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AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Thursday 18 November 2021

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 18 November 2021

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

## General Question Time

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

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

### Disability Benefits (20m rule)

1. **Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether the “20m rule” within eligibility criteria for disability benefits is dignified, fair, respectful and consistent with the values of Social Security Scotland. (S6O-00396)

**The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson):** From the launch of our replacement benefit, we will be significantly improving how eligibility for adult disability payments will be decided, and dignity, fairness and respect will be at the heart of our approach.

We have also, rightly, prioritised safe and secure transfer of disability assistance to Social Security Scotland. Fundamental changes to the eligibility criteria during the period of transition would put the transfer of nearly 300,000 clients at risk, which is something that no responsible Government would do.

We have committed to a full-scale review of adult disability payment, which will explore how further changes can be implemented, following safe and secure transfer of the benefit.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** No evidence yet exists that people who can walk more than 20m have less need for mobility support or that the 20m rule is an effective way to measure mobility. The rule does not take into account the fluctuating nature of many conditions. I, along with the MS Society and others, believe that until policy experts can look at the issue again, changing to a 50m rule in the qualifying criteria would not impact on passported benefits. Will the Scottish Government replace the 20m rule with the previous disability living

allowance 50m rule in the interim? It is far from perfect, but it is a better measure than 20m.

**Ben Macpherson:** As I set out in my first answer, safe and secure transfer of benefits will be critical in the period ahead. Disabled people have repeatedly told us that protecting their payments through safe and secure transfer is a key priority, as are passporting issues.

However, as I emphasised, our approach will be different. We will ensure that the impact on individuals of disability or health conditions, including fluctuating conditions, will be fully taken into account. We know that is not the case under the current system. We are introducing a person-centred way of making decisions on entitlement; we are removing degrading and inaccurate functional examinations and are putting an end to decisions being made on the basis of uncontested observations made by personal independence payment assessors. The approach of Social Security Scotland will be significantly different; I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government set that out in a letter to Pam Duncan-Glancy on 5 November.

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** On social security decisions, the minister will be aware that Tory and Labour Governments favoured private sector assessments that lined the pockets of the rich while letting disabled people down. Does the minister agree that that inhumane approach, which caused great misery, will have no part to play in our system in Scotland, which has dignity, fairness and respect at its heart?

**Ben Macpherson:** That is an important point. We know that PIP assessments that are carried out by the private sector often cause a great deal of stress and anxiety to the people who are required to go through them. They also fail to produce accurate decisions, which prolongs stress for clients and costs the public more money in appeals.

We are scrapping that approach and removing degrading examinations. Instead of snapshot judgments, we will base entitlement decisions on a range of supporting information. In-house person-centred consultations will happen only when they are absolutely necessary. In contrast to PIP, choice and flexibility will be embedded in our system.

**The Presiding Officer:** Questions and responses need to be quicker.

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** The minister has made it clear that there will be a review. Is he willing to commit today to the review's decisions being implemented during the current session of the Scottish Parliament, and to their not having to wait for a future session of Parliament for implementation, which would make people with

disabilities wait even longer to get the benefits that they are due? Will he commit to full implementation of review recommendations?

**Ben Macpherson:** I have already talked about the importance of safe and secure transfer. It would be wrong for any Government to commit to implementing the findings of an independent review before the review has even commenced. We will take the recommendations of the review extremely seriously, but we will have to consider budgeting concerns and ensure that changes are accounted for.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The minister is setting a lot of store by the different approach to potentially eradicate the 20m rule's downsides. Does he think that that approach will eradicate all the problems? If not, can he quantify what the issues will be?

**Ben Macpherson:** Given time constraints, I would be happy to meet Mr Rennie to talk about the matter in more detail.

It is important that we make changes in delivery through Social Security Scotland while undertaking safe and secure transfer of existing cases and ensuring that we protect people's passported benefits. The current time is crucial; we need to balance all the various considerations.

### Veterans (Services)

**2. Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what reassurances it can give to any veterans facing challenges in relation to their local healthcare, housing and accessibility needs. (S6O-00397)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Last year, we published our response to the veterans strategy, which set out our commitments through to 2028 to improve service delivery and support. We report progress against those commitments through our annual update to Parliament, which I delivered last week.

Furthermore, Scotland was the first country in the United Kingdom to establish an independent veterans commissioner, whose recommendations continue to assist—and occasionally challenge—our work, and ensure that wider policies are developed with the views of the veterans sector represented. I continue to explore additional measures that might be appropriate to provide further reassurance to veterans on those important concerns.

**Karen Adam:** I am sure that many of us were touched in some way last week during the remembrance day events. I often think about my grandfather in particular, and how grateful I am to have known him and to have heard his witness of

war before he passed. As we remember that past, we must not forget those who need help in the present.

In constituencies including Banffshire and Buchan Coast, a large armed forces community has specific housing needs. How will the Scottish Government ensure that the armed forces will continue to be taken into consideration as the housing sector deals with the challenges that the on-going disruption to supply chains causes, which will undoubtedly impact veterans disproportionately?

**Keith Brown:** I associate myself with Karen Adam's remarks about her grandfather, about those who have previously served and about the need for us to continue to remember them.

Through our affordable housing supply program, funding continues to be available to build homes that are specifically for veterans. I say "veterans" because responsibility for housing for people in the armed forces rests, as a reserved function, with the UK Government, although we will look to work with it.

When local authorities identify the housing issue as a strategic priority, we will work with them in relation to veterans. We are aware of the current shortages of materials and labour that parts of the construction sector face, and we continue to be advised of developments in that regard, as well as of impacts on the affordable housing supply programme. We are working closely with the construction sector, through the construction leadership forum, to understand and address the factors behind the issue.

### Alcohol Licensing (Sales Data)

**3. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to reported calls for licensees to be required to provide alcohol sales data to their local licensing board. (S6O-00398)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Regan):** Data on alcohol sales in Scotland is available through the Public Health Scotland annual publication, "Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy". That data from 2020 shows that the amount of alcohol that is sold per adult drinker in Scotland has fallen to its lowest level for the past 20 years.

The day-to-day administration of the alcohol licensing system in Scotland is the responsibility of the independent licensing boards. Operational decisions about specific requirements that fall on licensed premises, such as the data that should be ingathered to help to inform the development of each licensing board's statement of licensing policies, is a matter for each individual licensing

board to take a view on, based on the needs of its own locality.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Alcohol Focus Scotland has expressed to me that it believes that alcohol sales data is critical for assessment and development of effective policies to reduce the harms that alcohol causes. However, boards cannot get real-time data from license holders directly, and they are particularly concerned about receiving data from off-sales premises, particularly given the impact of the increase in off-sales during Covid restrictions. Could the Scottish Government look at the options, whether through legislation or other means, to compel license holders to provide the data directly to licensing boards?

**Ash Regan:** I respect the view of Alcohol Focus Scotland, but I am not sure that that level of data is necessary to help us to assess the effectiveness of minimum unit pricing. We have in place data gathering to enable monitoring and evaluation of minimum unit pricing. More generally, that information on alcohol sales is available across Scotland.

I take the member's point. There are likely to be some commercial sensitivities in obtaining the information that he has described at a local level, but once I have looked into the issue further, I will be happy to write to him with more information.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 4 has been withdrawn.

### Smoking Reduction

5. **David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to emphasise the harmful effects of tobacco as part of its aim to reduce smoking and protect public health. (S6O-00400)

**The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd):** Our 2018 action plan commits us to interventions and campaigns aimed at discouraging smoking. We aim to make the practice less acceptable and protect others from the damaging effects of second-hand smoke. However, we are not complacent. In 2022, we will introduce an offence for smoking near hospital buildings. We will also continue to promote our free stop smoking services and other targeted media and social media campaigns. We have also committed to a refreshed tobacco action plan, which will include several new actions and interventions, as we continue towards our goal of raising Scotland's tobacco-free generation by 2034.

**David Torrance:** The number of smokers across the country has almost halved in the past 20 years. Despite that drop, smoking continues to kill 10,000 Scots and creates 35,000 hospital

admissions a year. Those who live in deprived areas are three times more likely to be smokers.

Across my constituency and in wider Fife, the smoking rate is 13.6 per cent. What action can the Scottish Government take to further raise awareness of the harmful impact of smoking as we continue to work towards our target of a tobacco-free generation by 2034?

**Maree Todd:** The member is absolutely correct to highlight the fact that smoking rates continue to fall in Scotland, but we have more to do, and we need to focus that work in more deprived communities. There is a real health inequality around smoking and its impacts. We are determined to pick up that thread throughout our work on smoking.

Like the member, I am keen to highlight the impact of smoking in Scotland, where 180 people a week are still dying of smoking. It is the fifth most common contributor to preventable deaths. We will tackle that, and I am more than happy to work with the member to ensure that the programmes that we introduce work in his constituency as well as across Scotland.

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** The Scottish Government's own 2019 Scottish health survey reported that the number of people in the most deprived areas of Scotland who smoke regularly is more than five times the number of people in the least deprived areas who smoke regularly. Given that there is a direct link between smoking and the increased likelihood of those from deprived areas experiencing ill-health or early death, does the Government think that it is doing enough to look specifically at reducing smoking in our most vulnerable communities?

**Maree Todd:** I am aware of those statistics and I agree with Carol Mochan that we need to do as much as we possibly can and focus our attention on smoking in the most deprived communities.

As I have the opportunity, I want to say that stopping smoking is one of the most important steps that anyone can take to improve their health. The free smoking cessation service is available right across Scotland and I am keen for people to take steps towards stopping smoking in all our communities.

**The Presiding Officer:** I would be grateful if members could pick up the pace, please.

### National Health Service Workforce (Winter Pressures)

6. **Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with trade unions regarding the impact of winter pressures on the national health service workforce. (S6O-00401)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** The Scottish Government continues to have regular and extensive engagement with trade unions. In relation to the £300 million winter package, I met trade union representatives on 5 October, the day on which the package was announced. More recently, I also met with them at a round table earlier this month. Our partnership model is designed so that decisions are informed by health and social care partners and are in the best interests of patients and staff. The trade unions and staff representative organisations are key players in the decision-making process.

**Neil Bibby:** When I met Unison representatives at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley last month, they described in detail serious concerns about staffing and disruption to local services. They were concerned about not just the workforce but the people they care for. I shared those concerns with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in writing on 8 October, but I have yet to receive a response. Will the health secretary agree to meet those front-line workers, who can see the human impact of delayed screenings and appalling waits in accident and emergency, and explain to them why his recovery plan is not working?

**Humza Yousaf:** I apologise to Neil Bibby if there has been a delay in responding to him. I met Unison just last week—forgive me; it might have been earlier this week. I am always more than happy to meet site representatives and staff. I look forward to visiting the RAH when it is appropriate to do so. I would be happy to do that, and to get a full response to Mr Bibby.

The feedback on the £300 million winter package that we announced is that it can make a substantial difference, if we are able to get people whom it is clinically safe to discharge out into care settings in our community.

In response to Mr Bibby's question, I will, of course, be happy to visit the RAH when it is appropriate to do so.

### Long Covid

**7. Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it recognises long Covid as a disability. (S6O-00402)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** A person is disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a "substantial" and "long-term" negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. If long Covid has such an effect on an individual, they would be likely to be considered to be disabled under the 2010 act.

The Scottish Government encourages all employers to apply fair work principles and a flexible approach in dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 in order to protect the health and wellbeing of their workforce.

**Jeremy Balfour:** What conversations has the cabinet secretary had with his colleagues in Social Security Scotland to make sure that the appropriate benefits will be paid to those who have long Covid? Going forward, will the condition be defined in any guidance, so that tribunals and others, in making decisions, will be able to recognise it?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will ask the cabinet secretary who has responsibility for social security to write to Jeremy Balfour on those specific issues. We meet regularly. Much of that work is done through the role of, and is the responsibility of, the Deputy First Minister.

We want to ensure that our social security system is based on dignity and respect. Jeremy Balfour and I will have many constituents coming to us who are suffering from the long-term effects of Covid and who will be out of work for the first time. Among the benefits that they will look to for help is the safety net of universal credit. Scottish National Party members, along with members across the Parliament, demand that the United Kingdom Government reverse its universal credit cut. It is not too late for it to re-establish the additional £20, which can make a big difference to people with disabilities and those who suffer from the long-term effects of Covid.

### Economic Growth

**8. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what it considers to be the underlying strengths of any economic growth in Scotland. (S6O-00403)

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** Despite the damaging impacts of Brexit across many vital sectors, Scotland's economy has significant strengths. We have a thriving tech ecosystem, and a renewable energy sector that provides quality jobs and opportunities for innovation. We have strengths in food and drink, life sciences, financial services and advanced manufacturing, as well as a strong skills and entrepreneurial base, all of which has made Scotland the United Kingdom's top destination outside London for foreign direct investment.

We are pushing forward with an ambitious 10-year agenda of economic transformation to seize Scotland's potential and deliver a more prosperous, fairer and greener wellbeing economy. Our national strategy for economic transformation will set out how we will deliver a



green economic recovery and support new, good green jobs, businesses and industries for the future.

**James Dornan:** I note that the minister mentioned the damaging impact of Brexit on our economy. The chairman of the Office for Budget Responsibility recently indicated that the impact of Brexit on the UK economy will be worse in the long run than the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Does the minister agree that it is high time that the UK Government provided the additional funding that was promised to Scotland to mitigate the impacts of a hard Brexit that people in Scotland did not vote for in the first place?

**Ivan McKee:** The UK Government's Brexit deal has removed Scotland from a market that is worth more than £16 billion to Scottish exporters, and our companies now face additional costs, delays and barriers. As Mr Dornan has highlighted, the OBR's latest forecasts show that leaving the European Union will reduce the UK's potential productivity by 4 per cent in the long run. That compares with a reduction of 2 per cent as a result of the pandemic. We also know that, in the year up to June 2021, exports of Scottish goods fell by 24 per cent compared with the figure for the equivalent period in 2019.

I agree that the UK Government must provide the additional funding that was promised to Scotland to mitigate the harmful impacts of a hard Brexit, which people in Scotland did not vote for.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Justice System (Release from Prison)

1. **Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands (Con):** Sixty-seven-year-old Esther Brown was raped and murdered by Jason Graham. This is a man who was a registered sex offender and had 23 previous convictions. In 2013, he was given a seven and a half-year sentence for the rape of a retired nurse, but he got released early on licence. After Graham was sentenced yesterday for this brutal attack and murder, one of Esther's friends said:

"She was the type of person that would go and help anybody."

Can the First Minister honestly say that her Government's approach to justice is keeping the people of Scotland safe?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, and most important, my thoughts and sympathies are with Esther Brown's family and friends. Absolutely nothing, including nothing that I or anybody else in the chamber can say, will ease the pain that the family is suffering or the pain of anyone who knew her. I hope that the sentence yesterday will bring some closure to the family, but I do not underestimate the pain that they will be suffering and will continue to suffer for some time.

Obviously, I cannot comment on the detail of individual cases. First, it is important to recognise that, in this case, there will be a significant case review, which will assess the circumstances of the protection arrangements that were in place and the roles of the operational agencies that were involved. That will be done with a clear view to learning any lessons. It is right and proper—indeed, it is essential—that lessons are learned and acted on as appropriate.

Automatic early release has, of course, been an issue of contention for many years in the Parliament. Back in 2015, the Government legislated to end the previous system of automatic early release for prisoners. Of course, that legislation could not apply retrospectively, but it was an important move to make. We will continue to ensure that our justice system protects people from criminals and ensures that victims get the justice that they deserve. I am not talking about this case when I make this point, but we also want a justice system that tries to ensure that the principles of rehabilitation and reducing reoffending are at its heart.

**Douglas Ross:** This case is yet another damning example of the glaring flaws in Scotland's justice system. Jason Graham was released early.

He was not monitored properly. Yesterday, he got 19 years in prison—yes, that is a long sentence, but it is not nearly enough for such a horrific crime.

This week, the Scottish Government launched a consultation, proposing that violent criminals could get out of prison after serving just six or seven years of their sentence. The Government's document suggests that long-term prisoners could be considered for release after serving just a third of their sentence. Does the First Minister not see that the proposals would take our justice system even further in the wrong direction and would risk public safety?

**The First Minister:** These are very serious issues. Before I come on to early release and the consultation that the Government published in recent days, it is important to say that processes and procedures are in place—they clearly did not work in this tragic case—through the multi-agency public protection arrangements to minimise the risks that are posed by registered sex offenders. As I said, in such cases, it is right that there will be a significant case review to ensure that any appropriate lessons are learned.

My Government did not introduce the previous automatic early release arrangements, but we did legislate to end them. It is important that we recognise that it is necessary to have in place a justice system that punishes those who deserve to be punished—that is always an important principle of the justice system—but that also promotes rehabilitation and tries to reduce reoffending.

One thing that is often lost in these discussions—I reiterate that I am talking in general terms here, not about the case of Esther Brown—is that, in Scotland, we imprison a higher proportion of our population than any other country in western Europe does. It is not that we do not send a lot of people to prison. The question is whether prison is always the effective punishment for people. It will be in many, many cases.

We want to have a system of release from prison that, first, has risk assessment and victim safety at its heart, and that also looks at what is most effective in reducing reoffending. The consultation that was published this week is a consultation, and I encourage people across the chamber and indeed the wider public to respond to it.

It is important to say—this will be my last point in this answer, Presiding Officer—that the abolition of automatic early release for the most dangerous, long-term prisoners is not affected by any of the consultation proposals that were published earlier this week.

**Douglas Ross:** The First Minister started her answer by saying that there are processes and procedures in place. Those processes and

procedures did not save Esther Brown from being raped and murdered, so I am sorry, but that does not cut it when we are dealing with lives being lost, and it is not an individual case.

The SNP Government consultation does not stop there, however. It also proposes automatically releasing short-term prisoners after just a third of their sentence. The First Minister previously told the Parliament:

“Our objective remains to end the policy of automatic early release completely as soon as we are able to.”—*[Official Report, 2 April 2015; c 19.]*

That was six years ago, yet now, far from keeping dangerous criminals off our streets, this Government is proposing to let them out even earlier. Is it not the case that this Government's course of action has let some of the worst offenders back on to our streets, where they are free to commit further offences?

**The First Minister:** First, and the record will bear this out, I said in my previous answer that the arrangements that are in place through the multi-agency public protection scheme to protect people from registered sex offenders clearly did not work as intended in the case of Esther Brown. I know that nothing that I can say on the generality of these issues will bring any comfort to her family. I want to make that clear again.

I have also been at pains to say that I appreciate that some of the comments that I am making—because there are clearly wider issues here, which Douglas Ross is right to raise—are not applicable to the specifics of Esther Brown's case. I want to be clear, again, about that. I absolutely understand that anybody who loved her, listening to me right now, will take no comfort whatsoever from anything that I say, but the Government has a duty to ensure that the overall justice system has the right principles at heart when things go wrong and that lessons are learned, and that is what we will always seek to do.

This Government did legislate to end automatic early release for certain categories of prisoner—those serving sentences of four years or more. I do not want to get into politics on such a serious issue, but the Conservatives did not vote for those reforms. Other parties in the chamber did vote for them. It is important that, as we move forward, we continue to keep all the arrangements under review.

The consultation that was published this week is a consultation. It seeks views on whether certain prisoners who are serving short-term sentences could be released earlier than halfway if—and this is an important “if”—that was felt to better support their successful reintegration into society and, therefore, help to reduce the risk of reoffending.

We look forward to seeing the responses to the consultation and we will consider them all carefully.

Rates of crime in Scotland—again, I appreciate that this is no comfort at all for any victim of crime—are at their lowest level for many years, and we send a higher proportion of our population to prison than any other country in western Europe does. We have to ask ourselves whether the way that we use prison is as effective as it could be. It is therefore right that we consider these things carefully, and we will certainly do so. As we do that, we will of course learn lessons from tragic cases such as the one that we are discussing today.

**Douglas Ross:** More dangerous offenders such as Jason Graham are being released all the time. The most recent annual figures show that more than 95 per cent of the criminals who are sent to prison in Scotland will be eligible for automatic early release—more than 95 per cent. Far too often in the Scottish National Party's soft-touch justice system, criminals are put first, not victims. It is too late for Esther Brown, but that must change.

Our victims law would restore confidence that is sadly lacking. This Government has a choice to make: having emptier prisons from letting out early even more criminals, or protecting the public and putting victims first. I choose public safety and supporting victims. Which side is the First Minister on?

**The First Minister:** We should all be on the side of victims of crime, but we should also all be on the side of making Scotland as a whole safer. That means trying to ensure that we have in place a penal system that not only punishes—a vital principle in any justice system—but helps us to reduce the risk of those who serve sentences in prison reoffending. That is the wider issue that we have a responsibility to consider.

I know that it is an easy soundbite for the Conservatives, but it is simply not accurate to describe our country as having soft-touch justice when we have some of the lowest crime rates in many years and, as I have already said today, send a higher proportion of our population to prison than any other country in western Europe.

The question that we have to ask ourselves is whether our justice system and the approaches that are taken to dealing with offenders are always as effective as they should be, both in punishing and reducing reoffending. I accept that that presents difficult, challenging and, at times, contentious issues, which is why we are consulting carefully on the proposed reforms. We will listen carefully to all the responses that we receive.

## Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

**2. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I have repeatedly come to the chamber to raise tragedy after tragedy at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital. Despite that, we still have a culture of cover-up, denial and families being failed. Everyone should read the heartbreaking words of Louise Slorance, the widow of Andrew Slorance, who died in December after being treated for cancer in the hospital. Andrew was the First Minister's official spokesperson in 2007, then head of the Scottish Government's response and communication unit. He was at the heart of the Covid pandemic response.

Andrew went into hospital to get treatment that would prolong his life; instead, in hospital, he contracted Covid and a fungal infection—Aspergillus, which is a deadly bacteria that is often linked to water or mould. He died just days later. His wife, Louise, told me that she was never informed about the fungal infection. She had to uncover that in his medical notes after his death. She has spoken courageously of her anger, shock, distress and disappointment.

Why, despite everything that has happened, do we still have a culture of cover-up, secrecy and denial, with families being forced to take on the system to get the truth?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I assure members that I have read Louise's words very closely. I always do that when relatives of people who have died or received substandard care in our national health service speak out, as that is part of my duty. In this case, I have obviously also done that because I knew Andrew very well.

Andrew was a greatly valued member of the Scottish Government team. He is deeply missed by everyone who had the privilege of working with him, which certainly includes me. I first met Andrew on the very first day that I served in Government, back in 2007. He made an exceptional contribution to the Scottish Government's work, and my thoughts are often with his loved ones and, in particular, his wife, Louise, and his children.

My officials have already engaged this morning with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde so that the concerns that have been raised are properly investigated. We will do everything possible to ensure that Andrew's family members get the answers that they seek, and we will consider carefully whether the concerns that Louise Slorance has raised raise wider issues that require to be addressed. The chief operating officer of NHS Scotland has contacted NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde this morning to start to establish the facts, and I have asked for

information to be available later today, when we will assess what further steps require to be taken.

This Government and I will not tolerate cover-ups or secrecy on the part of any health board. Where there are concerns about that, we will address those concerns.

In relation to the issue at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, and other issues that have been raised over the years about the hospital, including by Anas Sarwar, a public inquiry is under way. I hope that that is a sign of our determination to ensure that any issues that are raised are properly investigated and that answers are forthcoming. The Government and I are determined that that will be the case in relation to Andrew Slorance's death.

**Anas Sarwar:** The First Minister says that she has heard these concerns from me for years, so why are these things still happening? If even the widow of Andrew Slorance cannot get the truth and justice that he deserves, when he was at the heart of this Government, what chance does anybody else in our country have? This is a repeated pattern.

Consider the scandal at the children's cancer ward that led to the tragic death of Milly Main. In that case, a bacteria linked to water, *Stenotrophomonas*, was identified by infection-control doctors, ignored by management and covered up. In this case, a bacteria linked to water and mould, *Aspergillus*, was identified by infection-control doctors, ignored by management and covered up. That is a culture of secrecy and denial, and the Government cannot escape that fact.

Such cover-ups have deadly consequences, so I ask the First Minister agree to Louise Slorance's demands: first, an independent case note review into all *Aspergillus* cases at the hospital; secondly, an independent Crown Office-led investigation into hospital-acquired Covid infections; and thirdly, for the public inquiry remit to be expanded to include *Aspergillus* cases.

Crucially, though, the health board leadership has lost the confidence of clinicians, patients, parents and the public. Given everything that has already happened, and everything that has been uncovered, why is the health board leadership in Glasgow still in place?

**The First Minister:** I will continue to address the issues raised. I said in my initial answer that my officials have already engaged with the health board today, and I have asked for further information. Later today, when I have had the opportunity to look at and assess that information, I will consider, with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, what additional steps are required.

I note that Louise Slorance has requested a case note review. A case note review was carried out in relation to earlier issues at the Queen Elizabeth, so it is a reasonable request, which I will consider with the health secretary later.

On Louise Slorance's other two requests, I absolutely understand why the requests have been made but, as I know Anas Sarwar is aware, the Crown Office is independent of ministers and can look into any cases that it deems appropriate. It is not appropriate for me, as First Minister, to instruct the Crown Office in these matters. Similarly, the public inquiry is, rightly and properly, operating independently of ministers. It is able to look at any issues associated with the Queen Elizabeth that it considers appropriate. To be beyond any doubt, there is no objection on the part of the Government to the public inquiry looking into any of the issues that have been raised in relation to Andrew Slorance by his wife today. However, it is not for me to instruct the public inquiry, because it is operating independently of ministers and will decide which issues it wishes to consider.

**Anas Sarwar:** I accept what the First Minister says, but I note that she dodged the question altogether about the leadership of the health board in Glasgow.

I am sorry—the answer is not good enough because, as the First Minister herself noted, these issues have been raised for years. The right thing to do would not be to ask an official to make contact with the leadership of the health board and have the process that comes back. The right thing to do would be for the First Minister to grip the issue, take ownership of it and get it sorted out.

Despite the tragic loss of life, the cover-ups and the denials, not a single person has been held accountable for the catastrophic errors at Queen Elizabeth university hospital. That cannot continue. From start to finish, the scandal has happened under Nicola Sturgeon's watch. She was health secretary when the hospital was commissioned and built, and First Minister when it was opened. Since then, water reports have been ignored; there have been deadly building flaws; patients have been getting infections; wards have closed; there have been patient deaths; and staff have been bullied and silenced. There has been an independent review, a case note review, a public inquiry, criminal investigations and continued failings and cover-ups. Families are still having to go public to fight the system and get the truth.

Enough is enough. This is the worst scandal of the devolution era. In any other country in the world, there would be resignations and sackings, but under this Government, there is denial and

cover-up. How many more families have to lose loved ones before anyone is held to account?

**The First Minister:** There is, right now, an independent statutory public inquiry under way. I think that that is right and proper. It was instructed by the previous health secretary of this Government. If the Government were to start to pre-empt the outcomes of that public inquiry, I think that, with some justification, Anas Sarwar and perhaps others would say that that is wrong as well, because we were seeking to interfere with the work that the inquiry was doing.

These are serious issues, and I think that they deserve to be treated seriously and on their substance. The public inquiry is doing that work right now. The findings and any recommendations that fall from that public inquiry absolutely should be, must be and will be acted upon.

I think that it is incumbent on all of us who care about these issues—and I know that that includes all of us in the chamber—to allow that public inquiry to do its work.

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to supplementary questions.

#### **Weir & McQuiston (Administration)**

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** The First Minister might be aware that Wishart-based, family-owned Weir & McQuiston (Scotland) Ltd entered administration this week. WMQ was one of Scotland's leading mechanical and electrical contractors, and that is a devastating development for the owners and the 90 members of staff who are affected. What engagement has the Scottish Government had with administrators through partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—and what support has been put in place for the people who are affected by those job losses in my constituency?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I thank Clare Adamson for raising what I know is an important constituency issue for her. I was also very sorry to hear that Weir & McQuiston had ceased trading after such a long period of time—some 45 years. My thoughts are with the employees who are affected by that decision and their families. I can assure Clare Adamson that our local PACE team has already been in touch with the administrators. It is working closely with the redundancy payments office, which will ensure that information on pay support is issued to the affected employees. We stand ready to do anything reasonable that we can to support them at this very difficult time.

#### **Booster Vaccinations (Ayrshire and Arran)**

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I have a constituent in the vulnerable category who went to book a booster vaccination and was told that there was no availability until mid-January. I have had it confirmed by NHS Ayrshire and Arran that booking is completely full. With that in mind, does the Government have any plans to expand the booster vaccination scheme to ensure that those who should get a booster jab have access to one?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, we do. I am happy to look into that particular case and into the wider issue in Ayrshire and Arran. We have plans in place and are working to ensure that all those who are eligible—and remember that eligibility for the booster means six months on from receiving the second vaccine dose—are vaccinated as quickly as possible and before the end of this year, wherever possible.

That is how we have designed the system—there is flex in it. Just this week, we are seeking to increase capacity further so that we can start vaccinating those in the over-40 age group. People should be getting appointments quickly. I will certainly look into any situation in which somebody who is eligible and has already passed the six months is being told that it will be January before they can get a booster. If there is not a good reason for that, we will certainly take that up with Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board.

#### **Glasgow Transport Fares**

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** Delegates to the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—were handed free smart cards like the one that I am holding up to access integrated public transport across the central belt of Scotland. However, my constituent, who was cleaning toilets for the world leaders at the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow, had to pay £5 for a bus ticket and another £3 for the subway every day, compared with £3 for publicly controlled Transport for London services or £3.60 on publicly controlled and owned Lothian Buses services. In Glasgow, on minimum wage, an hour's pay each day is spent on getting to and from work.

Does the First Minister therefore agree that a green new deal for workers in Glasgow must include using the powers of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to bring all public transport in greater Glasgow under a single, integrated, publicly controlled franchise, with London-style capped fares?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** There are two related issues there, and I certainly agree with the sentiment behind the question.

On the integration of ticketing, Transport Scotland is already working towards all journeys on our public transport networks being able to be made using some form of smart ticketing or payment. Progress has already been made towards that objective.

The second issue is affordability. I think that an important part of our journey to net zero and getting more people to use public transport is making public transport much more affordable and therefore more accessible. We need to do that in a way that we can accommodate within our budgets, and we are looking at that right now, in the context of our budget process.

One of the things that we were able to confirm during COP was the introduction of free bus travel for under-22s, which will come into force at the beginning of next year. We need to go further than that and we are considering how quickly we can do that within the resources that are available to us. Making sure that public transport is more accessible in terms of affordability and ease of use is a key priority for us.

### Booster Vaccinations

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Will the First Minister join me in thanking all the staff, volunteers and people in Scotland who have helped make Scotland the first United Kingdom nation to give the extra vaccine dose to half of over-50s? I remind members that I am part of NHS Dumfries and Galloway's vaccination team.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I again thank everybody who is working hard to design the vaccination programme and work out how we get the capacity that we need and where the capacity should be, and I thank those who are administering vaccines in vaccination centres the length and breadth of the country, which I know includes Emma Harper. The programme is going very well and we have become the first part of the UK to vaccinate more than 50 per cent of over-50s with the booster, but there is still a long way to go. Vaccination remains our best line of defence against the virus, so I encourage anybody who is not yet vaccinated with either their first or second dose and anybody who is eligible for the booster to get vaccinated, because it will protect them and others—please do it without delay.

### Oil and Gas Jobs (North East Scotland)

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** On Tuesday, the First Minister turned her back on 100,000 oil and gas workers, many of whom are in the north-east. Yesterday, the Scottish National Party turned its back on its commitment to fully dual the A96. Can the First Minister explain to the people of the north-east why she has turned her back on them?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Like much else that comes from the Conservative Party, that is nonsense, and it completely ignores the responsibility that we all have to address climate change. These issues are complex, difficult and often contentious, but let us be clear that the transition away from oil and gas, which the science says is essential, must be just. It must not put 100,000 workers into unemployment or increase reliance on imports. The question that flows from that is the key question. Do we say that, because we have a current jobs and energy reliance on oil and gas, we continue with new developments and unlimited extraction, or do we say that we need to break that cycle of reliance by investing in the alternatives and speeding up our move away from fossil fuels?

Our obligation to the planet says that we need to do the latter. That is why the Scottish Government is investing in a just transition. That just transition would be easier if the United Kingdom Conservative Government had not turned its back on carbon capture and storage, the Scottish cluster and the Acorn project—perhaps the Scottish Conservatives should take that up with their colleagues in London.

### Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** The heartbroken family of Andrew Slorance is not the only family seeking answers about what happened to loved ones at Queen Elizabeth university hospital. Theresa Smith, as reported on front page of the *Greenock Telegraph* today, has spoken of the deep pain that her family has endured since the death of her daughter, Sophia, in April 2017 at just 12 days old. Sophia died of an infection that she contracted at the Queen Elizabeth, despite initially responding well to treatment for breathing problems. The family was not informed and had to fight for a post mortem to know the truth. Theresa and her family have described the tortuous journey to try and get answers about what happened, with phone calls, emails and letters stonewalled. She, too, has pointed to a cover-up.

I heard what the First Minister said in response to Anas Sarwar about the public inquiry. Does she recognise that the inquiry did not save Andrew Slorance and will not save patients right now? What is the Government doing immediately to prevent such terrible and tragic deaths from happening again?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Infection prevention and control is a priority in every hospital all the time, which is absolutely right and proper, as is the need to learn lessons when things go wrong. That is a daily priority for hospitals and health boards across the country.

I convey my sympathies to Sophia's family. If the member wants to correspond with me, I am very willing to see whether there is something that the Government can do to help get the answers that Sophia's family understandably want. In a situation such as this, it is right, and it was called for, that we have a proper independent statutory public inquiry. That is not the sign of a Government trying to cover things up; it is the sign of the opposite. It is the sign of a Government that is determined to get to the truth, determined to find the facts, determined to get the answers, and determined to learn the lessons, and that is what we should be seeing.

### **26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (Impact)**

**3. Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government anticipates the lasting impact of COP26 will be for the people of Glasgow and Scotland. (S6F-00470)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I think that the lasting impact will be a very positive one. We can all feel pride in the leadership that Scotland, the people of Scotland and, in particular, the people of Glasgow showed during the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties. I think that the outcome, although it did not go as far as many of us would have liked, will accelerate or help to accelerate our delivery of net zero, and it is important that people and communities are at the heart of that.

We are currently funding a number of projects in Glasgow through the climate challenge fund, which supports communities to reduce car reliance, cut waste, grow local food and lower energy use. We are also building a new model to support further community climate action. That will be part of the longer-term legacy from COP26 in Glasgow over two weeks.

**Kaukab Stewart:** For many countries in the global south, the impacts of climate change are already being felt. We have a moral responsibility to acknowledge that and to take action. The Scottish Government has led the way by providing £2 million of funding for loss and damage. That commitment has been widely welcomed, including by the secretary general of the United Nations, António Guterres, but we cannot act alone. How will the Scottish Government continue to push for climate justice globally post-COP26?

**The First Minister:** First, we will try to lead by example through our actions at home. That is why the decision that we have taken to increase our climate justice fund and our decision to allocate resources to the issue of loss and damage are important. That allows us to use that leadership to seek to encourage others to do likewise.

I have already had discussions on the issue with other Governments, and I know that there is a willingness now to step forward on loss and damage. We will continue to play our part in building that momentum.

It is really important that we focus on actions to mitigate climate change and to help countries to adapt to the future impacts of climate change. However, as Kaukab Stewart has rightly said, many countries across the world are suffering loss and damage right now. They are struggling to cope with that, and the developed world, which has, of course, done the most to cause climate change, has a real moral obligation to step up and play its part in helping with that. Scotland will continue to do everything that we can to play our full part.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** As my colleague Paul Sweeney has said, one of the positives from the COP in Glasgow was that delegates benefited from smart, integrated ticketing. The First Minister promised Scotland that almost a decade ago, but she has never delivered it. This week, Dublin is rolling out a new 90-minute ticket across buses, trams and trains. Glasgow and Scotland are falling further behind our neighbours. When will the First Minister finally make seamless and affordable public transport a reality for Scotland's passengers?

**The First Minister:** That work is already under way. I will not repeat everything that I said in response to the previous question on that—it is an important question and it is an important priority—but let me repeat one point. From January next year, every young person under the age of 22 will have free bus travel in Scotland. That is a significant step forward, but it is not the end of the journey. We have to build on that to go further. However, we are taking concrete steps to make public transport more accessible and more affordable, and we will continue to make that progress in the years ahead, as we have to do a range of different things to live up to our own climate change targets.

### **Face-to-face Advocacy Services**

**4. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what assessment the Scottish Government has made of the impact of reduced face-to-face advocacy services on vulnerable people, such as victims of domestic abuse. (S6F-00472)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I commend the work of front-line advocacy services, which have worked tirelessly to ensure that people, including those experiencing domestic abuse, have been able to access support throughout the pandemic. We are in regular contact with those services to understand the

challenges that they face and to support them as best we can.

Over the past 18 months, we have invested an additional £10 million to allow the rapid redesign of services and to address backlogs, and we have supported organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland. In addition, our delivering equally safe fund recently confirmed funding for 112 organisations, which will help them to provide key services and prevent gender-based violence.

It is important that, when the issue is raised, all of us say how utterly abhorrent domestic violence is. It should never be tolerated, and, if anyone is in need of help, whether from the police or from a support agency, they should not hesitate to seek it.

**Pauline McNeill:** I especially welcome the additional funding for the equally safe campaign. However, it is clear that the loss of face-to-face advice will have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable members of our communities. Recently, Rachel Moon, who is a senior solicitor at Govanhill Law Centre, said:

"For the ... most vulnerable in our society—those with no literacy, no English, no family or monetary support, and a history of discrimination—they need a physical place ... to see a real person to hand over their eviction documents ... we must remember those people who cannot phone, zoom, or scan documents."

Violence against women is sadly endemic in our society and, as the First Minister has recognised, levels of domestic abuse are rising alarmingly. However, it can be impractical for people who are in a controlling and abusive relationship to seek help remotely at home. What will the Scottish Government do to review the funding that it gives to law centres and the free advice sector so that vulnerable people and women who are experiencing domestic violence have safe places where they can access face-to-face legal advice?

**The First Minister:** As I said in my initial answer, we will continue to do all that we can to ensure funding for front-line organisations that provide advocacy services. There are a range of such services—I mentioned some of them—particularly in the field of dealing with gender-based violence. There are also law centres, which I know—I used to work in a law centre, many years ago—provide valuable advice and services.

On the issue of face-to-face access versus telephone or online access, organisations themselves will often be best placed to make decisions about the correct balance. It is really important that, where necessary, people have the face-to-face option. However, I know that, during the pandemic, some organisations have found that the necessity of moving to more digital access has

allowed them to extend their reach, so it is important that the balance is right.

It is challenging in the current circumstances, but I hope that our commitment to funding those organisations, as far as we possibly can, will help them to return to normal and to provide the essential services that they offer to so many people across the country.

### **Advocacy Services (Funding)**

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Advocacy services are an important lifeline for many different groups, including vulnerable older people. However, even before the pandemic, reduced funding for advocacy organisations across Scotland meant that they were struggling to meet demand. Does the First Minister agree with independent advocacy services that increased funding is necessary to allow those organisations to protect vulnerable individuals' rights?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, I do—I agree strongly with that. We do not have unlimited resources—that is a statement of fact—but, within the resources that we have, we are seeking to ensure that front-line organisations that support and provide help to vulnerable people have the funding that they need, although that will continue to be challenging.

Of course, given the range of circumstances—I am not talking specifically about domestic abuse—in which people feel the need to access advocacy support, we also need to do more to deal with the root causes of some of those things. Many people who are accessing services—citizens advice bureaux, for example—right now will be doing so because of the cuts to their benefits, given the position of destitution that that often puts people in. We all have a responsibility to support front-line services, but, equally, we all have a responsibility to try to deal with some of the root causes that lead people to need those services. I hope that the member will, on behalf of his colleagues, reflect on that.

### **Minimum Unit Price for Alcohol**

**5. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what consideration the Scottish Government has given to increasing the minimum unit price for alcohol. (S6F-00467)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We are absolutely committed to ensuring that, as we move forward, we have in place a level of minimum unit price that remains effective in reducing alcohol harms. At the point when minimum unit pricing was first introduced, we did not know that we would be facing a pandemic, which has had an impact on the use and consumption of alcohol.



Prior to the pandemic, however, we were seeing early and very encouraging signs of a reduction in alcohol sales and in alcohol-specific deaths.

The evaluation of minimum unit pricing is ongoing, and a final report from Public Health Scotland is expected in 2023. Of course, any change to the level, or to any detail, of the minimum unit pricing policy must have a robust evidence base.

**Stuart McMillan:** I remind members that I am a member of Moving On Inverclyde, a local addiction service.

The First Minister will know that the most recent statistics indicated that Inverclyde had the highest level of alcohol-related deaths during the peak of the Covid pandemic. Every death is a tragedy and I offer my condolences to the people affected.

It is clear that minimum unit pricing was having a positive effect but, due to inflation, the effectiveness of the 50p unit price will have declined. Bearing in mind the fact that alcohol was 64 per cent more affordable in 2017 than it was in 1980—particularly in supermarkets and off-sales—will the First Minister consider increasing the minimum unit price in line with inflation or even slightly above that in the upcoming budget? Will she also commit to setting up an external commission to consider when future increases should occur and what level they should be?

**The First Minister:** I will consider any suggestions of that nature and will take Stuart McMillan's suggestions into account.

It is really important that we do two things, which are obviously related. First, we should properly and robustly evaluate the policy of minimum unit pricing. Indeed, a commitment was given to do that when the legislation was passed and the policy was introduced. That process is under way and we will know the outcomes of the Public Health Scotland evaluation in 2023.

It is also important that we keep the level of the price under review and take account of factors such as inflation, because the level of the price is critical to ensuring that the policy continues to be effective. There were encouraging signs pre-pandemic that it was being effective, and we need to take account of changes since then. Those issues will receive on-going, careful and evidence-based consideration by the Government.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Stuart McMillan is right. It has been a decade since the 50p rate was first set, inflation is rising dramatically and the sunset clause is coming into effect soon. The First Minister and I agree on minimum unit pricing but I am concerned about the lack of urgency in her answer. We need to move faster on increasing the rate. Today, 28

organisations spoke out to say that it should be 65p. Will she back the science?

**The First Minister:** I hope that Willie Rennie and others accept that there are few people in the chamber more committed to the policy of minimum unit pricing than I am. I was the minister who took the legislation through the Parliament. We then had a lengthy court challenge and have been committed to the policy throughout, including at times when few people were prepared to predict that it had any chance of becoming operational. Therefore, I take those points extremely seriously.

We need to consider all the points carefully and we are doing so. I do not want to sound in any way complacent about the matter. Minimum unit pricing will have the desired effect only if it is set at an effective level.

There is one other complicating factor right now—I say this as a statement of fact, not for any other reason—and that is the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020. Any changes in the price, whether by inflation or any other level, could engage that act. That is a source of great concern for us and one of the many reasons why we raised such profound concerns while that act was going through the Westminster Parliament.

I hope that, as we take forward the work on minimum unit pricing, members will engage rightly and properly on the detail of where the price should be set. That must be evidence driven. I hope that we will have the support of members around the chamber if we find that the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 is a serious obstacle to ensuring that minimum unit pricing remains effective, because that would be deeply regrettable, given the policy's history and how difficult it was to get it into operation.

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** Sadly, alcohol-related deaths in Scotland rose by 17 per cent in 2020, to 1,190. Those devastating figures emphasise the point that action must be taken and that a range of methods, including minimum unit pricing, should be implemented to tackle harmful alcohol consumption.

I know that the Government plans to consult on the marketing of alcohol. Will the First Minister consider implementing other measures, such as mandating nutrition and health information on alcohol labels and placing a social responsibility levy on alcohol retailers?

**The First Minister:** Without commenting on the specific suggestions that Gillian Mackay made, although they are both important, I say in general that we remain open minded to every action that can help us to deal with the harm that alcohol misuse does. In fact, when we first proposed minimum unit pricing, it was one of, I think, 40

different actions that were put forward in our alcohol strategy.

Minimum unit pricing is important but it is not the only initiative that needs to be taken. We will consider other initiatives and very carefully consider their evidence base. Within the powers that we have, that includes the suggestions that Gillian Mackay made.

### Tenants (Private Sector)

**6. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, as an owner of a rented property in North Lanarkshire.

To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to support tenants, in light of University of Glasgow research indicating that around a quarter of private tenants are in arrears, totalling around £126 million. (S6F-00463)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We are very much aware that rising rent costs cause hardship for tenants. Although that has been the case for many years, the pandemic has further exacerbated the financial situation for many people. That is why the Government has already taken significant action. For example, we have supported and are supporting tenants through a variety of schemes, with an additional £39 million. That includes a £10 million tenant grant fund, an increase in discretionary housing payments and a £10 million tenant hardship loan fund. This year we have committed £82 million in discretionary housing payments.

In the longer term, we have committed to tackling high rents by implementing an effective national system of rent controls by the end of 2025 and to introducing a new deal for tenants, so that there is quality, affordability and fairness at the heart of the rented sector.

**Mark Griffin:** I am grateful for the First Minister's answer but, with social sector arrears growing by £9 million just between July and September this year, it is clear that arrears are set to dwarf that £10 million grant fund. To my surprise and the surprise of those in the sector, that is not even new money; it has been raided from the ending homelessness together fund. Also, the loan fund appears to be completely useless. It offers tenants in arrears more debt, and most applicants are simply refused. In the first four months of this financial year, just £42,000 was paid out.

Tenants fear a tidal wave of evictions and homelessness, yet last week's report says that landlords want notice periods for arrears to be slashed to the pre-pandemic level of 28 days. Can the First Minister assure tenants that their rights

on notice periods will not be slashed? Can she commit to rent controls in next year's housing bill—not by 2025, as she suggested in her previous answer?

**The First Minister:** The member can take it from my previous answer and from the overall commitments from the Government that our objective is to strengthen the rights of tenants, not weaken them in any way. I take his points about financial assistance, although I would say that helping tenants with rent arrears is an important part of helping to prevent, and therefore end, homelessness. That point needs to be made.

In the course of the budget process, we will of course consider what more we can do to help not just tenants but others who are dealing with difficult financial circumstances right now. If the member wishes to make proposals about how we free up more money in the budget, the housing minister would be perfectly happy to have that conversation.

We are happy to engage about the timing of legislation on rent controls. The Parliament rightly wants proper time for consultation and scrutiny of proposed legislation, and we are open to discussions about the legislative programme and how quickly we can move to introduce reforms.

The reforms will be contentious. I do not believe that they will be unanimously supported within this party—within this Parliament, I mean. I hope that they will be unanimously supported within this party, but I am not sure that they will be within the Parliament. It is perhaps those members who might oppose them who are now murmuring from a sedentary position.

To be serious about it, this is a real issue. Overall, inflationary pressures from energy costs, rent and rising food prices will pose significant challenges for many people across the country, and the Government will do everything that we can within our resources to help people to deal with those pressures.

## Road Safety (Falkirk)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-01281, in the name of Stephen Kerr, on road safety in Falkirk. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak buttons or, if they are joining us online, to type R in the chat function.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises efforts in Airth and Reddingmuirhead to introduce a 20mph speed limit; considers that, in busy areas, a 20mph speed limit is safer for pedestrians, in particular school children and cyclists, and notes the view that local councils should be empowered to make decisions on speed limits, acknowledging their local knowledge.

12:50

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this motion on road safety in Falkirk. Road safety is of paramount importance and, when properly enforced, it saves lives. One of the most important factors in road safety is speed. The road safety charity Brake states that one in three fatal road crashes can be attributed to excess speed and that an average speed reduction of 1mph reduces crash frequency by 5 per cent.

Since becoming a member of the Scottish Parliament in May, I have been made aware of various community-led campaigns to improve road safety in Falkirk by reducing or enforcing speed limits. One of those campaigns is in the village of Airth and is led by Airth community council. For many years, residents have been complaining about the noise pollution and increased risk from cars, vans, lorries and even tractors ignoring the 30mph speed limit on the main street. Earlier this year, more than 100 residents took part in a survey that showed that 87 per cent of people who live in Airth backed proposals to reduce the speed limit on the main street to 20mph. Despite that support, the people of Airth are no closer to the introduction of a 20mph speed limit becoming a reality.

Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone community council has also been leading a campaign to enforce the 30mph speed limit on Shieldhill Road. There is a school beside the road, but there is no continuous pavement on either side, so children cross the road back and forth on their walk to and from school. By itself, that is incredibly dangerous but, when we take into account data that shows that 75 per cent of the traffic on Shieldhill Road ignores the 30mph speed limit, we see how

dangerous that daily walk is for the pupils of Braes high school.

In response to a letter to Falkirk Council to highlight speeding on Shieldhill Road, the council's network co-ordinator said:

"The Road Traffic Act 1988 requires local authorities to carry out studies into accidents that occur within their areas and, in light of those studies, take such measures as appear appropriate to prevent accidents."

The letter went on to say that there have been three personal injury accidents on the section of Shieldhill Road that is subject to a 30mph speed limit within the past 10 years, but that vehicle speed was recorded as a "possible" contributory factor in only one of those accidents. I am thankful that the recorded personal injury accidents on Shieldhill Road are relatively low, but local residents believe that the actual number of accidents is much higher.

Residents who use Shieldhill Road regularly are worried about safety on the road and are anxious that measures to enforce the speed limit will be taken only if a serious accident occurs. I share those concerns, so I ask the Minister for Transport whether the Road Traffic Act 1988 allows the police and councils to take preventative measures to enhance road safety, rather than relying simply on recorded accidents in the past 10 years.

Since I lodged the motion in Parliament, many constituents have got in touch to highlight the issue of speeding in areas across Falkirk. Talking about Kemper Avenue, one constituent said that "cars fly up there", and described it as a "nightmare" for elderly people who are trying to cross the road. There is retirement housing in nearby Glenbrae Court, so that nightmare is being lived on a daily basis.

Another constituent emailed me to say that the "speed of some cars going from Gartcows Road onto Windsor Road is frightening".

There are many family homes on Windsor Road, and such speeding is increasing the anxiety of parents when children go outside to play. Reflecting on why they believe speeding is prevalent, my constituent wrote:

"I believe the main contributor to speeding is a lack of enforcement of speed limits."

Commenting on Slamannan Road, which is another 30mph road, another constituent said:

"people seem to think it is a 40 to 50 area ... it is only a matter of time before an accident happens".

It is clear that road safety is a concern for people throughout Falkirk. Rather than wait for serious accidents to happen, police and councils across the country should be proactive in tapping into the knowledge and understanding that local

communities have about their roads. That way, we could prevent accidents rather than simply react to them.

I would like to ask the minister the following questions, which I hope he will be able to address at the end of the debate. First, what steps has the Government taken to support efforts to introduce 20mph limits in places where local residents support an introduction, such as in Airth? Secondly, what steps has the Government taken to enforce speed limits where residents have consistently voiced concerns about road safety, such as in Reddingmuirhead? Thirdly, what steps has the Government taken to ensure that the safety of pedestrians, such as schoolchildren, and cyclists is at the heart of developments to promote active travel in Falkirk? Fourthly, what steps has the Government taken to empower local residents in promoting road safety in their local communities?

People in Airth, Reddingmuirhead and throughout Falkirk are voicing their concerns loud and clear about road safety in Falkirk. It is our responsibility—as well as the job of Falkirk Council and the police—to listen to them and to act accordingly.

12:57

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I thank Stephen Kerr for securing this debate about roads in my constituency and other areas of Falkirk. I welcome his agreement with the ambition that is set out in the Scottish Government's programme for government to make a move towards national 20mph limits where appropriate.

First, I would like to put on the record my condolences to the friends and family of the, as yet, unnamed victim in a road traffic accident in Grandsable Road, which is also in my constituency.

We should bear in mind that the motion speaks to only two areas within a network of nearly 1,000km of carriageways and over 1,700km of footpaths, cycleways and other structures. All of those are the responsibility of Falkirk Council, while our national Parliament is responsible for national strategy. I am sure that we will hear more on that from the minister in due course. I also note that local councils already have powers to make decisions on speed limits, acknowledging local circumstances.

I will make a few remarks about the local issues contained in the motion. I am grateful to Councillor Laura Murtagh, a well-kent face in Airth and an extremely hardworking councillor, for all her efforts over a sustained period. Likewise, I am grateful to Councillor Gordon Hughes for his efforts in the Upper Braes over many years. They and other

Scottish National Party councillors have been at the forefront of activities to ensure that community needs are listened to and addressed.

In the case of Airth and the A905, it is a matter of public record that Falkirk Council has undertaken numerous investigations into issues that have been reported about speed and other road-related concerns raised by local residents. Those issues have been assessed in line with advice and guidance on road safety. The investigations are publicly available and I will happily share them with my constituents and with Stephen Kerr, to ensure that he, too, is up to speed.

Alas, the available evidence does not support the introduction of a 20mph zone along that stretch of road in Airth—it is recommended neither by Police Scotland policy nor by the national guidance. Although a 20mph zone might initially appear as a natural bonus to road safety, if it is unenforceable and in an inappropriate place without the corresponding road architecture to support it, drivers might be unlikely to observe it, which could ironically increase the danger to pedestrians.

The character of the road at Airth introduces an additional consideration, in that it runs adjacent to a stone wall and only one side of the road has a pavement. The passing of larger vehicles thus gives a feeling of being hemmed in. *[Interruption.]* The member should try to visit Airth sometime.

Local SNP councillors have led on exploring options for alternative pedestrian routes through the adjacent housing estate, and on securing agreement with some local heavy goods vehicles companies to limit their speed to 20mph when passing through the village. It was also local SNP councillors who helped to implement a spaces for people entirely closed road space in Airth.

Mr Kerr quoted a letter from the council that references Shieldhill Road. In summary, the letter notes that police records suggest that, of the three accidents that have occurred on Shieldhill Road in the past 10 years, confidence that vehicle speed was a contributory factor was noted as no more than possible in only one. That leads me to a key point. Although it is not my responsibility to act but that of Falkirk Council, it will act based on gathered evidence.

Everyone wants measures that will improve road safety. I understand that Falkirk Council roads officers are preparing a report under instruction from Councillor Paul Garner, Falkirk Council's spokesperson for the environment. The purpose of that report is to consider the approach towards implementing a 20mph speed limit in some towns and villages in the Falkirk Council area.

The recommendations will be evidence based and consider increasing road safety for pedestrians and drivers, through local knowledge, in order to improve the lives of people, promote active and sustainable travel, climate change mitigation and place making.

**Stephen Kerr:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Michelle Thomson:** I am already over my four minutes.

The report is expected to be presented to the executive committee in the next two months.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to wind up now, Ms Thomson.

**Michelle Thomson:** None of the above can be confused with the national strategy, which is the job of this Parliament to determine. I draw the attention of all to the programme for government, which notes that

“all appropriate roads in built-up areas”

should

“have a safer speed limit of 20 mph by 2025”.

13:02

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Down the years, Stephen Kerr and I have stood on opposite sides of the barricades. Ours is an unashamedly ideological clash and an honest and sincere political division, which stretches all the way back to the miners’ strike of 1984-85 and beyond. Given that history, there is a certain irony that it should be, of all places, the village of Airth and its community, with its strong associations with the Scottish coalfield, the mineworkers and the National Union of Mineworkers that brings us together on the same side of the argument. I thank Stephen Kerr for raising the issue.

I was in Airth on Monday with Joan Coombes, the local Labour councillor, to meet Robert Smith, the local community council’s secretary. Over the years, Robert Smith has petitioned Falkirk Council, petitioned Transport Scotland and petitioned the Scottish Government with a simple demand on behalf of the villagers of Airth: extend the 20mph zone by a distance of less than 1 mile, make it permanent and keep the community safe.

This week, as we walked alongside the A905 through the village, he said that

“People frequently get the impression that HGVs are exceeding the speed limit because of the close proximity of the vehicles to them, and the draft and slipstream caused. Many pedestrians particularly women with children, prams and pushchairs, have felt as if they were being blown off their feet.”

He is right—that is how it felt to me. I witnessed it this week, which is why the local community has my full support.

In the previous session of Parliament, Mark Ruskell proposed a member’s bill to introduce a statutory 20mph speed limit, which I was happy to sign and support. However, I recall that no Conservative MSP backed it at the time, and the bill fell before it could reach the statute book.

In this session of Parliament, we are told in the SNP-Green agreement that

“all appropriate roads in built up areas will have a safer speed limit of 20 mph by 2025”

and that

“A task group will be formed to plan the most effective route for implementation.”

As this is the first time that we have been able to debate the matter in Parliament, perhaps the minister can explain in his closing remarks what exactly that means. Is it that a default position of a 20mph limit, as was proposed in the bill in the previous session of Parliament, will be introduced, pure and simple. Is it the situation as it currently stands, or will it be somewhere in between?

For the avoidance of doubt, the position as it currently stands is set out clearly by Transport Scotland in a letter that was shown to me by Robert Smith on Monday. It says:

“The A905 is a local road and the responsibility of the local road authority, in this case Falkirk Council. Local authorities are responsible for deciding how best to meet their duties on local roads in their area”

That is why I have written to the chief executive of Falkirk Council again this week, expressing my support for an extended 20mph zone through the village of Airth. It is why I am delighted to report that it is my understanding that the proposal will now go before the council early next year.

It is also why, when I spoke to Welsh Senedd member Huw Irranca-Davies just this morning, we discussed the situation there. He confirmed that the Government in Wales is now introducing a 20mph speed limit. Local authorities have the right to reverse that if they have local support, but the burden of proof will be on them, and not the other way around. I think that that is the right position. That is where we need to be for the sake of the people of Airth, of Reddingmuirhead and of communities up and down Scotland. We are democratically elected representatives; we are sent to this Parliament to make people’s lives better, and I think that we are at our best when we show political conviction.

13:07

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to speak today; I pay tribute to my colleague Stephen Kerr for securing this debate on road safety in Falkirk.

Mr Kerr made a strong case for introducing a 20mph speed limit in Airth and Reddingmuirhead. Falkirk residents have been vocal in their support for the measure, with 87 per cent of respondents to a recent survey by Mr Kerr calling for a 20mph zone to be introduced on Main Street. In particular, the community complained about a lack of visible policing on Main Street and the risk to schoolchildren from speeding cars. Such concerns have been repeatedly shared with me in my region.

For local roads, I agree that councils are best placed to respond to the road safety requirements of the communities that they serve, so I caution against a top-down blanket approach being taken on 20mph zones. They can be effective at reducing casualties and accidents on the road, but they are not the only approach. Road humps, speed cushions, traffic islands, signs and markings provide alternative and sometimes more suitable traffic-calming measures. Such decisions are best taken at local authority level, based on local knowledge and community feedback.

**Stephen Kerr:** Does Tess White agree that Richard Leonard's speech was a splendid example of where we can set aside party badges and colours and do the right thing for the people who live in the communities that we are elected to serve? Does she share my disappointment about the tone of Michelle Thomson's speech, which was highly partisan and wholly inappropriate for the subject we are discussing?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms White, I can give you time back.

**Tess White:** I agree with Stephen Kerr. Please could the minister not laugh from a sedentary position? The safety of children around schools is very important and—[*Interruption.*] Shame on you. I would like just like to say—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Could you take your seat, Ms White?

**Tess White:** Safety is not a laughing matter. May I continue, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I discourage you from responding to interventions that are made from a sedentary position. I will deal with those.

**Tess White:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Decisions on such matters are best taken at local authority level, based on local knowledge and community feedback.

I note that last year there was a 35 per cent decline in the number of road casualties across Scotland because of restrictions on travel. That significant reduction is, of course, extremely welcome.

Michelle Thomson asked for evidence. I will give her evidence. There were still almost 5,000 casualties, including 490 children. That is not a laughing matter. Six children lost their lives—

**Michelle Thomson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Tess White:** No. I am talking about safety, so I would like to proceed.

Six children lost their lives—that is a higher figure than in the two years prior to the pandemic—and 176 children were seriously injured. There is the evidence. Those figures provide a sobering reminder of the critical importance of road safety for all users.

Now that restrictions on travel have been lifted, and as the winter approaches, with reduced visibility and adverse weather conditions, we cannot be complacent. Traffic calming measures have an important role to play, but their success depends on drivers respecting them, and on the measures being suitably enforced, where appropriate.

I understand that Aberdeenshire Council is investigating the correlation between certain age demographics, high collision rates on the roads, the work commute and the school run. I am particularly concerned about non-compliance with 20mph zones around schools in my region. For example, I have been contacted about concerns that have been shared by parents and teachers in relation to Marykirk primary school, where drivers regularly flout the 20mph speed limit on Kirktonhill Road. There are already too many near misses on our roads. Too often, we see action being taken when it is too late. I am committed to working with the school, local councillors and the police to ensure that children are safe on the school run. I appeal to residents and visitors to the area to reduce their speed around the school in order to ensure the safety of pupils, parents and teaching staff. It is simply not worth the risk.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I invite the minister to respond to the debate.

13:12

**The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey):** I congratulate Stephen Kerr on raising the issue of road safety, which is a very important issue not just in Falkirk but across the country, and I commend the efforts of the communities of Airth and Reddingmuirhead in promoting their concerns in that regard.

I agree that lowering speed limits in cities, towns and villages can help to make communities feel safer, not only in Falkirk but across Scotland. Tess White was right to say that the street furniture that accompanies such speed limits is equally important.

However, I must reiterate that the roads in and around the communities of Airth and Reddingmuirhead are local roads. Given the varied nature of Scotland's urban road network and the number of factors that need to be considered in setting appropriate limits, the Scottish Government's position remains that decisions on setting speed limits on local roads are best taken by individual local authorities, which can and do successfully implement 20mph limits where it is appropriate to do so. That is the case elsewhere in these islands, in England and Northern Ireland, although Richard Leonard was right to say that Wales has taken a different path.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 places a statutory duty on local authorities to promote road safety and to take steps to reduce and prevent accidents. Where data supports it, that can include the setting of appropriate speed limits. Therefore, local authorities do not require further powers to assist them with such things. It is not for the Scottish ministers to intervene in councils' day-to-day performance of those duties.

**Stephen Kerr:** Can the minister understand the frustration of the people of Airth about the fact that motorists who continue along the A905 towards Stirling will find that, once they have left the jurisdiction of Falkirk Council and entered that of Stirling Council, there are 20mph speed limits on the A905 there? They are deeply frustrated by the lack of action. I am afraid that Michelle Thomson's speech reflected the tone of the response that those people have been getting from her colleagues in Falkirk Council for some time.

**Graeme Dey:** As someone who represents a constituency, of course I understand local communities' concerns in such areas, but I will not get dragged into discussing the basis on which a 20mph zone has been set in one area but not in another. As Michelle Thomson rightly pointed out, the approach that is taken must be evidence based.

**Richard Leonard:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Graeme Dey:** No. I want to make some progress.

All that said, the Government encourages implementation of 20mph speed limits and zones in appropriate environments. In 2016, we published the "Good Practice Guide on 20 mph Speed Restrictions". The guidance offers flexibility to local authorities on the setting of local 20mph

speed limits when that is right for the individual road, with local needs being reflected and all local considerations being taken into account. The guidance aims to provide clarity to councils on all the options that are available when setting 20mph speed limits throughout Scotland. I assure members that the Scottish Government is committed to facilitating further the lowering of speed limits in cities, towns and villages.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** The minister rightly points out that the guidance gives councils flexibility. The problem is that many councils do not show that flexibility and instead hide behind the guidance. Having been a councillor, I have experience of that. Some councils just present the guidance, which is used as an excuse for not doing anything. That is done instead of showing common sense, which in this case would be to set a 20mph zone.

**Graeme Dey:** Let us move on to what is coming down the track in that regard. As Michelle Thomson rightly pointed out, there is a commitment in the programme for government that all appropriate roads in built-up areas will have a safer speed limit of 20mph by 2025. Reducing traffic speed to 20mph in the right environments can be a positive step in making our towns and cities friendlier and safer places, where people are confident to walk and cycle more often.

The importance of appropriate speeds is reflected in "Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030", which has a vision for Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world. The framework also supports active travel and sets out that Scotland's communities should be shaped around people, with walking and cycling being the most popular choice for short everyday journeys.

On the questions that Richard Leonard posed, we have committed in the framework's first delivery plan to developing a national strategy for the expansion of 20mph zones or limits in Scotland. The strategy will introduce a package of measures to support a range of policies. It will tackle the perception of road danger, encourage people to walk, wheel and cycle, and will create more pleasant streets and neighbourhoods.

In relation to a point that was made earlier, a multistakeholder task force has been set up, and its membership has been agreed. At its first meeting, which will be early in the new year, participation and input from local authorities will be key. The parameters of the group's work, as well as its membership, have been established. A series of options will be considered, ranging from the status quo to substantial change, so all the points that members have made, and their stances, will be covered.

I reiterate that, as I said at the outset, decisions on deployment of 20mph limits on local roads, when that is deemed appropriate, should and must be made at the local level.

13:18

*Meeting suspended.*

14:15

*On resuming—*

## **Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time**

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

The next item of business is Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time. I ask members who wish to request a supplementary question to press their request-to-speak button now or indicate in the chat function by entering the letter R during the relevant question. Succinct questions and answers would be much appreciated.

### **Local Offices and Surgeries (Security)**

1. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, in light of reported concerns, what consideration it is giving to additional funding for increased security personnel and security for MSPs' surgeries and local offices. (S6O-00413)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** At our meeting on 4 November, we considered options for further security support that could be made available to members following the death of Sir David Amess.

We recognise that any changes to security provision would be expected to have budget implications. However, the corporate body is clear that the safety of members and their staff should not be compromised on the ground of cost.

We have commissioned the following urgent work: a review of advice regarding lone working in local offices, including extending the provision of lone work devices; working with Police Scotland to introduce an annual security briefing targeted to issues in members' regions; and a project to establish how to effectively provide security support to MSPs at surgery meetings, including an assessment of the viability of providing security operatives, if appropriate.

As Jamie Greene will appreciate, these matters are too sensitive to discuss in a public forum, so the corporate body has agreed that a fuller security update will be shared with members soon.

**Jamie Greene:** I appreciate the sensitive nature of the discussions. Everyone in the chamber sends their thoughts and condolences to the friends and family of Sir David Amess.



No one in public office, public service or politics should go to work and not come home. We have a duty to protect our staff and members of the public who attend our surgeries and local offices, but we are keen to be as accessible as possible.

Has consideration been given to offering a centralised approach to the procurement of a third party security presence for those members who feel that they need it? Are members who want to contract services privately now free to do that? Will their current office provision allow them to do so?

**Claire Baker:** Jamie Greene raises important points, and I appreciate his comments about the security of members and their staff.

The Parliament currently offers a centrally managed security upgrade for local offices, although members can choose to go ahead and contract work themselves. I advise members to contact the Parliament's security office to discuss the matter further if they wish to proceed with security measures.

#### MSP Staff Allowances

2. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body when it will make a decision regarding the level of MSP allowances for staff for 2022-23. (S6O-00407)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** All my antennae have been trained to suppose that that is a trick question, because I think that Ms Baillie knows the answer to her question even better than I do.

The SPCB will submit its 2022-23 budget for consideration at the Finance and Public Administration Committee meeting on 21 December. It will include the proposed uprating of the staff cost provision for 2022-23.

**Jackie Baillie:** I would never ask a trick question—I assure you of that, Presiding Officer.

I am delighted to hear the timetable. When the Scottish Parliament last uprated the staff salary allowance, it did so on the basis of the annual survey of hours and earnings, and average weekly earnings. At that time, ASHE and AWE generated an increase of 2.96 per cent. This time, according to the Scottish Parliament information centre, the comparable figure from those sources would be 4.4 per cent. Is that the figure that will be applied effective from 1 April 2022?

**Jackson Carlaw:** It would probably be inappropriate of me to pre-empt the presentation of the budget to the Finance and Public Administration Committee. However, Ms Baillie is absolutely correct that we have been using the measures that she has suggested to uprate the office and staff cost provision.

#### Trade Unions (Meetings)

3. **Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body when it last met trade unions representing Scottish parliamentary service and MSP staff. (S6O-00406)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** The corporate body has a partnership arrangement with the Scottish parliamentary service's three recognised trade unions—the Public and Commercial Services Union, Prospect and the FDA. Parliament officials regularly meet those unions on a range of employment matters. The last formal partnership board meeting took place in October this year.

The SPCB has had no recent meetings with trade unions representing MSP staff.

**Paul Sweeney:** As a member of the GMB trade union, I welcome the strong relationship with trade unions representing parliamentary staff, but such a relationship is sorely lacking when it comes to the unions that represent the staff that members and party groups employ. If we truly value the principles of fair work and giving workers a stake in decisions affecting them in this place, surely the SPCB, as the ultimate financial controller of the allowances that we use to pay our staff, must properly engage regularly with trade unions such as the GMB.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I understand that various party groupings have arrangements with trade unions, but the SPCB has no locus to do so in relation to MSPs' staff. The SPCB is responsible for funding of the reimbursement of members' expenses scheme, including the staff cost provision, and for determining which indices are used to uprate the overall provisions of the scheme.

In 2020, the SPCB reviewed the indices used for the uprating of the scheme and, in so doing, was made aware of representations from trade unions representing MSPs' staff. The SPCB agreed to use a basket of indices for uprating the SCP on the basis that it would provide a more steady basis for future increases.

We do that on the basis that individual MSPs remain responsible, as employers of their staff, for setting and managing their staff's pay and cost of living increases, within the provisions of the expenses scheme. That is not within the locus of the SPCB, as we are not the employer of MSPs' staff; MSPs themselves are.

#### Armed Forces Reservists

4. **Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what support it provides to MSPs in connection with the employment of armed forces reservists,

and to armed forces reservists who work for the Scottish Parliament or MSPs. (S6O-00420)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** The corporate body is committed to supporting members of the reserve forces or those wishing to join the reserve forces. Staff who are armed forces reservists are entitled to take five days paid special leave each year to attend training. MSPs, as the employers of their staff, also have discretion to grant the same entitlement to their staff.

Reservists who are mobilised for acts of service are protected in law from detriment, such as the termination of their employment, because they have been called up to acts of service.

**Jackie Dunbar:** Mobilisation of reservists can sometimes happen at short notice, leaving employers with unplanned training and recruitment costs. The Ministry of Defence acknowledges that and reflects it in the form of compensation provided to non-public sector employers. Would the SPCB consider making additional budget available to MSPs who have staff mobilised, to cover expenses arising from mobilisation?

**Jackson Carlaw:** That is an interesting suggestion and it is one that I shall take back and discuss with my colleagues on the corporate body.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 5 is from James Dornan, who, hopefully, is joining us remotely.

If I cue him in again, that might work. I call James Dornan.

We will slightly change the order of questions, to see if we can sort out whatever technical difficulty has arisen.

## Heating and Ventilation

**6. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what review has been undertaken of heating the Parliament building, in light of the updated ventilation requirements. (S6O-00417)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** Ventilation of workplaces is an increasingly important mitigation in limiting the spread of Covid-19 and other viruses. A review of the ventilation system at Holyrood took place earlier this year, which confirmed that the mechanical ventilation systems at Holyrood are working well.

There is a building management system at Holyrood, which monitors temperatures across the campus. It controls the temperature during the preset hours of occupancy and automatically activates the heating system if temperatures fall below a certain point. However, there are parts of

the building that rely on natural ventilation, which means opening windows, vents and doors to provide sufficient fresh air.

**Emma Roddick:** Given the importance of staying safe and healthy this year more than ever, can the corporate body advise what the ambient temperature should be in the Parliament building, specifically in offices? Can it outline what support can be given to members' staff and SPCB staff to ensure that they have a comfortable and safe working environment?

**Claire Baker:** I appreciate that this can be a challenging building to heat, and that the temperature varies between different parts of the building. I would urge the member to contact facilities management and report any issues if there is a particular concern about her own circumstances or that of staff. Facilities management staff will work quickly to resolve any issues.

We are facing winter, and we are trying to find a balance between sufficient ventilation and making sure that members and the staff are comfortable in their workspaces.

## Collective Decision Making

**7. Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what its position is on collective decision making, following media reports of division, regarding the security of MSPs and the Scottish Parliament building. (S6O-00412)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** As the member will know, members of the corporate body are elected by the Parliament, and when they are acting as members of the corporate body, they do so in a non-party-political manner. All members of the SPCB are entitled to their views on the range of significant policy, operational and resourcing decisions that are considered by the corporate body. However, at the end of the day, any decision is taken in the name of the corporate body, and that is what is important.

**Stephen Kerr:** We all found out about the Parliament's designated status through Maggie Chapman's briefing of the press. I have been on a number of boards of directors through my years, and I cannot fathom a situation in which a board member would publicly criticise one of our decisions as a board and retain their place on that board. One simply cannot work in a situation where one person is intent on sabotaging the collective decisions of the board. Does the corporate body agree that any of its members who publicly undermine its decisions should resign from the board?

**Claire Baker:** The member raises the issue in his characteristic fashion, and his views are noted. I say to him that the minutes of each meeting are published, our work is transparent and open to scrutiny, and the corporate body operates on a collegiate basis. Of course, as the member would expect, there can be differing views, and that is to be encouraged as they are important in shaping our decisions. Our discussions often reflect the wide range of views that might be shared by members in the chamber as well as wider society. The important thing is that all decisions are fully discussed and determined in the name of the corporate body and are not party political. I am satisfied that members of the corporate body are working effectively in a co-operative way.

### Scottish Parliament Website

**8. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what action it has taken to assess the effectiveness and utility of the new Scottish Parliament website. (S6O-00414)

**Maggie Chapman (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** We use web analytics and user research and feedback to assess the effectiveness of the website on an on-going basis. We have a continuous improvement programme for taking forward work on the Parliament website, and we use the insights from that to inform how to prioritise various bits of work. We are proactive in seeking feedback. For example, we are about to launch an online user survey to gather further information.

**Clare Adamson:** I am not speaking for myself: I have had conversations with colleagues, students, stakeholders and constituents who are having trouble finding the information that they need on the new website. For example, the pages in the committee section are difficult to navigate and they list meetings without any context, unlike the previous website. It is frustrating to me, as a convener who inherited two different session 5 committees, that the dropdowns that were on the old website have now been changed, making it very difficult to search the *Official Report*.

I am concerned that this could cause reputational damage to the Parliament. I ask the corporate body to consider having an independent review that includes a comparison with the websites of other legislatures—[*Interruption.*] Apologies, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is okay. Had you finished?

**Clare Adamson:** Yes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Maggie Chapman.

**Maggie Chapman:** I think that some of the frustrations that the member has outlined are shared by members of the corporate body as well. In response, my answer is that no website is ever finished. We have an on-going programme of changes and enhancements to make to the website, and it is informed by feedback—the member's feedback and that of others.

The previous website was over 10 years old and built on outdated technology that was no longer supported, so we had to make substantial changes to the technical side of the website to make improvements.

We know that there are things that we need to adapt. For example, the search function is part of on-going work. We have already made changes to filtering options and that kind of thing in response to feedback, and other improvements will be made by the end of this financial year. Things such as committee reports and Scottish Parliament information centre briefings are currently on a different site, which makes things difficult. We are in the process of creating the uniform site, which should be done in the next few months.

### School Visits (Budget)

**9. Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what the Scottish Parliament's budget is for both inbound and outbound school visits. (S6O-00419)

**Maggie Chapman (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** Before Covid, our education services offered three different support packages to schools: a visit to the Scottish Parliament; a visit to the school; and resources for independent use by the teacher in the classroom. The average annual spend across 2018 to 2020 was £194,260. The cost of providing inward and outward visits was roughly equal, at £97,802 for inward visits and £96,458 for outward visits, including travel costs.

We are budgeting for a similar amount in 2022-23, as we anticipate a gradual return to pre-Covid demand and service levels towards the end of this academic year. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, we have not been travelling, and have ensured that the budget has been available to support other areas of the Parliament where required.

**Paul McLennan:** Which schools, if any, are regulars? How can schools that do not engage or that are in harder-to-reach areas be encouraged?

**Maggie Chapman:** There are a couple of things to consider. We want to ensure that the offer that we make to schools is available for all schools, regardless of their proximity to Parliament or regularity of engagement. The team has been doing work to reach out to schools over the past few months. We are reaching new schools and are trying to enhance that engagement to ensure that

we do not see some schools with repeated engagement while other areas are neglected or out of touch.

#### Local Offices (Ventilation)

10. **Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what assistance it will provide to MSPs to make improvements to the ventilation of their local offices, in order to support their reopening when that decision is taken. (S6O-00408)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** As recognised in a previous answer, ventilation of workplaces is an increasingly important mitigation in limiting the spread of Covid-19. The SPCB recognises the different types of premises that members have for their local offices, so a range of support will be put in place.

First, general advice is being prepared that will point members and their staff towards helpful information that is available from the Scottish Government and the Health and Safety Executive. As part of that guidance, tools will be available that can be used to identify where ventilation improvements may be needed. Secondly, a drop-in ventilation clinic will be run online later this month—officials will be in touch with details. Thirdly, specialist expertise will be made available over the telephone or in person for offices that have particularly complex or unclear requirements.

**Stuart McMillan:** At some point, we will be allowed to fully reopen our constituency offices. Will the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body prioritise those members whose offices are shop fronts or on high streets, where other challenges will also have an effect? I am sure that colleagues across the chamber want to ensure that their staff who work in those offices have a healthy and clean working environment.

**Claire Baker:** Stuart McMillan will appreciate that the priority so far has been ensuring that Holyrood can operate as safely as possible. That has, rightly, been the focus. However, local offices will need to be given support to carry out risk assessments around how to operate those premises safely. The focus will now shift towards local offices and addressing ventilation considerations there. I recognise the importance of meeting the needs of all offices. Members have various arrangements and challenges in relation to achieving a safe workplace for their staff and constituents. The corporate body will look at that closely as we develop plans for the reopening of offices.

#### MSP Annual Reports

11. **John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether members' annual reports can be delivered after 4 February 2022 and, if not, what the reasons are for its position on the matter. (S6O-00409)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** As per the allowances notice that was issued to all members on 10 November, members' annual reports cannot be issued in the period between 5 February 2022 and the local authority election on 5 May 2022 inclusive, in line with the SPCB's long-standing policy on members' publications.

The corporate body has taken that long-standing position to ensure the neutrality of any election without any undue or perceived influence—intentional or unintentional—coming through the issuing of members' parliamentary funded publications. Advance notice has been provided to enable members to plan the issuing of their publications over the next three months prior to the deadline. Annual reports and other parliamentary funded publications can be issued as normal following the election.

**John Mason:** If the main reason is that it is a long-standing decision, I do not accept that every long-standing decision is necessarily the correct one. It seems to me that three months is an excessively long period to stop members—especially, perhaps, new members—issuing important annual reports. Parliament stopped six weeks before the election last year, for example. Six weeks seems to me to be a more reasonable time than three months.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I thank Mr Mason for that observation.

The corporate body last considered the matter in 2019, in the previous session, in relation to the unexpected United Kingdom general election. At that point, it agreed that it remained vital to maintain the prohibited period and the neutrality that comes with not issuing such publications.

I have some sympathy with Mr Mason's argument, but I think that there is the potential, when the Scottish Parliament is sitting—I note that the UK Parliament does not fund such publications—for publications submitted by members of the Scottish Parliament to include people who might be standing in the local authority election, for example. There is that opportunity, however intentional or unintentional. That would be an unreasonable use of parliamentary resources and would potentially breach the intended political neutrality of the annual reports, which are for members to communicate with their constituents. We give as much notice as we do to

allow people to make proper provision so that they can fit within the schedule.

### Services Outwith Usual Hours

**12. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what consideration has been given to providing parliamentary services outwith usual hours. (S6O-00421)

**Maggie Chapman (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** The SPCB recognises the importance of providing flexible and responsive parliamentary services that support MSPs and their staff in fulfilling their roles. The pandemic has shown us new ways of working, and there are lessons, such as the value of extending information technology support until the end of members' business, that we can take forward in our response to the pandemic and more broadly in relation to the provision of services.

Providing comprehensive parliamentary services has to be balanced with staff rotas and shifts, a commitment to fair work employment practices, and the budgetary constraints that the Parliament works within. The SPCB is discussing how services may be able to adapt and improve post pandemic. We will seek to take members' views as part of that so that we can ensure that we are providing excellent parliamentary services to support members and the way in which they choose to work.

**Willie Coffey:** I thank my colleague for that answer. I am content with that response and am happy to allow us to move on to the next item of business.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Jamie Greene has a supplementary question.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** When is it likely that cross-party groups will be able to meet in person? Cross-party groups are a vital function of the Parliament and enable members of the public to engage with members and their Parliament. I am sure that all of us would like to see them running as soon as possible, given that other members of the public are already coming into the Parliament for other functions.

**Maggie Chapman:** Jamie Greene is right: CPGs and others are eager to get back to meeting in person. We review that on a regular, on-going basis, and we balance mitigations and the risk of virus transmission in the building. We hope that we will have an update prior to the Christmas recess, before we return in January.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It has not been possible to hook up with James Dornan, so that concludes Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time.

## Portfolio Question Time

### Rural Affairs and Islands

14:40

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is portfolio question time, on the rural affairs and islands portfolio. I remind members that questions 3 and 7 are grouped together, and I will therefore take supplementaries on those questions after they have both been answered. Otherwise, if a member wishes to request a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or indicate so in the chat function by entering R during the relevant question.

### Avian Influenza

**1. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is ensuring that keepers of birds and poultry, and the general public, are informed and able to respond to cases of the avian influenza virus. (S6O-00388)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** The Scottish Government, through its operational partners, has written to all known poultry keepers in the avian influenza protection and surveillance zone in Angus to inform them of the mandatory biosecurity controls that are in place and where to get help.

The Scottish Government meets key poultry industry stakeholders regularly to discuss the avian influenza situation. Keepers of poultry or other captive birds, as well as members of the public, are routinely informed of current risk levels, disease outbreak information, disease prevention guidance and the introduction of mandatory heightened biosecurity measures through social media, SMS messages, news releases and updates on the Government's website.

**Claire Baker:** As the cabinet secretary said, there have been cases in Angus, as well as in my Mid Scotland and Fife region. The United Kingdom is currently an avian influenza prevention zone, which means that strict biosecurity measures are in place. More than one million households across Britain now keep chickens, but registration is a legal requirement only for keepers of larger flocks. How confident is the cabinet secretary that those with smaller numbers of birds are keeping up to date with their responsibilities, including self-assessment in relation to the prevention zone status? What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that that is the case?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I completely accept the member's point and the concern that she raises regarding other keepers; our communications are

vital in that regard. The risk of incursion of avian influenza from migratory birds across the globe is continually assessed, and it was the recent reports that triggered the campaign messaging by the Scottish Government to encourage preparedness ahead of the anticipated outbreak season.

As I said in my initial response, the Government promotes preventative messaging using our social media channels, news releases and other media, and we use those methods to reach out specifically to our audiences in rural areas, where much of the livestock are kept. There are challenges in trying to reach smaller backyard keepers of fewer than 50 birds, but I assure Claire Baker, and other members in the chamber, that we are working hard to ensure that our communications reach them.

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Given that the outbreak of avian influenza is affecting other UK nations—cases have been recently confirmed in England and Wales—can the cabinet secretary outline what engagement the Scottish Government has had with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the matter?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I am happy to do so. The Scottish Government meets daily, in a range of meetings, with DEFRA, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, to take stock of current outbreaks and the on-going actions that are being taken to try to control the disease.

We also meet operational partners and key stakeholders daily, to keep apprised of the current situation, and to share information on actions that are being taken to control the disease at infected premises and the surrounding area and on the tracing and surveillance activity that is required to try to prevent the spread of disease.

The most recent assessment of the current risk for wild birds, poultry and other captive birds from highly pathogenic avian influenza in the UK and Europe was published on 10 November. Work is under way to update that with the most recent findings, and the chief veterinary officers of the UK will need to discuss the assessment's findings and whether further preventative actions need to be taken.

### **Rural Economy (North East Scotland)**

**2. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the rural economy in the north-east. (S6O-00389)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** The Scottish Government provides significant support to the

rural economy in the north-east through its £125 million contribution towards the Aberdeen city region deal, and through a further £254 million investment alongside that to support road, rail, housing and digital projects across the region.

Working with partners, communities and other stakeholders, our investment in innovation, digital connectivity and infrastructure will help to diversify the regional economy, create new jobs and aid in the transition to a net zero economy. That includes work, on which Scottish Enterprise leads, to deliver a number of transformational projects in the north-east. Within the Aberdeen City region deal, the £21 million seedpod project, which has been co-created with industry, will provide support to help the region become a leader in low-carbon food production and environmental sustainability.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Non-delivery of the reaching 100 per cent—R100—broadband programme in the north-east and rural Scotland is seriously hindering businesses, communities and the delivery of national health service care while increasing rural inequalities. It recently emerged in *The Press and Journal* that the roll-out has slipped again to the end of the 2026-27 financial year. How will the Scottish Government compensate our rural communities for the six-year broadband delay that it has caused?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I am sorry, but I simply refuse to accept the member's assertion, given that the programme is a reserved matter and that the Scottish Government has gone above and beyond to pay for the roll-out of the infrastructure. That job should have been done, and that investment should have been made, by the United Kingdom Government.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Seed potato merchants in my constituency have been in touch with me to ask for my support for their letter to the Prime Minister, as they face exclusion from exporting to European Union markets and Northern Ireland as a result of the Brexit deal. My constituents say that the UK Government has made no attempt to protect them, and has, instead, allowed EU imports of seed potatoes to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. What communication has the Scottish Government had with its UK Government counterparts on that matter, and how is it assisting the seed potato sector, which is vital to the north-east rural economy?

**Mairi Gougeon:** The member is right: it is a vital industry, particularly in the areas that we both represent and across the north-east. The Scottish Government absolutely shares the concerns that the seed potato industry has raised.

The Scottish seed and ware potato industry is a vital part of our successful rural economy,

particularly in the north-east as I said. Regrettably, the situation is another example of a Scottish industry being disproportionately impacted by EU exit. It is also an example of the UK Government's failure to secure through negotiations with the EU an outcome that could have protected that key Scottish industry as far as possible from the impacts of EU exit.

Finding a resolution to the situation is an absolute priority for the Scottish Government. We have raised concerns with the UK Government from the outset about the serious impact on the seed potato market of losing access to the EU and Northern Ireland market. That includes raising the matter in the regular meetings of the interministerial groups, as well as engaging regularly with our UK Government counterparts and seed potato industry representatives.

The Scottish Government has written to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request an urgent update on progress on the UK equivalence application with the EU for our seed potatoes, as well as to seek assurance that Scottish seed potato producers will not be placed at a commercial disadvantage against suppliers from the EU in supplying seed to ware potato growers in England while we do not have reciprocal trade with the EU.

### **Food and Drink Supply Chain (Staff Shortages)**

**3. Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, in relation to the impact on the food and drink supply chain, what its response is to a recent survey of 1,000 United Kingdom businesses by Gallagher, which reportedly found that many businesses have been affected by a shortage of staff because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of Brexit regulations. (S6O-00390)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** I am aware of the report that Gallagher has published. Although much of the detail covers the retail sector, its findings nonetheless provide further evidence, as Covid-19 continues to ravage our society and economy, of the extraordinary recklessness of a hard Brexit that took us out of the European Union, single market and customs union.

**Kaukab Stewart:** In the light of that research, does the cabinet secretary share my view that the pursuit of a hard Brexit, which has been forced on Scotland at the height of an unprecedented public health crisis, amounts to nothing less than an act of governmental vandalism that put ideology ahead of the needs of our economy?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I absolutely agree with that. More important, industry would agree with that,

too. James Withers, the chief executive of Scotland Food & Drink, said:

"Brexit has been an enormous shock to the labour market; a Brexit implemented in the middle of a pandemic, when supply chains were already straining."

There is no doubt that the harm that is being caused by Brexit to Scotland's economy, especially in the rural parts of it, for which I have responsibility, will be long lasting. The most recent research suggests that many exporters are thinking about relocating to mainland Europe. That is really depressing, if not entirely unexpected, given that our exporters have been facing barriers to trade for nearly a year now, which has created a completely unlevel playing field with importers.

We continue to do all that we can within the powers and resources that we have to support our businesses and exporters. I think that the solution is increasingly clear: for Scotland to vote for independence and rejoin the EU.

### **Food and Drink Industry and Supply Chain (Staff and Skills Shortages)**

**7. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent engagement it has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding reports of labour and skills shortages in the food and drink industry and supply chain. (S6O-00394)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** I have written to the United Kingdom Government a number of times, most recently on 2 November. In that letter, I again requested a meeting with the secretary of state and the Home Office. I await the UK Government's response to that, as well as to all other previous communication.

Despite agreeing to meaningful engagement on migration, the UK Government has dismissed our proposals for addressing the acute labour shortage crisis. The UK Government simply has to improve its engagement with not only the Scottish Government but all devolved Administrations, as well as with industry.

**Clare Adamson:** As was pointed out by my colleague Jim Fairlie on Channel 4's "The Political Slot", one of Scotland's great strengths is our natural larder. Food industry leaders have been clear, however: Brexit has led to a critical shortage of pickers and processors. The UK Government's ad hoc visa scheme is bureaucratic and is not fit to address the chaos caused by Brexit. Has the minister had any engagement with her UK Government counterparts regarding changes to the visa scheme that would allow us to welcome back valued food workers and to build resilience into our supply chains?

**Mairi Gougeon:** Yes, I have. We have sought to engage constructively with the UK Government on so many different occasions. The frustration is that that has been to little avail. On the back of raising this matter at the most recent interministerial group meeting in September, together with ministers from Wales and Northern Ireland, we had a follow-up meeting with the minister, Victoria Prentis, at which we were assured that our concerns would be looked into and that DEFRA would arrange a meeting between us and the Home Office. That was two months ago now, and we are still waiting on a response to that.

As I said, it is hugely frustrating that we continually pursue these matters, which are critical to our food and drink industry right across the supply chain, but we are repeatedly ignored. This is the single biggest issue that is raised with me by food and drink businesses right across the supply chain. We need the UK Government to listen and to act to address these serious matters.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** The cabinet secretary will recall that, earlier this year, a seafood trade group was established within Government to provide additional capacity to help seafood exporters to deal with the increased bureaucracy arising from the UK's exit from the European Union. Given that the issues facing seafood exporters, including the Orkney Fishermen's Society in my constituency, are likely to continue for some time, will the cabinet secretary commit to keeping in place that valuable additional resource?

**Mairi Gougeon:** The member is absolutely right. Establishing the group to deal with the issues that we are facing has been a critical piece of work. As I have just outlined, I do not think that the issues will go away any time soon; they will probably be with us for some time to come. I assure the member that our commitment to delivering a seafood trade strategy, together with all the work that is on-going and the work that recognises the importance of sustainable fisheries, will continue, irrespective of the internal structures that we have to deliver that work. I will, of course, consider the issue closely and carefully.

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** The minister is aware that for those in our most deprived areas, an equally important issue, which is relevant to supply chains and the food and drink industry, is that of affordable access to sufficient amounts of nutritious food. Can the minister explain why the Scottish National Party and Green MSPs failed to support the progress of a right to food bill at the committee stage last month? What action is the Scottish Government taking to address hunger and food insecurity, particularly in our rural communities?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I am happy to provide a response to that question, because we fundamentally believe in a right to food, but we have already said that the vehicle for that will be the human rights bill that will be introduced to the Parliament. The right to food is integral to other human rights, so it is only right and fair that it is considered as part of the bill.

However, that is only part of our work. At the start of October, we introduced the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill to the Parliament for consideration. We have also been consulting on a draft local food strategy, and that consultation is open until 2 December. Again, I encourage members to spread the word about that and fill in the consultation, because it is this Government's intention to make sure that everybody who lives in Scotland has a right to and is able to access good, healthy, local and nutritious food, and we are absolutely committed to delivering on that.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** The northern isles are at the end of the supply chain and rely heavily on lifeline ferry services for incoming freight. What assurances can the Scottish Government give that shortages in the national stock supply chain, which has been impacted by Brexit and the heavy goods vehicle driver issues, will not be the Grinch that steals islanders' Christmas?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I appreciate Beatrice Wishart's concern. We are in regular discussion and dialogue with our retailers and across the food and drink supply chain to ensure that that does not happen. I give a commitment that we will continue to monitor the situation to make sure that our islands do not suffer.

#### Climate Targets (Agriculture)

4. **Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what actions are being taken to ensure that the agriculture sector plays a leading role in delivering a net zero Scotland. (S6O-00391)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** Agriculture is absolutely taking a leading role, collectively, through the agriculture reform implementation oversight board. On 28 October, I announced a £51 million national test programme that will support our farmers and crofters to learn how their work impacts on climate and nature, and help us understand how sustainable farming can be supported and rewarded in future. That builds on a range of other support, including grants, advice and research, to deliver our vision for Scottish agriculture: to transform the sector to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture, delivering on our ambitious climate targets.



**Martin Whitfield:** I am grateful for that answer and I am sure that the minister will agree that a one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective. Our local farmers need flexibility, so what steps is the Scottish Government taking to deliver a flexible approach that will enable different farms with different circumstances to secure support to help tackle climate change?

**Mairi Gougeon:** That is an absolutely critical point and the work that we are undertaking through the implementation oversight board is pivotal to that. We wanted to make sure that we had representation across the board, so 21 members represent different geographies and sectors across Scotland, as well as environmental interests. That representation means that we can really help to shape and develop the policy together and make sure that we get it right for the different parts of Scotland and the different needs that exist.

**Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** Last week, leading agricultural figures, including Scotland's young farmers, penned a powerful open letter of concern to Mairi Gougeon. Despite their efforts, hard-working farmers have been demonised over emissions and their morale is low, because of a negative perception that they are to blame for climate change—and that is fuelled by some politicians. Furthermore, it did not help that, recently, when given the opportunity, the First Minister did not deny that one of the Scottish National Party policies to meet net zero is to cull 300,000 cattle.

Rural Scotland is waiting. Presiding Officer, I hope that you will support me when I ask that the cabinet secretary comes to the chamber with a ministerial statement to address the very serious issues that are raised in that letter.

**Mairi Gougeon:** I feel quite fed up of having to respond to that point. I have already responded to that question from Rachael Hamilton three times in this chamber and reaffirmed that it is not—and will not be—our policy to cull livestock. I also confirmed that very clearly in a statement at the NFU Scotland conference on 28 October, and I hope that this response will finally knock that claim on the head.

I completely understand the concerns that have been raised by the Scottish young farmers. I responded to them immediately I saw the letter that they had sent to me on Twitter. I have since followed that up with a letter inviting them to meet me to discuss their concerns.

I am with the industry in that regard. I am taking every opportunity to challenge that negative perception. People are already doing fantastic, pioneering work in agriculture. It is our job to

support, encourage and enable that through our transformation programme.

**Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** The Scottish Government's world-leading climate change legislation sets a target date for net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045. Could the cabinet secretary outline how the recently announced national test programme will lay the groundwork for Scotland's agriculture sector to be global leaders in sustainable agriculture?

**Mairi Gougeon:** Our positive vision seeks to transform Scottish agriculture to be low carbon and sustainable in the future. Through the national test programme, farmers and crofters will be able to better understand their current environmental performance and efficiency, for example, through undertaking carbon audits and nutrient management plans. That will enable them to mitigate their businesses' greenhouse gas emissions. The programme will also put in place livestock data and performance systems for businesses in the beef sector, with the aim of improving both business and emissions performance.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Those who farm in the Lomond hills regional park in Fife have a significant role to play in the climate change mitigation efforts, as well as in public access. They do not make a lot of money off the land. Can the cabinet secretary reassure me that the new farm support mechanism will reflect the contribution that they make to climate change and public access, so that they can continue their good work?

**Mairi Gougeon:** Where that good work is happening already, we want to ensure that it continues. As part of the vision for agriculture that I have set out, we want to support active farming and food production, as well as supporting our farmers and crofters to lower emissions to the lowest possible level and to enhance their biodiversity. We have already said that by 2025, we will be making half of all the direct payments conditional. As I say, we want to support active farming and food production and to keep people on our land.

### Rural Skills Development

5. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the rural affairs secretary has had with ministerial colleagues and rural businesses regarding action to improve and enhance rural skills development. (S6O-00392)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** I keep ministerial colleagues regularly informed and highlight the particular issues faced by rural businesses, many

of which are microbusinesses. That has allowed us to invest in rural schools projects and targeted support for employers.

On my visits to rural businesses across the country, skills are always one of the main topics of conversation. Those visits provide me with the opportunity to hear at first hand how employers benefit from investment in the skills of their workforce. Last month, I visited WeCook in Barry near Carnoustie—an award-winning business, which is doing fantastic work with apprentices—to launch a practical toolkit for rural employers to invest in apprenticeships, training and work placements.

**Emma Harper:** Skills planning that meets the current and future needs of Scotland's rural economy is a vital part of the suite of measures that is needed to develop a highly skilled workforce and deliver sustainable economic growth. Can the cabinet secretary outline how the "Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland: 2019-2021" is working to support rural skills across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders?

**Mairi Gougeon:** The skills action plan has driven forward a partnership approach to developing the skills and talent that is needed to ensure that Scotland's rural economy and communities continue to flourish and grow. People are the key to driving forward our rural communities, making them sustainable and inclusive places to live, work and thrive. Through the actions identified under the plan's five priority areas, we will ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills.

We are currently commissioning an evaluation to determine the success of the plan in achieving its objectives, while also reviewing what lessons might be learned from the first two years. That evaluation will help to inform the direction of any future support for skills development and the co-ordination of that in rural Scotland.

**Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** To support rural skills, in addition to the national plan that the cabinet secretary just mentioned, will the Scottish Government set up and invest in a land advisory service that would be tasked with supporting the whole sector to become a global leader in regenerative agriculture through training, advisory services, research, improvement of supply chains, support for co-operation, encouragement of farm diversification, knowledge transfer, innovation and marketing?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I hope that the member will understand that I am reluctant to commit absolutely to that project today, because we are considering all those issues and how best to tackle them in the work that we have undertaken with the agriculture reform implementation oversight board.

As well as developing the policies that will help with that transformation, we are working with our farmers and crofters to do that too. It is really important that we consider all those issues as part of the board's work, so that we can develop that project together.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 6 has been withdrawn.

### Farmers and Crofters (Support Payments)

**8. Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making on issuing payments to farmers and crofters through this year's national basic payment support scheme. (S6O-00395)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon):** Scottish farmers and crofters are an essential part of our rural economy. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting them and, once again, was the first United Kingdom paying agency to make available advance loan payments to maintain cash flows through the recovery from coronavirus and to overcome the challenges that Brexit presents.

We started making payments in September, injecting more than £330 million into the Scottish rural economy. Those advance payments are worth up to 95 per cent of final claim value. In contrast, farmers in England will need to wait until December, whereas farmers in Wales and Northern Ireland started to receive advance and full payments from 15 October.

The loan scheme closed on 12 November 2021, with full scheme payments for the basic payment scheme, greening and the young farmer payment on track to commence from early December.

**Evelyn Tweed:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that initiatives such as the national basic payment support scheme demonstrate the Scottish National Party Government's support for Scotland's agricultural sector, as opposed to the actions of the Tory Government in Westminster, which has chosen to endanger Scottish agriculture by agreeing trade deals that offer little to no benefit but threaten great harm?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I could not agree more. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting and protecting our farmers and crofters, who work extremely hard to produce quality products to world-leading standards. It is really disappointing—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me for a minute, cabinet secretary. Could we have less chuntering from a sedentary position? The cabinet secretary is trying to answer Evelyn Tweed's question. Please resume, cabinet secretary.

**Mairi Gougeon:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I was saying that I was disappointed that the UK Government disagreed to proposed amendments to both the Agriculture Bill and the Trade Bill, which would have enshrined in domestic law that agri-food had to be produced to equivalent standards to those of the UK, and would have therefore protected Scottish farmers and crofters.

The agreements were rushed through before the Trade and Agriculture Commission was fully established. No engagement took place with us or other devolved Administrations, or with industry, prior to reaching them, which is in stark contrast to the approach that I believe Australia and New Zealand took with their own industry. All of that was for the sake of an expected increase in gross domestic product of 0.02 per cent from the Australian deal and 0.0 per cent from the New Zealand deal, which simply beggars belief.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Edward Mountain, who is joining us remotely, has a supplementary question.

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Given that the most inept cabinet secretary for rural affairs that we have ever had in Scotland—who oversaw the failure of the common agricultural policy information technology system—managed to get out all basic single farm payments without any deductions or loans before the middle of November each year, why can the cabinet secretary not do so?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I am sorry—I might have missed elements of that question.

First, the member's comment about the previous cabinet secretary is an absolute disgrace, which does not befit him.

We have done everything that we can to ensure that our farmers and crofters have the cash flow that they need. We have made our payments at the earliest ever stage. To ensure that continuity and stability for our farmers and crofters, I announced at NFU Scotland's conference on 28 October that the rate for basic payments will not reduce in this session of the Parliament, and I committed that we will endeavour to get those payments out before December each year through our national loan schemes.

## Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Agenda

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the United Kingdom shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland.

As ever, I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak buttons or put an R in the chat function if they are joining us remotely.

15:11

**The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson):** This debate is an important opportunity for the Parliament to discuss the future replacement of European Union funding and to consider, with concern, the way in which the United Kingdom Government is using those funds to bypass devolution, disrespecting the Scottish Parliament and the people who elected it. There are principles of fairness and democracy at stake and we cannot lose sight of those.

Since the UK left the European Union, against Scotland's will, we have witnessed the UK Government actively infringing upon the sovereignty of Scotland's Parliament, and that of our sister devolved nations. The UK Government has granted itself powers via the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 and, as a result, it is a fact that devolved policy is being unfairly dictated by Westminster, bypassing the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government. Indeed, the use of the internal market act by the UK Government and the roll-out of its levelling up agenda confirms what we feared would happen with our share of vital funding as it dragged us out of Europe. Westminster is reducing the Parliament's autonomy and, by unashamedly politicising the replacement for EU funds, the UK Government is causing our places and people to lose access to the welcome benefits and fiscal stability that was previously afforded to them by our stewardship of EU funds. In turn, and overall, our Scottish communities will ultimately suffer as a result.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** The problem that the minister has is that if the UK Government's shared prosperity fund is so flawed, why are Scottish National Party council leaders across Scotland applauding it and welcoming this huge investment in our country?

**Ben Macpherson:** I go back to my point on principles, and I will say more on that in due

course. Although additional funding for Scotland will be embraced by regional partners, the announcements hide the problematic nature of the fund and how it is being developed and delivered by the UK Government.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Ben Macpherson:** I will give way to Mr Johnson, but then I will have to make some progress.

**Daniel Johnson:** The minister is right that this is about principles and fairness, but would he not be better arguing that £173 million is inconsequential in terms of tackling fairness rather than turning the debate into a constitutional grievance match?

**Ben Macpherson:** Mr Johnson makes that point in good faith but I want to see the Labour Party as the party that was, to its credit, behind the conception of the Scottish Parliament, standing a bit firmer and stronger in defence of its powers.

As a member of the European Union, Scotland was respected and trusted to make decisions about the priorities for our nation. Had we remained in the European Union, as was the clear preference of the Scottish people, we would have had full control over the funding that was allocated to us. Indeed, had the UK Government chosen to give the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations our rightful place at the table as the UK shared prosperity fund was being developed, we could have continued with the successful delivery of the replacement funding.

However, at numerous meetings with UK ministers, ministers from the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations repeatedly asked for more details on the shared prosperity fund and meaningful involvement in its development, but we were largely kept in the dark and kept out of the room. I experienced that on numerous occasions as Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, and I saw the same happen to colleagues.

Instead of choosing collaboration, the UK Government opted to work in isolation, risking the benefits that EU investment has brought to Scotland over many decades. The UK Government has taken it upon itself to make those decisions for us, not with us, sweeping aside devolved nations' legitimate concerns about its approach and voting in the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.

The financial assistance provisions in the internal market act confer new powers on UK ministers to spend directly on a wide range of devolved matters, thereby bypassing parliamentary scrutiny here at Holyrood. That is

not only devious and undemocratic; it risks duplication and waste in the delivery of policies and services, and it blurs accountability, with Whitehall-led programmes delivering in policy areas that are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. In short, the internal market act strips away the rightful power and authority of the Scottish Parliament. Everyone in this chamber, regardless of their political allegiance, should be very disturbed by that.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** Will the minister give way on that point?

**Ben Macpherson:** I will take one last intervention.

**Stephen Kerr:** It is clear that the minister's sentiment is not shared by Cecil Meiklejohn, who is the leader of Falkirk Council. She welcomed the funding from the UK Government's levelling up fund. She said that it

"is very welcome and will support our economic recovery", and that

"we are content to work with both tiers of government to ensure that we continue to benefit from such funds."

She also said:

"Individually and collectively, these successful projects will have a significant effect on Falkirk's communities as they rebuild".

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that you have made your point, Mr Kerr.

**Stephen Kerr:** The point is that the SNP councils on the ground that are involved with the UK Government are supportive of that additional money.

**Ben Macpherson:** I touched on that issue in response to Mr Briggs. It is clear that the Scottish Conservatives do not want to stand up for the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

A key example of our concerns is provided by the UK Government's recently announced multiply programme, which aims to improve adult numeracy across the UK. That programme will be top sliced from the UK prosperity fund and will focus on education and skills, which are policy areas that clearly fall within our devolved competency. The UK Government cannot tell us how that programme will work or how it will interact with the existing landscape in Scotland. Today, we are faced with the stark realisation that the internal market act has enabled the UK Government to undermine the delivery of policy in areas of devolved competency in the way that I have just illustrated.

What else do we know of the illusive UK shared prosperity fund? Not a lot, as it turns out. Back in 2018, Westminster claimed that the shared

prosperity fund would be a full replacement for EU structural funds. It also told us that it would be at least comparable in value to the funds that were being lost.

From the outset, the Scottish ministers set out a number of red lines on replacement funding, one of which was that Scotland should not lose out financially, compared with the level of funding that it received from the EU at that point. Another red line related to the expectation that we would be afforded the status of equal partner in the process, rather than that of consultee.

On the first of the red lines, we have been promised further detail for more than three years, yet all that we have learned since 2018 is that the shared prosperity fund will be worth a little over £2.5 billion. As COSLA noted in its paper "Replacing EU Structural Funds", the quantum that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has offered confirms that the UK shared prosperity fund

"will only meet the previous ministerial Commitment of £1.5bn per annum in 2024-25, only issuing £400m in 2022-23 and £700m in 2023-24."

COSLA also stated:

"It is worth noting that to meet the UK Ministerial commitment of £1.5bn per year from 2022, the Autumn budget proposal amounts to a net loss of £1.9bn for 2022-2024."

From COSLA's calculations, there is no way that we can agree that the shared prosperity fund is a replacement for EU funding, and we absolutely reject the UK Government's claim that it will keep its promise that Scotland will not lose out.

On the second of the red lines that I mentioned in relation to being an equal partner, several times, we have had to raise our deep disappointment at the lack of engagement. As the UK Government has slowly worked through the details of the funding in devolved areas, it has made no attempt to seek advice on how best to deliver the funding and on how it ought to be used and structured. Instead, officials have been told about decisions after the fact, as a statement of intent. This is not a partnership of equals.

While we were still under the impression that Scotland would decide for itself how to use the funds, we set out our plan for the shared prosperity fund in November 2020. That plan was developed in consultation with 171 organisations and in partnership with Professor David Bell of the University of Stirling and with Professor John Bachtler of the University of Strathclyde.

The plan envisaged approximately £180 million per annum being devolved to the Scottish Government to provide comparable funding to replace that from the European regional development fund, the European social fund, the LEADER programme and the European territorial

co-operation programme. Under European structural funds, and under that plan, Scotland had long-term certitude on our future funding. However, under the UK Government's approach, we still have not even been told whether the allocation to Scotland will be an appropriate sum or whether it will match our expectations. That means that we cannot plan the best use of the funding.

I am here, of course, to advocate for the Scottish Government and for the recipients of the funding. We need details in order to make the strategic decisions and plans that are necessary to deliver benefits. With only months left, the chances of that being realised are being reduced daily by the UK Government. Indeed, the Royal Society of Edinburgh shares our position. It highlights that the

"continued uncertainty means it is not possible for national and local governments along with other potential delivery partners to make firm plans on how the funding will be used."

Today, I have demonstrated that the UK Government's unilateral and paternalistic approach to levelling up through the SPF has reduced the potential benefit of such investment. The Scottish Government wants our communities and businesses to thrive, so we will take the opportunity to stress to the UK Government that we expect to be treated as a full and equal partner in the development of the UK shared prosperity fund. We have said that, and we will reiterate it. We retain the belief that Scotland's share of the funding ought to be fully devolved so that we can target it in a manner that best suits the needs of Scotland's people, communities and businesses.

The Parliament must ensure that the devolution settlement is not encroached upon further. The UK's levelling up agenda has only complicated policy development in Scotland. Ultimately, it has infringed on the sovereignty of this Parliament, to the detriment of the Scottish people. It is vital that Scotland retains control over any new arrangements that are put in place. Otherwise, the UK Government's approach threatens to represent a significant power grab over Scotland's autonomy. If we are to be able to target investment and make decisions based on transparent evidence that shows what will bring greatest benefits to the people, businesses and communities involved, the UK Government must have a change of heart.

I move the motion in Richard Lochhead's name,

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Government's Spending Review plans for Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund not only fall well short of Scottish expectations and needs, but also infringe the sovereignty of the Scottish Parliament by circumventing the devolution settlement to deliver policy in areas that are clearly and firmly within the ambit of the Scottish Government, and

calls on the UK Government to keep the promises made to Scotland, and to work in full partnership with the Scottish Government and local communities on the development of these programmes going forward to ensure they support job creation and a just transition, and meet the needs of Scotland's citizens.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I advise members that time is very tight. I have to ask that interventions be accommodated in the time for members' speeches.

15:23

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** I start by sending my best wishes to Richard Lochhead for a speedy recovery.

I am sorry that the minister has had to come to the chamber with this week's latest grievance from the Government. In the five years in which I have been an MSP, I do not think that I have ever seen such a confused Government motion as the one that has been lodged for today's debate. The motion manages not only to contradict itself spectacularly but to talk down Scotland. The SNP-Green Government motion for debate, on the one hand, complains that the UK Government has the audacity to spend hundreds of millions of pounds in Scotland and, on the other hand, states that those very same millions of pounds are simply not enough.

What is really behind today's latest manufactured constitutional grievance?

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** I hope that the member will acknowledge at some point that these moneys are not acts of charity but are actually Scottish taxpayers' moneys.

**Miles Briggs:** Yes, and this is a huge investment in our whole United Kingdom. It is something that we should all welcome. I am glad that the member welcomes it as well.

What is really behind this grievance today is perhaps the fact that, for 14 years in office, the SNP has not acted to level up Scotland and has not invested in our communities. I pay tribute to the many local organisations and groups and the local authorities across Scotland that have worked so hard on the local bids that have been put forward—for many positive projects—to the community renewal fund and the shared prosperity fund. We may have a motion today that is like something from Victor Meldrew in "One Foot in the Grave", but their hard work and dedication to their communities should not be undermined by what ministers have put forward.

The truth is that the UK Government is working to level up funding across Scotland. That should be welcomed. It should be something that we all support.

**Daniel Johnson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Miles Briggs:** I will not have time, unless the Presiding Officer has any time in hand.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I do not.

**Miles Briggs:** It is therefore welcome that SNP council leaders across the country have warmly welcomed the funding. In that spirit, I congratulate them on the positive work that they have done to successfully help to take forward local bids for innovative projects that will help to breathe new life into towns, villages and rural and coastal communities across Scotland.

The UK Government is committed to levelling up in every corner of our United Kingdom, backing local projects that will make a real difference to all our communities. Together, the three funds that have been announced will help to unleash the potential of people and places right across our country. The £200 million of funding through the UK Government's renewal fund will help local areas to prepare for the launch of the UK shared prosperity fund in 2022. That scheme will see UK-wide funding to match all former EU national and regional development funds, reaching £1.5 billion a year.

There is incredible talent right across our great country, and this national investment will help to unlock that potential with projects such as the £218,000 fund for employment and wellbeing programmes across housing associations in the Scottish Borders. That programme will help to deliver digital skills and financial literacy, as well as promoting positive mental health. Another example is the £400,000 to create a seaweed academy in Argyll and Bute. I am not sure what that will look like, but I am sure that my colleague Donald Cameron will talk about it later.

Here, in my Lothian region—and, in fact, in Ben Macpherson's constituency—we have £16 million to help to restore the historic B-listed Granton gas holder. That project will help to kick-start the regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront. As Edinburgh MSPs, we should be right behind that, driving that investment for our area. It is an ambitious urban development project that will deliver sustainable economic growth and real jobs for Edinburgh.

There are so many great projects across Scotland that I cannot touch on them all in the time that I have in the debate. They will work to improve and invest in our communities and will drive success for their future prosperity and wellbeing. That is why we, on the Conservative benches, and the UK Government want to see this investment in our communities. For too long, communities across Scotland have felt left behind and forgotten about.

Today's debate is very much a tale of two Governments. What has the SNP-Green Government ever done to level up communities across Scotland?

**Ben Macpherson:** Will Mr Briggs take an intervention on that point?

**Miles Briggs:** I do not have time. Sorry.

From what we see in the motion today, the answer is simply nothing. For 14 years, the SNP Government has taken powers off local authorities. The UK Government is working with local government to empower our communities. I say to SNP and Green MSPs that they should stop talking Scotland down. It is time that both of Scotland's Governments worked together in the national interest to benefit every community in every part of our country. These investments in all our communities show that people and the UK Government can level up our country and drive economic growth here, in Edinburgh, and right across Scotland.

**Ben Macpherson:** Will Mr Briggs acknowledge the unfortunate irony of the Conservatives talking about levelling up when they have presided over a decade of austerity policy, massive cuts to the welfare state and really challenging cuts to the devolved Governments across the UK over that period?

**Miles Briggs:** The only thing that the minister failed to say was that we have also presided over the highest budget that this Parliament and the Scottish Government have ever received. He forgot to mention that point for some reason. I wonder why.

As I have said, these are investments in our communities and our people. They show the UK Government's commitment to levelling up, which we should all welcome. As we emerge from the pandemic and face the huge challenges ahead, let us work together to realise the potential of every community in Scotland.

I move amendment S6M-02158.2, to leave out from "agrees" to end and insert:

"welcomes the UK Government's plans to level up every part of the UK; further welcomes the recent announcement of the funding for dozens of projects in every part of Scotland through the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund; agrees with local authorities across Scotland that have applauded the UK Government for directly funding projects in their areas; calls on the Scottish Government to stop talking down Scotland's place in the UK and the value of such to the people of Scotland; agrees that the UK Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund should at least match the level of EU funding it is replacing; calls on the UK Government to meet that target in line with commitments made in its recent budget, and further calls on the Scottish and UK governments, as well as local authorities, to work together to ensure the efficient delivery of projects to every community across Scotland."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Time is tight. I can give a little bit of time back for interventions, so I do not encourage members to think that they cannot take an intervention. However, that is not an invitation for members to shout their interventions from a sedentary position. That applies to members of all parties.

15:30

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I move the amendment in my name.

There is a danger that the debate is set to focus on constitutional wrangling rather than the needs of our constituents. I appeal to SNP and Conservative members not to do that.

Of course, the funds should have been devolved, but the SNP cannot sit on the side of the angels on this matter. When it came into power, the first thing that it did was centralise EU funds that had previously been devolved to local government.

That said, we in the Scottish Labour Party want both of our Governments to work together with councils and communities to tackle the wealth divide. Poverty is increasing—that fact has hardly merited a mention so far in the debate. We want to create a country in which everyone can live life to their full potential, free from the blight of poverty. Therefore, the debate must be about levelling up the regions and tackling age-old wealth divides.

It is fitting that the debate is taking place on international equal pay day, which marks the day in the year when women, on average, effectively stop earning relative to men because of the gender pay gap. It is not just about equal pay for the same job; it is about the fact that jobs that are done predominantly by women are lower paid than those that are done predominantly by men.

The situation is made even worse because women bear the brunt of caring costs. Only last week, in a members' business debate, we heard how women have been disproportionately affected by long Covid. The week before, we heard about delays in the rolling out of funding for childcare, which is affecting women up and down the country and their ability to work. Women carry out the bulk of caring responsibilities, leading them to be more likely to leave work during the pandemic. They are also more likely to be in part-time work, which is lower paid. The recent cut in universal credit has disproportionately impacted on women because they are more likely to depend on it.

In the Scottish Government's gender pay gap action plan annual report for 2021, its analysis suggests that the pandemic

"could exacerbate existing labour market inequalities for protected groups including women".

The report goes on to say:

“As we recover from the pandemic we must ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into policy design and services so that we protect and advance women’s equality, particularly in relation to tackling poverty, promoting access to and progression within good jobs, and supporting business growth.”

We must tackle regional disparities. The cost of living is significantly higher in rural areas than it is in urban areas. Additional minimum living costs for households in remote rural Scotland can add 15 to 30 per cent to a household budget. Poverty is rife but hidden. Childcare is limited and often difficult to access due to a lack of public transport and a lack of provision. Children get free bus travel to school, to access education, but not for nursery education.

The Scottish Government has recommendations, research, advice and reports on how to improve equality. It must act.

In an attempt to narrow regional inequalities, inclusive growth has been a feature of Scottish Government economic strategies since 2007, yet, as we approach 2022, the SNP Government is no closer to achieving it. Regional inequality in Scotland is not currently being sufficiently addressed by investment from the UK Government’s levelling up fund or by the Scottish Government. That is why Scottish Labour is calling on the Scottish Government to implement new regional equality targets in the national performance framework, in order to tackle employment and skills gaps across regions. Maybe—just maybe—if the SNP had worked with local government on a strategy for levelling up bids, we could have made some progress.

Another drawback is the fact that both of our Governments depend on flawed indicators to identify poverty. Those work well in urban areas but are, frankly, useless in rural areas, where poverty is largely hidden because the very poor live in the same postcode areas as the very rich and are therefore cancelled out.

The levelling up funds are set to replace EU funding, but what they miss—which the EU understood—is the issue of peripherality. We are now in a situation whereby Highland Council and Western Isles Council, with huge pockets of hidden rural poverty, have been downgraded and will not receive funding comparable to what they received in the past from Europe. There must be a better way to ensure that levelling up happens everywhere. In order to have levelling up, there must also be levelling down.

What is not clear is how we must redistribute wealth to ensure that our society receives the levelling that it needs. It is heartbreaking to see people struggle in the grip of poverty while others

accrue obscene wealth. The recent debate about second jobs for members of Parliament and members of the Scottish Parliament has brought that into sharp relief. Our society has become more polarised between extreme wealth and extreme poverty, and our public services are no longer coping. Now is the time for action.

We, in the Scottish Labour Party, are asking both of our Governments to set aside their constitutional wrangling, put the best interests of our constituents to the fore and work together to ensure that levelling up becomes a reality for all.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Grant. I do not think that you moved the amendment.

**Rhoda Grant:** I did so at the start of my speech, but I am happy to move it again.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Better twice than not at all.

**Rhoda Grant:** I move amendment S6M-02158.3, to leave out from “infringe” to end and insert:

“circumvents the devolved settlement; recognises that gender inequality remains stubbornly high; notes that there are increasing regional inequalities across Scotland, including in health, child poverty, income and economic opportunities, which neither the UK Government nor the Scottish Government is adequately tackling, and calls on the Scottish Government to reinstate the previously scrapped regional equality targets to direct government action and funding of local authorities to urgently address this injustice across the country.”

15:36

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The two groups of nationalists in this Parliament do love a good stramash over power and control. They hunt for evidence and fabricate the circumstances to perpetuate division, bitterness and distrust. We have seen that today in spades. Neither the Conservatives nor the SNP are fond of partnership—of building bridges and working together. They want the power all for themselves.

The Scottish Government never had direct control over the EU funds of various shades.

**Dr Allan:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Willie Rennie:** Not just now.

Those decisions were made in Brussels, but is it sensible for the UK to make all the decisions about the allocation of the successor funds, now that we have left the EU? Of course it is not. No matter how much I loathe the current Scottish Government, there is little doubt that the institutions of Government and Parliament have built up an expertise and an understanding of the needs of local communities that would be of value to anyone seeking to allocate funds here.



Duplicating the administrative processes and institutions for the new funds would be a waste of time and money. The Conservative Government and those on the Conservative benches here would do well to recognise that.

Equally, is the Scottish Government best placed to have a strategic overview of the relative needs of different parts of the United Kingdom? Of course it is not, and the Scottish Government should be mature enough to recognise that, too.

I like to be helpful, and it is obvious that we need a partnership approach. Some may call it federalism. My amendment calls on the UK Government to establish—[*Interruption.*] See—SNP members do not like partnership. They do not like federalism, because it is a sustainable option for the whole of the UK and they want to break up the UK. They should recognise that we need a mature approach.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Is Willie Rennie aware that the UK Government engaged all the devolved Administrations, including the Scottish Government, in developing the funds, and that it sought advice on projects at the shortlisting stage, including on deliverability but also on alignment with existing provision?

**Willie Rennie:** There is a significant difference between consultation and partnership. Partnership means actively being involved in the decision-making process from the beginning. It is important that we understand that. No one should have a veto in this process. Equally, though, everyone should work together to try to get a consensus across the piece. Further, Westminster should not always have the final say when there is a disagreement. It needs to be proper partnership. I recognise what Donald Cameron says, but it does not reflect the kind of United Kingdom that I want to see, which is a genuine partnership of its nations and regions. That is the best way to sustain the United Kingdom, as opposed to the cavalier approach that the Conservatives are adopting.

My proposal is to have a joint council for levelling up that would agree and oversee spending in relation to the levelling up agenda and the UK shared prosperity fund. That council would include representatives of the constituent authorities of the United Kingdom, so that it is a proper partnership. There would be no veto—UK ministers would not have the final say on areas of dispute. Each member of the council would have to work incredibly hard to build a fair majority in favour of their proposals. However—and this point is important—no one in communities across Scotland or the United Kingdom would forgive any partner in that partnership of federalism if they engaged in a nationalist-inspired power struggle

that would deny them the funds that their communities desperately needed.

I am afraid that the debate today is inspired just by grievance on both sides—I repeat, on both sides. We need to move up and to be mature in order to recognise what we need for the future.

What we propose is a model of partnership that we could, perhaps, roll out to other areas of common interest across the United Kingdom. It would ingrain partnership. It would ingrain a way of working together. We could call it a form of qualified majority voting. It would mean that no one would have a veto. It would mean that there would be proper partnership.

That is what we need for the whole of the United Kingdom, but I am afraid that the Conservatives just do not get it. They are part of the problem of constitutional grievance, and they add to the problem with acts such as this. Just consulting—just asking—is not enough. It needs to be a proper partnership.

**Miles Briggs:** As much as I enjoy a lecture from Willie Rennie, does he not realise that this whole programme has been put together while working with local authorities across Scotland? He used to believe in local democracy. What has gone wrong?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Rennie, you need to wind up.

**Willie Rennie:** When lecturers give a lecture, they expect the students to listen. I am afraid that Miles Briggs does not listen too often to what I am trying to say.

Of course consulting is fine, but we need partnership to make sure that we can sustain this United Kingdom. I am afraid that the Conservatives have a lot to learn, but the nationalists should just give up on their grievance.

I move amendment S6M-02158.1, to leave out from “not only fall” to end and insert:

“fall well short of what is needed, and calls on the UK Government to establish a joint council for levelling up that will agree and oversee spending in relation to the levelling up agenda and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for this council to include representatives of the constituent authorities of the UK, and for this council to work in partnership with local communities on the development of these programmes going forward to ensure they support job creation and a just transition, and meet the needs of citizens.”

15:42

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** It is difficult to imagine that any rational person with a commitment to Scotland could possibly object to the Government motion. Predictably, we can therefore rely on the opposition of the Tories.

If the introduction by the UK Government of a shared prosperity fund and a so-called levelling up agenda signals anything, it is a recognition of the historic and systemic failure of successive UK Governments' economic decision making. The funds are to be placed not under the control of the nations of the UK that are directly responsible to the people who elect them but under the control of the very institutions of the UK state that have created the failures in the first place. You could not make it up.

Bringing in funding to deliberately bypass this establishment reveals a political motive. Make no mistake: the aim is to undermine the role of the democratically elected Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, and thereby the rights of the Scottish people. The motive is clear: to undermine Scotland's democracy.

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I wonder whether the member was critical of the EU when it gave funds directly to local authorities. Was that an attack on this establishment?

**Michelle Thomson:** I think that the member missed the point about the say that our democratically elected Scottish Government had in that.

The levelling up fund will ostensibly be allocated on the basis of need. However, the definition of need that it uses was developed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for England without any consultation with the Scottish Government.

The first stage of prioritisation is based on an index that is made up of three components: productivity, unemployment and skills. However, those weightings take no account of national variations. It is incredible that the same weightings apply to the City of London, my constituency of Falkirk East and even our unique Scottish islands.

The second stage of needs assessment focuses on transport connectivity. One might imagine that transport connectivity would be particularly helpful for Scotland's island and rural communities, but the assessment uses data only for England. As the Fraser of Allander Institute points out,

"Failure to integrate connectivity data from Scotland has contributed to Orkney, Shetland and the Highlands being placed in the category least likely to benefit from the fund alongside areas such as the City of London."

How on earth can a so-called levelling up fund that ignores data from Scotland, is based on criteria determined by England's housing ministry and ignores the economic and other policies enacted by the Scottish Parliament be seen as anything other than a direct attack on the democratic institutions and rights of the Scottish people.

I turn to the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020. Not only did Brexit mark a turning point by taking Scotland out of Europe against our wishes, it also enables direct UK Government action in economic development, infrastructure, cultural activities and sport. Do not just take my word for it, though. The Fraser of Allander Institute notes:

"This approach has been made possible by the Internal Market Act which provides a new means for the UK government to allocate spending in the devolved territories to areas which had previously been thought to be the purview of the devolved governments."

Without agreement or permission, the UK Government's power grab enables explicit powers to bypass the Barnett formula and directly spend in areas in which previously EU funding was allocated to projects by our Scottish Government. That is more than a failure of democracy and more than a demonstrable failure that there is no partnership of equals—it is a clear demonstration that power devolved is power retained and that power can and has been removed.

**Stephen Kerr:** I hate to interrupt the member's whinge—that is what it is—but the fact is that Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn welcomed those investment decisions for Falkirk, which is the constituency that Michelle Thomson represents, including those for the Westfield roundabout and community funding. Cecil Meiklejohn says:

"we are content to work with both tiers of government to ensure that we continue to benefit from such funds."

That is the pragmatism of local democracy as opposed to the ideological blindness that we hear from the Government front bench.

**Michelle Thomson:** I put on record that of course I welcome a few roundabouts, but I regret the fact that the payment for a few roundabouts is more of our Scottish money coming from Westminster. If the summit of the Conservatives' ambition is for more of our money to come from Westminster, a couple of roundabouts and, let us not forget, a Scottish family on "Gogglebox", that is not good enough. I am considerably more ambitious for Scotland. Let us start with the £728 million EU of funding being replicated.

Those actions will not be changed by the Scottish Parliament, because they cannot be. We do not have that power. I issue a call here, because we have a voice; Scotland has a voice. I call on civic Scotland, all those who fought for the Scottish Parliament and all those who, like me, believe that the power to spend the money that is raised in Scotland for the benefit of our Scottish people according to our democratically expressed wishes can be achieved only if we become a normal country like any other—independent.

15:49

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I start by talking about a project in my Central Scotland region that has already been mentioned. The Westfield roundabout in Falkirk will receive £20 million from the UK Government levelling up fund. It is a futuristic-looking scheme that will create four loops that appear to hang in the air. The new roundabout and pedestrian and cycle bridge will ensure that people are safe when crossing at that key junction and enable better connection for active travel. The roundabout is a key link between Falkirk and Grangemouth and is close to the new Forth Valley College, Helix park and the planned gateway project, and it is expected to bring more shops and housing.

When Rishi Sunak announced the funding, Falkirk Council's SNP leader, Cecil Meiklejohn, who has already been mentioned by her number 1 fan, Stephen Kerr, called it "welcome news". If an SNP council leader can see the benefits of that funding for her own area, why can an SNP minister such as Ben Macpherson not do the same?

**Daniel Johnson:** Does Graham Simpson recognise that there is a bit of a gap between the rhetoric and the reality? A few spruced-up roundabouts and shopping centres are all well and good, but that is hardly the strategic levelling up that the rhetoric from his party seems to suggest, is it?

**Graham Simpson:** I am going to give a long list of projects later on in my speech. There are not just a few projects.

Cecil Meiklejohn went on to say:

"It builds up the programme of works we are preparing in our Investment Zone and will complement a series of measures which will help drive forward our area's economy following the pandemic.

The new roundabout and ... bridge will ensure people are safe when crossing ... while enabling better connection for active travel"—

that is a great thing—

"between key sites such as the Helix Park, Falkirk Community Stadium and Forth Valley College's new campus."

I am still quoting the SNP council leader. She said:

"The roads will be widened to accommodate increasing traffic and each of the four 'rings' of the iconic bridge"—

it is iconic—

"will provide an elevated platform to view the local area and a safe way of getting around without disrupting traffic."

It sounds great, and it is a great project.

**The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur):** I ask this question in all sincerity, because I want to have a

deeper understanding of the Scottish Conservatives' position. Is there any area of devolved competency in which the Conservatives think that the UK Government should not engage in direct spending?

**Graham Simpson:** My view is that the levelling up fund and another fund that I will come on to are great things and are examples of one of our Governments working with local councils to improve their areas. Frankly, the minister should be applauding that.

The Westfield roundabout project is just one of eight initiatives in Scotland to receive levelling up fund cash. The other projects are the development of Inverness castle; a new marketplace in Aberdeen city centre; a direct route between Glasgow and three towns in North Ayrshire; transforming Pollok stables and sawmill in Glasgow to become a net zero heritage centre; redeveloping Granton waterfront, which Ben Macpherson should be applauding; remodelling the Artizan shopping centre in Dumbarton; and connecting the advanced manufacturing innovation district to Paisley, which Mr Arthur should be happy about. Other SNP council leaders have welcomed the extra funding. What a shame that their parliamentary counterparts revert to type.

Lanarkshire is getting more than £3 million from the community renewal fund for a range of employment and enterprise projects. That funding will be used to engage local people and businesses and increase skills and employability at the community level. There were six successful bids, which have been awarded just over £3 million.

There is huge investment from Rishi Sunak and the UK Government in our local communities in Lanarkshire. The funding will help to improve skills and employability in our local communities and will make a real difference to the lives of local people. It is a welcome boost from the chancellor that demonstrates the benefits and support that North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire gain from being part of a strong United Kingdom.

Both funds show that the UK Government is working hand-in-hand with local communities in Scotland. It is little wonder, then, that councils are so grateful, given the way that they have been treated by the SNP over the years.

Ben Macpherson should be ashamed of the motion that he has brought to the chamber today. It is petty—it is not like him. It is grievance ridden and unbecoming of him. Parliament should reject it and vote for the amendment in Miles Briggs's name.

15:55

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** My constituency of Na h-Eileanan an Iar received significant investment from EU funding sources over the years, much of it—to respond to a point that a member made earlier—while this place was in what we might call its long adjournment. That support helped to facilitate major infrastructure projects, transport links and new community facilities on the islands, as well as contributing to the establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands and delivering wider community benefits through numerous training and social inclusion programmes.

Life for islanders would have been far more challenging without that support. Without the causeways linking Berneray and North Uist, Eriskay and South Uist and Vatersay and Barra, for example, I imagine that I would now be dedicating even more of my time than I currently do to the issue of ferries. In Harris, the significance of funding from the EU for invaluable infrastructure such as the Scalpay bridge and the road to Rèinigeadal cannot be overstated.

The loss of financial support from the EU will be sorely felt throughout my constituency unless the UK Government fully commits to allocating at least the same levels of investment that are needed to replace the loss of EU structural funds, as well as the funding from schemes such as the LEADER programmes and the common agricultural policy payments for crofters. It is disappointing, yet unsurprising, that the UK Government's engagement with the devolved nations regarding the development of EU funding replacement schemes has been much weaker than the close working relationship that the Scottish Government had with the European Commission in the development of the structural fund programmes.

The United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 allows Westminster, rather than this place, to allocate funds that were previously dispensed by the EU. It is increasingly clear that the UK is not, in that respect, a partnership of equals, despite many attempts to convince us otherwise. When spending decisions for Scotland are made not on the basis of the Scottish Government's knowledge and experience, but according to a UK Government agenda, that simply adds to the complexity of the funding landscape and creates a confused, incoherent policy framework as well as financial inefficiencies.

I will address a key question that has come up several times today: the question of gratitude, as I suppose one might call it. Of course everybody wants to level up, however ill-defined that phrase might be, and everybody wants to share prosperity. Those principles are not controversial. However, we should remember that when the UK

Government spends money in Scotland, it is—as we discussed earlier—spending Scottish taxpayers' money.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** If everyone shares that agenda, will the member agree that it is regrettable that the Scottish Government did away with cohesion targets, which were aimed at reducing regional inequality, and that they should be reintroduced as a matter of urgency?

**Dr Allan:** As I said, the Scottish Government managed to work very well with the European Commission on some of the issues around promoting social cohesion to which the member alluded, and I am sure that we will do so again in the future.

In the past, we had an understanding that money would be directed and spent in devolved areas by a Government that had gone to the trouble of being elected in Scotland at some point more recent than the Suez crisis. It is clear, therefore, that the way in which the funds will now be allocated represents a UK Government infringement on areas that are firmly and fully devolved.

If the Tories do not see it as their job to stand up for the powers of this Parliament and this place, and to defend Scotland's interests, there are many of us who—unapologetically—do. Money that Scotland would previously have received, for instance, under the seven-year EU structural fund programmes will now be distributed annually by the UK Government according to its own priorities, which could leave Scotland worse off—

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Will Alasdair Allan give way?

**Dr Allan:** I do not have time, I am afraid. I must make some progress.

The UK Government must engage properly with the Scottish Government to ensure that the development of any UK-wide funding programmes, such as the UK shared prosperity and levelling up funds, actually meet the needs of Scotland's local communities. If the UK Government continues to attempt to impose its own agenda and undermine the devolution settlement, that will raise unavoidable questions about whether, in its heart of hearts—if that is an entirely relevant phrase—it truly believes in the Scottish Parliament's existence.

Scotland continues to have to deal with the negative consequences of a Brexit that we did not vote for and a last-minute hard Brexit deal that satisfies nobody and leaves us far worse off than we were before. We are a European nation and it is my hope—and the hope of many other people—that it is not too long before we are able once

again to enjoy the benefits of EU membership, this time as an independent country.

Meanwhile, the UK Government's spending review plans for levelling up and the UK shared prosperity fund are, in their operation, an infringement on the powers of the Scottish Parliament and do not come close to matching, in real terms, the significant EU funding revenue from which Scotland benefited for more than 40 years. I echo the calls for the UK Government to honour the promises that it made to Scotland, to work with the Scottish Government to ensure the continued development of such funding and to keep the interests of Scotland's citizens, and Scotland's democracy, at its heart.

16:01

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** The Parliament was formed from a desire to not only bring decision-making powers closer to the people of Scotland, but to use them for a purpose: to address the economic and social trauma caused by deindustrialisation in decades gone by. People created the Parliament to advance social and economic justice in the hope that better decision making would create a better Scotland for future generations.

Every day that we are here, we must measure the progress that we make as a nation against the ambitions of the people who founded the Parliament all those years ago. As someone who represents West Scotland and many of the communities that endured the collective trauma of deindustrialisation and inequality, I say frankly that those ambitions have not been realised. Scotland is a far from equal country.

Originally, I looked forward to the debate. It should have been about confronting regional inequalities that have been neglected for too long. However, with a few exceptions, there has been far too much pointless constitutional bickering between the SNP and the Tories. That does not put the Parliament in a good light. As Willie Rennie said, it seems that our politics has of late been dominated by real or perceived inequalities between nations, rather than those that exist within them. Those inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid and have not had enough discussion and debate today.

Covid has not affected us all in the same way. It has not affected all areas in the same way. Four out of the five local authorities with the highest Covid death rates are in my West Scotland region. With 33 Covid-related deaths per 10,000 of the population, Renfrewshire has the worst death rate from that awful virus in the entire country. It is followed by West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire. All those areas live with the legacy

of deindustrialisation. North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire have the highest levels of unemployment in Scotland.

Some areas have been significantly harder hit than others. Those areas need extra support to recover and rebuild. We need extra support not only for the front line, such as the national health service and local services, but to rebuild and recover our economy. If levelling up means anything, it means levelling up the areas in Scotland that have above-average economic and social need.

In Renfrewshire, for example, the local economy is suffering because of the pandemic. One of the longest-standing economic challenges that we face there is the regeneration of Paisley town centre. Not a single penny of the levelling up fund will be spent regenerating the centre of Paisley, which is the largest town in Scotland. The money that is coming to Renfrewshire is not the sector-specific support that we need for our key industries, such as aerospace and aviation, to compensate for the thousands of jobs that have been lost in recent years. For the reasons that I have outlined, I call for the west of Scotland to get its fair share of investment as we build back from the crisis.

The Tories' policy of levelling up appears to be a public relations exercise. They cannot level up an economy when they are levelling down welfare and workers rights. However, at least the Tories have a policy. Where is the SNP's commitment to, or policy on, levelling up in Scotland? It is non-existent. The SNP has secured a debate on the Tories' levelling up agenda, but it should be leading a debate on its own levelling up agenda. It has not done that, because it does not have one. The Scottish Government used to have a cohesion target—rightly in my opinion—which aimed to reduce the employment gap between Scotland's regions. That was its levelling up target before the Tories' new-found interest in levelling up. However, that was scrapped in 2017, perhaps because it showed that the employment gap was widening.

In October last year, I asked the Auditor General for Scotland to examine regional inequality and the impact of Covid on the hardest-hit regions. I hope that Audit Scotland and the Public Audit Committee are considering those issues. It is clear that we need not only to set targets—we absolutely need to do that—but to independently monitor the gap. It is not just the difference between the level of unemployment in Aberdeenshire or Edinburgh and that in my region that causes such concern; the scandal is that the SNP Government has done nothing to remedy the stark inequalities within my region.

Let us consider the August 2021 claimant count, as detailed by the Office for National Statistics. In East Renfrewshire, it is 2.8 per cent of the population; in East Dunbartonshire it is 3.2 per cent. Compare those figures with 6.8 per cent in North Ayrshire, 6.7 per cent in West Dunbartonshire and 5.6 per cent in Inverclyde. More than 18 per cent—almost one fifth—of the country's most deprived data zones are in West Scotland. The single most deprived zone in the whole country is Greenock town centre. Two zones in Ferguslie Park in Paisley are in the top 10. I remind the Parliament that those are the areas that have been hit the hardest by the Covid crisis. Those gaps between our regions reinforce the inequalities in health, life expectancy, education and poverty. It will take more than platitudes or bombast to address profound regional inequalities. We need action, investment and, more important, political will.

In late 2018, the Fraser of Allander Institute published its "North Ayrshire Economic Review". There is a sentence in it that applies to the whole of my West Scotland region, and indeed to the whole of Scotland. The review said that

"if significant in-roads are to be made in tackling regional challenges this will require major investment and national strategic support."

Levelling up across Scotland and across the UK will take more than soundbites and slogans; it will take more than one-off pots of cash. It takes leadership, sustained investment and a strategy to genuinely remake and reform our economy, so that it better serves left-behind communities.

The absence of leadership, the absence of sustained investment and the absence of strategy leave the parties of Government exposed today. The challenge for Government is to rebalance the economy and to make it work for everyone. Bluntly, if the recovery is not working for the west of Scotland, it is not working at all.

16:07

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):**

For the past five years, MSPs on our benches have warned and feared that the halting of funding streams from the EU, such as horizon 2020 and EU structural funds, would leave unfilled holes all over Scotland after Brexit. We were never convinced by mendacious slogans on buses, by bluster from the likes of Farage and Johnson, or by promises of "sunlit uplands" and "seas of opportunity". We were sceptical that the much-heralded, but undefined, shared prosperity fund would be an adequate replacement for anything that the EU streams gave us.

But, hey, no one likes someone who peers into the future and warns of its worst portents, like the

Cassandra of mythology. We were "the doomsters, the gloomsters", to quote the Prime Minister using that blustering, bombastic turn of phrase that he has. Sadly, however, we were right.

What we did not quite predict was that the level of support to be given in regions of Scotland would be wholly decided in London, not Edinburgh. Here, in this Parliament, we have absolutely no say on where the funds go. The Scottish Government is cut out, the Scottish Parliament is cut out, and my Tory colleagues over on their benches are cut out, too.

When it came to Boris Johnson deciding who would get what, he sold out not just Aberdeenshire but his north-east Tory colleagues. They will not show it today; in fact, only one—

**Douglas Lumsden:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** I will take an intervention from a north-east MSP.

**Douglas Lumsden:** I wonder whether Gillian Martin would like to join me in welcoming the £730,000 from the community renewal fund that has come to Business Gateway to create a network of enterprise support services.

**Gillian Martin:** It is interesting that the member mentions that. I thought that he was going to mention the new revamped Aberdeen market, which I think has the people of Turriff, for example, as excited as they might be about the roundabouts in Falkirk that were mentioned earlier today. I think we will move on from that.

Despite the huge tax revenues that my area has sent to the UK Treasury over many decades, Aberdeenshire has been put into the lowest possible funding tier—level 3—by the UK Government's new funding scheme, so we will get a tiny fraction of the EU funding that we used to get and which the Government promised that it would replace in full. Let us not forget the UK Tory Government's other slap in the face for the north-east: the kicking into the long grass, possibly never to be retrieved, of the Acorn carbon capture and storage project and, with it, the Scottish cluster. Combined with the refusal to back tidal energy projects or do anything about the ridiculous and punitive tariffs for Scottish electricity, that is proof, were it needed, that the UK Tories do not give two hoots about Scotland's economic future or just transition. In fact, the Tories are a direct impediment to the north-east's potential to lead the way to net zero and transform the area into a low carbon energy centre. The only Government that is trying to help us reach that potential appears to be the Scottish Government, and the £500 million transition fund that Kate Forbes announced is proof of that.

We keep being reminded that there are two Governments in Scotland, not least by Mr Carson, who has been bellowing it out throughout the debate.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** No, because he is not from the north-east. I am taking only one intervention, and that was from a north-easter. Forgive me for being parochial, but that is what I am.

The first people who should be saying to Boris Johnson that the other Government needs to step up are the north-east Tory MPs Andrew Bowie, David Duguid and, of course, Douglas Ross. The UK chancellor ignored the views of the Scottish Government, which worked in good faith and presented plans for a separate Scottish shared prosperity fund. That planned replacement for EU funds would have been managed and decided on locally between the Scottish Government, local authorities and communities, and scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament. Instead, the UK Government extended the English shared prosperity fund to cover the whole of the UK and deprived Scotland of an expected £400 million in Barnett consequentials over the four-year duration of the fund.

That approach potentially leaves Scotland worse off, raises many value-for-money concerns and undermines devolution. However, the thing that most upsets me is possibly the thing that I have just heard Neil Bibby being upset about, which is the unfairness of the geographical distribution of those funds. They are not arbitrary; they are political. My colleague Richard Thomson MP has consistently shone a light on that in the UK Parliament, as north-east Tories squirm with shame and embarrassment on the opposite benches.

**Miles Briggs:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** No, I have already taken an intervention.

Speaking about the levelling up fund to the UK Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Luke Hall, my colleague Richard Thomson said:

“that index seems to be working in a rather curious way. It has not escaped anyone’s attention that some Tory target areas in England seem to have done extraordinarily well out of this fund, yet areas such as mine in the north-east of Scotland ... are languishing in levels 2 and 3 of the fund, despite being forecast to be hit hardest by Brexit.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 19 April 2021; Vol 692, c 643.]

Two things occur to me about the politics of that. First, promises that the Tories made about Scotland being an equal partner—that whole “lead, not leave” shtick that we heard so much

during indyref—are coming back to haunt them. Secondly, I cannot wait to remind my constituents of that in town hall hustings ahead of the next independence referendum. Last time, we warned like Cassandra; this time, we point to the evidence of the present and the recent past. The people of my area will be in no doubt that Scotland must leave the UK in order to be the leader of our future—not shunted to the back of the queue for funding our recovery—and an independent country that makes its own decisions, based on the needs of our citizens, not the pork barrel politics of the UK Tory party.

16:13

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** According to political economists, uneven development—the uneven or unequal development of the economy—is an inevitable function of capitalism. It is seen in various dimensions—for example, different sectors of the economy are developing to varying degrees and at different rates. That unevenness can be and has been established on the basis of any number of different metrics, such as employment rates, income levels and rates of economic growth. It is also seen in various scales, from intra-urban differences, through regional differences, to uneven international development. It forms the basis of many inequalities and social injustices that we see every day. It is vital that we do what we can to avoid those dangers of uneven development—inequality and social injustice. In that vein, I agree with much of what Rhoda Grant said.

A key problem in the UK has been the two-speed development that we have experienced for decades. The financialised economy of the south-east of England has been preferred by successive UK Governments. The UK has never recovered from the mass deindustrialisation in every other part of the country. As always, the Tory assumption is that the south-east of England has got it right and the rest of the country has got it wrong. However, the failure to provide the infrastructure for economic development in the rest of the country is a substantial part of the reason why we have a two-speed economy.

We were promised that the funds that the EU had channelled into that infrastructure would be replaced after Brexit, yet what we see in the UK Government proposals is an exact replication of everything that we were told was wrong with the EU, including decisions made by distant bureaucrats, following political agendas that do not necessarily reflect those of the people. Furthermore, the value of the funds do not match what they replace.

While the UK Government may consider that, in the words of the Prime Minister,

“Scottish devolution has been a disaster”,

the problem for the Prime Minister is that people want decisions made much closer to them. We know that the real challenges facing us—the climate and ecological crises as well as the pandemic—

**Miles Briggs:** Will the member give way?

**Maggie Chapman:** No, I am not going to take interventions.

We need to create good-quality jobs in a just transition that delivers decarbonisation and social justice, rather than propping up an increasingly unpopular union by splashing cash to curry favour.

That is a point for us in this Parliament, too. We need to base our infrastructure developments in more participatory processes. We have had a climate assembly and we will hear about its outcomes soon. We need an infrastructure assembly to decide, collectively, what infrastructure we need and want, which could then be delivered with local, regional and Scottish input, without further complicating or cluttering the economic development landscape.

We have worked very hard in Scotland to ensure that fair work standards are at the heart of our infrastructure. We need well-paid jobs, partnership with trade unions, and procurement that delivers community wealth building and drives down carbon emissions. There seems to be no intention to build those standards into the UK funds. That is another reason why the UK Government should follow the logic of devolution.

We need a democratic green industrial revolution—we need to transform our energy system to decarbonise it, while creating good jobs. We need to provide high-quality homes that are carbon neutral. We need to be at the forefront of digital connectivity to increase social inclusion and create new opportunities for good-quality, low-carbon work. We need to engage more people in the creation of those projects to identify how best they can deliver for the people of Scotland.

We need ambition in our infrastructure funding, which is why I am so looking forward to discussions about how the £0.5 billion just transition fund—which we secured as part of the Scottish Government-Greens co-operation agreement—will support communities in the north-east, and on the roll-out of the £5 billion investment in our railways.

What we do not need is the replacement of the EU structural funds with a slush fund for politically motivated projects to make the case for London rule that is imposed on the people of Scotland; nor

do we need something that adds to the already cluttered landscape of development funding in Scotland.

Now is the time for us to move away from the old elite decision-making processes. We should be creating national missions supported by the infrastructure spending. We should be bringing Scotland’s people behind those missions. As we all know, after the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—we need to build a country that both mitigates and adapts to the climate crisis. We need funding to ensure that that happens. That must be our priority.

16:19

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to highlight the blatant attack on the Scottish Parliament’s powers by the Westminster Government that is under way. As the motion states, the UK’s shared prosperity fund is nothing other than an assault on the Scottish devolution settlement and the Scotland Act, which is fundamental to our Parliament.

As the Westminster Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove—described by his own colleagues as scheming, unscrupulous and dangerous—is now in charge of spending around £4.6 billion a year on the UK’s shared prosperity fund.

That fund includes the UK community renewal fund, the community ownership fund and the bizarrely named levelling up fund. That funding comes from Scotland’s former contribution to the EU structural funds, which, prior to Brexit, came back through the Scottish Government. That power was devolved, but the UK Government in Westminster has grabbed back that process.

Mr Gove has made clear his commitment to undermine this Parliament. He stated that his department would establish direct relationships with

“councils, voluntary and community sector organisations and local education providers such as universities.”

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Emma Harper:** I can take a really quick one, because I am sure that I can read Mr Carson’s mind at this point.

**Finlay Carson:** I am glad that Emma Harper cannot read my mind.

Will she cast her mind back to June of this year, when she called for the UK Government to invest in the A75? She would surely welcome that investment, given that the connectivity review that



consulted broadly across the country identified the A75 and A77 as priority routes. Emma Harper asked for the UK Government to make that funding available.

**Emma Harper:** I am coming to the A75 at the end of my speech, so Mr Carson will hear what I have to say about it.

Mr Gove went on to say:

“The UK Ministry will then formalise agreements with each of the Scottish local authorities, including the arrangements for information sharing, monitoring and ... evaluation”.

The technical note for lead authorities in Great Britain also refers to spot checks on those bodies by the UK Government, and to a requirement for

“reports to be sent by them to the UK Secretary of State”,

who is now Michael Gove. That regulatory role will become a function of the increasing army of civil servants who are based across the road in Queen Elizabeth house—the UK Government’s hub in Edinburgh—which is now home to 3,000 UK civil servants, who cost the Scottish taxpayer £250 million.

The UK Government plans to form direct relationships with Scottish local authorities, public and voluntary sector agencies and communities. Those areas of policy are all devolved to this Parliament, so if that is not an attack on devolution, I do not know what is.

**Miles Briggs:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Emma Harper:** I am sorry—I am not taking any mair.

I turn to the next assault on devolution—the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, much of which is concerned with ensuring that goods and services that are produced in one part of the UK can be sold without restriction in all other parts. The act creates the means for a race to the bottom when it comes to consumer and environmental protections. It prevents the Scottish Parliament from effectively legislating in a range of areas, including laws that cover the food that people put on their tables, which in Scotland is currently produced to high EU animal welfare and food safety standards. Those standards will be undermined by Scotland having to accept the lower standards that a UK Government sets in its desperate pursuit of harmful trade deals.

Members are aware that, since my election, I have campaigned on that very issue. I have learnt a lot from Leicester farmer Joseph Stanley, and have warned of the risks that the trade deals pose to Scottish agriculture. Products that are brought in will include chemicals the use of which is currently not allowed in Scotland—hormones and

antibiotics such as carbadox, cloxacillin and ractopamine, which is intended to make pigs leaner. All those chemicals are currently used in meat production in Australia, America and Brazil—countries with which the UK is entering into trade deals.

The internal market act does not just threaten future areas of policy. The Scottish Government has already pointed out that, had the act been in place in 2018, the Scottish Parliament would not have been able to pass its world-leading legislation on minimum unit pricing for alcohol. It is in fact doubtful that even Scottish licensing rules, which prohibit alcohol promotion through discounts, would be allowed under the act.

UK Government ministers claim that no specific powers have been removed from Holyrood, but that claim misses the point. Section 50 of the act gives Westminster the power to make financial provision in a range of devolved areas, such as health, education and transport. The priorities for capital spending in those areas are set in Scotland and funding is allocated from a block grant from Westminster. The new powers allow Westminster to set the priorities, which takes power away from this Parliament and the Scottish Government.

Through those new powers, the UK Government has stated that it will invest in the A75—the main road from Gretna to Stranraer in my region of South Scotland. Concerned constituents have raised with me that the UK Government is only interested in investing in the A75 so that it can create a direct express route to transport nuclear radioactive waste from the proposed new nuclear power stations to dump in Beaufort’s Dyke in the North Channel of the Irish Sea.

I have written to the UK Government and asked for its commitment that Beaufort’s Dyke will not be reopened as a dump site for nuclear and radioactive waste as it was used previously. I ask the minister to join me in that call.

I call on the UK Government to stop its attack on the Scottish Parliament and encourage the Scottish Government to continue to do everything it can to protect this place.

16:25

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members of my entry in the register of members’ interests, which shows that I am still a councillor at Aberdeen City Council.

The levelling up initiative from the UK Government is devolution in its purest sense. It is empowering our communities, delivering local projects and funding our local authorities to build back better after Covid-19. Levelling up will see countless projects up and down the UK receive

the funding that they need to level up. The city of Aberdeen will receive £20 million to create a new marketplace and revitalise the city centre. Along with all the other projects, it will boost skills, employment and enterprise; encourage tourism; support our performing arts; invest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning; and help us to progress towards a net zero future. That can only be a good thing for the people of Aberdeen, the north-east and the whole of Scotland.

The project in Aberdeen is fully in line with the city council's local outcome improvement plan, which meets the needs of our communities, including in relation to job creation, and makes the SNP motion completely laughable. Instead of welcoming the funding, like many SNP-run councils, and celebrating the increased devolution of resource, the devolved SNP-Green Government seems to be interested only in manufacturing endless grievance—it is a disgrace.

Hundreds of good causes will receive funding under a new system that is faster, more efficient and less bureaucratic. The matter is simple—good causes will receive good funding in good time. Members from the SNP claim that that process disrespects devolution and is an act of centralisation. The fact of the matter is that it enhances devolution from the UK government and puts it right at the heart of our communities. The SNP would do well to remember that we have two Governments in Scotland: the UK Government and the devolved Government in Edinburgh.

Frankly, it is laughable to hear the SNP accuse the UK Government of too much centralisation. The UK Government has a strong record on decentralising power and funding. It created 25 directly-elected mayors and 30 police and crime commissioners, giving more power to local communities.

In sharp contrast, what have we seen here in Scotland? Local police forces have been abolished and centralised into the generic Police Scotland. Local police control rooms have been abolished and centralised away from the local communities that they serve. Even Aberdeen, Scotland's third largest city, was not spared those harsh cuts, with the closure of our police control room in 2017.

**Ben Macpherson:** Will the member recognise the outstanding success of the operation of Police Scotland in recent years, particularly in recent weeks, when it undertook the policing of COP26 remarkably well?

**Douglas Lumsden:** Absolutely—it did a remarkable job of policing of COP26 but it benefited from the support of UK police forces in Glasgow and right across Scotland.

We have also seen a huge increase in ring-fenced funding to councils, so the SNP Government, not the locally elected decision makers, decides where local money is spent.

Planning matters have been overturned by central Government, which is a complete slap in the face for the local councillors who are there to serve their local communities.

**Tom Arthur:** Out of genuine interest and in all sincerity, I ask the member, who is the planning spokesperson for the Conservatives: do the Conservatives still support the right of appeal for developers?

**Douglas Lumsden:** What needs to be addressed is the amount of planning applications that are drawn back to the Scottish Government, overturning local democracy. The SNP wants to centralise power at every opportunity.

Furthermore, the UK Government has protected the funding of the Scottish Government through the generous Barnett formula. The Scottish Government does not afford such protection to its local authorities, with local authorities getting an ever-dwindling share of the Scottish Government budget, as COSLA highlighted just this week. The UK Government's record on decentralising power and protecting local funding is far stronger than that of the SNP.

I am pleased that Aberdeen will receive £300,000 to fund street performances and culture festivals through the community renewal fund. That will be a huge boost to our city centre, which will place artists at the heart of our recovery from the pandemic and create employment and training opportunities in Aberdeen's creative industries. I highlight the hard work of the chief executive of Aberdeen Performing Arts, Jane Spiers, in ensuring that that funding will come to Aberdeen.

Aberdeen city centre is swiftly becoming a cultural heartland through the forward-thinking council, with Conservatives in the administration. We welcome and thank the UK Government for its commitment to the north-east and its investment in our culture, our heritage, our industries and our businesses. There is no talk of removing investment, no discussion about closing vital industries and no question of overlooking the north-east in favour of our central belt colleagues. Perhaps the minister would like to explain why, this week, Glasgow City Council received more than £440,000 in funding for libraries, yet Aberdeen City Council received only £16,000.

The Scottish Government is no friend of the arts in the north-east. Indeed, the new Aberdeen art gallery was funded by the local council, with £1.5 million coming from the UK Government, but not a single penny coming from the Scottish Government.

It is clear that the levelling up agenda will bring funding and prosperity to the north-east, and vital resources to projects that are doing fantastic work up and down our country. That must be encouraged and supported. Many SNP council leaders have welcomed the fund and are applying for resource. Surely that tells us everything about the level of resource that is coming to local councils from the UK Government.

Let us compare that to how the SNP-Green coalition is treating the north-east. Just this week, the First Minister turned her back on 100,000 oil and gas jobs. In addition, the SNP has turned its back on its commitment to dual the A96, and the free ports that the north-east desperately needs have been thrown into doubt by the SNP's grievance politics.

It would be great if, as a Parliament, we could simply welcome the UK Government's funding into Scotland, thank the UK Government for its investment and move forward with delivering the projects without the grievance politics from the Scottish Government.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** We move to closing speeches. I call Willie Rennie to wind up for the Liberal Democrats.

16:32

**Willie Rennie:** The SNP has made a tactical blunder this afternoon. I think that it expected to unleash fire and fury on the Conservatives for a betrayal of Scottish democracy, but as we have seen, Conservative members have enjoyed themselves. They have done so by listing various projects in different parts of the country, and poking fun at and teasing SNP members. They have done that extensively. I have to say that they have learned from the best—the SNP Government has done exactly that for the 14 years for which it has been in power, during which time it has misused finance and power in order to advance its party.

Meanwhile, ordinary people in communities are left out. We do not get the equality; the fairness; the rebalancing of the economy in the UK and in Scotland, which Neil Bibby talked about; or the gender equality that we desperately need in this country, which Rhoda Grant talked about. All those issues, along with the challenges in rural communities, which I know a lot about, and those in urban communities, pale into insignificance because we have a destructive, competitive relationship between the two Governments that are represented here this afternoon. I do not think that that is good for our country.

I have enjoyed watching the Conservatives enjoying themselves, because that does not happen too often, but while they might have

experienced a short-term benefit today, longer-term problems will accrue over time.

Meanwhile, we have had po-faced speeches from SNP members about constitutional arrangements. That is normally the preserve of the Liberal Democrats, and I am quite upset that that has been captured from us by the SNP. Again, the SNP has only itself to blame. The hostile relationship that it has developed with the UK Government over the past 14 years has meant that it comes as little surprise that the Conservatives sometimes behave in the way that they do, no matter how reprehensible it is that they do that. The SNP and the Conservatives are as bad as each other, and it is about time that this country had a more mature approach to the relationship between our two Governments. That way, we might not end up having debates such as the one that we have had this afternoon.

**Tom Arthur:** I appreciate the points that Willie Rennie has made, but does he not recognise that there is a fundamental issue given that the Conservatives have been rejected—not narrowly but comprehensively—at election after election after election in Scotland since 1955? Does he not understand the fundamental tension that that creates? It is not the Scottish Government that has been hostile to the Conservatives; it is the Scottish people at the ballot box.

**Willie Rennie:** I recognise the point that the minister has made, but the fundamental problem is that we decided to stay in the United Kingdom and—no matter how much I hate it—the United Kingdom elected a Boris Johnson Government. I hate that that is the case, but that is the world in which we live. If we are going to get on in advancing the cause of the people in Scotland whom we represent in the Parliament, we need to take a more mature approach. Always rubbing the noses of the Conservatives in the dirt, as the minister has just done, will not help. It will not move us forward, and we will end up with more debates like today's one.

I had to laugh when Ben Macpherson said that he was disappointed with the UK Government's "paternalistic approach". If he speaks to those who have been council leaders across Scotland over the past 14 years, they will tell him about a paternalistic approach from a central and powerful Government. That is exactly what has happened; the Scottish Government has hoovered up powers.

The minister had the gall to cite Police Scotland. One of the Government's biggest disasters has been the central call-centre system and the stripping out of civilian staff—which has had a detrimental effect on communities across Scotland—because the Government wanted to

take control of the police. That has happened right across—

**Miles Briggs:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Willie Rennie:** Not just now. I am getting into my flow—don't stop me.

Such an approach has been replicated across Scotland. The Government thinks that it knows everything and that it has the power to make every decision in Scotland. It is about time that we devolved power to every community in Scotland. Let us have a much more mature approach. We need federalism—I have been banging on about that for years. With that, we will build a proper structure for shared power and decisions, end the destructive competition between our two Governments, make better decisions, cut out the duplication and benefit the people in our communities.

Although the debate has been a bit of fun, I am afraid that the Conservatives will have to learn a little more about how to ensure that we have a United Kingdom that shares power and makes the right decisions for the benefit of the people whom Rhoda Grant, Neil Bibby and Daniel Johnson talked about. We need to ensure that we have proper equality and fairness in this country. This way is not how to achieve that.

16:38

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** I should congratulate Willie Rennie on his clairvoyance—he was able to listen to my speech before I actually gave it. Nevertheless, he is quite correct to agree with me, because I agree with a great deal of what he has just said.

The reality is that the debate has suited the SNP and the Conservatives. Both of those parties are very comfortable arguing about flags, boundaries and borders. The real dividing line in the debate—the one that actually matters—is between parties that believe in outcomes, making things work and how we build things better and those that want to have a constitutional tussle and see who can wave the bigger flag.

I say very gently to those members that they should think very carefully about their words. I have grown to have a great deal of respect for Douglas Lumsden since he came to Parliament, but the fact that he said, without irony, that the levelling up fund was devolution personified, or the greatest example of devolution, was quite incredible. He knows as well as I do, because he has seen the evidence from local authorities, that they are unclear about precisely how the money will be divvied out and about what purpose it is meant to serve. They have had to fire in

applications without that context. He knows the deficiencies in what is being delivered, so he cannot possibly think that £173 million will deliver the change or the levelling up that Conservative members' rhetoric seems to suggest.

**Douglas Lumsden:** I was just thinking back to not too long ago, when the person who is now the leader of Aberdeen City Council, since my departure, visited number 10 to argue for levelling up funds coming to Aberdeen. How can the member take a stance that it is not right when we have the Labour leader of Aberdeen City Council going to number 10 and asking for the funds?

**Daniel Johnson:** I am not saying that it is not right; I am just saying that the money is not enough. That is the point.

By contrast, we have heard members on the SNP benches obsess about process without once asking what is being delivered. I agree that process matters, but ultimately what people care about is whether their towns, cities and localities are getting investment.

The great tragedy of this debate is that we heard a speech from Ben Macpherson—again, someone I have a great deal of time and respect for—and, in the entirety of the 12 minutes that he had, he did not mention poverty or inequality once. He spoke purely about the destabilisation of the devolution settlement. If our devolution settlement is so weak and precarious that £173 million upsets it, we really are in a very sorry state indeed.

**Gillian Martin:** Daniel Johnson says that it is not about process, but we are in a Parliament that is part of a democratic process that can ensure fairness. His colleague Neil Bibby and I both mentioned the geographical unfairness of what has happened.

**Daniel Johnson:** I am glad that Gillian Martin has raised that point, as I was just about to come to it. That is what we should have spent the past two hours talking about—the regional unfairness.

In some ways, the debate was summed up by a combination of Willie Rennie and Alasdair Allan. Alasdair Allan highlighted the very real difference that the EU structural funds made. What we should have been talking about is how we can ensure that such funding continues so that we see delivery of the investment in roads and infrastructure that our remote and rural communities need. To be frank, the amount that has been offered will not do that.

Similarly, we should have been focusing on how we can deliver in partnership. Willie Rennie might want to call it federalism; I call it redistribution and the pooling and sharing of resources. That is what unions are based on, and, if the Conservatives are serious about defending the union and making

sure that we do not see the break-up of the country, they should be seeking to strengthen devolution, not undermine it or thumb their nose at it. They know that they have bypassed it, and they should be careful before they continue in that manner. Simply annoying SNP ministers is not a great outcome. They should be seeking to make a real difference in our communities, because we have real inequalities.

SNP ministers often cite the example of the south-east of England and the way that it draws disproportionate resource, but we have our own south-east problem here, in Scotland. In Edinburgh, gross domestic product per head is £38,000. Just 60 miles away, in Dundee, it is £20,000, and with that comes economic inactivity at 27 per cent. Over a third of children in Dundee grow up in poverty. In Scotland, we have inequality such that the wealthiest areas deliver 2.5 times the level of gross value added of the least wealthy areas.

That is what we should be talking about—how we level up our regions and tackle those inequalities, which result in poverty, loss of opportunities, shortened life spans and gross social injustice. That is the debate that we should have had this afternoon, and that is what we should be discussing. We should be hearing about Scotland's levelling up programme rather than disagreeing about constitutional grievances.

16:44

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Presiding Officer, as you may know, the famous road to the isles runs from Fort William to Mallaig. The A830, as it is, takes in some of the most stunning locations in the west Highlands—Glenfinnan, Inverailort, Arisaig and Morar—and it finally opens out to the sea and views over the Sound of Sleat to Skye.

Until about 10 years ago, when it was eventually upgraded, the final section of the road—from Inverailort to Mallaig—was still a single-track road. In fact, it was the UK's last single-track trunk road. Who paid for the upgrade? The Scottish Government and the EU did. There is still a sign on the road with the EU flag on it that details the structural funds that co-financed the upgrade. At the time, did any politician—least of all an SNP politician—complain about the EU helping to fund a road project that was within the remit of a devolved Administration? Did anyone protest at that infringement of devolution? Of course they did not. It was welcomed by everyone and rightly so, because it drastically improved a dangerous stretch of road. It continues to provide significant benefits today.

However, in the past few weeks, when the UK Government has announced major investments in dozens of projects across Scotland from the shared prosperity fund and the other funds that we have spoken about, the Scottish Government has been up in arms. That is the SNP for you: not a whimper when the funding comes from Brussels, to be invested in devolved policy initiatives, but furious when such funding comes from Westminster. The SNP and the Greens loathe the idea that the UK Government can have a positive impact in Scotland, and they despair at the idea that people in Scotland might recognise that.

**Ben Macpherson:** Will Donald Cameron take an intervention?

**Donald Cameron:** I will, in a moment.

Let us deal with some other myths. Speaker after speaker, from many parts of the chamber, has spoken about circumventing, bypassing and infringing devolution. The devolution settlement is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1999 and the later Scotland Acts. We respect the settlement as establishing the Scottish Parliament and its powers. However, not one MSP has pointed out which provision of the legislation says that the UK Government cannot fund devolved policy areas. That is because such a provision does not exist. The devolution settlement does not prevent the UK Government from funding devolved areas of policy—it never has—because there is a distinction between the UK Government legislating and its investing in devolved areas.

**Tom Arthur:** Will Donald Cameron take an intervention?

**Donald Cameron:** I will, in a second.

Furthermore, as the Supreme Court has just told us, the Scotland Act 1999 allows the UK Government to retain the power to legislate for Scotland. If that is true, how much more true is it that, as a matter of law and practice, it is implicit in the devolution settlement that the UK Government can directly fund and invest in devolved areas?

**Tom Arthur:** I hope that Donald Cameron can shed light on the question that I put to Graham Simpson, who was unable to answer it. Does he believe that the UK Government should be able to spend in any area of devolved competency?

**Donald Cameron:** I have said that there is nothing in law preventing the UK Government from funding such areas. There should be no limit to anything that the UK Government, the Scottish Government or local government does. That is the whole point of levelling up.

What is more, if we look at the international context, we see that that is entirely normal in Europe and beyond. In any federal or quasi-federal system, or in any system that is akin to

devolution in the UK, the central Government retains the power to build bridges, upgrade roads and fund connectivity without there being any question of infringing on the power of the state or the devolved legislature. Look at Canada, Germany and Australia.

Let me turn to the Scottish Government's motion. When I first read it, I could not believe my eyes. It is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions, as Miles Briggs said. It starts by saying that the funding is insufficient. Of course, funds from the UK Government are never sufficient in the eyes of the SNP. Then, the motion goes on to denounce the funding as an infringement of devolution. In the same breath as saying that it is not enough money, the SNP takes issue with the principle of the funds being distributed at all. Basically, it is a motion that says, "How dare you give us this money?" Tell that to the people of Falkirk in relation to the Westfield roundabout, which Graham Simpson spoke about. Tell that to the people of Aberdeen in relation to the cultural investment that Douglas Lumsden mentioned.

**Gillian Martin:** Will Donald Cameron take an intervention?

**Donald Cameron:** I am sorry—I cannot.

Tell that to the SNP local authority leaders, including those of Renfrewshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow—I note that the two ministers on the SNP front bench are MSPs for parts of those areas—who had the good grace and political judgment to welcome investments. We can understand why. Those council leaders have had to smile and nod for years while their bosses in Edinburgh have passed on swingeing cuts to local government. Between 2007 and 2019, the Scottish Government's budget increased at more than double the rate of the grant that was given to local councils. I wish that, just for once, the SNP-Green coalition would welcome investment such as this and work with the UK Government to deliver more funding for our communities. Why not welcome the levelling up fund?

Daniel Johnson took issue with the sum involved. He said that £172 million is not enough. For starters, this is the first round of funding and there is an assurance that the figure will rise to £1.5 billion a year by 2024 and that it will, at the very least, match EU funds. Why not welcome the £19.9 million that is going towards the redevelopment of Inverness castle? Why not welcome the near £1.1 million investment from the first round of the community fund, including the £220,000 that is designated for the Old Forge in Knoydart?

I take issue with Willie Rennie because he said that this is all about power and politics. It is not.

That funding in the Highlands and Islands, in one of the most remote areas of Scotland—a tiny part—is an example of the funding that is reaching communities in every part of Scotland, even the most remote. I will happily take an intervention from Willie Rennie if I have time.

**Willie Rennie:** I might well take the member up on his offer—he might regret it.

If it is not about power and control, why does the member not support a partnership approach with all the constituent parts of the United Kingdom?

**Donald Cameron:** I do, and I hope that the one thing that emerges from this debate is that the Scottish Government works with the UK Government in that partnership to bring about transformational change in our communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Tom Arthur to wind up for the Scottish Government. Please take us to decision time.

16:52

**The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur):** I begin by expressing my gratitude to all members for their contributions this afternoon.

The first question that we have to pose is: what do we mean by levelling up? The reality is that, for all of us who have engaged as members in our respective constituencies and regions, particularly in areas that have suffered multiple generations of deprivation, the issues—those wicked problems—cannot be resolved overnight or by one funding round. Resolving them requires sustained investment and a co-ordinated approach. It requires resource grants, capital grants, asset transfers, broader community empowerment, participatory budgeting, the planning system, local economic development—a whole suite of areas. That requires partnership working.

The motion is born out of genuine frustration that the UK Government will not engage in that spirit of co-operation and partnership. I hope that, if one thing emerges from the debate, it is that there can be genuine partnership and co-operation. I recognise that what the people on the ground want is delivery. The risk that emerges from the UK Government's approach is that it is complicating the landscape.

**Stephen Kerr:** Why, then, did the Scottish Government not engage in the union connectivity review?

**Tom Arthur:** We have sought to engage constructively across a range of areas, but there has to be meaningful and genuine willingness. It cannot be tokenistic and, unfortunately, that is too

often the reality of the UK Government's approach.

We have heard from members today about some of the potential negative implications of the UK Government's handling of replacement EU funding. However, we should also consider the alternative. We should think about the positive ways that the Scottish Government, and indeed the Scottish Parliament, have approached investment and how we would have used, in line with our principles of delivering a wellbeing economy for Scotland, the funding that is being spent by the UK Government.

There are fundamental ways in which this Government works in full and genuine partnership to ensure that every penny of public money can help the recovery from Covid and enable a wellbeing economy that is focused on the journey to net zero—

**Daniel Johnson:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Tom Arthur:** I really have to make progress, but yes—very briefly.

**Daniel Johnson:** Taking what he has just said on board, would the minister agree that we need new targets on regional inequality for Scotland?

**Tom Arthur:** I think that we have an excellent suite of targets in the national performance framework, which gives us a way to measure our success. I will come on to some of those matters, because a wellbeing economy is fundamental.

I know that some might question the relative importance of where funds originate. However, the origin and ultimate destination of funding and the impact of funding are inextricably linked, through criteria, policy alignment and local, regional and national expertise—which Willie Rennie touched on—as well as through assessment and decision-making processes. People want to see money used in an intentional way to benefit their communities. People want to see good, trusting relationships between communities, local authorities and this Government.

The Scottish Government is committed to working with local authorities and partners in the public—

**Miles Briggs:** Will the minister give way?

**Tom Arthur:** Sorry—I really have to make progress. I am short of time; otherwise, I would.

We have been working with local authorities and partners in the public, private, third and community sectors. That can be seen in the work that we are doing to implement the community wealth building model of economic development across Scotland, which Maggie Chapman touched on.

Community wealth building is about creating practical, bottom-up partnerships that seek to ensure that as much as possible of an area's wealth, and as many as possible of its assets, can be retained in that area, in the form of tangible benefits such as fair work opportunities, public contracts for small and medium-sized businesses or greater community ownership of property or facilities.

**Miles Briggs:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Tom Arthur:** Very briefly.

**Miles Briggs:** I put back to the minister the question that he has been putting to members. Does he believe that there should be a limit to the powers that SNP ministers plan to remove from local authorities?

**Tom Arthur:** We have a governance review. We are putting powers into the hands of not just local authorities. Since passage of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, we have led the UK in putting power into the hands of communities, and we will enhance that approach through the community wealth building model, which is being led, from the bottom up, by local authorities across Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me, minister. Could we have less chatting from a sedentary position in the chamber? We want to hear the minister respond to the debate. Thank you.

**Tom Arthur:** Equally, we are taking an intentional approach to regeneration. We have been delivering the regeneration capital grant fund in partnership with local government since 2014, supporting more than 200 projects in disadvantaged communities, including fragile rural communities, across Scotland. Over that time—this is such an important point—we have developed relationships with other key match funders and with wider networks and communities to share information and opinions on proposals, so that, jointly, we can make better decisions about which projects to fund and when.

That approach also benefits applicants. The RCGF panel recommends proposals for funding, and many projects are referencing levelling up funding and community renewal funding as match-funding sources. However, as the UK Government does not have a transparent process and is not involving the Scottish Government, it is likely that good projects could fail because of uncertainty about match funding. Because of the way that the Scottish Government works in genuine partnership, that uncertainty would never have happened had we been administering the funds. Instead, we could have worked together with all parties to maximise the impact of our combined

resources and support communities to deliver transformative change.

That way of working can also be seen in our approach to national planning framework 4. Planning powers are fully devolved, and in Scotland we are using those powers well to chart a new course that will encourage and incentivise investment in the kind of country that we want to be, and in the sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive places that we like to call home.

We are doing that in the long-term interests of our communities, our businesses and our people. We are also doing it to fully play our part as we transition to net zero and tackle the twin climate and nature crises.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which we passed in the last parliamentary session, is strengthening the way that we plan for Scotland's future development, and it has placed the national planning framework—which ultimately has to be approved by this Parliament—front and centre in leading how we shape the future of our places.

Regional-scale planning, which outlines strategic development priorities, has shaped the draft spatial strategy, based on a positive and productive collaboration between central and local government in this country. It is an open and transparent process, and future investment in our infrastructure and places should support the priorities that we collectively decide will be in our national spatial strategy.

That is the right way to go, so that choices about Scotland's future development and how we deliver development and infrastructure priorities across our regions and communities are made here in Scotland. We need a joined-up holistic approach. That is what is required if we are to deliver transformational change.

Neil Bibby mentioned the west of Scotland and Ferguslie Park, and he will know the outstanding work that is going on through participatory budgeting there. That is real empowerment for communities that allows communities to determine their priorities by trusting them to make the right decisions. That informs the approach that we want to take, but it has to be an embedded, sustainable, joined-up and holistic approach. That is what we need if we are to transform our communities, build community wealth and make lasting change.

I reiterate the calls that we have made today for the UK Government to engage constructively. If it is not willing to give the Scottish Parliament responsibility for those funds, at the very least it needs to start engaging constructively with members of the Scottish Parliament and the democratically elected Scottish Government.

## Point of Order

17:01

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In the spirit of the comments that the minister has just made, I appeal to you for help in relation to an important matter that affects members. The accountability of the Government to the Parliament is at the heart of our democracy. As members, we have a duty to ask questions of the Government, and the Government has a responsibility to answer them as fully as it can. That is particularly true for written parliamentary questions when members are seeking information from the Government.

Today, I received an answer to my question S6W-04075, in which I asked the Scottish Government

“what recent discussions it has had with businesses regarding the introduction of a deposit return scheme.”

This is the answer that I received from Lorna Slater:

“Scottish Government officials have been engaging, and continue to engage, closely with a range of businesses to reach an implementation timetable for Scotland's Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) that is both ambitious and deliverable.”

That is the entire answer, but it is not an answer. That is the latest in a long series of my questions that have not been answered.

I am afraid that the Government shows a steely determination to avoid accountability. Therefore, may I ask you, as the Presiding Officer of our Parliament, what steps your office can take to ensure that when members ask written parliamentary questions, the answers that they receive directly respond to the question, or at least bear some relationship to the question? That would allow all members to uphold their basic duty of holding the Government to account.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The member will appreciate that the content of written answers is not a matter for the Presiding Officer. However, such matters can be discussed at the Parliamentary Bureau and I am content for that discussion to take place at the next meeting of that body.



## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:03

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motion S6M-02190, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/359) be approved.—[*George Adam*]

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

## Decision Time

17:03

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Miles Briggs is agreed to, the other amendments will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-02158.2, in the name of Miles Briggs, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland, 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.

17:04

*Meeting suspended.*

17:08

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We come to the division on amendment S6M-02158.2, in the name of Miles Briggs. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is now closed.

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Hamilton. We will ensure that that is recorded.

### 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)  
 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)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)

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)

### Against

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

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-02158.2, in the name of Miles Briggs, is: For 29, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-02158.3, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland, 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)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
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)  
Dowey, 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)  
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)  
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
Mackay, 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)  
Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-02158.3, in the name of Rhoda Grant, is: For 23, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-02158.1, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland, 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)  
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
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)  
Dowey, 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)  
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)  
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
Mackay, 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)  
Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-02158.1, in the name of Willie Rennie, is: For 23, Against 95, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland, 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)  
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
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)  
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)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)

### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

### Abstentions

White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-02158, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and the UK Government's levelling up agenda in Scotland, is: For 65, Against 51, Abstentions 1.

### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Government's Spending Review plans for Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund not only fall well short of Scottish expectations and needs, but also infringe the sovereignty of the Scottish Parliament by circumventing the devolution settlement to deliver policy in areas that are clearly and firmly within the ambit of the Scottish Government, and calls on the UK Government to keep the promises made to Scotland, and to work in full partnership with the Scottish Government and local communities on the development of these programmes going forward to ensure they support job creation and a just transition, and meet the needs of Scotland's citizens.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S6M-02190, in the name of George Adam, on the 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) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/359) 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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