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Wednesday 5 June 2024

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 5 June 2024

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

Portfolio Question Time

Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, and Parliamentary Business

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is constitution, external affairs and culture, and parliamentary business. As ever, I make a plea for succinct questions and answers in order to get in as many questions as possible.

Fine Arts and Performing Arts (Engagement of Children and Young People)

1. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that children and young people have opportunities to engage with fine arts and performing arts, such as music, drama and art. (S6O-03516)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The Scottish Government's long-standing investment in the youth music initiative has helped young people across Scotland to access music-making opportunities and to develop their wider skills and learning. To improve the accessibility of theatre for school pupils, the National Theatre of Scotland, one of the five national performing companies that receives funding from the Scottish Government, manages a dedicated theatre in schools programme. Having expressive arts within Scotland's curriculum provides a platform for teachers to use interdisciplinary approaches and to work collaboratively with cultural organisations to increase opportunities for children and young people to engage with the arts.

Brian Whittle: Many of us first engage with the arts, such as music, drama and art, in the school curriculum. We know that access to arts in school has been consistently eroded by the Scottish Government. Does the cabinet secretary still believe that a broad education should include the arts? What damage is the lack of access to the arts in the education system doing to the future of performing arts such as music and drama?

Angus Robertson: Like Brian Whittle, I had the good fortune to go to a school in which music and

the arts were central to teaching. I learned a musical instrument and even reached the giddy heights of the Edinburgh secondary schools orchestra.

I agree with him that it is important that pupils right across Scotland get opportunities to take part in culture and the arts. In my initial answer to Mr Whittle's question, I outlined the ways in which that works extremely successfully. If Brian Whittle has any specific examples of where there are deficiencies, I would be happy to hear from him.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary outline how reductions to arts and culture spending by the Westminster Government have impacted Scotland's budget?

Angus Robertson: Through the Barnett formula, the Scottish Government receives block funding based on the total changes in United Kingdom departmental allocations for areas of devolved competence. The changes in spending by a UK Government department do not necessarily reflect an increase or decrease in that UK department's budget allocation, so they may not directly impact the Barnett consequential. However, I note that, although the UK Tory Government and the Welsh Labour Government have both cut culture spending, we, in Scotland, are increasing it.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): What assessment has the Scottish Government made or what assessment will it make of the viability of film in the curriculum, given that the funding for the screen educator in residence pilot programme, which the Scottish Government has supported, ends this month? How will the Government make sure that the progress that has been built by the programme is not lost?

Angus Robertson: Screen education has huge potential in Scotland's schools. In fact, a number of pilot schools have been implementing screen studies, which I am very excited about. Screen Scotland is taking that work forward and there is significant international interest in it. I would be happy to update Neil Bibby, to let him know about the plans for screen education to be introduced into Scotland's schools. I think that the work will have cross-party support.

Armed Forces Veterans (Census Data)

2. **Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the culture secretary has had with ministerial colleagues regarding how the census outputs on armed forces veterans, due to be released on 13 June, will be able to be used to inform a better understanding of the veterans community. (S6O-03517)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): Inclusion of a question on veteran status in the census for the first time marked a significant step forward in developing the evidence base on veterans in Scotland and their characteristics. Officials will analyse the outputs, which we will use to consider how we continue to support veterans and their families. The analysis will inform the discussions that the Minister for Veterans will have with other portfolio ministers. A further update on our work to use emerging evidence to understand more about the circumstances and needs of veterans will be provided in the minister's annual update to the Parliament.

Maurice Golden: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response and for the inclusion of the question in the census.

The most recent data show that the number of veterans of the UK armed forces resident in Scotland is 220,000. That data is from the annual population survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics in 2017, although we know that there is a reticence on the part of veterans to identify as such, which means that, in some cases, they cannot access the support services that they need. How will the cabinet secretary utilise the census data and share it with charities to aid them in targeting support for veterans?

Angus Robertson: Maurice Golden asks an important question and gives me the opportunity to commend him for his work as the convener of the cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community. In this week, when we mark the 80th anniversary of the D-day allied landings in France, the importance of our veterans and armed forces community is recognised across the Scottish Parliament and by the Scottish Government.

I give Maurice Golden the commitment that all relevant census information, once published, will be shared with Veterans Scotland and, through it, with all of its much-valued member charities, associations, trusts, organisations and veterans champions, which will help them in targeting support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Carol Mochan joins us remotely.

Heritage and Culture Preservation (Local Authorities)

3. Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on what role local authorities have in preserving the heritage and culture of the areas that they serve. (S6O-03518)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The Scottish Government's position is to ensure that local authorities have the freedom to make independent decisions for their own communities.

Local authorities have powers to designate conservation areas, or areas of special architectural or historic interest, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. They have planning authority to safeguard local development decisions in their areas in line with the national planning guidance and legislation in respect of historic assets. Local authorities may also develop their own heritage strategies to protect and celebrate heritage in their area.

Carol Mochan: Local authorities across Scotland, including Scottish National Party-run councils, are being forced to make savings in areas such as libraries, cultural centres and key heritage sites as a result of year-on-year real-terms cuts to their budgets by this Government. If it values the role that local authorities play in preserving the heritage and culture of the areas that they serve, why does the Scottish Government keep passing budgets that deliver brutal cuts to councils, putting heritage and culture sites across the south of Scotland and the rest of the country at risk?

Angus Robertson: The Scottish Government very much values the role that local authorities play in the provision of culture and heritage. I had the great pleasure of joining the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in recent weeks in hosting a meeting about this. Is there more that local authorities and the Scottish Government can do within our current budgets? I think that we are all trying our best, but there is no getting away from the fact that we are having to work within the structures of a United Kingdom austerity policy that is being pursued by the Conservative Party and that, sadly, is being emulated by the UK Labour Party.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary provide an update regarding the work of the local and national delivery group and how that work can help to increase links between local and national initiatives?

Angus Robertson: So far this year, the local and national delivery group has helped to shape the development of a collaborative event that was jointly hosted by the Scottish Government and COSLA. The event was held on 20 May and explored the value of culture in delivering a wealth of local outcomes, with a view to developing partnership working across boundaries at local and national levels. The Scottish Government will

work with the local and national delivery group to consider tangible next steps based on the themes raised at the event.

Independence (Engagement with Businesses)

4. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, as part of its work to further the case for Scottish independence, what engagement it has carried out with businesses regarding Scotland's constitutional future. (S6O-03519)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): This is a Government that is engaged with and supportive of business, and ministers and officials met a number of businesses and their representatives throughout the drafting of the "Building a New Scotland" series. We will continue to engage with and listen to Scotland's people, civic organisations and businesses, to drive a growing economy that is fair and green.

In a recent speech to business leaders, the First Minister advised that

"re-joining the European Union as an independent country and making our own economic decisions"

is the best way to meet the challenges that businesses face and to grow our economy.

Emma Roddick: The Scottish National Party Government has always supported small enterprises in my region, but many businesses are struggling due to the decisions that have been taken outwith Scotland on migration, trade and EU membership. Can the minister tell me how, compared with Brexit Britain's current insular approach, an independent Scotland will better serve Scottish business?

Angus Robertson: Scotland is already a good place to do business, as the on-going global success of many of our sectors and businesses testifies. As we set out in the "Building a New Scotland" prospectus papers, with greater powers over immigration, employment and taxation, an independent Scotland in the European Union could learn from the United Kingdom's failures and from industrial policy successes elsewhere to build a business environment that is designed to maximise the economic benefits of the many opportunities that Scotland has, not least the transition to net zero.

If colleagues have not yet read any of the papers, I draw their particular attention to the paper that compares the economic success of every one of our neighbouring countries, which all outperform the United Kingdom.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): When the cabinet secretary engages with business, is he able to give any meaningful insight into the SNP's

currency plans? His latest fictional white paper says:

"As soon as practicable, Scotland would move to its own independent currency, the Scottish pound.

Until then, the pound sterling would remain Scotland's currency."

Would the minister like to say how soon "As soon as practicable" is? Is that not just the latest attempt to kick difficult cans down the road as the Government glosses over the legitimate fears of Scottish business about his independence plans?

Angus Robertson: "No" is the short answer to Mr Hoy's question, but I encourage him to actually read the paper. I am not sure whether he has read it. [*Interruption.*] He is shaking his head, so he clearly has not read it. If he had, I am sure that he would have found the detail very convincing and hugely encouraging for Scotland.

We look forward to having the opportunity to live in a democracy and having a democratic say in a referendum about the country's future. Looking at all our neighbouring countries, which all outperform the United Kingdom, I think that it is a prize worth joining together for, across the chamber, although I suspect that that is not likely in the case of Mr Hoy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 is from Willie Rennie, who joins us remotely.

Early Learning and Childcare Provision

5. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to propose a parliamentary debate on the provision of early learning and childcare. (S6O-03520)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn): I recognise Willie Rennie's long-standing interest in childcare. As he will be aware, the Parliamentary Bureau is responsible for proposing the parliamentary business programme, which comes to Parliament for agreement. I am happy to discuss with him and the relevant minister whether I can bring the issue that he raises to the Parliamentary Bureau for consideration.

Willie Rennie: That is a helpful response from the minister, and I expect nothing less from him. It is really important that we take forward the previous First Minister's commitment to close the gap between the funding for the private, voluntary and independent sector and the funding for council nurseries. The gap is big and is having an impact on the provision of staff—particularly experienced staff—in private sector nurseries.

I am happy to meet the minister. Could we have that meeting next week, along with the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise, so that we can get the debate going?

Jamie Hepburn: I certainly commit to meeting Mr Rennie as soon as possible. He raises important issues. Notwithstanding the challenges, the private sector continues to grow, and more professionals are entering that part of the sector. Of course we can meet and discuss those matters. In principle, I am open to us having a debate, because it would enable us to debate the fact that we in Scotland already have the most generous provision of early years learning and childcare of any part of the United Kingdom.

Cultural Activities Participation (Motherwell and Wishaw)

6. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports people in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency to access and participate in cultural activities. (S6O-03521)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): Through our support of the Culture Collective programme, run by Creative Scotland, we supported Reeltime Music, which is based in Motherwell. Reeltime Music was awarded more than £270,000 to deliver a project that included working with communities in Motherwell, Glenboig, Airdrie and Bellshill, and to deliver region-wide projects with partners including Lanarkshire Deaf Club. Our youth music initiative access to music making fund also provided support for a music project in Wishaw, through Glencassels Community Development Project.

Clare Adamson: Because of Brexit, we have lost a number of extraordinary European Union cultural exchange programmes, which I know that Reeltime Music and Glencassels have in the past taken part in. The Tories and Labour have rejected proposals from the EU for freedom of movement for under-30s, again denying generations of young people wonderful opportunities. Will the minister set out the Scottish Government's priorities for giving opportunities to young people through cultural exchange?

Angus Robertson: The loss of access to the creative Europe programme has indeed had a major impact on young artists. The programme played a vital role in facilitating international cultural collaboration, which helped young artists to develop cross-border networks, to share knowledge and to learn from their peers.

The Scottish Government is calling on the United Kingdom Conservative Government and any incoming Labour Government to rejoin creative Europe as a priority. We also urge the UK Government to engage positively with the European Commission's proposal to open negotiations with it on youth mobility and to

constructively negotiate a deep and generous agreement with the European Union.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Elena Whitham joins us remotely.

Brexit (Impact on Culture Sector)

7. Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its assessment is of any impact that Brexit is having on Scotland's culture sector. (S6O-03522)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The United Kingdom Government's decision to leave the European Union has ended freedom of movement. Along with the UK Government's failure to negotiate with the EU a mobility agreement for creative professionals, that is making vital international activities such as touring in Europe far more difficult. Creative professionals now face barriers including visa and customs requirements, and restrictions on haulage. The loss of the creative Europe programme, which plays a unique and vital role in facilitating international cultural collaboration and developing cross-border networks, has meant that the opportunities for people in the sector to work and build relationships internationally are, sadly, more limited.

Elena Whitham: A few years into the disaster that is Brexit, we are better placed to assess and even measure lost opportunities. Will the cabinet secretary outline any analysis of the damage done to brand Scotland and our status as a leading nation for culture by the impact of Brexit on performers and artists?

Angus Robertson: As a Government, we engage closely with stakeholders from across the culture sector to assess the full impact of Brexit. We have repeatedly heard of creative professionals leaving the sector because of barriers to international opportunities, as well as hearing of international artists facing difficulties coming here.

We recently held a consultation on our international culture strategy, in which a wide range of stakeholders detailed the impact of leaving the European Union on Scotland's culture sector. A good first step to turning all that around would be for the United Kingdom to rejoin creative Europe.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Several cultural organisations in Scotland have reported a decline in the ability to deliver their services. That is not because of Brexit but because of the Scottish National Party Government's inability to provide adequate funding to the sector. Does the cabinet secretary

accept that his Government's funding failures have negatively impacted the sector?

Angus Robertson: That is a curious intervention from a party that is cutting culture spending in the rest of the United Kingdom, when the Scottish Government is increasing it. I know that, deep in his heart, Alexander Stewart supports the Scottish Government's efforts to raise spending on culture. I hope that I can continue to have his support, his party's support and support from across the chamber in increasing spending on culture.

The Scottish Government has committed to a £100 million boost to culture spending in Scotland, which is in stark contrast to the United Kingdom Government's cuts to culture in England and, indeed, to the Labour Government's cuts to culture in Wales.

Creative Scotland (Funding)

8. Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether Creative Scotland's funding will be increased during the next financial year. (S6O-03523)

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): I am pleased that the First Minister, when he was setting out his priorities for Scotland on 22 May, recommitted to investing at least £100 million more annually in culture and the arts by the financial year 2028-29.

As the finance secretary set out in her budget speech in December, the increases that we have provided this year were our first step on the route to investing at least £100 million more in the arts and culture by 2028-29. Our aim is to increase arts and culture investment in 2025-26, the next financial year, by at least a further £25 million.

Sharon Dowey: In October 2023, the then First Minister pledged to double arts spending during the period of Creative Scotland's next funding programme, but we are now faced with a stark reality. Creative Scotland has received bids that are worth £87.5 million for its multiyear funding programme, yet only £40 million is available, which is a significant shortfall. The shortfall puts many of Scotland's theatres, music venues and festivals at risk, and it could lead to Creative Scotland rejecting 55 per cent of applications. At the same time, the body has been criticised for giving funding to an explicit show. That has received significant backlash and has inevitably lowered public confidence. Will the cabinet secretary outline whether the Scottish Government will take any action to ensure that funding is given to projects that are deemed appropriate?

Angus Robertson: I think that Sharon Dowey knows that it is not for the Scottish Government to

give individual grant funding to cultural organisations. We have separation of Government from arts funding in this country. That is why we have an arm's-length cultural funding organisation, which is called Creative Scotland. It is important that we have that separation. I thought that, until now, we had party consensus on all that.

However, I think that we are agreed that we want to ensure that organisations—whether it is Creative Scotland or directly funded cultural organisations such as our national performing companies—receive the funding that they require. As I have already committed to, and as the First Minister has committed to, we are set to increase funding for culture in Scotland. That is a good thing and stands in stark contrast to what the United Kingdom Conservative Government is doing in England and what Labour is doing in Wales.

Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Following standstill funding, Creative Scotland will be able to fund only an estimated 45 per cent of long-term funding applications. Along with that, we have been waiting 18 months for the overhaul of long-term cultural funding from Creative Scotland, after that was postponed due to a lack of confidence or clarity about its future finances. Does the cabinet secretary agree that Creative Scotland needs clarity on its long-term funding so that our creative organisations can be secure in their future?

Angus Robertson: I agree that major funding changes are going through at present. I think that there is still cross-party consensus that multi-annual funding for our cultural organisations that are funded through Creative Scotland is a good thing. Creative Scotland is trailblazing in that respect. Other parts of the third sector do not receive multi-annual funding. It is important that Creative Scotland is able to introduce that approach, and I wish it well in doing that.

I think that the member understands, and perhaps Sharon Dowey also understands, that cultural organisations, in response to a call for funding, have asked for the maximum funding that they can receive. I understand that. We all need to operate within our means, but the means that we are putting at the disposal of the culture and arts sector in Scotland are going up. They are being cut in England under the Tories, and they are being cut in Wales under Labour.

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): The funding that has been mentioned affirms the Scottish Government's confidence in the Scottish culture sector and the principles of its culture strategy. With that in mind, what recent calls has the cabinet secretary made to the UK Government to match that stated ambition and increase its investment in arts and culture?

Angus Robertson: I have repeatedly written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and I have spoken with her, to highlight the importance of providing adequate support to the sector.

At the first meeting of the culture and creative industries interministerial group on 2 May, I highlighted to the secretary of state from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport the challenges that the sector faces as a result of financial constraints and the need for the UK Government to provide adequate investment in the sector. I also discussed existing initiatives to support the sector that could be built on, including tax relief in the sector.

Justice and Home Affairs

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is portfolio questions on justice and home affairs. Again, I would appreciate succinct questions and answers in order to allow as many members to have the opportunity to get in as possible.

Women Prisoners (Needs and Welfare)

1. **Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to address the needs and welfare of women prisoners, in light of the reported challenges arising from a growing prison population. (S60-03524)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance): The needs and welfare of all those in our care remains a key priority for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service. The SPS continues to manage those in custody with a person-centred approach and, together with its partners, to deliver a range of trauma-informed support and services to women in custody to meet their specific needs.

However, I have been clear that the critical pressures that the Prison Service experiences and their impact on women and men in prison as well as staff require urgent action. That is why I laid regulations before Parliament last week to seek approval to use the emergency release power in the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023.

Evelyn Tweed: It is welcome that the Scottish Prison Service is committed to becoming a more trauma-informed organisation. With that in mind, what steps is the service taking through the use of available technology to help create safe and secure environments, where doing so is viable?

Angela Constance: The Scottish Prison Service has invested in technologies to support its commitment to safety and security and to

becoming a trauma-informed organisation. Rapiscan machines, which are available in every prison, and body scanners, which are available in 11 establishments, further enhance our comprehensive suite of security measures that are deployed to keep our prisons safe. However, the SPS remains vigilant to the threat that is posed through the introduction of contraband and ensures that applied tactical measures complement the use of those technologies.

Advancements in technology have also allowed the SPS to roll out in-cell telephony throughout its estate. That facility supports positive mental health and wellbeing for those in the service's care, creating a holistic approach to security and to being trauma informed.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Women are routinely being strip-searched in Scottish prisons, despite ministers saying, five years ago, that the practice would be reduced. The cabinet secretary will know that the practice is particularly retraumatising for female prisoners who have suffered abuse in the past. Only this morning, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, the chief inspector of prisons, wrote to the cabinet secretary, asking for the practice to stop. Linda Allan, whose daughter Katie took her own life in Polmont prison, said that repeated strip-searching was a major factor in her death. How quickly does the cabinet secretary think that the practice can come to an end?

Angela Constance: I have already been in correspondence with the chief inspector of prisons with regard to this very serious matter. I, of course, share the chief inspector's concerns, although it must be noted that the chief inspector has acknowledged that there can be a legitimate role for body searching, if there is robust intelligence or robust reasonable grounds.

The member's point about the importance of trauma-informed practice also relates to my answer to Ms Tweed about advancing the use of technology, because the use of body scanners, for example, reduces the need for body searches. I am committed to continuing to engage not just with the inspector, but with the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, with whom I have had a conversation on the matter. I have sought further assurances that body searching will be used only where there are robust grounds and robust intelligence, and I am due to have further discussions with the Scottish Prison Service on the matter.

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): Natalie Beal, the governor of HMP Glenochil, has said that it is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with prisoners in their 60s and 70s. In 2018, the Scottish Prison Service spent £636,000 on prisoner social care, but that had trebled to £2.1 million by 2022. Given the growing population in

Scottish prisons, what action is the Scottish Government taking to deal with the increasingly complex needs of the prison population?

Angela Constance: I am grateful to Ms Dowey for raising that important point. I have discussed the matter in a number of previous statements to the Parliament. Ms Beal is quite correct, in that the prison population is not just increasing but becoming increasingly elderly, and that comes with significant health and social care needs. As I have previously stated to Parliament, there is engagement with the SPS and the cross-Government prison healthcare group on how we can better address the needs of community safety and security in our establishments and ensure better care for elderly long-term prisoners.

Scottish Government Resilience Room

2. **Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what role the Scottish Government resilience room would play in the event of a major nuclear incident. (S6O-03525)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance): Civil and defence nuclear safety are reserved matters. However, the Scottish Government holds responsibility for the off-site consequence management of a nuclear incident effect in Scotland.

The Scottish Government resilience room is the Scottish Government's central co-ordination mechanism for responding to civil contingencies and complex emergencies. In the case of a major nuclear incident, that mechanism would activate to facilitate an effective Scottish Government response to the incident. The resilience room would provide Scottish ministers and senior officials with situational awareness, facilitate Government co-ordination and support communication with responders at all levels in Scotland and, of course, with the United Kingdom Government.

Bill Kidd: As the cabinet secretary is aware, the UK's nuclear submarine fleet is based at Faslane, which is 25 miles from Glasgow. In the event of a major nuclear incident, the Ministry of Defence's conservative projections suggest wholesale evacuation within a 30-mile radius and a shelter warning for everyone extended over a 75-mile radius. Given the increasing frequency of nuclear incidents on the Clyde and the very real danger to life that that could present, does the minister agree that all parties in the Parliament should work together in calling for the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland?

Angela Constance: I am, of course, in favour of all parties working together. The Scottish Government's position on nuclear weapons is clear and long-standing: we are firmly opposed to

the possession, threat and use of nuclear weapons. They are strategically and economically wrong; they are indiscriminate and devastating in their impacts; and their use would bring unspeakable humanitarian suffering and widespread environmental damage.

The Scottish Government has consistently expressed a commitment to removing nuclear weapons from Scotland in the safest and most expeditious manner possible, following a vote for independence. That position was last set out in the recent paper in the "Building a New Scotland" series, "An independent Scotland's place in the world".

Violent Crime

3. **Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to Police Scotland to tackle violent crimes in local communities. (S6O-03526)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance): The latest Scottish crime and justice survey results show a 58 per cent fall in violent crime since 2008-09, with an increase in the number of adults feeling safe in their local communities over the same time. We welcome that encouraging progress, but we are not complacent. Despite difficult financial circumstances due to United Kingdom Government austerity, our budget for 2024-25 includes record police funding of £1.55 billion, which is an increase of nearly £93 million. That investment is ensuring that Scotland continues to have more police officers per capita than England and Wales, with 30 officers per 10,000 of the population at 31 March 2024, compared with 24 officers per 10,000 of the population in England and Wales at 30 September 2023.

Jackson Carlaw: The police quarterly report that was presented to East Renfrewshire Council confirmed that there continued to be an overall increase in non-sexual crimes of violence in East Renfrewshire, with the figure up to 68 from the 55 offences that were recorded for the same period in the previous year. I think that the cabinet secretary and I entered Parliament at the same time, in 2007. She will remember that the proudest boast of her Government by the end of that session of Parliament was that it had increased police numbers by 1,000 officers. Obviously, therefore, I am dismayed to find that we now have the lowest level of police numbers since 2008.

To tackle violent crimes in East Renfrewshire and across Scotland, does the cabinet secretary not agree that increasing the number of police officers should once again be a priority for the Scottish Government to help to keep our local communities safe?

Angela Constance: I assure Mr Carlaw that policing most certainly remains a key priority of this Government. However, I am concerned to hear of the monthly reports on violent crime in his constituency. The longer-term trend shows that, from 2006-07 to 2022-23, there was a 36 per cent reduction in violent crime in his constituency. That reduction was greater than the 25 per cent reduction in the country as a whole.

Nonetheless, I take seriously Mr Carlaw's concerns about the recent fluctuation in the monthly figures. He might be reassured to know that, as of 31 March this year, there were 2,459 officers in G division, which covers his constituency. That is 72 more officers than there were in the previous quarter.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary provide an update regarding the steps that are being taken to ensure that, despite the deeply challenging financial circumstances due to the United Kingdom Government's financial settlement, the increased Scottish Police Authority resource budget supports further police recruitment?

Angela Constance: Although the recruitment and deployment of police officers is, of course, a matter for the chief constable, I am reassured that she is taking action to get the number of officers up to between 16,500 and 16,600. More than 310 new officers have commenced their training this year, and there are plans to recruit a further 840 new officers between July and the end of March.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): I recently met East Kilbride victims of teen violence, which is a group of local residents who have been affected and shocked by recent events in the town. Will the cabinet secretary outline the work that the Scottish Government is taking forward, alongside the police, with important organisations including the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit and Medics Against Violence? How can their expertise be used in towns such as East Kilbride, where police data shows that there has been a significant rise in youth violence?

Angela Constance: I share Collette Stevenson's concern about youth crime. I understand that Police Scotland is investigating incidents in East Kilbride and that it has deployed additional patrols to reassure the community.

Through our violence prevention framework, we are supporting a programme of action, backed by over £2 million this year, to prevent and reduce violence across Scotland. In East Kilbride, the funding is supporting the targeted work of Medics Against Violence and No Knives, Better Lives to prevent youth violence in the first place.

Although such problems should be of concern to each and every one of us in the chamber, I hope that Collette Stevenson can take some reassurance from the fact that, as I have highlighted, there has been an overall reduction in youth crime and crime generally, with violent crime having decreased by 58 per cent since 2008-09.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 4 was not lodged.

Non-crime Hate Incidents (Recording)

5. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Police Scotland in relation to its guidance on recording non-crime hate incidents. (S6O-03528)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance): On 9 May 2024, Police Scotland published its interim guidance on responding to hate crime, which includes information on the recording and handling of non-crime hate incidents. Although the recording of non-crime hate incidents and the development of guidance are operational matters for Police Scotland, the chief constable and I discussed the matter when we met on 30 April.

Murdo Fraser: I am aware that, following concerns that I and others raised about the lawfulness of Police Scotland's policy on recording non-crime hate incidents, it has now changed its policy to bring it into line with the Miller judgment. Police Scotland appears to have done so from 1 April, but it took it another five weeks to update its policy and tell anyone that it was changing. Only then was its website updated. Although that change is welcome, what will happen to all the non-crime hate incidents that were recorded under the old policy, which Police Scotland has tacitly accepted was unlawful?

Angela Constance: I reassure Mr Fraser that I have discussed the matter not only with the chief constable; I have also taken the opportunity to discuss it at length with Martyn Evans, the chair of the Scottish Police Authority board, because the SPA has a crucial role in scrutinising Police Scotland operational matters.

Obviously, I take very seriously concerns that are expressed in the chamber. I do not think that Police Scotland would have the same interpretation of what is lawful or unlawful as Mr Fraser has articulated but, given that the detail of the policy is firmly located in an operational space, I will ask the chief constable or the chair of the SPA to reply directly to Mr Fraser on that point.

Justice System

6. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to

reports that the Scottish justice system is “close to collapse” and that solicitors are taking industrial action. (S6O-03529)

The Minister for Victims and Community Safety (Siobhian Brown): I am aware of the position that has been adopted by the Scottish Solicitors Bar Association. Legal aid solicitors play a crucial role in our justice system, which is why, since 2021, there has been investment of £31 million in legal aid. We will continue to work with the legal profession and others to identify measures to improve and reform Scotland’s legal aid system.

We will continue to work with and support our justice partners in achieving the outcomes described in “The Vision for Justice in Scotland” by taking forward a programme to drive key areas of reform, including criminal justice efficiency under a criminal justice efficiency programme. The 2024-25 budget provides almost £3.8 billion to be invested across the justice system.

Sarah Boyack: I thank the minister for that answer. One of the reasons for the industrial action is the Scottish Government’s proposal in the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill for a pilot of rape trials being conducted by a single judge without a jury. The proposed pilot trials have had a mixed reaction from victims and survivors of rape. Survivors have shared with the Criminal Justice Committee their concerns that not even judges are without unconscious bias and that decisions will rest with one judge. It is clear that the Scottish Government has not been able to secure widespread support for the pilot project from the legal sector or survivors, so will the minister support amendments at stage 2 to remove the provisions from the legislation?

Siobhian Brown: The cabinet secretary will consider the stage 1 recommendations from the Criminal Justice Committee and stakeholders.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Can the minister reaffirm that the Scottish Government is committed to the principle of legal aid, which ensures that free legal services are available to those who are most in need?

Siobhian Brown: Yes, the Scottish Government remains committed to the principle of legal aid. We have maintained resourcing of legal aid and have not actually cut its availability. It is a demand-led budget that is directly linked to application numbers; all those who are eligible will continue to benefit from legal aid.

Fatal Accident Inquiries (Delays)

7. Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its

position is on whether there are excessive delays in holding fatal accident inquiries. (S6O-03530)

The Solicitor General for Scotland (Ruth Charteris KC): The decision to hold a fatal accident inquiry is taken after thorough and independent investigation, the timeframe for which depends on the nature and circumstances of the death. There are often legitimate reasons for prolonged investigation, including the need to await the outcome of investigations by reporting agencies, to consider reports from agencies or to instruct expert evidence.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has significantly reformed its processes in recent years to improve the quality of death investigations and to reduce the time taken to investigate deaths and bring FAIs to court. However, in some cases FAIs have simply taken too long to commence. We appreciate and very much regret the impact that waiting for investigations to conclude has on families.

Fergus Ewing: What faith can bereaved families have in the justice system when they have to wait, in some cases for eight years, before an FAI is held and are fobbed off with explanations that appear to have come from “The Bumper Book of Excuses”? Will the Solicitor General or the Lord Advocate therefore come before Parliament and give a full statement so that Parliament as a whole can scrutinise this failure of the current system?

The Solicitor General for Scotland: I recognise that all families who have lost a loved one rightly expect investigations into the death to be progressed as expeditiously as possible. I offer my sincere apologies to all families who have simply waited too long for FAI proceedings to commence.

We want to do better. To that end, we have been working hard to make changes, and significant modernisation has taken place. For example, criminal investigations and related wider death investigations now proceed in parallel, so that FAIs can begin swiftly after the conclusion of criminal proceedings. We are working with specialists and other partner agencies to reduce the time that it takes to conclude investigations. Every death investigation that is more than two years old and deaths in custody are monitored by senior management through a case-management panel process. We have also instituted a death investigations improvement board.

Death investigations are a difficult, sensitive and hugely important area of work that the COPFS strives to do well. There are inherent challenges in death investigations, which are not unique to Scotland. There are clear indications that the situation is improving. However, neither I nor the Lord Advocate are beyond self reflection. If there

is a need for a statement, either of us would be happy to do so.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): Typically, a few dozen FAIs take place each year, while all other deaths are considered behind closed doors at the Crown Office. Compare that with the situation in England and Wales, where tens of thousands of coroners' inquests are held in public. Families keep being failed by Scotland's slow and ineffective system of investigating sudden, suspicious, accidental or unexplained deaths.

Does the solicitor general agree that a root-and-branch review of FAIs is needed?

The Solicitor General for Scotland: In our system, the Lord Advocate will instruct a discretionary fatal accident inquiry where it is in the public interest that one be held. Those are in addition to FAIs that are compulsory being held.

Every year, we investigate a large number of deaths. This year, we have dealt with approximately 14,000 deaths, the majority of which concluded within 12 weeks. In many cases, it is simply the case that there are no lessons to be learned from the tragedy and it is enough that the family is made aware of what happened to their loved one.

Scotland is not the only jurisdiction where a small number of complex deaths can take a long time to properly investigate. Although coroners' inquests begin rapidly in England, they still take many years to reach conclusions. That is not to diminish or dismiss the responsibility for investigating deaths as quickly as possible and for placing the dignity of the deceased and their families at the heart of the process.

I can speak only for the work that is being carried out by the dedicated, experienced and independent team in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, which—as I have indicated—is working hard to make changes and bring forward an increase in speed.

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 (Implementation)

8. Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the implementation of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 since it came into force on 1 April 2024. (S6O-03531)

The Minister for Victims and Community Safety (Siobhian Brown): The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 sends a strong message to victims, perpetrators and communities that offences that are motivated by prejudice will not be tolerated. The act consolidates, maintains

and extends protections that are aggravated by prejudice, as well as including stirring up of hatred offences for all characteristics covered in the hate crime legislative framework.

The offence of stirring up racial hatred has been in Scots law since 1986. We have worked closely with Police Scotland and other justice partners to ensure the 2021 act's effective implementation, and we will continue to do so.

Tess White: I have been liaising with Police Scotland about engagement with women's groups on the implications of the hate crime act for their lawful meetings. Disappointingly, Police Scotland has indicated to me that it will not participate in that vital engagement while it is in the process of developing longer-term policies around the 2021 act.

Does the minister or the cabinet secretary agree that input from women's groups should influence the process and should not occur after it has concluded? Will the minister and the cabinet secretary make representations to Police Scotland to ensure that women's voices are heard?

Siobhian Brown: Yes, I agree. We have been told that Police Scotland will consult internally and externally.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Police Scotland data shows us that the volume of reports has consistently reduced week on week. Does the cabinet secretary believe that the early high numbers of reports were due to widespread misinformation about the 2021 act, including, unfortunately, from members in the chamber?

Siobhian Brown: Recent Police Scotland data shows that the volume of reports at week 7 has reduced by more than 99 per cent from the first week of the act's commencement. The fact that we have seen so many reports since implementation reinforces the importance of the hate crime act.

Although the commentary surrounding the act during its implementation included misrepresentation, it is important to remember that the act was passed by 82 members of the Parliament. People and communities who are at the sharp end of hatred in their daily lives, simply for being who they are, should rightly look to this Parliament to stand with them, which the Scottish Government will continue to do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on justice and home affairs. There will be a very short pause to allow front-bench teams to change positions.

Low-emission Zones

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Fiona Hyslop on protecting public health and improving air quality. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:52

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport (Fiona Hyslop): When it comes to protecting health and tackling the climate emergency, which all of us in Parliament claim to have an interest in and which we say is a priority, the warm words and rhetoric are the easy part. The hard bit is taking action.

I recall that, when the Transport (Scotland) Bill was discussed in Parliament in 2019, Liam Kerr, a Conservative, stated:

“We believe that low-emission zone schemes are a good thing”—[*Official Report*, 10 October 2019; c 105.]

Colin Smyth, a Labour member, was very supportive. He said:

“The proposals on low-emission zones introduce a much-needed framework ... and they are very welcome.”—[*Official Report*, 10 October 2019; c 94-95.]

Showing that the support extended across all parties, Mike Rumbles, a Liberal Democrat, said:

“There are good measures in the bill, such as ... the creation of low-emission zones.”—[*Official Report*, 10 October 2019; c 99.]

The Government will never shy away from taking the tough action that is required to protect the health of the most vulnerable or from tackling the biggest threat that our planet faces. I am therefore pleased to inform members that, after several years of development and planning, we now have low-emission zones operating in our four largest cities, keeping the most polluting vehicles out of our city centres and protecting our citizens.

I will address the comments that Liam Kerr made in the chamber when he asked for the statement. He asked what flexibility local authorities have with regard to low-emission zones. The four cities were responsible for the design of, planning for and consultation on their LEZs. Each local authority gained relevant committee approval prior to submitting its LEZ scheme to the Scottish ministers for approval. The local authority has the flexibility to determine the geographical area of the LEZ, the types of vehicles that are within its scope, the length of grace periods and the granting of local time-limited exemptions. It also has the power to vary the hours of operation away from the default position

of 24/7 and it may make amendments to or revoke an LEZ, subject to the Scottish ministers' approval.

The Scottish Government is committed to low-emission zones as they are a significant public health intervention. I am sure that, with time, the introduction of our low-emission zones will be considered a watershed moment and held in the same regard as the smoking ban and, before that, the ban on lead in petrol. LEZs are an obvious, sensible and essential intervention to protect everyone's health, but particularly that of young children, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

The benefits of better air quality are well understood, with further evidence being published continually. Members will be aware that the University of Dundee recently published a study on hospital respiratory admissions in the Tayside area. It found that respiratory admissions of children were significantly associated with elevated levels of air pollution in the area. The lead researcher on the study, Professor Jill Belch, has been very clear about the harmful effects of air pollution on the brains and lungs of babies and children. We simply cannot condemn our future generations to disease and infection when a limited and targeted intervention such as low-emission zones can make a difference. Experts around the world agree that measures such as LEZs are essential to tackle air pollution and, therefore, protect children and the most vulnerable.

We can rightly be proud of the important role that our city centres play in promoting Scotland for business and trade, attracting tourism and being the places of entertainment and nightlife that we all enjoy. However, they are also places where large numbers of people live and spend time. We want our city centres to continue to thrive, so we must be responsible and do what we can to reduce pollution in those areas. In banning only a minority of the most polluting vehicles, LEZs will deliver air quality improvements by specifically targeting those vehicles. That evidence-based policy is an obvious, commonsense intervention. I commend the four city councils for their action to protect health and improve air quality, and I welcome it.

It is not the case that Scotland is unique in introducing this type of emission-based vehicle access restriction—far from it. The four Scottish cities join more than 320 towns and cities across Europe that have similar schemes, helping to make cities cleaner, healthier, safer and more attractive places to live, work and visit.

Critics of LEZs suggest that current air quality means that they are not needed. However, the detractors fail to acknowledge that recent air quality improvements are, in part, due to

preparations for LEZ enforcement. Businesses, fleet operators and members of the public have not left it until the last minute. Instead, they have invested in cleaner vehicles in the years running up to enforcement starting.

The other key point that some fail to comprehend is that the legal air quality targets are the absolute minimum standards that are required—the floor, rather than the ceiling—of our missions for health and the environment. There is no safe level of air pollution, and any air pollution has detrimental impacts on health.

Hope Street in Glasgow has long been known to be the most polluted street in Scotland. However, with the first, bus-only phase of Glasgow's LEZ having started in 2018 and with cleaner buses in place, that street now just meets the minimum air quality targets. With all vehicles in Glasgow city centre now being required to be LEZ compliant, we can expect even better results in the future.

Any suggestion that the LEZs have made air quality in the zones worse is nothing more than mischief making and selective cherry picking of data that is based on limited information. Full monitoring and performance reports, including on air quality in the cities, are a statutory requirement and will be published in due course.

This Government has provided extensive support to those households on low incomes and microbusinesses that have needed help to prepare for the LEZs. Since 2019, £13 million has been provided through our LEZ support fund to help low-income households and microbusinesses to prepare for the LEZs. A further £5 million will be available this year, including £2 million specifically for taxis. Through that scheme, more than 3,700 of the most polluting vehicles have been scrapped and alternative sustainable means of transport supported. For example, more than 2,000 bikes have been provided in place of scrapped vehicles. That, in turn, highlights the side benefits of our LEZ policy in helping to reduce car kilometres, tackle climate change and encourage healthier travel choices.

We are acutely aware that many disabled people rely on their cars or lifts from others and that some of those vehicles may not be LEZ compliant. We have therefore developed a system whereby blue badge holders can register for an exemption for not just their vehicle but any vehicle that they need to travel in. So far, more than 15,000 blue badge holders have registered with the scheme.

I am aware that concerns have been raised about the LEZs potentially having a negative effect on footfall in the cities. However, data from Glasgow earlier this year shows that footfall in the city centre was matching the pre-Covid levels at

weekends and that evening footfall is higher than before, which indicates that the LEZ has had no negative effect. It is true that daytime footfall is slightly down, but that appears to be attributable in the main to changed working practices such as home working, which mean that cities are not as busy during office hours.

I formally place on the record my thanks to the four local authorities, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Transport Scotland officials for their focus and determination in delivering the LEZs. The work that has been done behind the scenes in undertaking the detailed assessment and design of the LEZs has been under way for a long time. In addition, the extensive marketing and awareness-raising campaigns that have been undertaken since 2019 have helped drivers and businesses around the country by giving them ample time to prepare for the LEZs.

We acknowledge that, although the move to LEZs will not affect the vast majority of vehicles on the road, it will mean that owners of high-polluting older vehicles will have to take action to avoid receiving penalty charge notices. Whether that will mean switching to a cleaner vehicle—petrol cars that are newer than 2006 are generally all compliant—or to more sustainable transport options, or varying their route to avoid the relatively small city centre areas, the effect is that only the owners of the most polluting vehicles need to take action.

The introduction of the low-emission zones is an essential measure to tackle the potentially life-changing impacts of harmful air pollution. I would like to think that all members see the low-emission zones for what they are—a reasonable and proportionate response to a very real public health issue that has been largely ignored for far too long.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing advance sight of her statement. However, I have to say that there was very little point to it. It does not tell us anything that we did not already know. Apart from revealing an alliance between Liam Kerr, Colin Smyth and Mike Rumbles, it does not announce anything. It is just a defence of low-emission zones. For the avoidance of doubt, we have never been against low-emission zones in Scotland. Our view is that decisions on such zones are local decisions. Our concerns have always been about the implementation.

If we accept that the owners of older vehicles are often less well off, that gives rise to a couple of questions. What analysis has the Scottish Government done on how many older vehicles will be affected in the low-emission zones for those who live and work in the zones? How many taxis in Scotland are still non-compliant?

Fiona Hyslop: Graham Simpson has raised a number of issues. I am more than happy to take parliamentary time to promote good policies such as low-emission zones, so I am happy to be here to make the statement. I point out that the reason for the statement is that Liam Kerr did not understand where the responsibilities between national Government and local government lay and what flexibilities there were. That is why I took the opportunity to address those issues right at the beginning of my statement.

I agree that this is about local decisions. If Graham Simpson wants to talk about local implementation, that is probably not the basis for him to ask questions of me, as the national Cabinet Secretary for Transport. That is a matter for him to have meetings about with the relevant local authorities.

Graham Simpson's substantive question was about how many vehicles are affected. Seventy-five to 80 per cent of cars that will be in the city centres are expected to be compliant. In relation to taxis, we know that, for example, there has been total support for Glasgow, which means that 1,100 taxis are now compliant in Glasgow. I can also provide the information that Glasgow City Council has provided exemptions for another 202 taxi vehicles post the end of June 2024.

I have tried to give Graham Simpson some additional information that he may not have, but I remind him that the reason for the statement is that Liam Kerr wanted to have clarity on local flexibility.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): First, I make it clear that Scottish Labour supports the view that local authorities should have the powers to be able to tackle poor air quality and air pollution where it exists. When it comes to low-emission zones, it is crucial that an authority understands the impact of introducing an LEZ and that it works with communities, local businesses and transport providers to properly assess the impact and to provide support to ensure the success of the scheme.

In Glasgow, black cab businesses could be lost, in part due to the lack of appropriate support. Will the cabinet secretary ensure that the Government undertakes a review of the implementation of the LEZs across Scotland so that any lessons that need to be learned are learned? Will she put in

place options for any support that is required to ensure that the LEZs are successful?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, I will. I reassure the member that I have had regular meetings with the council leads—the councillors for Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, and his colleague Councillor Scott McArthur in Edinburgh. We are already learning lessons from each other, and I think that that is correct. It is a very appropriate question.

I should have pointed out that licensing in Glasgow has been slightly different. For example, in Dundee and Aberdeen, far more of the taxis were already compliant for different reasons, although Aberdeen has an exemption for a further year. We know that more than 450 taxis have already been retrofitted to Euro 6, with grants providing up to £10,000 of capital costs.

The question gives me the opportunity to highlight that, in 2024-25, a further £2 million will be made available to support taxi operators with retrofitting costs.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): We know that some vehicles pollute more than others or have done so in the past. Can the cabinet secretary provide any update regarding the funding that has been provided through the low-emission zone support fund to date to enable more of those vehicles and operators to comply with the low-emission zone requirements? How many households and businesses is that fund expected to have supported?

Fiona Hyslop: A total of £13.1 million has been paid out to lower-income households and smaller businesses through the scheme between October 2019 and March 2024, which has seen more than 4,000 non-LEZ-compliant, high-polluting vehicles taken off our roads. Help to meet the LEZ standards has been provided to an estimated 2,500 lower-income households and—in answer to Mr Rowley's point, too—to 1,600 small businesses. As I indicated, there is also a further £2 million this year for taxi operators.

Through our bus emission abatement retrofit, which has helped to improve our bus fleet, more than £24 million has been allocated to allow more than 1,100 midlife buses and coaches, operated by 59 different bus coach companies, to be cleaned up to the latest Euro 6 emission standard.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for clarifying the Aberdeen City Council leader's misunderstandings on flexibility. On that point, crucially, the emissions data that the Aberdeen City Council used to justify imposing the Government's 2017 LEZ appears to be years out of date, and existing emissions do not seem to come from vehicles anyway. Nevertheless, Aberdeen City Council has spent

£1.5 million so far. Can the cabinet secretary tell us more about the performance reports on emissions reductions? Will those reports contain an assessment of whether such reductions outweigh the council's spend, the negative impact on disabled, older and poorer people, and the devastating impact on Aberdeen's local businesses?

Fiona Hyslop: I thank Liam Kerr for acknowledging that I have addressed his question on flexibility. To say that emissions from vehicles make no contribution is really overstating it, so I caution against saying that there are no emissions.

The emission zones have been operational for a number of years, allowing time for people to change their vehicles. Therefore, the data that is used would not necessarily be from the year of enforcement but could be from previous years. However, in our next meeting with the four council leads, we will address the point that was previously raised about how we monitor the process.

I also want to dispel the point about the impact, particularly on people with disabilities. I emphasise that blue badge holders can apply for exemptions not just for themselves but for a car that they are driving in, and a scheme has been established to ensure that that happens.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome what the cabinet secretary has said in her statement about lung health. The cross-party group on lung health, which I am co-convenor of, has heard evidence on how poor air quality can stunt the growth of children's lungs, worsen existing lung conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma and even cause lung cancer. Will research and monitoring continue to be done on how low-emission zones are protecting people against poor lung health?

Fiona Hyslop: That monitoring is very important. I am pleased that Gareth Brown, the chair of the healthy air Scotland coalition and a representative of Asthma and Lung UK Scotland, has made that point. With one in five Scots developing a lung condition such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease during their lifetime, air pollution can trigger life-threatening asthma attacks and flare-ups and, as we have heard, children are more susceptible. The public health aspects of the policy are very important. I commend the work that the University of Dundee has done and I would like to see more work being done on the monitoring that Emma Harper has referred to. I pay tribute to her and others in the Parliament for raising the issue of lung disease and the impacts that it could have on people's daily lives.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Can the cabinet secretary give an update on what financial support the Scottish Government has offered to councils and small businesses to upgrade their fleets, particularly given the costs of upgrading to electric vehicles? Many councils and businesses want to do that, but there have been challenges in the aftermath of Covid, which impacted many of our small businesses.

Fiona Hyslop: We are very conscious of fleet replacement, both in relation to this issue and more generally in relation to support for an electric fleet. We have already provided funding for councils and we are about to provide more funding for them for fleet replacement, although I am not sure what we can announce at this time. That is an important part of it. The member asked about support for councils; we have supported them on the promotion of the LEZs and their administration. It varies as to which councils have received the money, but they are in the process of receiving the support for the administration of low-emission zones.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, from when they are in the womb until they reach adulthood. Pollution can cause low birth weight, asthma and reduced lung function, among other things. With the European Environment Agency estimating that more than 1,200 deaths in people who are under 18 are caused by air pollution every year, does the cabinet secretary agree that air quality policies such as LEZs should protect the health of children and young people by explicitly taking into account the differences in their biology and exposure pathways?

Fiona Hyslop: In recent weeks, the contribution from health experts who have helped to explain the difference that LEZs will have for young people has been quite striking. Young people are still developing, so the impacts on them are even more severe. The University of Aberdeen has done some interesting work to look at the cognitive development of babies and children and the impact that air pollution can have on that. Air pollution is firmly in the public health arena. I am pleased that, across the cities, and from different parties, we have support for the policy.

Lorna Slater (Lothian) (Green): The Scottish Greens welcome the enforcement of Scotland's low-emission zones. Revenue that is raised by the policy will have a transformational effect in Glasgow, where it will be used to support local, sustainable transport projects. Organisations such as the Cargo Bike Movement in Lothian, which I visited this week, are in desperate need of similar support. The Cargo Bike Movement not only uses cargo bikes to redistribute food to those who need it but loans and rents those bikes to the

community, so that people can transport goods in a low-carbon way. What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that the revenue from the new LEZ schemes will be redistributed as quickly as possible to organisations that are doing great work to get people out of their cars and on to bikes?

Fiona Hyslop: I commend the work of the organisation that Lorna Slater has referred to. I emphasise that the LEZs are a public health measure and are not for revenue raising. She is correct in saying that any revenues that are raised are required to be spent on transport and improvement measures that are chosen by local authorities. However, we want to be in a situation in which the schemes do not raise revenue and in which fewer penalty charge notices are issued because we have made improvements in the number of people coming into LEZ enforcement areas. I am keen to ensure that we pursue the policy for public health reasons, rather than to raise revenue.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP): I am sure that the cabinet secretary will join me in commending the fantastic work that Dundee City Council has been undertaking to electrify its vehicle fleet and support the increase in the number of electric taxis and buses in the city. It is, of course, early days for the LEZs in Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, but is the cabinet secretary aware of any significant problems with compliance or early impacts on people travelling to and around Scotland's city centres? Does the cabinet secretary share my concerns that the interests of the Tories, rather than being concerned about people's health, appear to be entirely connected with the upcoming general election?

Fiona Hyslop: Joe FitzPatrick has made his point. As a minister in the pre-election period, I will not comment on the latter part of his question.

It is early days, but the feedback from local authorities and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is positive. We are not aware of any operational, camera or enforcement systems issues. The first penalty charge notices are expected to land on doormats by the end of this week.

I join Joe FitzPatrick in commending the work of Dundee City Council. It has been replacing its fleets and ensuring that, through licensing, its taxis are modernised—for lots of different reasons, not least for EV use and for people with disabilities. I am very interested in how Dundee has carried out that exercise. Each local authority has developed its own scheme and has engaged with local communities on its own terms, which is as it should be. We are confident that, if we can improve the air quality in our cities, we will improve

not only the quality of public health but the quality of life for those who live, work and visit there.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The cabinet secretary referred to engagement with local communities, and she is absolutely right to point to the importance of allowing local flexibility. She will be aware that residents in Orkney and Shetland often arrive in Aberdeen by ferry, sometimes for hospital appointments at the Aberdeen royal infirmary. What would her expectation be of the level of consultation and awareness raising on how people from Orkney and Shetland arriving in Aberdeen might engage with or, indeed, avoid the low-emission zones?

Fiona Hyslop: I am aware that, for some time, there has been pre-promotion by the northern isles ferry service, in particular, to ensure that people who have been using that service are being presented with information on what happens when people come into Aberdeen harbour. There is also signage around Aberdeen harbour to make sure that people are aware of where they can go.

The geography of the city centre LEZs are, on average, a square mile. It varies from city to city. In the end, between 1 and 2 per cent of the whole city environment has been affected by the measure. Of course, that is the part of the city that is most congested and where the air quality issues have historically been more problematic. We need to improve the air quality for public health reasons, as it is affecting those who live there and children in particular.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): The ministerial team has given its full backing to the low-emission zone in Scotland's capital, which might also reduce traffic volumes and tackle congestion across Edinburgh.

Will the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity give his backing to a project that is estimated to remove half a million cars during the central belt rush hour—a project that will be more beneficial to achieving our net zero goals than Edinburgh's low-emission zone—and build a station in Winchburgh?

Fiona Hyslop: As Cabinet Secretary for Transport, I will be answering the question. I think that Sue Webber has been a member long enough to know that it is the same minister who answers questions as presents the statement.

I am a great champion of Winchburgh in my capacity as a back-bench MSP, and I have been for many years. As I said in committee just yesterday, I was instrumental in bringing all the players together to make sure that we got further on than we would have been otherwise. I am delighted that my colleague Mr Fairlie will be taking on that issue.

Sue Webber makes an important point. If we are to tackle congestion in cities—not just in the city centre but over wider areas—it is the people of East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian who have to be supported in relation to how they travel into cities. On that point, I agree with her.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I wonder whether the cabinet secretary agrees with Dr Richard Dixon when he says, in today's *Scotsman*, that the successful introduction of low-emission zones in Scotland has been

“Despite a certain amount of nervousness and political parties playing games”,

which shows that

“politicians can be bolder when introducing environmental measures.”

He goes on to say that a survey found that

“3 times as many people in Scotland support LEZs as oppose them.”

Therefore, does the cabinet secretary agree that the public has more appetite for well-designed environmental measures?

Fiona Hyslop: I do, indeed, and I recognise the recent opinion polls that show that vast majority of support from the public for such measures.

I regret any party political positioning around that, but I also reiterate that our most successful policies are those on which we all come together across the parties. That is the leadership that the people of Scotland want.

Of course, we are not alone, because 320 towns and cities across Europe—an increase of 40 per cent since 2019—have introduced such vehicle access restriction schemes. Those countries include Germany, Italy, Denmark, the Czech Republic, France and Portugal, and England has clear air zones in Bath, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Portsmouth, Sheffield and Tyneside.

The public are looking to us to collectively push forward pro-public health and pro-environmental policies, and to do so in a way that takes everyone with us.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Not all disabled people have blue badges, and often the only accessible public transport that is available to them is taxis, which many rely on to get to work or appointments or to see family and friends.

In Glasgow, despite the extension that the cabinet secretary has mentioned, 246 taxi drivers still need help to comply, because they have not been able to access the funds or mechanics to do what is needed. The result is that one in five drivers will hand back their licence, which will impact many people in the region, including, disproportionately, disabled people.

I support the aspirations of a low-emission zone, but the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council have to address that issue. What more can the cabinet secretary do to help the remaining 246 taxi drivers to stay in work? If she will not take further action on that, will she set out how she expects disabled people to get around Glasgow with fewer taxis available to take them?

Fiona Hyslop: Pam Duncan-Glancy has consistently raised that issue with me. The purpose of the statement is to recognise the flexibility that each local authority has to make changes, which she acknowledges. As we have reflected, Glasgow City Council has exempted another 202 taxis, which brings the total to 1,100 that are available for use. That is my understanding, and I will correct the record if I am wrong about that total.

As Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and my local authority have done, Glasgow has to recognise that all black cabs must have disability access. There is a variability between local authorities in the licensing that is required so that people with disabilities can use taxis when they need to. That needs to be the focus, rather than the LEZs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the ministerial statement. There will be a short pause before we move on to the next item of business, to allow front-bench teams to change positions.

Road Infrastructure

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-13480, in the name of Graham Simpson, on improving Scotland's roads. I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak buttons now or as soon as possible, and I advise members that we have no time in hand this afternoon.

15:23

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Presiding Officer, I do not know what you think, but I think that one of the basic infrastructure requirements of any country is to make it easy to get around. It is kind of vital to people and it is certainly vital to the economy. For the country to function, we need to get a few basics right, and chief among those requirements is decent roads. We do not necessarily need more roads; we just need better ones.

World leaders are not queuing up to get advice on that from the Scottish Government—and nor are leaders from anywhere else in Britain—because Scotland is ahead of the game, but only in the number of potholes that we have. Earlier this year, researchers who analysed reports of potholes in 69 cities across Britain, which were registered via FixMyStreet.com, found that Glasgow was the worst, followed by Edinburgh. I see that China has landed a craft on the crater-filled dark side of the moon. It could have saved itself the bother and just come to Glasgow, or to Caithness, where it has been reported that people are leaving because of the state of the roads. Scotland's roads are so bad that we could almost think that it is deliberate. It is as if we are living in some dystopian experiment led by a faceless Green committee that sits around trying to think of ways to stop us driving.

I do not blame the councils—not even anti-car Edinburgh would actually want its roads to be as bad they are. It comes down to the decline in funding that our councils have had under the Scottish National Party, and it is time that we stopped that.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): The member quite rightly mentioned Edinburgh and our problem with potholes, but is he aware that, in the recent budget decisions, the SNP proposal to cut the budget by around £5 million was defeated by the rest of the council? At least the situation will not get even worse.

Graham Simpson: Common sense from Edinburgh for a change.

When it comes to moving goods and people, it is our trunk road network that does the heavy lifting, and it is found wanting. From the A75 and the A77 to the A1, the A9, full dualling of which by 2025 was promised in 2011, and the A96, whose dualling was promised in 2007—I could even throw in the M8, not to mention the Rest and Be Thankful—we have main roads that are in serious need of upgrading, which are all years behind where they should be under the SNP.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): As the member said, the SNP has broken a 17-year-old promise to dual the A96 from Inverness to Aberdeen. A delaying-tactic report is now a year and a half late and has cost £5 million so far. John Swinney made comments in Elgin at the weekend that suggest that it will be further delayed. Does the member think that the SNP has shamefully taken the people of the north-east for fools and that it needs to stop the excuses and get on with dualling the A96?

Graham Simpson: Yes.

There are tragic consequences of failing to invest. Between 2020 and 2023, there were 144 deaths on Scotland's major trunk roads that go outside the central belt, and 104 of those were on sections that were not dualled. Failing to invest can also hit people in the pocket. A constituent of mine found that out when his car suffered hundreds of pounds of damage when he was driving along the M8 at night. Amey, whose job it is to maintain that road, told him:

"It is not the duty of an Operating Company to make all roads under their control completely safe ... Our duty is to maintain roads in a condition which is safe for road users who are themselves exercising reasonable care."

In other words, Amey was saying, "If you don't look out for potholes and you hit one, it's your own fault." It is no wonder that driving instructors in Scotland are now teaching their students how to avoid them: just do not go out.

The cabinet secretary might well say that the debate is just us trying to score points ahead of a general election—or she might not, now that I have headed her off at the pass. She would be wrong, because we have been making those points for years and we are no nearer to seeing roads such as the A9 completed. Reading the Government's amendment today, one would think that everything is just fine, the Government is cracking on with things and there is just a temporary pause because of—wait for it—Westminster.

I think that we should finish with a game. It is called "Guess who said this", and all the questions are about the A9. The first one is easy:

"I am sorry that we will not have dualled the A9 by 2025 ... I want to be clear, though, that I do not accept that we

failed to meet that target because we just did not bother and we were not trying to meet it. The 2025 target was set for the right reasons and we were committed to it.”—*[Official Report, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, 29 May 2024; c 7.]*

There are no prizes for guessing that that was Nicola Sturgeon last week.

Then there is this one:

“the A9 is the backbone of Scotland. It must be safe, reliable and resilient, and that is what the Government will deliver.”—*[Official Report, 20 December 2023; c 23.]*

While members are all being impressed by the stand-up comedy abilities of that speaker, I can tell them it was none other than Màiri McAllan.

Finally, Presiding Officer,

“This is not an easy project. The A9 dualling is one of the most sophisticated pieces of infrastructure we have ever undertaken ... Things are getting done. We need to move on from this. I get sick and tired of listening to the Tories constantly bringing this up in parliament as if they own the issue. It’s us, that is the first government who has ever pledged to dual the A9 in its entirety.”

Control yourselves now. Who said that? Any guesses? No? The answer is witty Pete Wishart in his stirring address to the SNP conference last year.

That is a series of SNP figures with delusional outlooks. The SNP has had 17 years to deliver. It has not delivered. It will never deliver. The SNP needs to go.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the importance of a well-maintained road network to Scotland’s economy; believes that Scottish National Party administrations have repeatedly broken promises on major road upgrades and that their underfunding of Scottish local authorities has led to a deterioration in the condition of local roads, and calls upon the Scottish Government to fairly fund Scottish local authorities and make road infrastructure a key priority.

15:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government recognises fully the important role that a safe and efficient road network performs. The network is vital because it connects our cities, rural communities and the ports that serve the islands. Investment in maintaining and improving roads is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Scotland.

I welcome today’s debate because it gives the Government the opportunity to set out all the progress that it has made on the trunk roads for which it is responsible, particularly in the past year. The SNP Government has made significant investments to improve Scotland’s road network in recent years. Projects that have already been delivered include the Queensferry crossing, the

M8 motorway improvements and the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which are delivering tangible benefits to lives across the country on a daily basis. Labour and the Conservatives speculated about those projects for decade after decade, but they never delivered them. This SNP Government has delivered them.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will the transport secretary give way?

Fiona Hyslop: Very briefly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Be brief, please.

Kevin Stewart: Does the transport secretary agree that it is disgraceful that it took from 1948, when the AWPR first went down on paper at the planning stage, until there was an SNP Government to deliver the scheme? The AWPR was ignored by Tory and Labour Governments. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask that members listen to the person who has the floor, please.

Fiona Hyslop: I thank the member for reminding us of that very important point. More recent projects have included the A9 dualling from Luncarty to the Pass of Birnam and the A77 Maybole bypass.

We also continue to invest in further upgrades to our roads. Last December, we set out the delivery plan for completing the A9 dualling, reaffirming our steadfast commitment to improving safety on that important economic artery and the key route connecting our Highland communities.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Fiona Hyslop: No, I will not. This is a very brief debate, at the choice of the Tories.

The delivery plan sets out a realistic and achievable timetable for completion, balancing market capacity, the impacts on road users and the availability of funding. The approach means that the Highlands can have confidence that this Government will deliver the dualling in full.

In May, we published the contract notice for the fourth section, from the Tay crossing to Ballinluig. We expect to award the contract for that project in summer 2025. We will also shortly complete the procurement process for the Tomatin to Moy project. I am pleased to inform members that three tender submissions were received on 31 May and we expect to award the contract for that project in July. *[Interruption.]* No, I will not give way, as this is a very short debate, at the choice of the Conservatives.

Similarly, I reaffirm this Government's commitment to improving the A96, including with the dualling of the Inverness to Nairn section and the Nairn bypass. Last week, I announced that the statutory authorisation process with the made orders has completed. That clears the way for ministers to acquire the land to construct the Inverness to Nairn section, including the Nairn bypass. Transport Scotland is pressing ahead with the procedural steps to make that happen.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I am sorry, but I have only two minutes left. I apologise to Fergus Ewing.

Work has also commenced to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering the scheme. Thereafter, a timetable for progress can be set in line with available budgets.

This Government is also committed to delivering an infrastructure solution to address the landslip risks on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful, along with making improvements to the A75, with the procurement of technical advisers under way to progress design work on the Springholm and Crocketford bypasses, which will benefit locals, hauliers, tourists and especially the residents of those two villages.

To help us to reach our aim of achieving the best road safety performance in the world by 2030, this Government's investment in safely operating and maintaining the trunk road network—I am sure that Mr Simpson will be interested in this—will increase by more than 30 per cent this year, from over £525 million in 2023-24 to over £683 million in 2024-25, despite reduced capital funding from the United Kingdom Government.

Although the Conservatives might want to make the UK election about the most local of issues—potholes—we need to remember that it is local authorities that have responsibility to manage and maintain roads in their areas. We can, however, send a clear message to the next UK Government. We are proceeding with all of the work that I described, and we are making progress on maintaining and improving roads despite the problems that were caused by the UK Government's spring budget, which, taking into account inflation, is forecast to result in a real-terms cut of almost 9 per cent to our capital funding. That is why our amendment calls for the incoming UK Government to deliver an emergency budget to address the £1.3 billion-plus hole in Scotland's capital budget that was created by the UK Government. Surely, everyone in the Parliament can get behind that and support this SNP Government's call to put the interests of Scotland first.

I move amendment S6M-13480.3, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"notes that the procurement process for the construction of the A9 Dualling Tay Crossing to Ballinluig project has now started, and that the contract for the A9 Dualling Tomatin to Moy project is on track to achieve contract award early in summer 2024; further notes that the statutory authorisation process is now complete for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) project, which will enable the purchase of land required to build the project; notes that the Scottish Government is delivering a range of measures in the short, medium and long term to reduce the risk of impact of landslides at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful; further notes that the procurement of technical advisors is underway to take forward design work on Springholm and Crocketford Bypasses on the A75; notes that investment in safely operating and maintaining the trunk road network will increase from over £525 million in 2023-24 to over £683 million in 2024-25, which is an increase of over 30%; further notes the ongoing commitment to Scotland's 2030 road safety targets, with a record £36 million earmarked for investment, including £10 million for the local road network through the Road Safety Improvement Fund; agrees that the funding in the UK Spring Budget falls far short of what Scotland needs to deliver improvements to Scotland's infrastructure, and will result in a reduction in real terms of the Scottish block grant for capital of 8.7% by 2027-28, and calls on the incoming UK administration to bring forward an emergency budget to address this hole in Scotland's capital budget of over £1.3 billion."

15:36

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In January, the Automobile Association released its latest pothole index, which showed that, across the UK, car damage caused by potholes was the worst that it has been in five years, with an estimated £475 million-worth of damage caused in 2023.

The timing of this debate is fitting, given that most members in the chamber will be spending time out in communities. In the communities that I have visited to speak to people, issues with potholes come up time and time again. As such, I agree with the motion, which raises the issue of the chronic underfunding of local authorities that the Government has presided over. The cabinet secretary demonstrated that when she talked about the investment in trunk roads and then said that all other roads are responsibility of local authorities. The fact is that the SNP Government has completely hammered local authority funding in a disproportionate way. Compared with all other cuts in funding across Scotland, local government has taken the hardest hit.

A massive number of the problems that people incur day in, day out are caused by potholes on local authority roads. It is not good enough for the cabinet secretary simply to say that it is down to local authorities, when the Government has slashed local authority budgets. Local authorities are having to prioritise between education, social

work and putting money into roads. The roads have suffered, and the people who drive cars have suffered, too.

However, cuts by the SNP Government have caused suffering not only to those who drive cars, because of the damage, maintenance and cost incurred by families and individuals, but to pedestrians, too. Try to imagine what it is like for people who have sight problems, trying to cross a road and then hitting a pothole. It is the same with pavements. The budgets have been slashed, and it is not good enough.

I also want to talk about the bus partnership fund, which I have mentioned in my amendment. The fund was described as a

“landmark long-term investment ... of over £500 million to deliver ... bus priority measures”,

but only £26.9 million was spent before the fund was paused. When it was paused, I spoke to transport authorities across Scotland and found out that hundreds of millions of pounds of bids had been worked up for it. However, the fund seems to have been frozen, and those bids are now sitting with Transport Scotland.

I believe that, if we are to reach our net zero targets—targets that the SNP Government laid down—such as reducing car mileage by 20 per cent by 2030, we have to invest in public transport. Public transport, and investment in it, have to come first. As a bus user coming down the M90 motorway and passing all the cars in the morning, I often think, “Why on earth did I ever drive and sit in those big queues?” When the bus comes up to the Forth bridge and I see the queues for the Queensferry crossing, I think, “This is the right way to go.” However, as the bus comes into Edinburgh, it starts to get caught in traffic, and the whole scheme falls down.

Investments in public transport are absolutely crucial if we are to actually achieve the targets at the end of the day. The cabinet secretary should not just blame councils—she should get the investment in and get the potholes fixed, no matter whether a council or the Government is responsible for the road.

I move amendment S6M-13480.2, to insert at end:

“; further calls on the Scottish Government to confirm when the Bus Partnership Fund will be reinstated following the decision to pause this crucial infrastructure investment, and calls for a clear delivery plan for active travel, bus, ferry and rail infrastructure projects, with clear actions to reverse the decline in public transport, which has seen significant cuts to both rail and bus services in Scotland.”

15:40

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): As a nation, we face an urgent climate

crisis that demands bold action. The transport sector is Scotland’s most significant contributor to climate change and is responsible for more than a quarter of our greenhouse gas emissions. Despite that, we have made little progress in reducing those emissions over the past 30 years. Our current approach to transportation is not sustainable and requires a fundamental shift.

It is absolutely clear to me, as an MSP for the Highlands and Islands, that a well-maintained road network is vital for our economy and our communities. The roads in some parts of my region are lifeline roads; for example, the Rest and Be Thankful road provides the only practical way in and out of Argyll. However, our infrastructure investment needs to be bolder and more ambitious than road upgrades and expansions. Too often, our transport plans seem to start and end with road upgrades and expansions, instead of our looking at all the transport options that we need to invest in, from buses to bikes, rail and ferries.

The Scottish Government has committed to reducing car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030—a target that aligns with our legally binding climate commitments. However, the proposed road upgrades and expansions, such as the full dualling of the A9 and A96, directly contradict that. Building more and bigger roads will only encourage increased car usage, create more greenhouse gas emissions and undermine our efforts to combat climate change.

Over the past decade, the Scottish Government has spent £4 billion on road-building projects, with on-going or planned projects estimated to cost at least £7 billion. Shockingly, the average completion cost of those projects has escalated by 86 per cent. That is a poor use of taxpayer money and a misguided approach to addressing our transportation needs.

Instead of investing billions in high-carbon new road infrastructure, we should be redirecting those funds towards sustainable alternatives that benefit all Scotland’s residents. That includes expanding our public transport and active travel networks, which will reduce emissions, improve public health and reduce inequalities. It is worth noting that around 28 per cent of Scottish households do not have car access and would not benefit from the proposed road expansions.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Ariane Burgess: I will not be taking interventions, because I am short on time.

Furthermore, the argument for road upgrades, which is based on safety concerns, is more complex than it might seem. For example, on the A9, accident rates and injury collisions are higher

per mile on dualled sections than on non-dualled sections.

Fergus Ewing: What about the people who have died?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing.

Ariane Burgess: More effective and less costly measures to improve road safety include average-speed cameras, improved signage, education and policing to reduce speeding and dangerous overtaking.

It would be far better to use funds to dual the Highland main line, which is a key Highland infrastructure route that has not seen any expansion in its capacity since the 19th century. Investing in railways means expanding safe low-carbon travel, taking freight and commuters off roads and significantly reducing transport emissions. Compared with the eye-watering overspend that are associated with road projects, recent rail projects have been substantially cheaper per mile and their popularity once operational has significantly exceeded estimates. Three times as many passengers use the Borders railway than was estimated when the business case was made.

Just last week, we welcomed the reopening of the Levenmouth line at a cost of just over £19 million per mile. At current estimates, dualling the A9 will cost more than £46 million per mile. Is that the best use of stretched Government funds in the midst of a climate crisis?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You need to conclude.

Ariane Burgess: In conclusion, although I support the fair funding of Scottish local authorities to maintain our existing road networks, I cannot support the prioritisation of road upgrades and expansions.

15:44

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): A report in 2022 highlighted that the cost of fixing potholes across all of Scotland's roads was £1.7 billion, and that figure has only risen since then. Indeed, the SCOTS backlog figure, which shows the cost of treating all road sections categorised as red or amber within one year, was nearly £2.2 billion in 2023.

News reports from Caithness highlight the impact on residents of driving longer routes to avoid damaged roads, with residents facing prohibitively expensive car repairs. Local authorities face challenging financial conditions and, without adequate funding for road maintenance and upgrades, councils have to prioritise which roads receive attention, meaning

that other upgrades get postponed, with the risk that the condition of those roads will degrade further in the meantime and that, ultimately, it will cost more to repair them.

A prominent example from my constituency is the Cullivoe road project. It is the council's highest-priority major road development, but the project has been subject to delays, with the estimated cost rising over time to £9.9 million. It is an important link for aquaculture and fishing traffic, as those people need to travel to and from the pier at Cullivoe, and for other developments by the proactive North Yell development council, such as the business park and the proposed caravan park.

Despite that, the road is still single track and in poor condition. Without an upgrade to a two-lane road, it remains a challenge for local industries to navigate. The planning application in that respect has now been submitted, so I am hopeful that we will see progress soon.

Another road project in Shetland is the widening of the Levenwick road, but that, too, has faced many delays. In December, the council said that it could be a number of years before work could begin. Currently, the road is narrower than the current design standards of 6.8m, despite its being the main road to the airport.

Crucially, road improvements are linked to road safety. Recent Transport Scotland figures show that 155 people lost their lives on Scotland's roads in 2023, and Scotland is not on track to meet the target of reducing the number of road casualties by 50 per cent by 2030. The fact is that 155 lives lost on Scotland's roads is 155 lives too many, and I offer my condolences to everyone affected.

When the SNP came into government in 2007, it pledged to take action to improve trunk roads in the north and north-east. Communities across Scotland deserve better than missed targets and deadlines. As a matter of public safety, our roads urgently need to be upgraded.

Last week, Nicola Sturgeon said that she was sorry that the Scottish Government's commitment to dualling the A9 from Inverness to Perth by 2025 could not be met. She said that the project had faced challenges beyond the Scottish Government's control, avoiding full responsibility for the delays. The admission that the Scottish Government's commitment to dualling the A9 by 2025 is unachievable is a betrayal of trust and shows neglect to people living in the north of Scotland. After all, 10 out of the 11 most dangerous single-carriageway sections of the A9 are north of Inverness.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats are committed to delivering core connections to the Highlands and Islands, including by investing in programmes such as the A9 and A96 upgrades. Upgrading

those roads will reduce the severity and rate of accidents, better connect the Highlands and Islands and improve access to employment opportunities and services, including quicker and safer access to hospitals. The upgrades will also improve public transport journey times. The Scottish Government must publish a detailed road map for the completion of the A9 and A96 dualling programmes, and it must commit to investing in infrastructure across the Highlands and Islands.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

15:48

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank Graham Simpson for securing the debate. I was disappointed when reading the SNP amendment, which says that the Government is perfect and has everything under control. From the evidence taken on the A9 dualling project by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, whose meetings I have had the privilege of attending, it is clear that that is not the case.

In fact, it was clear that Alex Salmond was committed to dualling the roads between our key cities, but that commitment seemed to drop by the wayside when a member of his Cabinet—who, at some stages, did not even recognise that she was in the same Cabinet as him—became First Minister. In 2017, it became clear to the then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, that the A9 dualling could not be delivered by 2025. The honest thing to do would have been to come forward and tell the people of the Highlands that, but that is not what happened. Disingenuous and dishonest statements were made that the Government was continuing to push forward, but the project was never going to be completed by then—it was not possible.

I do not want to steal Murdo Fraser's thunder on the A9, because I know that he will want to speak long and hard about it, but I would say that the people of the Highlands were hornswoggled by this Government. It is a great description, and it is a good word because it covers a lot of the words that I could not possibly use in the chamber.

The A96 was supposed to be dualled in 2011—the infrastructure plan said that that would happen. In 2016, updated plans were put forward, which I remember going out to consultation when I was first elected. We were all excited that, finally, the A96 was going to be dualled. Then, in 2017, all the ground surveys had been completed. There was nothing in the way. Those ground surveys cost more than £1 million a mile just from Inverness to Nairn—a huge amount of money. It was all going to happen and, in 2018, when the local inquiry met

and we got the results of that, we thought that we were there—home and dry.

However, we are not home and dry—the A96 is not going to be dualled. In fact, only a short section is going to be dualled—the Nairn bypass. What disappoints me is that, when the cabinet secretary turned up at the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee yesterday and was pressed on whether she would meet the deadline of 2030, she was unable to say that she would. I think that she was even unable to say that when she went to Nairn on Saturday, where I hear that the reception was less than favourable. She tells us that the made road orders are made, but nothing is actually happening.

I see Mr Ewing rising to his feet. It is always a pleasure to welcome him to speak favourably in one of our debates.

Fergus Ewing: Does Mr Mountain agree that it is absolutely essential that the Scottish Government makes a statement that the section of the A9 between Smithton and Auldearn, including the Nairn bypass, will be dualled, setting out when it will start and when it will be finished, and that that statement must be made before the end of the year? That is a red line for me—ink written by my constituents.

Edward Mountain: Mr Ewing and I share constituents, and I totally agree with him. It is a fairly reasonable ask and I cannot believe that the Government is not going to commit to that.

As for the rest of the A96, we seem to be waiting on the results of a review—a review that we were told would be transparent and evidence based, which the Greens had demanded to see whether the road is what the people in the Highlands want. I can tell members that we do not need a review to know that we need the road and we need it now.

I could go on, but that would stretch my time. I will just say that, when it comes to roads in Caithness, the Caithness roads recovery crew has made it quite clear that people would be better off in a tractor than a car and that shake, rattle and roll is not a dance any more; it is what people do getting into the high street. I will leave it there, because we have lots more speakers to hear from.

15:52

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): First, I thank Graham Simpson for bringing the debate to the Parliament, as it gives me the opportunity to publicly thank the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Amey for the investment that is taking place in the trunk road network in my constituency.

I have long campaigned for improved trunk roads in Inverclyde. When I was a West of Scotland regional MSP, I had a regular dialogue with Transport Scotland about the condition of the roads. At the first meeting that I had with the then chief executive of Transport Scotland, his opening remarks to me were that he had received more correspondence from me about a small part of the national network than he had received from any other MSP, including those with far greater trunk road footprints in their area. He acknowledged that there was an issue and said that he wanted to fix that problem. There have been some false dawns in the past, with sporadic improvements, but I kept the pressure on Transport Scotland, Scotland TranServ previously and now Amey.

More than £3.2 million was invested in the A8 and the A78 in Inverclyde between 2022 and 2023, with planned schemes inside the area and more money being spent on regular maintenance, such as carriageway patching. A great deal of resurfacing is taking place on the A8 corridor between Port Glasgow and Greenock. We have already had a great deal of resurfacing of the A78 in the other part of my constituency. The A8 has needed that for a couple of years, but the project was delayed—not through neglect but because Scottish Water was installing a flood prevention scheme that was worth more than £2.5 million. The work lasted for approximately one year. I had campaigned for the scheme since 2009, and I am delighted that it has now been installed.

Some would argue that I should be disappointed that the scheme took so long to be delivered—and I was. However, the fact that record keeping for the underground infrastructure, by any of the relevant agencies, was not up to date meant that an integrated catchment study for Inverclyde had to be produced between Scottish Water, Inverclyde Council and Transport Scotland before any plans could be progressed.

Inverclyde has two trunk roads—the A8 and the A78—that are crucial to the community and the local economy. Those roads being in good condition is essential because of the thousands of vehicles that use them daily and to ensure road safety. Whether it is for internal or external commuters, bus traffic, emergency services, lorries or the business community, those two roads are absolutely pivotal for Inverclyde. If one of them closes, it creates a huge problem for the area.

Graham Simpson: Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: I am sorry—I have only four minutes.

That is why I am delighted to see the improvements taking place; I know that drivers will be able to travel on the roads, which will be better

and, crucially, safer. In the past, I have taken Transport Scotland and Scotland TranServ staff for a drive around the local network to highlight the problems that existed. That was due to happen again on Friday this week, with Amey. However, sadly, I will now be attending a funeral, so that will be rearranged. I know, however, that the list of outstanding issues for it will be a great deal shorter than previously.

The easiest thing for any politician to do is to criticise something when there is a problem, and sometimes that is the right thing to do. However, I have always attempted to offer potential solutions to improve the situation, whatever that may be. Furthermore, when those improvements take place, it is only correct to then thank those who have made the difference. I therefore thank Scottish Water for its investment in flood prevention work, Transport Scotland for sticking by its commitment to work to improve the local network in the Greenock and Inverclyde constituency, and Amey for being responsive and doing a great job locally. It knows that there is more to do, including improving the timings of the traffic light system, which is raised consistently by Inverclyde Chamber of Commerce.

Finally, I thank the Scottish Government for ensuring that the finance has been there to improve the A8 and the A78, despite the cuts coming from the UK Government. I know that my constituents certainly appreciate the investment that has been made in that area.

15:56

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): When I was first elected to Parliament in 2017, I met Vince Cable. I did not think that I would have much in common with a Liberal Democrat MP from a London constituency, but he informed me that he started his political career in Glasgow when he was elected as a councillor—as a Labour councillor, in fact—for the Glasgow Corporation in 1971. He then told me that his greatest achievement in politics to date—despite serving in the Cabinet and rising to some of the highest offices in the land—was successfully persuading the corporation of the city to cancel the Maryhill motorway project in one of the last acts of Glasgow Corporation before it was merged into Strathclyde Regional Council.

I then reflected on being elected to this place in 2021, which coincided with a huge project just adjacent to where the Maryhill motorway was to be built, at the Woodside viaducts. That was completed in the same year that Vince Cable was elected—1971—but it is now going to have to be expensively rebuilt, because the whole structure, which is about 300m long, is suffering from what is colloquially known as “concrete cancer”. It is

crumbling and is destabilised. It is going to cost up to £152 million—£71 million more than was first anticipated—simply to prop the structure temporarily. That will last until 2026, which is the end of this parliamentary session.

As an elected parliamentarian from Glasgow, I have had no consultation, and no one has asked my constituents' opinion about whether that is appropriate expenditure. We have heard about the pressures across the trunk road network elsewhere in Scotland.

Fiona Hyslop: I extend an invitation to Paul Sweeney to visit and see the problems with the structure, which, as he said, was built back in the 1970s. The issue is serious, and I hope that he will be properly informed once he has had that briefing and personal inspection, along with other MSPs from the Glasgow area.

Paul Sweeney: I thank the cabinet secretary for that kind invitation, and I look forward to arranging that. I am in no doubt about the seriousness of the issues with that piece of infrastructure, which is more than half a century old. However, there has been a bit of narrow-mindedness when it comes to Transport Scotland's consideration of all the available options. After all, that is just the temporary propping measure, and not even the permanent repair.

Around the world, the highways to boulevards campaign is showing cutting-edge innovation in urban planning and in how to deal with the legacy of urban motorways, which were in vogue half a century ago. There are many new ideas out there that we should be exploring. At-grade boulevards are increasingly seen as the best practice around the world. I point to numerous examples, from San Francisco and Boston to Seoul, Montreal and Paris, where the Georges Pompidou expressway was replaced by an urban boulevard in 2016 under Anne Hidalgo, who has served as the mayor of Paris since 2014 and is a pioneer of the 15-minute city movement. That has moved 73,000 vehicles a day off the Paris waterfront at the Seine.

We have plans in place. Glasgow City Council has been working with Dutch architect Winy Maas and Austin-Smith:Lord to prepare district regeneration frameworks that point a way to reducing the severe impact that the M8 has. When it was opened in 1971, protesters gathered above the overpass at Charing Cross with a banner that said, "This scar will never heal." The programme that Glasgow City Council has prepared has a set of categories that say how to heal Glasgow's motorway scar. We are talking not about closing the M8 down altogether but about reimagining the road in the context of an inner-city environment and taking into account best practice around the world, from Paris to Seattle.

We should try to be world leaders on the matter. If the Government wants to do that and to achieve its objectives of reducing car use while maintaining critical road networks, we should be looking at unlocking that value. Glasgow city centre has the equivalent of Inverness city centre's worth of motorway running through it. It needs to be reimagined. We could release huge amounts of currently sterilised inner-city land to be repurposed and developed, which could return a significant positive contribution to the public purse to invest elsewhere in Scotland. I urge the minister to explore all those opportunities for the betterment of Glasgow and Scotland.

16:01

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Dick Whittington set out to discover whether the streets of London were paved with gold. If he was making a similar journey today, the chances are that he would find his way to the A75 before heading up the A77. Members should make no mistake: those are golden highways, but unfortunately they are not treated as such when it comes to investment from the SNP Government. The two routes carry goods worth close to £9 billion annually, as 400,000 freight vehicles travel along the 95-mile stretch of the A75 between Gretna and the ports of Cairnryan and onwards to Northern Ireland and beyond.

A strategic economic impact assessment that was produced by Dumfries and Galloway Council together with South Ayrshire Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council evidences enormous financial benefits that could be gained by improving both trunk roads. The findings also pointed to environmental gains by greatly reducing carbon dioxide emissions, which would assist us in reaching the climate change targets. The report examined seven upgrade packages, which ranged from fully dualling the A75 and the A77 to simply initiating bypasses around key towns and junction improvements. If both routes were fully dualled, close to £5 billion-worth of positive benefits would be generated, with even the lowest upgrade package accruing in excess of £1 billion. The financial rewards would come through improved journey times and lower vehicle operating costs.

It is no surprise that the port operators at Cairnryan, Stena Line, P&O Ferries and Belfast Harbour have been lobbying hard for improvements on both roads.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Finlay Carson: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

As Andy Kane, the regional ports operations manager for Stena Line, said,

“The full potential of south-west Scotland cannot be unlocked until these roads are upgraded.”

That was all before the announcement of the Belfast investment zone, which would cover Stranraer and Cairnryan, or, indeed, Stena’s green energy plans.

The A75 and the A77 are two of the slowest roads in Scotland, and they remain two of the most dangerous, with casualties reported every three days. Too many of those result in fatalities. I have written to three different transport secretaries, including Fiona Hyslop, urging them to introduce average speed cameras in conjunction with an increase in the speed limit from 40mph to 50mph for heavy goods vehicles. Such a move has brought benefits in other parts of the country.

The union connectivity review identified the A75 as one of the UK’s key transport and infrastructure projects. Bizarrely, the then transport secretary, Michael Matheson, instructed officials at Transport Scotland not to engage in that. That is not the only example of his poor judgment, but it is one of the worst. In fairness, he is not alone, as the former First Ministers Alex Salmond, Nicola Sturgeon and Humza Yousaf previously promised improvements only to fail to deliver. I hope that Fiona Hyslop will be different.

On a positive note, the UK Government has stepped up with funding, and both of Scotland’s Governments have been working on a feasibility study ahead of a multimillion-pound upgrade at Crocketford and Springholm. I hope that progress is being made and a timetable will be forthcoming in the near future. Perhaps the cabinet secretary can update us on that.

I have lived within touching distance of the A75 all my life. The road touches people’s lives in Dumfries and Galloway in a way that no other road in Scotland comes close to. It is a vital artery to work and to life and, sadly, it has been the scene of too many tragedies. The road must change, and it must change for the better. Pre-devolution, the Scottish Conservative MPs Ian Lang and Sir Hector Monro delivered numerous bypasses and many miles of road improvements. Sadly, in the past seven years, the SNP has delivered nothing but empty words and broken promises.

16:05

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Members may wish to excuse my voice today. I am suffering with a wee bit of a cold.

The motion is about road networks across Scotland, and it calls for fair funding to local authorities to ensure that roads remain well maintained and safe. I agree with the motion’s sentiment that a well-maintained road network is

paramount for Scotland’s economy. A well-maintained network is also vital to achieving road safety for all those travelling and commuting across the country.

As we have heard, the Scottish Government’s commitment to road safety was underlined by the announcement of £36 million of funding for road safety in this year’s budget. That is up £5 million on last year’s budget. In the budget for the 2022-23 financial year, road safety funding amounted to £31 million. Nearly £10 million was granted to local authorities through the road safety improvement fund, which works to support the delivery of targeted safe system initiatives, nearly £4 million was given to Road Safety Scotland to carry out education and publicity projects, and £12 million went to road safety measures on Scotland’s trunk road network.

The remaining funds, amounting to just under £8 million, went to evidence-led enforcement through the Scottish safety camera programme. However, two cameras in my constituency have been taken out of service, and I am not sure whether that will make matters better. I have written to the Scottish safety camera programme about those cameras. However, it is through those substantial investments that the Government wants to achieve its long-term vision of no one being killed or seriously injured on Scotland’s roads by 2050.

The M73’s and the M80’s vital links, which pass through the north of my Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, are currently undergoing 14 weeks of maintenance and repair, including the installation of new safety barriers, the replacement of bridge joints, surfacing repairs, various cyclical maintenance activities and structural concrete repairs. Those works are critical to ensuring the safety and efficiency of our road network in Scotland.

The recent M8 improvements took congestion off the part of the A8 that runs through my constituency to the south. Those improvements have done a lot to connect Coatbridge and Chryston and other areas of Lanarkshire to the rest of Scotland. That is a massive improvement. Anybody who used to use the A8 before the improvements were made will know exactly what I am talking about. I am sure that Graham Simpson is one of those people.

Graham Simpson: What does Fulton MacGregor think of the condition of the council-owned roads in his constituency?

Fulton MacGregor: I will come to the council in a wee bit.

I was talking about the M8. I encourage members, when they are driving by, to pay heed to the tourist information signs, such as those for

Mackinnon Mills, Summerlee and the Time Capsule, and to consider those places for summer activities for the family. People can have a whole day out in Coatbridge and Chryston now; that is absolutely no problem.

Outwith my constituency, Scotland has seen the delivery of the Queensferry crossing, the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the M74 motorway improvement projects under the SNP Government. To the north, the Government has underlined its commitment to improving the A96, including the dualling of the road from Inverness to Nairn and the Nairn bypass. Great credit has to go to my colleague Fergus Ewing, who is an absolute champion for that road.

To come on to Graham Simpson's point, the motion acknowledges that the statutory responsibility for local roads improvement and maintenance and repairs lies with local authorities. I am sure that all members will agree that it is for locally elected representatives to make decisions on how best to deliver services to their local communities. Nevertheless, in 2024-25, the local government settlement provided record funding of over £14 billion to local authorities.

Although the Tory motion calls on the Scottish Government to increase funding to local authorities, it does that in the full knowledge that successive Tory UK Governments have given us more than a decade of austerity, a disastrous Brexit and a catastrophic mini-budget that almost crashed the economy. Those economic calamities have severely hampered our ability to fund capital projects and have created an incredibly difficult fiscal environment. That has been exacerbated further by the UK Government's decade and a half of failure to invest in public services and infrastructure. That continual lack of investment in Scotland has resulted—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You need to conclude.

Fulton MacGregor: —in a real-terms deficit of £1.3 billion in Scotland's capital budget. I agree with the amendment that urges the incoming UK Administration to bring forward an emergency budget immediately in order to address that financial disparity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the winding-up speeches.

16:09

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): It is interesting, and perhaps serendipitous, that this debate follows the ministerial statement on low-emission zones. I was heartened to hear the cabinet secretary state very clearly in that statement and in response to

questions that the primary purpose of LEZs is to improve public health. It was not all that long ago that many people could not see the links between our transport infrastructure and individual and community health and wellbeing.

As my colleague Ariane Burgess said in her opening remarks, we understand that a well-maintained road network is important for our economy and our communities, but on its own it is not enough. Our transport system also has an impact on physical and mental health, on access to culture and leisure facilities, and on access to education and work. It has an impact on so many different aspects of our lives—in fact, it has an impact on pretty much every aspect of our lives.

Just as we need to have a joined-up way of thinking, we need to take an integrated and coherent approach to transport. As has already been highlighted, we should be doing all that we can to change how we use our roads. If we reduce the amount of freight and commuting traffic on our roads by shifting goods and passengers to rail, we reduce the building and maintenance costs for our road network and our local authorities. Modal shift for people and for goods is vital. It is good for safety, it is good for climate emissions, and it is good for efficient and effective use of public money.

Modal shift will also mean that we do not simply replace polluting vehicles with electric vehicles. Private car use does not always meet people's needs, and we know that we can catalyse shifts away from car use if we provide alternatives. We see that very clearly in other parts of the world.

Fergus Ewing rose—

Maggie Chapman: There are people who say that we just need to replace internal combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles. If we look back more than 100 years, we see that, when the Victorians were looking at their transport system and wanted to get between places better, one of their answers was faster horses, but that works only up to a point. Along came the combustion engine, which changed everything. We know that, with technology and the right kinds of investment, we can do that.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member give way?

Maggie Chapman: Our transport system is also a key driver of inequality in our communities.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member give way in this millennium? [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing!

Please continue, Ms Chapman.

Maggie Chapman: The Tories might not want to listen to this, but the issue is one that

fundamentally affects their constituents as well as mine.

The transport system is also a key driver of inequalities in our communities. Those people who do not have access to cars need to have access to affordable—the Scottish Greens would say that it should be free—public transport. We should be investing in buses and trains, and I thank Alex Rowley for highlighting the bus partnership fund in his amendment.

People in the lowest-income group use bus services more than three times as often as people in the higher-income groups. According to the Equality Trust, the richest 10 per cent receive £977.4 million in transport subsidy, while the poorest 10 per cent receive just £296.7 million. Road building is a subsidy for wealthy, usually white men, who are the main beneficiaries of reducing journey times between cities, so we really need to think about what our transport infrastructure should be there to do and who it is for, and to prioritise public investment accordingly.

Some roads will be necessary, so we need to make them as safe as possible. We have heard much about safety already this afternoon, but I will reiterate one point. There is substantial evidence that shows that speed is the primary cause of accidents on our roads. If we reduce speed, we save lives, and dualling roads does not reduce speed.

Our constituents and our communities deserve sustainable transportation solutions that benefit everyone. We must take seriously our responsibilities to those for whom the current systems do not work, and we must also take seriously our responsibilities to future generations by leaving a transport infrastructure legacy that supports a greener, healthier and more connected future.

16:14

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Scotland should have a modern road network that is safe to travel on and is properly maintained. Yes—we need fewer cars on the road, but we still need to have a good road system. We are lagging behind the rest of northern Europe, which has excellent good-quality roads, but it also has good public transport systems. It is possible to have both. In comparison, Scotland's road network is still, in places, patchy and unfinished.

Glasgow's M8 seems to be a mess at the moment. It is Scotland's busiest motorway and it is crucial for the west of Scotland economy. The remediation work that was supposed to be completed last year was revised to be completed at the end of this year, but now it seems to be expected that it will be completed in 2026, and

costs are rising. That will cause considerable difficulties for road users and—as my colleague Paul Sweeney pointed out—for communities.

There are factors beyond the contractor's—that is, Amey's—control. Amey has a great team, but there must still be accountability for the length of time that the project is taking and the money that it has now cost. Drivers and communities need to be kept informed of on-going developments, if the project is going to take another three years. We need to be able to trust that it will require three years because—although one should not make assumptions—people who drive by it often see no workers on that road. We need some accountability and information, and we need engagement with those who are affected.

Not surprisingly, one of the top issues that people still raise, as Alex Rowley and others have said, is potholes, which have become quite a significant topical issue—certainly in this election. In February this year, a new study that was conducted by SmartSurvey named Glasgow as the worst city for potholes outside London. Glasgow prides itself on being second to London in many things, but not that one.

Apart from being a risk to pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, potholes cause damage to cars and bikes and can cause fatal accidents, so the matter is not trivial. They cause hazards on the road as drivers try to avoid them. We have all, if we drive, seen that. Taxi drivers across the city of Glasgow say that potholes are a nightmare, and one taxi driver said that

“On brand new vehicles, the guys are having to replace the wheels because they are getting cracked after hitting these potholes.”

Having a good road network is essential, but that does not mean that we do not want to get more people out of cars and on to buses and trains. All are necessary.

Stephen Kerr: Does Pauline McNeill agree that the condition of the roads is a matter of civic pride and that many people are embarrassed by the state of the roads in our communities?

Pauline McNeill: That is absolutely true. I know from talking to people that not only are they frustrated about the dangers that the roads cause, but they feel embarrassed. When I opened my speech, I talked about other European cities. I have had the benefit of driving on those roads, so I have seen them for myself.

The Labour amendment talks about the bus partnership fund. It is essential that we transform the quality of bus journeys; if we do not encourage that, we will not get more people, who do not use them now, using buses. As the cabinet secretary has described, that is a key area of investment. The project is meant to improve bus reliability and

speed—two of the reasons why people who do not already use buses do not use them. As Maggie Chapman pointed out, low-income households tend to use buses. However, if we want more people to use buses, there must be investment in partnership. I want to see that happening, certainly in this session of Parliament.

16:18

Fiona Hyslop: I thank members for their contributions. Regardless of the particular views that we might have in a political context, we all recognise the importance of having a safe, efficient and accessible transport network right across Scotland. That is crucial to economic growth and the wellbeing of the country.

I have welcomed today's debate, which has given the opportunity to highlight the progress that the Government has made in maintaining and improving the transport network. Despite what the Conservatives might think, we are delivering for the people of Scotland. I am not saying, to quote Mr Mountain, that the situation is "perfect", but progress is being made. That progress includes the Maybole bypass on the A77, which opened in 2022. I point out to Mr Carson that that is within the past seven years.

The UK Government's spring budget, however, falls far short of what we need in order to deliver all the improvements that we would like to make to Scotland's infrastructure. That is why, in the UK election, we are calling for an emergency budget to address the hole of more than £1.3 billion in Scotland's capital budget.

In the course of the debate, I have listened carefully to the arguments about progress in dualling works on the A9 between Perth and Inverness and the A96 corridor, and about the A75.

As I have highlighted, we are making significant progress towards delivering our A9 dualling programme. The delivery plan for completion of A9 dualling entails continuous construction activity from the time when the work starts on the Tomatin to Moy project until dualling is complete. That means that sections of dual carriageway will become operational on a progressive basis, with nearly 50 per cent of the A9 between Perth and Inverness expected to be operating as dual carriageway by the end of 2030, rising to 85 per cent by the end of 2033 and 100 per cent by the end of 2035.

Improvements to the A75 and A77 are direct recommendations within the strategic transport projects review 2, with progress now being made on improvements on the A75.

I was recently in the vicinity of the A83 and I inspected the changes that have been made and the improvements to the old military road. I also heard about the progress on the medium and long-term solutions for that route.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member give way?

Fiona Hyslop: I am sorry. It is a very short debate.

I recognise that there are many calls being made on council budgets. However, it would be wrong for the Scottish Government and Parliament to tell local authorities how to manage and best allocate their resources. Mr Rowley may want to correct the *Official Report*, because he will be aware that, between 2023 and 2024-25, councils' share of the Scottish Government's budget rose from 31 per cent to 32 per cent. Although that is a small increase, it is still an increase that has had to be made to the detriment of other parts of the budget that are within the Scottish Government's control.

I am pleased that Fulton MacGregor touched on road safety, which remains an absolute priority for the Scottish Government. We continue to make progress on road safety, particularly on trunk roads. Recent road safety statistics are concerning, so I will probably want to return to speak to Parliament about that specific matter, Presiding Officer.

Finally, I reiterate that the responsibility for local roads lies with local authorities. It is not for us to tell local authorities how to manage and best allocate their resources. However, across the chamber, I have heard that there is a need to recognise improvements in asset management at all levels of government. I will, in the future, quote Graham Simpson, who said that we do not necessarily need new roads, but we need decent roads. I will also quote him saying that

"the trunk road network ... does the heavy lifting".

In conclusion, I say that the Government remains firmly committed to infrastructure investment as a key factor in securing economic growth and high-quality public infrastructure across Scotland. I call again for the incoming UK Government to deliver an emergency budget to address the £1.3 billion-plus hole in Scotland's capital budget that has been created by the UK Government. That would benefit councils, as well as the Scottish Government trunk road network.

16:22

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives make no apology for using our debate time to highlight the importance of our road network. Having an efficient and well-maintained road network is essential to our

economy, it allows people and goods to move around more easily, and it contributes to economic growth.

I welcome the contributions from Maggie Chapman and Ariane Burgess. I say to them that there is no contradiction between having a good, well-maintained road network and meeting our climate ambitions. We need to remember that, although we want to encourage the use of public transport, which is important, the most popular form of public transport—buses—require roads to be driven on. As we move towards an increase in electrified vehicles, those will also need roads to travel on. To suggest that we should cease road improvements, as the Government in Wales, which is run by Mr Johnson's party, has done because of our climate targets, is simply to misunderstand the role that roads play.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Is the member interested to hear that the Danish Government has found that well-maintained roads save up to 8 per cent in CO₂ emissions because of the efficiency that they provide? Will he reflect on that?

Murdo Fraser: That is a helpful intervention. Mr Johnson is quite right that well-maintained roads and well-maintained vehicles, which require well-maintained roads to drive on, are good for reducing our climate emissions.

We have heard a lot about potholes. Graham Simpson regaled us with stories of them, as did Alex Rowley and Beatrice Wishart. A BBC Scotland report claims that people are leaving Caithness due to potholes, because their cars are being damaged on a regular basis. People are leaving their jobs in the care sector. They have to use their cars to travel around and so much damage is being done to their vehicles that they cannot afford the cost of repairs on their relatively low salaries. People in Caithness were holding up signs saying "Welcome to the moon" because of the size of the craters that they were encountering. It is a serious issue.

Another angle to road improvements is the question of road safety. Every year, too many people lose their lives on our roads. In the past three years, there have been 144 deaths on Scotland's major trunk roads outside the central belt. Many of those deaths were avoidable; they would not be happening if we had better-quality, safer roads.

I have raised many times in this chamber the need to upgrade the A9 to dual carriageway between Perth and Inverness. I am truly sorry to have to keep raising the issue again and again. The SNP Government promised in 2011 that the A9 would be dualled by 2025. I can well remember the current First Minister campaigning on the issue

and making promises that A9 dualling would be delivered not only to improve the economic opportunities in Perthshire and the Highlands but to address the overriding necessity of improving road safety. We know that that promise has been broken. In the period that the SNP has been in office, only 11 miles of the A9 have been dualled, with over 70 miles remaining. At the current rate, the A9 would take more than a century to dual.

Fiona Hyslop: I will send the member the programme that makes it quite clear that that is not the case. By using such exaggeration, he diminishes the argument that he is making.

Murdo Fraser: I have to say to the transport secretary that we have had promises before that have not been delivered, so we will believe it when we see it.

To put this into perspective, in 18 years, the last Conservative Government to have responsibility for roads in Scotland managed to dual 62 miles of the A9. In 17 years, the SNP has dualled just 11 miles. That statistic alone demonstrates the scale of the broken promise to the people of Perthshire and the Highlands, and it has real-life consequences, with individuals dying every year in avoidable accidents, families losing loved ones, and members of the emergency services having to face trauma and distress.

I commend my colleague Edward Mountain for his contribution to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee—a committee that is ably led by my friend Jackson Carlaw—in relation to the work that it has done on the SNP's failure to dual the A9, and I pay tribute to the petitioner, Laura Hansler, for the assiduous way in which she has pursued the matter.

Alex Salmond told the committee that when he left office as First Minister, he believed that the commitment to dual the A9 would be fulfilled. However, under the watch of his successor, Nicola Sturgeon, precious little progress was made. Indeed, it seems to be a pattern for the SNP to try and blame everybody else for its failure and its lack of progress.

We continually hear from the SNP about "Tory austerity" affecting budgets, but the reality is that in this current year, according to the independent Fraser of Allander Institute, the Scottish Government's budget is up 69 per cent in real terms since devolution and up 7 per cent in real terms since 2010. Even accounting for inflation, which has been a major issue, the Scottish Government has more to spend than before. If it is not investing in roads—if it is not upgrading routes such as the A9—that is a political choice that it has made, and we are living with the consequences of that.

It is short-sighted not to prioritise road projects. Finlay Carson referred to the A9, the A96, the A77 and the A75, which are all in desperate need of investment and yet the political choice that the SNP Government has made is not to prioritise those road projects. That is a serious error.

If the SNP is serious about economic growth now that it has ditched the Greens from the coalition, and if it is serious about road safety and saving lives, it needs to start investing in our roads. That is the point made in our motion, which I commend to members.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on improving Scotland's roads. There will be a brief pause before we move on to the next item of business to allow members on the front benches to change over.

Oil and Gas Industry

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland's oil and gas industry. I would be grateful if members who wish to speak in the debate were to press their request-to-speak buttons.

16:30

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): During the most recent debate on oil and gas in the chamber, I stood here and said that the Scottish Conservatives were the only party that is committed to ensuring the future of the oil and gas industry in Scotland. A couple of months on, and that position has only been strengthened.

During this election campaign and in the television debate on Monday night, it was abundantly clear that Labour and the Scottish National Party will sell our industry down the river. Neither party will protect the jobs and investment in the north-east of Scotland; neither party will commit to issuing new licences; and neither party will stand up for communities and residents in the north-east. They are doubling down on their positions of destroying the energy industry for future generations, with one promising crippling taxes and refusing to issue licences, and the other failing to scrap its damaging presumption against new oil and gas. The industry condemns both parties for their records in that area.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Douglas Lumsden: Is there any time, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: There is the time that has been allocated; we have no extra time.

Douglas Lumsden: I am sorry, Mr Johnson. I will continue my speech.

I want to spend some time today in considering the recent report from the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce on energy transition. It makes for sombre reading and rightly issues a challenge to all parties and Governments to protect the interests of this vital industry. It states that we have

"100 days to save 100,000 jobs",

which is a stark and chilling challenge to us all. The industry is losing confidence in investing in Scotland. Optimism here is falling, but it is rising internationally, and we all know who is to blame for that.

The industries that fed into the report all said that they increasingly believe that Aberdeen and the north-east energy sector can play an important role in providing United Kingdom energy security and leading UK energy transition ambitions. However, the sector can do that only through support from the devolved SNP Government. There is belief within the industry that the north-east should play a leading role, but there is pessimism about the support that the sector will receive in order to fulfil that potential.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will Mr Lumsden take an intervention on that point?

Douglas Lumsden: I am sure that we will hear from Mr Stewart later.

There is also huge distrust that the industry will be given the opportunity to expand, because of a backward-thinking SNP Government that wants to turn off the energy sector's taps and decimate the industry.

The Minister for Climate Action (Gillian Martin): Will the member take an intervention?

Douglas Lumsden: We will hear from you later as well.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Lumsden, please speak through the chair.

Douglas Lumsden: I apologise, Presiding Officer.

Indeed, the report shows that the political environment is now the biggest concern for those who are involved in the industry. We need stability and support, and the devolved SNP Government is not giving that.

Gillian Martin: Will Mr Lumsden take an intervention on that very point?

Douglas Lumsden: I am sure that we will hear from the minister later.

In fact, when asked, those who responded to the survey went even further. They were asked to rate the impact of the Scottish Government's energy strategy on the energy sector and investor confidence, and 75 per cent of those who responded thought that the strategy had a very negative impact on the sector. That record has got worse and worse over the past year. It is clear that the SNP has lost the confidence of the north-east and the business community.

The report asked people in the industry how they viewed the Scottish Government's just transition fund but, first, it asked whether they had even heard of it. A quarter had not; that is not a great endorsement of the Scottish Government's record in that area. Fifty per cent said that they were not aware of how the fund could benefit their

business, and 40 per cent thought that it was not important to helping Scotland achieve net zero.

When asked which party has the best policies for energy security, the Scottish Conservatives scored highest of all the parties.

The First Minister stood up on Monday night and claimed to work closely with the oil and gas industry. What a joke. John Swinney is completely out of touch with the industry and with the people of the north-east.

I make no apologies for sounding angry, because I am angry. I am angry on behalf of those hard-working individuals throughout the north-east who depend on the oil and gas industry for their livelihoods. I am angry on behalf of the companies that are being sent decrees from on high rather than being listened to. I am angry on behalf of all of us who represent the constituencies that are being ignored, sidelined and preached to by those who know nothing about the people who live and work there and know nothing about the energy industry.

One hundred days to save 100,000 jobs is a stark message that we should all be taking seriously. We should all be doing more to protect our communities. We are working with our friends and colleagues to do just that while Labour and the SNP look for ways to destroy the industry for good.

We will likely hear a lot from other parties today about moving jobs from the oil and gas sector into renewables. We have the potential but, without a proper plan, it is for the birds. We need to protect the supply chain that will be vital for the energy transition.

In the past nine years, Scotland's low-carbon and renewables sector workforce has risen from 23,000 to just under 26,000, according to Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce—far less than what Alex Salmond promised. If that trend continues and the SNP continues to turn its back on the oil and gas industry, it will leave tens of thousands of people out of work, and tens of thousands of families right across Scotland facing economic hardship.

Many companies that are investing in opportunities such as floating offshore wind, carbon capture and hydrogen will require the cash flow from a stable and predictable oil and gas business to fund those opportunities. That is why we support the industry—without it, our path towards net zero will be so much harder.

Will the cabinet secretary today commit to what John Swinney found so difficult to commit to on Monday night and remove this backward-facing, science-denying and industry-destroying

presumption against new oil and gas? It is a stupid policy that is harming our energy transition.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the invaluable contribution that oil and gas makes to Scotland, with the industry supporting 94,000 jobs and providing over £10 billion in revenue in 2022-23; notes with concern that the Scottish Government has a presumption against oil and gas, whilst the Labour Party has said it will not allow any new licences, something that industry experts have said could lead to thousands of job losses; welcomes the provisions of the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, which, when passed, will increase investor confidence in the oil and gas sector and reduce the UK's dependence on higher-emission imports from overseas; welcomes the approval of the Rosebank oil field and awaits a similar decision on the Cambo oil field; appreciates that oil and gas will still be a vital component of the UK's energy mix in the future and that it is more environmentally friendly for the country to produce its own oil and gas than import it from abroad, and notes with concern the extremist positions taken by some activists, who are opposed to the very existence of a North Sea oil and gas sector, and condemns their actions, which are irresponsible, damaging and disruptive.

16:36

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): I begin this important debate on points of indisputable fact. First, Scotland's highly skilled oil and gas workforce is hugely important to us now and will continue to be in future. Secondly, the North Sea is a geologically mature oil and gas basin. Thirdly, vitally—Douglas Lumsden speaks of scientific facts—the scientific evidence is clear that there is an urgent need for the world to transition away from burning fossil fuels if destructive climate change is to be abated.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Màiri McAllan: Absolutely not, when you did not take a single one.

The Presiding Officer: Through the chair, always.

Màiri McAllan: Apologies.

Those indisputable facts combined mean that a serious, responsible Government—one that cares deeply about Scotland's offshore energy industries, as the SNP has always done—must now plan and deliver a managed and fair progression to a dynamic and internationally competitive system of energy of the future, which we are so well placed to deliver.

That means a just transition, and there is much talk of that across the political spectrum. The difference is that the SNP is not only talking about a just transition but working to deliver it. I will come back to that in a moment, but I will first address two other matters on which there has been much discussion recently.

The first is licensing. Regrettably, licensing—and therefore control—of Scotland's oil and gas resource remains the domain of Westminster. Although my party is working to change that, while it remains the case, Scotland has the energy but lacks the power. We have seen in today's prices how £400 billion-worth of our oil and gas revenues have flowed from the North Sea to the UK Treasury coffers.

Licensing decisions do not rest with the Scottish Government, but we are clear that the UK Government must approach licensing on a rigorously evidence-based, case-by-case basis, with robust climate compatibility and energy security being key considerations.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Last year, the cabinet secretary said that she was consulting on a more robust climate compatibility checkpoint, including for oil and gas fields that are already licensed but not developed, and on a presumption of no new exploration in the North Sea. However, given the recent statements on climate compatibility and Kate Forbes's statement today that the Government has been

"clear that we're not against new licences",

can the cabinet secretary confirm her position and tell us what her amendment today means?

Màiri McAllan: I am very happy to do so. Labour's position, whether it has intended this or not, is an outright ban. The approach that the SNP has always articulated and which I am reasserting today is an evidence-based approach. It is an assessment on a case-by-case basis that takes account of climate compatibility and energy security.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Màiri McAllan: I am afraid that I do not have time.

Our position puts us squarely between the London parties. On the one hand, we have the Tories, who are wilfully ignoring the climate emergency—there is not a single mention of it in their motion today. On the other hand, we have Labour, which, true to form, is wilfully ignoring the needs of Scotland's communities.

The second issue that I want to mention is windfall taxes. Again, I want to be clear that the SNP supports taxes where windfall profits arise anywhere across the United Kingdom economy. Indeed, while households are still struggling with energy bills, we support an energy profits levy up to its previously announced end date.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Màiri McAllan: I will not. I do not have time, I am afraid.

However, we object to the London parties extending and increasing that levy, focusing disproportionately on Scotland's energy wealth and putting investment in renewables transition at risk.

In the case of the Tories, we object to their using that money to fund their unfunded tax cuts elsewhere and, in the case of Labour, we object to their apparent plans to invest it in nuclear energy in England. Both parties are undermining confidence in Scotland's transition, which is vital for our economy and our contribution to ending climate change.

I said that I wanted to come back to some good news about how the SNP is already working to build a transition in Scotland. That includes our investment of £24.5 million to leverage Sumitomo's groundbreaking £350 million supply chain investment in the port of Nigg, and the Scottish National Investment Bank's £50 million investment, which is supporting one of the largest regeneration projects in the Highlands for decades at Ardersier, with the potential for around 3,000 jobs and reskilling opportunities. It also includes the £3.7 million that we have invested in the development of a practical offshore energy skills passport. On that, I am very pleased to note the industry update of progress on that last month.

The Presiding Officer: I must ask you to conclude at this point, cabinet secretary.

Màiri McAllan: I will conclude by saying that we know that the task is difficult, but the opportunity and the prize are enormous, and we are already working to build the transition. We could do more with the powers in this Parliament and if the London parties would only put Scotland first, as the SNP always will.

I move amendment S6M-13482.4, to leave out from first "that oil" to end and insert:

"of the highly skilled and internationally recognised workforce in the oil and gas sector and the part that it plays in Scotland's economy; believes that any responsible government that cares about the workforce and its future, as well as a just transition in regions such as the north east of Scotland and Shetland, and sites such as Grangemouth and Mossmorran, must now plan for a managed energy transition; notes that Scotland has been well positioned twice in terms of natural energy resources, once for North Sea oil and gas and now again for renewables; calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a finalised Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan in summer 2024 that takes an evidence-based and pragmatic approach and ensures that climate compatibility assessment and energy security are properly reflected; understands the clear scientific evidence that there is an urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels globally if the Paris Agreement climate goals are to be met, and that the North Sea is a geologically mature and declining basin; appreciates that a key element of a managed transition must be a fiscal

regime for the entire energy sector that provides stability and certainty, protects jobs based in Scotland and incentivises investment in renewables, and believes that the incoming UK administration should invest in a just transition for Scotland's valued oil and gas workforce to a net zero future as North Sea resources decline, and invest in reducing emissions in line with climate commitments."

16:42

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): This debate should be about how we ensure that we have the energy to power our homes and industry, how we deliver climate leadership, how we secure the economic benefits of the green economy and how we ensure that a just transition is a reality for all workers. Under the SNP and Tory Governments, that has not been the case. There is much talk of a just transition but little delivery.

Gillian Martin: Will the member give way?

Sarah Boyack: Not just now, thank you.

Last month, there was another failed SNP deadline, with no draft just transition plan for Grangemouth being published despite a commitment to do so by May 2024.

I would be delighted to take the minister's intervention now.

Gillian Martin: As Sarah Boyack will know, a general election is on and no new announcements can be made during that period. We are ready to publish the Grangemouth just transition plan once the general election is over.

Does the £500 million just transition fund not count as assistance? Does £500 million of strategic investment not count as assistance to the just transition for energy?

Sarah Boyack: The point is that those projects should have been published earlier, before the election was called.

The just transition fund—slashed by 75 per cent. The green jobs fund—cut. The green growth accelerator—non-existent. The sectoral just transition plans—not delivered. The green skills passport—overdue and still not delivered.

The Scottish Trades Union Congress summed up the position very well when it said that the Scottish Government has failed to deliver the funded transition support, training support and jobs and skills audits for oil and gas workers.

Kevin Stewart: Will Ms Boyack give way?

Sarah Boyack: No, thank you.

The actions of the UK Tory Government have been just as bad. For 14 years, it has not invested in renewables jobs across the UK, which we need for a sustainable future. From David Cameron proudly announcing that he was cutting "the green

crap” to the UK Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, which the UK Government has confirmed would not take a penny off energy bills, the wrong message has been sent to investors on the UK’s commitment to the green economy.

We need change. We will not revoke existing licences. We will work with oil and gas companies to ensure that there is a sustainable, phased transition to clean energy. I am clear that the oil and gas sector in Scotland will be with us for decades to come. It is an established industry, and it is the duty of politicians and Governments to work with the sector, its workers and trade unions to ensure that we have a fair and managed transition during the next few decades.

Our green prosperity plan would create 69,000 jobs. It would create direct jobs in clean power and manufacturing and invest in the plumbers and builders that we need in our communities now to retrofit homes. Our local power plan would ensure that we can maximise the benefits of community-owned energy projects across Scotland, supplementing the technology that we already have, decarbonising our buildings and bringing down people’s bills. We would establish GB energy, an energy generating company that would be headquartered here, in Scotland.

Gillian Martin: Will the member take an intervention?

Sarah Boyack: No, thank you.

That company would be able to de-risk private investment in new technologies such as tidal and offshore floating wind while accelerating the deployment of existing technologies. It would be critical to ensuring that Scotland and the UK power ahead in the global race for renewables and the green economy. We have to accelerate the pace of change to create new jobs and investment opportunities. Through a national wealth fund, we would provide funding to invest in the key sectors and the infrastructure that we urgently need for the green economy, such as ports, industrial hubs and green hydrogen. Scottish businesses would have a partner in a possible future UK Labour Government.

We need change. We would work to reduce energy bills, create good jobs, deliver energy security and provide climate leadership. Those are Scottish Labour’s priorities.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will live up to the words in her amendment and work with—not against—a future Labour Government, because no community must be left behind. It is critical that, when we can work together in co-operative partnership with businesses, we do so and that we deliver the jobs that are urgently needed now.

16:46

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): We are at a critical point in the transition—halfway to net zero—but that is largely as a result of the easy wins, especially the decarbonisation of electricity. Anyone with any credibility at all accepts the reality that change is needed.

Outright climate denial is largely a fringe notion that is confined to the absurdities of GB News and the far-right press, but that was not always the case. The fossil fuel industry understood the fundamentals of the harm that it was doing to the world as long ago as the 1960s. Initially, it covered it up. Then, as the science came to be understood more widely, it pumped out lies and conspiracy theories as rapidly as it continued pumping out oil and gas. It succeeded in delaying climate action for decades. As millionaires became billionaires, the damage that they were quite deliberately doing to our global life-support system continued.

The fossil fuel industry’s creation of the climate denial conspiracy movement should go down in history as one of the greatest crimes against humanity ever perpetrated. The damage that it did is still with us, but, more recently, the fossil fuel industry has been successful at creating a new threat by moving its strategy from climate denial to climate delay. It says, “Of course, there should be a transition, but let us manage it in our own time and at a slower pace.” There was a time when all of this could have been done more slowly. It would have been easier. It would probably have been cheaper in the long run, too. That time was when the science first became clear and when we still had decades in which to act, but the fossil fuel industry was doing everything possible to put its own profits ahead of the survival of our world.

Whatever else we disagree about across the political spectrum, we should agree on the interests of the workforce whose livelihoods are at stake. To anyone working in the oil and gas sector, I say that, if your family or community is dependent on that industry, you need an active transition to make sure that there is a decent, secure future after the fossil fuel age. If that is what you need, it should be clear to you that the fossil fuel industry is your greatest enemy. It will always put its short-term profits ahead of your long-term future. It did it before, it is doing it now and it will continue to do it for as long as Governments allow it.

To those who say, “Let’s work with the fossil fuel industry on the transition,” I say that it is time to get real. As research from Oil Change International just a couple of months ago showed, of the large oil companies, including many of those working in the Scottish North Sea, many have plans to increase their global oil and gas production—not to transition away from it, but to

increase it—and many of them are also ranked among the world's most climate-wrecking investor-owned companies, based on their historical pollution.

The industry cannot be trusted to lead this change. Only assertive interventionist approaches from Government will get results at the rapid pace that is now required after decades of industry delays. We have seen the Tories ripping up their climate policies—thankfully, they will be out of Government very soon. The SNP is now back to its old ways. Instead of accelerating action on climate, Kate Forbes is quoted today as saying that the SNP has

“been clear that we’re not against new”

oil and gas licences and has

“never said no”.

That represents a shameless retreat from a position of climate leadership. The SNP is even attacking Labour's half-hearted and insipid measures as too extreme. For its part, Labour wants to talk to us about GB energy, but it seems to be as unclear as the industry is about what that actually would be.

It is clear that only the Greens are willing to act like our future depends on it, shifting away from fossil fuel at the speed that is required and willing to use progressive taxation so that the wealth that is being hoarded by the super rich can be used to invest at the scale and pace that the transition demands.

I move amendment S6M-13482.2, to leave out from “makes” to end and insert:

“has made to Scotland's economy and the contribution that it has made to the greenhouse gas emissions, which threaten the future of humanity and much of the living world; accepts the reality that the North Sea is a declining basin, that most of its production is for export and does not contribute to energy security, and that the world already has far more fossil fuel in existing reserves than it can afford to use in any scenario consistent with the Paris Agreement; notes that the industry supports an estimated 30,000 direct jobs and that these skilled workers need a managed transition to green industries that is both just and fast; further notes the long track record of the fossil fuel industry in first covering up climate science, then promoting climate denial conspiracy theories, before shifting to its current strategy of lobbying for slower climate action; notes with concern reports that the Scottish Government is considering ending its presumption against new oil and gas licences; condemns the UK Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, which would reward the fossil fuel industry and do nothing to reduce the UK's dependence on it; notes with concern the extremist positions taken by some fossil fuel apologists who are opposed to the very existence of a liveable world, and condemns their actions, which are irresponsible, damaging and disruptive.”

16:51

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Back in March, Mr Lumsden and his colleagues were made to look faintly ridiculous as they sought to attack a windfall tax on oil and gas giants that their own chancellor and Prime Minister were happily extending that very same morning. Given the erratic behaviour of Rishi Sunak since calling an election that he had not even discussed with his Cabinet, Mr Lumsden must have lodged his motion for this debate with no little trepidation. However, in time-honoured fashion, I thank him for providing this latest opportunity to debate the oil and gas sector, our future energy needs and how Scotland and the wider UK make the just transition to a decarbonised energy system.

The motion and each of the amendments fairly acknowledge the vital role that the oil and gas sector plays in Scotland's energy mix, as well as the jobs and economic activity that it supports. The sector will continue to play that role going forward. That said, what Mr Lumsden's motion and his speech fail to acknowledge is that our reliance on oil and gas needs to come down, not just for environmental reasons but for the sake of our economy.

Last year, the Office for Budget Responsibility concluded that the UK is

“one of the most gas dependent countries in Europe”,

with 78 per cent of our energy needs met through fossil fuels. Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine has made it clear that continued dependence on fossil fuels has left the UK more exposed to fuel price shocks, causing hardship to households and businesses. If Mr Lumsden is still not persuaded, perhaps he would heed the advice of the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee, which is chaired by his colleague Philip Dunne and which recently concluded that

“Accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels will enhance the UK's energy security”.

It went on:

“It will also help to protect households from volatile fossil fuel prices permanently”.

That is a compelling win-win.

The transition that we need will undoubtedly come at a significant financial cost, and we need to look at how best we can meet those costs and be more creative in the financial incentives that are on offer. However, talking only about the costs of action ignores the fact that the costs of inaction or inadequate action are far greater still.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: No.

The Conservatives might believe that their Canute-like approach to the issue is good politics in the midst of an election, but they are kidding themselves and, more importantly, misleading the public, which appears to be the campaign strategy of the day.

Earlier this year, the UK Climate Change Committee's former chief executive Chris Stark warned all party leaders that the North Sea basin is winding down, whatever we do, so the priority needs to be removing the reliance on fossil fuels from the economy. This is not a question of policy or even politics—it is a matter of geological fact. Chris Stark also pointed out that, for all the sound and fury, at the extremes, the Greens and the Conservatives are actually arguing about whether North Sea production declines by 95 per cent or 97 per cent by 2050. Whatever way we cut it, if we are still stuck on fossil fuels in 2050, we will be importing them.

The transition is, of course, inevitable, but how it happens is certainly not. It needs to have the people and communities that are most directly affected at the heart of the decision-making process, and it will be different in different parts of the country. However it happens, it will require both of Scotland's Governments to co-operate and collaborate—that has been a consistent message from the UK CCC over the years and is a key element of my amendment.

Patrick Harvie is right to say that this will not be easy, as all the easy stuff has already been done. However, the transition will be made harder, costlier and more painful if we pretend, as Douglas Lumsden appears to be doing, that it does not need to happen or that it can somehow be delayed.

On that basis, I move amendment S6M-13482.3, to leave out from first "notes" to end and insert:

"recognises that there is a climate emergency and that it is essential that Scotland meets its net zero targets by 2045 and drives down its reliance on fossil fuels; believes that the phasing down of the traditional oil and gas sector must be done hand in hand with the expansion of renewables and the creation of green jobs, using the wealth of talent and skills available, in order to ensure that communities are not left behind, and further believes that, in order to achieve a successful just transition, both of Scotland's governments must work together, and with the oil and gas and renewables sectors, so that change can be managed properly and effectively."

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

16:55

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): Thousands of livelihoods across the north-east rely on the oil and gas industry, not to mention the

wider supply chain across Scotland. The industry supports the Scottish economy to the tune of almost £19 billion, and upwards of 94,000 jobs—that is massive by any standard.

People would be forgiven for expecting SNP and Labour politicians to want to safeguard such an important sector. However, the SNP, Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens want to turn off the taps in the North Sea and turn their backs on oil and gas. Hard-working and highly skilled North Sea workers would pay the price of political virtue signalling, with calls for the fastest possible transition to net zero.

Patrick Harvie has demonstrated that he lives in a bubble. I invite him to come up to the north-east and say what he said today to the hard-working families who would lose their livelihoods and their jobs. He and the SNP would create a cliff edge in the energy transition and devastate communities across my region.

The north-east economy is well and truly on the line, which is why we need a sensible and pragmatic approach to the energy transition. However, the SNP still has not published a proper energy strategy. It does not have a plan, but it has found the time to release independence paper after independence paper.

Gillian Martin: Will Tess White take an intervention on that point?

Tess White: I am sorry, but I do not have time. I would normally take an intervention.

During this week's STV debate, John Swinney and Anas Sarwar both tried to swerve questions about the North Sea, but it was as clear as could be that the SNP and Labour still do not support new oil and gas licences or North Sea exploration. That has a direct impact on the energy sector in Scotland and investment in it.

The energy transition survey that was published just last week by the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce lays out, in the starkest of terms, what the situation looks like. It reports that confidence among companies that work on the UK continental shelf is now lower than it was during the financial crash and the pandemic, when oil prices were as low as \$16 a barrel. A presumption against new licences would force us to import more oil and gas from overseas, at higher cost and with a greater carbon footprint, eroding our energy security at the same time.

However we look at it, the approach taken by the SNP and Labour does not make sense—it is economically and environmentally illiterate. It is a double blow for the north-east, because those communities are bearing the brunt of the new transmission infrastructure that is puncturing our

countryside and decimating our prime productive arable land.

The Scottish Conservatives will keep standing up for our oil and gas industry. This week, Douglas Ross was, once again, unwavering in his support, while Anas Sarwar and John Swinney were all at sea. We are the only party that supports new oil and gas licences and, at the same time, supports the growth of highly skilled and highly paid roles in the renewables sector. We will not allow the oil and gas industry to be shut down, and we will not abandon the North Sea workers whose livelihoods depend on it.

16:59

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Scotland has, indeed, punched above its weight when it has come to the energy sector, with the oil and gas industry underpinning a vital part of the Scottish economy over many decades. The workforce is highly skilled and internationally recognised, and there is an extensive supply chain, as well as research and innovation. The industry keeps us warm and keeps our lights on, and it provides a secure domestic energy supply. The north-east has been a major part of the oil and gas family since 1975, when the BP Forties field pipeline was switched on and the oil flowed onshore to Aberdeen and on to Grangemouth. Those were the days.

To date, our oil and gas sector has contributed an eye-watering £350 billion in tax revenue to the UK Treasury, and, according to Offshore Energies UK, 2022-23 saw the sector generate £18.9 billion in gross value added for the Scottish economy and support 90,000 skilled jobs.

Demand for fossil fuels will decline, but the sector will continue to play a vital role towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050, supporting the expansion of renewables and low-carbon technologies more broadly.

Liam Kerr: Will the member give way?

Audrey Nicoll: No, thank you.

I refer members to the words of Professor de Leeuw at Robert Gordon University, who recently said:

“Given the magnitude of change that is needed ... over the coming years, ... the UK, and devolved administrations must ... pursue credible energy pathways, which deliver a ‘just and fair’ transition for the sector and its workforce.”

Given those comments from a well-known expert and the fact that we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take the best learning from our world-class oil and gas sector and mirror that experience for new and green energy, it is bizarre—though not unexpected, given the Conservatives’ stance on energy—that their

motion excludes any reference whatsoever to just transition, renewables, emissions or the climate.

In the short time that I have left, I want to draw on the excellent detail outlined in the latest Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce energy transition survey report and highlight a couple of the many points that it makes.

First, on policy recommendations, the report highlights the challenges that Scottish Government planners face as they struggle to keep up with the pace that the industry demands for green energy consents, particularly with regard to offshore wind. It is an issue that I and other members raise regularly. I appreciate that that is more of an operational matter, but I would be grateful if an update on that important issue could be provided at the end of the debate.

Secondly, the report states:

“it is clear from our survey ... that companies will exit the UKCS”—

that is, the continental shelf—

“under the tax regime being proposed by the Labour Party. This is supported by independent analysis which concludes that 100,000 ... jobs currently supported by the UK oil and gas sector will be lost by 2029. Investment of up to £30 billion is at risk, and for many of the basin’s key pieces of infrastructure, we are rapidly approaching the point of no return.”

Finally, on the energy profits levy, the report states:

“we have a UK Government taxing the oil and gas sector to death with its Energy Profits Levy (EPL), triggering a state of inertia among global investors.”

Moreover,

“many will turn their investment plans and focus elsewhere.

This outcome would be catastrophic for jobs, tax revenues and energy security”.

The cabinet secretary set out very helpfully the concerns arising from the EPL—

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Nicoll. I must ask you to conclude at that point.

Audrey Nicoll: Presiding Officer, there is a lot to be positive about—

The Presiding Officer: Yes, thank you very much, Ms Nicoll. [*Applause.*]

I call Daniel Johnson, to be followed by Stephen Kerr.

17:03

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I presume that that applause is for the beginning of my contribution.

Let me try to do the impossible. Despite the heat and the noise and the ill temper, there are things that we agree on. First of all, there is the extraordinary contribution that the North Sea has made to the economy of this country, including tens of thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—of well-paid jobs and the fact that, with that expertise and those assets, we have an extraordinary opportunity in renewables. That opportunity will require a transition plan, and an extraordinary level of investment will be needed to deliver it.

However, I fear that contrived disagreements and bluster will create an environment that puts off that investment and leads to confusion and instability, driving people away from investing in the North Sea at a time when we can ill afford that.

Let us make no mistake—

Stephen Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Daniel Johnson: I want to make a little progress.

The cost of energy is absolutely critical. If we ever needed a lesson in that, we would just have to look at how, in the past couple of years, utility bills have doubled, food bills have increased by a third and the cost of doing business has skyrocketed, all because of an energy shock. In line with that, utility companies, particularly those in the petrochemical industry, saw their revenues increase threefold, with profits by Shell and BP alone doubling in 2022.

When such profits are made, the choice that faces us is this: do we want them invested in share buy-backs, or do we want them to be taxed as extraordinary profits and invested in the transition? That is the proposition that Labour is setting out. By all means question the detail of that—

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Daniel Johnson: I am keen to take some interventions, but I would like to make some progress.

That is the proposition and that is the plan—and at least we have a plan to look at and criticise. By all means let us look at the detail, but I think that we do need that plan.

Stephen Kerr: Will the member give way on that point?

Daniel Johnson: Yes.

Stephen Kerr: Does Daniel Johnson not realise that the industry and the investors that he is describing are being put off by his party's future plans for the sector? That is what is driving investment away.

Daniel Johnson: Let us look at that. I think that both parties of Government are misrepresenting their positions, or at least are being confusing. The energy profits levy, which I presume is at the heart of the attack, is something to which his party is committed, up to 2029. Indeed, we are also in an extraordinary position with the Scottish National Party and its announcement just today in the chamber that it wants to withdraw the levy one year early. It is being less clear on that tax—or less committed to it—than the Conservative Government. *[Interruption.]* Will the cabinet secretary clarify whether that is what she meant by her comment about the original date?

Màiri McAllan: That was a reassertion of our position, which is, as it always has been, that we support the energy profits levy to its original date. As I have said, the SNP supports windfall taxes, where windfall profits apply, across our economy. I wonder whether Daniel Johnson extends his support for windfall taxes to online retail giants and supermarkets, or is Labour just content to use Scotland's natural resources as its cash cow?

The Presiding Officer: You must draw to a conclusion, Mr Johnson.

Daniel Johnson: I think that we have just heard the rather extraordinary revelation that, when it comes to windfall taxes, the SNP wants to do less than the Conservative Government. That should not come as a surprise, because we have seen the SNP take at least three different positions on a windfall tax in the past year alone.

As for licensing, Màiri McAllan said on 22 November at a Friends of the Earth meeting that the Scottish Government did not agree with new licences. Today, though, we have heard an entirely different position, and it is pretending as though the previous position did not exist at all. The reality is that we have very confused positions from both the Conservatives and the SNP.

I am sorry that I have to draw my comments to a conclusion but, ultimately, as Liam McArthur said, transition is a necessity—

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude.

Daniel Johnson: —not an option.

17:08

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): We all saw John Swinney and Anas Sarwar struggling to answer the very pointed questions that were put to them on Monday night by Douglas Ross, because their positions on the issues relating to the future of the oil and gas sector are, to be frank, extremely dangerous for the future of the sector.

One of the criticisms that is most often levelled at this Parliament is that there are not enough

people in here who have experience of the world of business. Daniel Johnson has such experience, which is why, had his speech gone on much longer, I think that he would have struggled to defend the policy of his party. Listening to this debate, it is hard to argue with the criticisms that people level about the lack of business experience among members in the chamber. What we have heard this afternoon is theory that is devoid of any real-world context being bandied about by members who are in a complete state of denial about the reality of what is happening in the North Sea basin.

Let us consider the Greens, very briefly. They would just shut everything down. They have no interest in the tens of thousands of people who work in the sector. Tess White is absolutely right. Patrick Harvie's comments were an insult to tens of thousands of families in the north-east of Scotland.

Let us consider the SNP. It campaigned for years on the slogan "It's Scotland's oil". It expressed that repeatedly, but now there is a presumption against new oil and gas. That is what we have heard from the SNP front bench for the past three years, in which I have sat in the Parliament. There is no point in denying it, and there is no point in Kate Forbes trying to revise what has been said in this chamber by First Ministers and others who have sat on that front bench. They have argued in favour of swingeing surtaxes on North Sea operations. They cannot say that they are not in favour of that, because, in all honesty, we do not have straw for brains. We can remember what was said just last week, the month before or the year before. I tell members not to insult the intelligence of the people of Scotland now by portraying the SNP as the defenders of North Sea oil and gas.

Let us consider Labour. As we saw last night, we can never be sure of what Labour policy is on anything, but industry bodies and trade unions are united in condemning the party's current policy towards North Sea oil and gas. They warn that the consequences of additional windfall taxes and a presumption against—no, a banning of—new oil and gas will cost millions and millions and precipitate the demise of the whole sector. Labour says that it does not want a cliff edge, but it then exposes its ignorance of how global capital flow works.

Daniel Johnson: Does Stephen Kerr accept that the North Sea basin's output is declining by 15 per cent a year, that that is irreversible and, what is more, that we are arguing about a difference in headline rate?

Stephen Kerr: If Labour policy threatens the flow of capital into what is already there, it will not be there at all. Very quickly, it will drop off a cliff.

There is a constant need for new capital investment in the North Sea. If there is no future for North Sea oil and gas, why on earth would anyone invest in the sector now?

There is also the mystery of GB energy. What on earth is it? Every time a Labour politician stands up to talk about GB energy, they talk about something completely different. Apparently, it is an energy company that generates but does not generate energy. I have no idea what the Labour Party's policy on it is. I go back to my original point: it can only be a policy that was worked up by careerist politicians and policy wonks who have no idea how the real world works.

Only the Scottish Conservatives will stand up for the oil and gas sector and the tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on it.

17:12

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I am glad that we are speaking about this important issue in our national Parliament. It is interesting that the motion that has been brought to the chamber covers the fact that decisions on energy and offshore oil and gas licensing are reserved. I look forward to the Conservatives being as open minded about discussing reserved issues in future.

I speak not only as an MSP but as someone who worked for one of Scotland's leading commercial law firms—I hope that that is enough professional experience for Mr Kerr—and a renewable energy company that had a wonderful and remarkable staff team, many of whom had come from the oil and gas sector. They were forward thinkers on the just transition. That gives me a relevance in the debate.

The oil and gas industry is particularly pertinent in the north-east of Scotland, Shetland and other parts north of Edinburgh. However, not only is the supply chain Scotland-wide, but so is the services sector that delivers for oil and gas and, in time, will deliver more and more for net zero. I am more than happy to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the highly skilled and internationally recognised workforce in the oil and gas sector, the part that they play in Scotland's economy and what the sector does for us at present by supplying heat and electricity and through the economic contribution that it makes. However, we have to recognise that the North Sea is a geologically mature and declining base and that it is geographically challenging to access compared with other fields.

Despite what has rightly been said about some in the oil and gas industry not wanting to transit to net zero, we have to recognise that there is a general worldwide shift towards net zero and that

that is a huge opportunity for Scotland to realise. That is why I welcome the Scottish Government's intention to introduce a finalised energy strategy and just transition plan later this summer. It will take an evidence-based and pragmatic approach and will ensure that climate compatibility assessment and energy security are properly reflected. I hope that, at that juncture, outwith the election period, we will have more time to talk about and debate those issues.

There is an absolute need to move to net zero and, as has been acknowledged, the just transition is the right way to go about it. More than anything else, we know from history that, if we do not protect jobs and skills and do not undertake a change in a way that is sensitive to communities, it causes significant damage. There is an irony in what the Conservatives say, because unfortunately, in constituencies across the country, including mine, we are still having to deal with the deindustrialisation that their Government presided over.

As we move towards net zero, we do so with respect and admiration for those who work in oil and gas, and they are part of how we move forward. We move forward methodically but purposefully—

The Presiding Officer: I must ask you to conclude at that point, Mr Macpherson.

Ben Macpherson: —in meeting our climate necessity, and we do so sensitively and strategically.

The Presiding Officer: We move to the winding-up speeches.

17:16

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I commend Ben Macpherson on a thoughtful speech that was to some extent a bit of an antidote to the speech from Stephen Kerr that we heard prior to that. I acknowledge that the debate is taking place in an election context and I recognise that Mr Kerr has more skin in the game than the rest of us. However, slightly worryingly, the tone of the debate has largely not been different from the debate that we had three months ago, when the election was but a glint in Rishi Sunak's eye. The point has been made that the general consensus on issues in the energy sector that we have had for many years appears to be breaking down, which is a real concern.

We heard rather alarmist rhetoric from Tess White and Stephen Kerr about shutting the sector down. On the other hand, we heard Patrick Harvie's suggestions on the discussions about what happens next and the pace at which it happens. The industry and those with an interest

in it can perhaps be condemned or criticised for actions in the past, but to exclude them from the process, what happens next and the pace at which it happens is not something that we would contemplate or accept in any other area.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I will give way very briefly.

Patrick Harvie: I am grateful. Will Mr McArthur accept the reality that the companies that we are talking about are expanding their fossil fuel investments at the moment and they are not transitioning away? That is a matter of fact.

Liam McArthur: I do not accept that at all. Different things will be happening in different parts of the world. There is no doubt that oil and gas will remain a part of our energy mix for some time, but the notion that we can exclude from the discussions those who have an interest in what happens next is not something that we would accept or tolerate in any other area.

Despite the election context, Daniel Johnson made a valiant effort to draw together areas of common cause, including the contribution of the sector, the inevitability of the transition, the investment that will be needed to deliver it, and the important point about confidence that many members have made. Confidence across the energy sector has not been helped by some of the UK Government's recent decisions. Daniel Johnson's attempt to bring harmony fell apart, as he suggested that the Scottish National Party was less aggressive on the windfall tax aspirations than the Conservatives. However, it was a valiant effort.

Let me conclude with a couple of the key points from the Liberal Democrat amendment about what we need to see as part of the transition. One of those points, which the UK CCC has been making for years, is about the need for both of Scotland's Governments to work together to develop detailed plans for delivery on their ambitions. There is no point in having ministers, whether they are based in Downing Street or at St Andrew's house, hunting out disagreement. We are talking about an area in which, over the years, successive energy ministers in the Scottish Government and the UK Government have found ways of working together, and we need to get back to that.

The other point is that the transition is inevitable. The disappointing thing about Douglas Lumsden's motion and his speech is that he elided that fact—he avoided making any reference to it whatsoever. That transition will look different in different parts of the country. In my Orkney constituency, for example, where the Flotta oil terminal has been integral to our island economy and community for almost half a century, it might involve a transition to a green hydrogen terminal over time, but that is

the embodiment of the transition that we need to see.

It is certainly the case that inaction and inadequate action would come at a heavier price than the action that we need to take. On that basis, I urge Parliament to back the amendment in my name.

17:21

Patrick Harvie: I have frequently reflected on the comparison between the debates that happened about a decade ago in relation to Longannet and those that are happening now in relation to the North Sea. The same debate is happening, and I think that there is the same lack of transparency for the workforce involved, only on a much bigger scale.

Everybody knew that Scotland's last coal-fired power station was going to close—they knew that it had to close, should close and would close. We all knew it, yet the company that owned it, the local authority, the Scottish Government and the UK Government all kept on saying the same thing: "We're fully committed to the long-term future of the plant." That was a dishonest position, then; it was not in the interests of the workforce of the plant, which was a doomed plant. It was going to close, and we all knew it. What should have happened is that the last decade of its operational life should have been dedicated to investment in a decent economic future for the local community for the period after it closed. That did not happen.

That is what a planned transition would involve, and that is the kind of honesty that is required in relation to the North Sea. It is entirely wrong of the Conservatives to claim, as they have done today, that they are the ones who are standing up for the workforce. They are pretending that the oil and gas industry has a long-term future, when we all know that that industry is not the future.

As for the Liberal Democrat amendment, I recognise the valiant attempt that Liam McArthur has made to try to calm things down. Perhaps he is due credit for trying to do so. However, I cannot support an amendment that includes that mealy-mouthed phrase about "phasing down" fossil fuels, which is the very phrase that caused such utter dismay when fossil fuel lobbyists managed to get it into a United Nations framework convention on climate change conference of the parties report a few years ago.

I do not expect much better from the Conservatives on their position, but I have to say that I used to expect better from the SNP. It had begun—finally—to end its fixation on supporting the fossil fuel industry, but it appears that that is no longer the case. In relation to licensing, the cabinet secretary—although it might have been

the minister—said that the Government will take an "evidence-based" approach, but she also said that it would do so on a "case-by-case basis". The evidence that we have is that the entire world already has far more fossil fuel in existing reserves than we can afford to use. The United Nations says so, the International Energy Agency says so and the global climate experts say so. We have far more of the stuff than we can afford to use. There can be no justification for going looking for more. We have a global glut of the stuff, and we cannot use it.

As for the Labour Party's position, I know that Daniel Johnson was keen to say—I enjoyed the fact that he enjoyed saying so—that the SNP and Conservative positions were unclear, undefined, uncertain and "confused", but I have to say that the Labour Party's position on its proposal for GB energy is no clearer. Back in January, Sarah Boyack said that GB energy would be a

"publicly owned energy champion for clean energy".—
[*Official Report*, 24 January 2024; c 36.]

In May, Anas Sarwar said that it would be a
"publicly-owned energy generating company".

Just four days later, Keir Starmer said that it would be an

"investment vehicle, not an energy company,"

but on the same day, Ed Miliband said that it would be

"a company that generates electricity."

I am sure that a position will be set out in the closing speeches; the point is that there have been so many different positions that even the industry is unclear about what it means.

The one thing that I am clear about is that GB energy will lack the resources that it needs. Just a few months ago, Sarah Boyack said that Labour would be "committed to" £28 billion of investment, which she said would be "crucial". Last year, Ed Miliband said that

"Some people don't want Britain to borrow to invest in the green economy. They want us to back down. But Keir, Rachel and I will never let that happen. Britain needs this £28bn a year".

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Mr Harvie.

Patrick Harvie: Now that Keir, Rachel and Ed have backed down, that commitment has gone—

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Mr Harvie.

Patrick Harvie: —a commitment that Labour was describing as "essential", just months ago.

17:25

Sarah Boyack: I had been looking forward to the debate since it was announced, because I was intrigued to see which versions of each party we would have in the speeches. Would it be the SNP that boasts about climate action and that was, only in March, lodging amendments to motions that argued in favour of windfall taxes, or would it be the SNP that is the only party to refuse to back a windfall tax on oil and gas giants and will not rule out new licences?

For the Conservatives, do we have the Tories of Jeremy Hunt's budget, who extended the windfall taxes to 2029, or the Tories who want unlimited North Sea oil drilling in defiance of scientific reality and climate necessity? We have a bit of everything—some vague statements and some poorly masked desperate pleas from two struggling parties that are in an election cycle that they are not enjoying.

Let me focus on the motion and amendments. It will not come as any surprise that I cannot support Douglas Lumsden's motion. I absolutely value the work and contribution of our oil and gas workers, but Douglas Lumsden's motion does not reflect the fact that the oil and gas deposits in the North Sea are declining. As speakers from across the parties have said, we need a plan and we need to invest now, and we need to think about how we deliver a just transition. In failing to acknowledge that fact, the Tories seem to be intent on doing to oil and gas workers what they did to the Scottish coal communities.

We need to invest in new opportunities and we need to work with the oil and gas sector, because many of its companies are transitioning to renewables and investing in innovative technology that is reducing emissions in their operations now, as they still produce oil and gas.

The points that Ben Macpherson made about jobs and skills are absolutely crucial. They are why we need the offshore skills passport now, so that workers in the North Sea can use their knowledge and experience over the coming decades in oil and gas and in renewables, there and back.

Gillian Martin: Will Sarah Boyack recognise that the offshore skills passport is an industry-led scheme? Although the Government has given some money towards it, it has been led by industry, which recently made an announcement on its progress.

Sarah Boyack: We need the offshore skills passport to happen, though, and we need the two Governments to ensure that it happens now, because some workers are already missing out on job opportunities; they must either pay several thousands or just give up.

There is a real issue about the content of the cabinet secretary's amendment—the lack of actual action. Again, we have just heard that it would be nice if the business sector delivered the passport, but that has not happened yet. We have had far too many missed opportunities. We have been calling for the energy and just transition plan to be published for months, because we need certainty. When I meet companies in the energy sector, they say that they want clarity so that they can invest now and with confidence.

We have so many opportunities in Scotland, but the supply chains need to know where the investment will go. We know that we potentially have new renewables construction in Leith, and that the Sumitomo Electric Industries Ltd project has been announced. Things are happening, but we need a joined-up approach and a plan for investment, because this is not just about the words "just transition": it is about implementation. I am so glad that—

Màiri McAllan: Will the member take an intervention?

Sarah Boyack: No. I need to move towards the end. I am in the last minute.

GB energy which I mentioned in my opening speech, is not a mystery. It will champion the transition and enable investment. There are lots of publicly owned energy companies across Europe, but we need a generating company in Scotland that will get the investment going—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Ms Boyack.

Sarah Boyack: —that will support investment by the public and the private sector.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: Ms Boyack is concluding.

Sarah Boyack: The company will bring together the UK Government, the Scottish Government and our local authorities. We need to work together, because the climate emergency and the challenge of fuel poverty, which the Tory cost of living crisis has exacerbated, are real issues.

We need action and investment in green jobs now, and we need to work with the oil and gas and the renewables sectors to deliver the opportunities—

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Ms Boyack.

Sarah Boyack: —to give us the just transition now and in the decades to come.

17:29

The Minister for Climate Action (Gillian Martin): I begin by stating clearly that there will be no routes to net zero or energy security except in partnership with business—particularly businesses that are operating in Scotland, including Scotland's valued offshore energy industry. Scotland's existing highly skilled oil and gas workforce is vital to delivering the transition to a renewable future, as is investment from integrated energy companies. It is no longer the case that oil and gas companies are over there and renewable companies are over here; they have merged and are working in partnership with one another. Oil and gas companies are also diversifying into renewables, as we have seen with the ScotWind rounds. Those companies will help us to future proof our position as a major energy-producing nation.

Even if there was no climate emergency and it did not pose an existential threat—although we know that it does—Scotland, particularly the north-east, the Highlands and Islands and Orkney and Shetland, would need to transition to a future that future proofs energy jobs. As so many people have said, we know that the North Sea is a mature basin that is declining. Oil and gas companies recognise that, which is why they are diversifying. We need to ensure that, where levers remain reserved, we call on the UK Government to act to support the transition in a way that, to be honest, it has not done so far.

I will move on to areas about which there is a lot of agreement. Daniel Johnson mentioned some of those areas, including Governments working together to ensure that Scotland gets the investment that it requires. I say to Sarah Boyack that we put £500 million of just transition funding into the north-east in Moray; I would like that to be matched by an incoming Labour Government. We have £500 million in strategic investment funding; I would like to see that being matched by an incoming Labour Government. I would like Governments to put their money where their mouth is, because Scotland is at the epicentre of the renewables revolution that will be powering and decarbonising all of the UK's energy supply.

If our energy is not decarbonised, we will be continually reliant on burning oil and gas. With a mature basin, we will not be able to service demand domestically, and we will need to import the oil and gas that we require. I agree wholeheartedly with Liam McArthur, who put the challenge squarely to the Conservatives that, if the party continually denies the fact that oil and gas in the North Sea and the west of Shetland is a declining resource that it will no longer be commercially viable to extract, it is letting down the workers of the north-east. We and the parties that

recognise that are the ones that are future proofing Scotland's economy as well as the jobs of future energy workers. I make that point very clearly.

Meanwhile, we need to help oil and gas operators to invest in renewables, work with other renewables companies and reduce their production emissions, which we have done with the innovation and targeted oil and gas—INTOG—rounds. That initiative will develop floating offshore wind that allows production emissions to reduce, which will lead into the climate compatibility aspect of things. If oil and gas companies wanted to apply for a licence for a new field, they would have to demonstrate that, for example, they were doing everything that they could to bring down the emissions of the associated production. We want to see an evidence-based licensing regime for oil and gas.

Patrick Harvie: Will the minister clarify whether she just said that her approach to evidence will be about production emissions only, not the emissions that are associated with consumption? Is that correct?

Gillian Martin: I was giving an example of a condition that might be in a climate compatibility checkpoint. I did not say that that would be the only condition in a checkpoint.

Scotland is leading the way in the conversation on climate compatibility checkpoints for the UK as well as oil and gas producing companies around the world. We will do that until our country's energy systems, such as heating and transport, no longer rely on the burning of oil and gas.

Daniel Johnson: The minister has taken a consensual approach. However, does she recognise that the previous First Minister said that approving Rosebank would be tantamount to climate denial? The current approach is significantly different from that previous statement and the previous approach to licensing.

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, minister.

Gillian Martin: I will bring the debate back to the workers, because that is really what we are talking about. We are not talking about multinational companies; we are talking about Scotland's future economy. We need to recognise that, even if there were not a climate emergency—which there is—there is not a future for North Sea oil and gas beyond the next 50 years.

The Presiding Officer: I must ask you to conclude, minister.

Gillian Martin: That is not me saying that; it is the companies that are currently working in that area.

The Presiding Officer: I call Liam Kerr to wind up the debate—up to six minutes, please.

17:35

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The debate has been revealing. First, it has revealed a failure to appreciate demand. Oil and gas will be required for years—for decades to come—and not only for power, although as it currently meets around 75 per cent of the UK's energy needs, that is not going to change soon. Also—Liam McArthur missed this in an otherwise interesting contribution—2021 figures show that around a quarter of the UK's oil and gas goes towards manufacturing everyday products. That is medicines, cosmetics and asphalt; it is materials for wind turbines and solar panels.

It was good to hear Tess White remind us that meeting demand here is vital for energy security, for a lower carbon footprint and for tens of thousands of Scottish jobs, of which roughly 95 per cent are in the north-east. Yes, we all want a transition, but curtailing supply before renewable energy capability can cope, as well as failing to answer the base-load question and cut demand, is illiterate. As Douglas Lumsden pointed out, the transition will not happen without the support and investment of the oil and gas industry.

As Ryan Crighton of Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce put it, to achieve net zero

“we need to unlock almost unfathomable amounts of capital”,

and that is in a context where investment often does not pay a return for years. That leads me to the various amendments—

Daniel Johnson: Will the member give way?

Liam Kerr: Can I come back to you, please, Mr Johnson?

I have for some time thought that one of the few things that Humza Yousaf got right during his ill-fated time as First Minister was to eject the Green Party from Government, so it was gratifying to read Patrick Harvie's amendment and listen to his unevidenced, dogmatic and—dare I say it—extreme contributions and interventions today and be proved absolutely right. His ludicrous amendment bears absolutely no further consideration.

The Labour and Scottish National Party amendments display astonishing ambivalence and ignorance about investment—despite Daniel Johnson, rightly and constructively, bringing it up. As a mature basin, the North Sea oil and gas sector is at greater risk of divestment than others as it becomes less economic, yet the Labour Party's positioning reveals that it does not understand that.

Never forget that it was Keir Starmer who said last year that he would end new exploration, which Audrey Nicoll rightly said would deter up to £30 billion of investment in Scotland. In the leaders debate, Anas Sarwar said that he wants oil and gas companies to invest, then in the same breath he talked about not only hiking the energy profits levy—a hike that it has been reported could lead to 42,000 jobs being lost and £26 billion of economic value being wiped out—but ripping away the investment allowances that are specifically put in place to divert profit to renewables.

Daniel Johnson: Last year, BP made more than £30 billion-worth of profits and Shell made more than £50 billion-worth of profits, and much of that excess profit is used for share buy-back. Does the member accept that that is not a good use of money and that it should be invested in renewables, which is what our proposition is?

Liam Kerr: I presume that Daniel Johnson would accept that those profits are not specifically isolated to the UK—[*Interruption.*]—and he has to have a much more forensic analysis when he is using such statistics. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Johnson.

Liam Kerr: Let us stay with Labour on this. Earlier, Stephen Kerr brought up GB energy. Let us ignore for a second the fact that Labour cannot tell us where it is going to be located, and the fact that it would apparently employ only 50 to 100 people, and let us focus on Keir Starmer going on “Good Morning Scotland” to say that it would be an energy company. It would not be an energy company and it was not to produce energy—until yesterday, when he said that it is an energy company and it will produce energy. On Sarah Boyack's speech, I do not know which version of the party—as you said—turned up, but which Keir Starmer can we expect to turn up on any given day?

The Presiding Officer: Please speak through the chair.

Liam Kerr: Let us be clear that, when it comes to uncertainty stifling investments, the Labour Party has nothing on the SNP. Members should remember when, as Stephen Kerr pointed out, it was Scotland's oil and the 2013 SNP paper was predicated on the average cash price not falling below \$113 a barrel.

Kevin Stewart: Will Mr Kerr give way?

Liam Kerr: I will make the point.

Those were halcyon days indeed because, in an abrupt volte face, the SNP's energy strategy contained a presumption against oil and gas exploration. This week, it turns out that the First Minister is exploring his position on the

presumption. When he was asked four times on Monday night whether he would back new licences, his answer was, at best, unclear. Shirley-Anne Somerville was asked the same question on Radio 4 four times yesterday, but she gave no clear answer.

Meanwhile, Stephen Flynn was on Radio Scotland on 29 May urging the SNP to change policy, and Kate Forbes was on STV saying that the SNP has never said no to further licensing.

Kevin Stewart: Will Mr Kerr give way?

Liam Kerr: No—I will not.

The SNP is making it up as it goes along, and its members are contradicting each other at every turn. I say to Gillian Martin that that is not future proofing—it is stifling investment. Who should investors believe—the First Minister or the two people who are manoeuvring to replace him?

As I said at the start, the debate has been revealing because it has shown the ignorance of the Greens, the incompetence of the SNP and the financial illiteracy of Labour. All the oil and gas debates in the past few years have been brought to the chamber by the Scottish Conservatives, and consistency and clarity run through them. We back our oil and gas industry, our energy security, tens of thousands of jobs and a just transition, and we do so not with words but with deeds, such as the £16 billion North Sea transition deal.

I urge Parliament to reject the contortions of Labour, the confusions of the SNP and the delusions of the Greens and vote for the motion in Douglas Lumsden's name.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on recognising the contribution of Scotland's oil and gas industry.

Business Motions

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-13493, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 11 June 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government Priorities: Eradicating Child Poverty

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 12 June 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Abortion Services
(Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

7.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 13 June 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Questions

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

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish
Government Priorities: Investing in
Scotland's Public Services

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 18 June 2024
 2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 9.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 19 June 2024
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands;
 NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 20 June 2024
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Social Justice
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Gender Representation on Public Boards (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 4.30 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 10 June 2024, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

The Presiding Officer: I call Liz Smith to speak to and move amendment S6M-13493.1.

17:42

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is my understanding that, prior to the Presiding Officer's selection of my topical question yesterday, the Minister for Parliamentary Business had intended to schedule a statement about the recent reports in the media that the Scottish Government would be handing back £450 million of European Union funds that are available for investment projects in Scotland.

Yesterday, in her answers, the Deputy First Minister told Parliament that those reports are untrue and that almost all of the allocated funds will be spent. She added:

"we will endeavour to spend as much of it as possible."— [Official Report, 4 June 2024; c 3.]

That is hardly the most convincing line about the detail of the allocations of the money.

The Deputy First Minister added that 60 per cent of the available funds had been earmarked for local government investment projects, but there was no detail, nor did she elaborate on the Scottish Government's acknowledgement that the initial available budget was reduced by €72 million because there had been a lack of demand or a lack of ability to spend the money.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic (Kate Forbes): Does Liz Smith accept that the programme still has at least a year to run? If all the money had been spent by now, that would be somewhat dubious, considering that there is still a year left of the programme.

Liz Smith: I have spent quite a lot of this morning reading up on the EU rules on this, and I understand what is being asked for, but I remind the Deputy First Minister that the Scottish Government has already handed back €199 million. I am asking for clarity and that is what the rest of the Parliament is asking for. If the Deputy First Minister is saying that the £450 million figure is inaccurate, she must have some idea of what the actual figure is. The Parliament ought to know what that money is and what it has been earmarked for.

I am asking for a statement so that we can be provided with further information and can scrutinise what the Scottish Government is saying on the matter. To come back to the point that I made yesterday, if money has been available, we ought to know about it and we ought to be able to tell local government and all the people who have been involved, for example, in enterprise budgets, exactly where that money is. If we are not doing that, we are not being transparent or ensuring that this Parliament is looking after the public.

I move amendment S6M-13493.1, to leave out from third “followed by Business Motions” to second “5.00 pm Decision Time” and insert—

“followed by Ministerial Statement: Allocation of EU Structural Funds

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.30 pm Decision Time”.

17:44

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I rise in support of the appeal to change the business motion for the following key reasons. The first is the quantum of the sums involved. We are talking about hundreds of millions of pounds of funding. Although the absolute figure might be disputed, it is potentially up to around 1 per cent of the Scottish Government’s budget.

We know that many of the figures are a matter of published fact—they have been published by the EU itself. We also know that many of the funding mechanisms are technical and dependent on match funding and other factors.

Finally, there is the matter of timing. Although there is the claim that there is a year to go, there is at the very least speculation that some of those deadlines are looming as soon as the end of June. Given the matter of the quantum, comparison with published fact, the technical nature of the funding and the timelines, I believe that a topical question at the start of this week is inadequate to answer those questions. Parliament needs a statement so that we can interrogate the facts and due to the significant concern and the significant sums of money that are involved.

The Presiding Officer: I call the minister to respond on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

17:46

The Minister for Parliamentary Business

(Jamie Hepburn): It is the case that I received a request from the Conservative Party to schedule a ministerial statement on EU structural funds for this week. I wrote to business managers to explain that I had intended to schedule the statement as requested but given that a topical question on EU structural funds had been selected and was asked yesterday, I felt that it was no longer required. After writing that letter to all business managers, I received no response from the Conservative Party business manager to my note, nor did he particularly push for the statement when it was discussed in the bureau. Otherwise, we could have discussed the request in more detail.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): Is it not the case that, following the topical question, it

would appear from the contributions from either side of the chamber that further questions have arisen and that a statement is the appropriate vehicle for the Parliament to hold the Scottish Government to account?

Jamie Hepburn: There are many mechanisms and means by which members can do that. I note that Mr Johnson said that the topical question was not enough. I am unaware of whether Mr Johnson—he can get to his feet and tell me now—pressed his button to seek to ask a question at topical question time on Tuesday.

Daniel Johnson: Does the minister accept that sometimes the facts change? When the facts change, so should his position. Does he not accept that, given that further questions have arisen, more questions should be permitted in the chamber?

Jamie Hepburn: The fact is that Mr Johnson did not bother to press his button yesterday to seek to ask a question. In the short period in which I have held the office that I hold now, I have sought to be reasonable in responding to requests from other parties. Earlier today, we had a statement on low-emission zones, following a request by the Conservative Party. Last week, we had a statement on industrial action in Scotland’s colleges, following a request by the Labour Party. I brought the timetabling of those requests to the bureau and made sure that those requests could be accommodated.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I say for the record, because the minutes of the bureau do not go into the detail that would allow what was said to be reflected, that I did say that we would reserve our position on the business motion, as we are doing today, if the answers to the topical question were not sufficient. I made that clear at the bureau and I would like that to be reflected on the record now.

Jamie Hepburn: I am making the point—I make it again—that I am a reasonable person. If we had had a fuller discussion, we could have considered scheduling the statement. Party business managers can bring such matters to the bureau, and members surely have to entrust those responsibilities to the business managers. Of course, I recognise and respect the right of members to do so, but it is my hope that we will not see continual attempts to amend business that is presented by the bureau for Parliament’s agreement. Those matters have been discussed and agreed by the bureau.

I will, at all times, operate on the basis of seeking to facilitate fair and reasonable requests, just as I had been ready to with the one that was made in respect of EU structural funds.

As I mentioned, there has been a topical question on the matter already this week. Indeed, Liz Smith asked that question, and the Deputy First Minister gave a full answer to her on the issue. The answer was so full that Ms Smith was able to regale us with the details today.

It is very clear that the suggestion that the Government will not allocate £450 million of available EU funding for investment projects in Scotland is incorrect, as the programme is not yet complete. Indeed, partners have always had access to the funding that they requested. Final expenditure figures for that funding will be published and reported to Parliament as soon as they are finalised. I see no reason for scheduling a further statement, which will only reconfirm the position that has now been outlined twice to the chamber in the past two days.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-13493.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13493, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, 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.

17:50

Meeting suspended.

17:52

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S6M-13493.1, in the name of Liz Smith. Members should cast their vote now.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

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)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)

McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-13493.1, in the name of Liz Smith, is: For 55, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-13493, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 11 June 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government Priorities: Eradicating Child Poverty
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 12 June 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic; Finance and Local Government
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 7.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 13 June 2024
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Questions
 2.45 pm Portfolio Questions: Net Zero and Energy, and Transport
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government Priorities: Investing in Scotland's Public Services
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 18 June 2024
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followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 19 June 2024
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands; NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
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followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 20 June 2024
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:

Social Justice

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Gender
Representation on Public Boards
(Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

4.30 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 10 June 2024, in rule 13.7.3, after the word “except” the words “to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or” are inserted.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-13494, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a stage 1 extension for a bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be extended to 13 September 2024.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-13495, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Sea Fisheries (Remote Electronic Monitoring and Regulation of Scallop Fishing) (Scotland) Regulations 2024 [draft] be approved.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

17:55

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The motion relates to the draft Sea Fisheries (Remote Electronic Monitoring and Regulation of Scallop Fishing) (Scotland) Regulations 2024. My colleagues on the Conservative benches agree in principle to the introduction of REM and the general policy objectives, but although the majority of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee agreed to recommend to the Parliament that the SSI be approved, my colleagues and I are concerned about the detail—or, indeed, the lack of detail—in the instrument.

The fishing industry stakeholders who responded to the committee’s call for views expressed concerns that REM would be used predominantly as a tool for compliance and enforcement. The Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association questioned why

“another layer of complex and expensive control and enforcement is required for this sector”

and stated:

“this is not an industry with a short-term perspective, the long-term objective is to maintain a prosperous and sustainable industry well into the future. In order to achieve that, we need healthy fish stocks and a robust control and enforcement regime, which is already in place.”

The Scottish Fishermen’s Federation argued that the Scottish Government has not set out clearly or identified the exact problem that REM is being introduced to solve. It said:

“REM is not a silver bullet solution to anything. If the fisheries management policies that are in place are not practical and are difficult or impossible to comply with, then REM is simply setting up fishermen to fail.”

Fear remains about there being a level playing field when Scottish vessels fish outwith Scottish waters, which would still require them to use REM, whereas other vessels currently do not.

Professor James Harrison, the Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust, Open Seas and the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation questioned why the technical specifications would be provided in separate documents rather than being included in

the SSI, highlighting concerns about the lack of scope for parliamentary scrutiny. In its written evidence, the SFF stated:

“Government is giving itself the powers to introduce the technical specifications with no scrutiny, and also the powers to change the technical requirements ‘from time to time’ with no evident legal obligation to consult those who will be impacted, and who will be required to spend more money—another blank cheque—to meet any amended or new requirements.”

In committee, Rachael Hamilton stated:

“I am very concerned about the SSI, the clarity of the technical specifications and the BRIA. The financial considerations that have been presented in the BRIA do not give fishermen confidence. The requirements will cost the sector a lot more than is anticipated and the resource for Marine Scotland and the compliance officers will be significant. I am also not sure about the policy direction with regard to the science and data collection. It seems to me that the process is purely about compliance with a smokescreen around science and data collection to support fishing and the marine area.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs and Islands Committee*, 1 May 2024; c 27.]

We believe that the marine directorate’s current resources are insufficient to achieve the objectives of REM, other than to be a blunt enforcement tool.

Given those concerns, along with others relating to REM malfunction and potential fines related to data processing, we will not support the instrument, which, sadly, is yet another example of the Scottish National Party Government’s failure to understand Scotland’s fishing industry, as clearly shown by the continual stream of flawed legislation.

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Mr Carson.

Finlay Carson: I urge MSPs not to support the motion.

17:59

The Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity (Jim Fairlie): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Parliament regarding the introduction of this SSI, which will mandate the use of remote electronic monitoring on board scallop, dredge and pelagic vessels.

Scotland is leading the way, and we already know that others are following, with roll-out of REM planned in other parts of the United Kingdom and the European Union. Only recently, the UK Government confirmed its plans to deploy REM on board key parts of the English fishing fleet, starting with pelagic boats. We are working in partnership with others to share our learning and to ensure that REM roll-out goes smoothly. It is an exciting new technology, representing a step change in how we deliver sustainable fisheries management in Scotland. Scotland’s fishing industry has always been at the forefront of innovation and technology.

Our fishing industry must be celebrated and supported, but it should also be appropriately regulated. A well-regulated fishing industry benefits us all and ensures that fishing takes place in a sustainable way. On 1 May, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands gave detailed evidence to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee regarding the introduction of REM. The robust line of questioning from the committee was representative of the diverse range of views held by stakeholders, and it reflected the consultation feedback that we received.

The supporting documentation that accompanies the SSI sets out the benefits that are to be gleaned from REM, which include the ability to deter non-compliance with fisheries regulations. REM will also enhance our understanding of fisheries, support a robust scientific evidence base and deliver confidence and accountability in the activities of fishing vessels at sea. We have heard directly from retailers in response to multiple fisheries consultations that they support REM and want greater trust in fishing activities. REM will help to deliver increased confidence for those retailers and consumers.

Based on calls from the fishing industry, we have already deployed REM to the Scottish scallop dredge fleet on a voluntary basis. The scallop industry has recognised the reputational benefits that can flow from REM. The regulations have been developed in a proportionate way, following a full public consultation. For example, we have ensured a level playing field and taken a pragmatic approach to dealing with technical faults, providing flexibility to fishers where possible and avoiding undermining the policy intent.

We want REM to succeed and the fishing industry to succeed, and this legislation will help to ensure that that happens by improving standards across the board. I urge members to approve the regulations into law.

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

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-13496, on approval of a statement of principles. I ask Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Child-friendly Complaint Handling Statement of Principles (SPSO/2024/01) be approved.—
[*Jamie Hepburn*]

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

Decision Time

18:02

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are 10 questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-13480.3, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13480, in the name of Graham Simpson, on improving Scotland's roads, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. I ask members to refresh their voting app and, after that, to proceed to cast their votes.

The vote is closed.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The app lost its connection and I was not able to cast a vote. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Thomson. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote]

cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-13480.3, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, is: For 56, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-13480.2, in the name of Alex Rowley, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13480, in the name of Graham Simpson, on improving Scotland's roads, 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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-13480.2, in the name of Alex Rowley, is: For 56, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

The vote is tied. As is usual when the Parliament has not been able to reach a decision, I am obliged to exercise a casting vote. I will not make a decision for the Parliament. The established convention is for the chair to vote in favour of the status quo, as the chair is required to act impartially. Therefore, I cast my vote against the amendment.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-13480, in the name of Graham Simpson, on improving Scotland's roads, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Mountain. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Nicol, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
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)
Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-13480, in the name of Graham Simpson, on improving Scotland's roads, as amended, is: For 57, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges the importance of a well-maintained road network to Scotland's economy; notes that the procurement process for the construction of the A9 Dualling Tay Crossing to Ballinluig project has now started, and that the contract for the A9 Dualling Tomatin to Moy project is on track to achieve contract award early in summer 2024; further notes that the statutory authorisation process is now complete for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) project, which will enable the purchase of land required to build the project; notes that the Scottish Government is delivering a range of measures in the short, medium and long term to reduce the risk of impact of landslides at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful; further notes that the procurement of technical advisors is underway to take forward design work on Springholm and Crocketford Bypasses on the A75; notes that investment in safely operating and maintaining the trunk road network will increase from over £525 million in 2023-24 to over £683 million in 2024-25, which is an increase of over 30%; further notes the ongoing commitment to Scotland's 2030 road safety targets, with a record £36 million earmarked for investment, including £10 million for the local road network through the Road Safety Improvement Fund; agrees that the funding in the UK Spring Budget falls far short of what Scotland needs to deliver improvements to Scotland's infrastructure, and will result in a reduction in real terms of the Scottish block grant for capital of 8.7% by 2027-28, and calls on the incoming UK administration to bring forward an emergency budget to address this hole in Scotland's capital budget of over £1.3 billion.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Máiri McAllan is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Sarah Boyack, Patrick Harvie and Liam McArthur will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-13482.4, in the name of Máiri McAllan, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland's oil and gas industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Edward Mountain: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am having trouble with my phone and could not connect. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Mountain. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Máiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

The vote is tied. As the established convention is for the chair to vote in favour of the status quo, I cast my vote against the amendment.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is on the amendment in the name of Sarah Boyack. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Sarah Boyack is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liam McArthur will fall.

The question is, that amendment S6M-13482.1, in the name of Sarah Boyack, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland’s oil and gas industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (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)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (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)
 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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 19, Against 94, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Patrick Harvie is

agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liam McArthur will fall.

The question is, that amendment S6M-13482.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland's oil and gas industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP):

On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My apologies; connection to the app on my phone was lost. I would have voted no to the amendment.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Constance. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 7, Against 107, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-13482.3, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland's oil and gas industry, 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, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)

McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 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)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 79, Against 34, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-13482, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on recognising the contribution of Scotland’s oil and gas industry, as amended, 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, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 106, Against 7, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the invaluable contribution that oil and gas makes to Scotland, with the industry supporting 94,000 jobs and providing over £10 billion in revenue in 2022-23; recognises that there is a climate emergency and that it is essential that Scotland meets its net zero targets by 2045 and drives down its reliance on fossil fuels; believes that the phasing down of the traditional oil and gas sector must be done hand in hand with the expansion of renewables and the creation of green jobs, using the wealth of talent and skills available, in order to ensure that communities are not left behind, and further believes that, in order to achieve a successful just transition, both of Scotland’s governments must work together, and with the oil and gas and renewables sectors, so that change can be managed properly and effectively.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-13495, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Clark. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Gillian Mackay]
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [Proxy vote cast by Richard Leonard]
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (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)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 85, Against 0, Abstentions 27.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Sea Fisheries (Remote Electronic Monitoring and Regulation of Scallop Fishing) (Scotland) Regulations 2024 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-13496, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on approval of a statement of principles, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Child-friendly Complaint Handling Statement of Principles (SPSO/2024/01) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Volunteers Week (40th Anniversary)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-12850, in the name of Kevin Stewart, on the 40th anniversary of volunteers week. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I invite members who wish to speak to press their request-to-speak buttons now or as soon as possible.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the 40th anniversary of Volunteers' Week, which will take place from 3 to 9 June 2024; notes that Volunteers' Week, which takes place from the first Monday of June every year, celebrates what it considers to be the invaluable contribution that volunteers make to society by selflessly giving up their time and energy to help other people, as well as inspiring others to try their hand at volunteering; understands that Volunteers' Week will be marked by thousands of charities, voluntary groups and social organisations coming together across hundreds of events and activities, including volunteer recruitment events, open days, coffee mornings and awards ceremonies, and culminating with "The Big Help Out", which is aimed at encouraging more people to become part of the volunteering community; sends its best wishes to everyone taking part in Volunteers' Week, and thanks all the volunteers for everything that they do in improving lives in Aberdeen and in communities across Scotland.

18:28

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): It is a great privilege to open this debate celebrating the 40th anniversary of volunteers week, and I thank all those members who signed the motion.

Volunteers week is an annual campaign that takes place from the first Monday in June and consists of thousands of charities and voluntary organisations recognising the contribution of volunteers to our society. As well as offering an opportunity to thank volunteers and recognise the value of their time, passion and skills, volunteers week acts as a chance to inspire others to give volunteering a go.

The debate is unlikely to garner a huge amount of media coverage, even though it should. However, I know that it will be reported by Charles Fletcher of Caledonia Media and will be broadcast on community radio stations across Scotland, including—I hope—SHMU FM, from the Station House Media Unit in Aberdeen. Our community radio stations are run largely by amazing volunteers, who are to be commended for bringing local news, information and entertainment to their locales.

Many of SHMU's volunteers are young people. In my home city of Aberdeen, youth volunteering is of immense value, with 3,154 young people aged between 12 and 25 undertaking Scottish Government Saltire awards for volunteering. The Saltire awards are national awards that are endorsed by the Scottish Government, and they are delivered in each local authority area by third sector interfaces to recognise the contribution that young people make through volunteering and the achievements of young volunteers. Certificates are awarded in recognition of undertaking 10, 25, 50, 100, 200 or 500 hours of volunteering, and are signed by either the First Minister or the Deputy First Minister.

I have previously had the pleasure of awarding Saltire certificates to young people from schools such as Harlaw and St Machar academies; to a young man who was supporting older people with their information technology skills at the Silver City Surfers; and, on a number of occasions, to young people who have been helping disabled Aberdonians.

Yesterday, on power of youth day, the Lord Provost of Aberdeen, David Cameron, and the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations presented a Saltire summit award signed by our First Minister, John Swinney, to Lucas Mackenzie for 500 hours of volunteering with Future Choices, a charity that supports disabled people in the granite city. I am sure that every member in the chamber will join me in congratulating Lucas on that superb achievement.

Aberdeen has also led the way in acknowledging our volunteer stalwarts, with the annual Celebrate Aberdeen parade and awards. That is the brainchild of Morven Mackenzie, who wanted to recognise, thank and celebrate our city's third sector organisations, community groups and volunteers.

However, volunteering is not just a nice thing to have—it has real economic and societal benefits, too. My hame toon benefits greatly from the contribution of more than 80,000 volunteers, who give an incredible 6.2 million hours of help every year. Their volunteering has an impact on every aspect of life in Aberdeen, with an overall social return on investment for volunteering in my city of 14 to one. In other words, for every £1 that is invested in volunteering, there is a cumulative economic, societal and public health return of £14.12.

As such, it is critically important that we, in the chamber, recognise the contribution of volunteers and do what we can to support them. An important part of that support is the "Scotland's Volunteering Action Plan" document, which was co-created by the Scottish Government and Volunteer Scotland. It states that,

“The Volunteering Action Plan ... aims to create a Scotland where everyone can volunteer, more often, and throughout their lives.”

The action plan has four main goals:

“Increase volunteering participation by focusing on non-volunteers and lapsed volunteers, and especially those who’ll gain most benefit.

Widen access to volunteering by understanding and reducing the barriers to participation and supporting community-based, ‘place-making’ activities.

Listen to volunteers by ensuring that the volunteer ‘voice’ is heard and that volunteers help make the decisions that affect them.

Provide great experiences whereby volunteers feel supported, valued and recognised for their contribution.”

I am sure that we all wish the action plan success in increasing volunteering in our country.

Finally, I take the opportunity to thank those volunteers from organisations with whom I have recently met. Those organisations include Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust, We Too! and Aberdeen Cyrenians—there are too many more to mention. My gratitude extends to all the volunteers in Aberdeen and across Scotland for their selfless service, their dedication and their invaluable contribution to our society: thank you, thank you, thank you.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

18:35

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to speak in today’s debate marking the 40th anniversary of volunteers week, and I thank Kevin Stewart for bringing this important debate to the chamber.

Volunteers make a vital contribution to services and communities up and down the length of the country, and it is only right that Parliament has the opportunity to express its thanks. Volunteers provide benefits for so many communities across Scotland, and volunteering can be a truly rewarding experience for individuals who give up their time and share their talents to provide support.

The impact of volunteering can be seen across all sectors of society; we have heard some important examples of that from Kevin Stewart. The Fraser of Allander Institute has highlighted that voluntary organisations make huge contributions to different areas of our economy. I welcome the institute’s new project, which aims to identify the true scale of volunteering across the United Kingdom.

Regardless of the raw numbers, however, members need to look at the some of the huge gaps that would be left in communities if we did

not have those volunteers doing that work. For example, we know that volunteering is an important part of the fight against loneliness in Scotland. A survey has shown that the most common type of informal volunteering involves supporting those who are at risk of loneliness, and we know that the support that they receive is so important. Age Scotland has identified that half of those over the age of 50 have sometimes struggled with loneliness.

However, rates of informal volunteering have been declining since the pandemic. That is an important issue that we need to look at, and we need to encourage individuals to support volunteering and take it up. However, there is an issue, in that Disclosure Scotland is potentially going to introduce fees for processing applications for volunteers under the protecting vulnerable groups scheme. That proposal could have a massive impact on some sectors if it goes through. I know that a consultation is taking place, but it would be good to get some views on that from the Minister for Equalities in her closing remarks.

The Scottish Men’s Sheds Association is a fantastic organisation that is supported by many volunteers. I am lucky to have a number of men’s sheds across my region, including in Forth Valley and the wee county. They provide support to individuals and communities, but we would not have that type of support in place if they were not run by volunteers. I therefore welcome that the Scottish Government has finally accepted the numerous calls to restore funding to the men’s sheds network, as that will help to support more than 200 sheds and 10,000 members across Scotland.

However, despite long-term funding for such organisations, it still remains for us to ensure that volunteer-led organisations can continue to be viable. As has been identified, they are assets in fighting loneliness and isolation. In so many sectors, organisations and areas in our communities and our constituencies, volunteering shows what the benefits are when individuals give of their time and of their talent to provide services in their communities.

In conclusion, the hard work and dedication of volunteers is so important to organisations and projects in every corner of Scotland. Their work is fundamental, and it is part of our fabric of our society. It is right and important that we celebrate them in the chamber today, and thank them for all that they do to support our communities up and down Scotland.

18:38

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow Alexander Stewart’s

contribution. I extend my thanks to Kevin Stewart for bringing the debate to the chamber on what is the 40th anniversary of volunteers week. One can think back to those first volunteers 40 years ago, who were perhaps teenagers, or maybe even pre-teenagers, then, and who are perhaps still volunteering and organising and giving selflessly of their time.

According to the Scottish household survey in 2022, 46 per cent of respondents had taken part in some form of volunteering in the previous 12 months. In East Lothian, between 2015 and 2019, 33 per cent of adults volunteered formally, with volunteers contributing 3.1 million hours of volunteering.

I take the opportunity to focus on, and speak to, the young people who volunteer. Between 2019 and 2022, we saw a reduction, from 49 per cent to 37 per cent, in the number of young people who do formal volunteering, and a reduction from 25 per cent to 18 per cent for those doing informal volunteering.

Of course, that period of time straddled Covid, and it straddled a change in expectations of young people. Indeed, it showed a difference in the challenges that our young people face. It is to those 37 per cent and those 18 per cent who still volunteer that I extend my thanks, because the work that they do in helping other people—not just young people, but old people—with food deliveries, befriending, shopping, litter picks, or just chatting or being there, is a phenomenal contribution, and it shows what a great asset they will become as they grow up and enter adult life.

I take this opportunity to highlight our galas, particularly in the south of Scotland, where young people—sometimes slightly forced by their parents—come together to celebrate, usually on a Saturday. Indeed, I will make mention of Prestonpans gala this Saturday, which means that it will probably rain, so my apologies to door knockers who want to go out on that day. Even through the rain, those people bring a massive smile as they travel around the town, celebrating the joy of being young and celebrating the joy of what they can offer.

As local authority budgets become overstretched and community centres are forced to close, the challenges of volunteering—to echo Alexander Stewart's comments—are getting greater. We need to look to the Scottish Government, to this place and to our local authorities to do as much as they can to facilitate the ease of volunteering, while doing so in a safe environment.

As is right, I want to thank all the volunteers across the south of Scotland and those who help to organise the volunteers. I make mention of the

Pennypit Community Development Trust lunch clubs around East Lothian, which do so much; the volunteer befrienders at the Berwickshire Housing Association's BeFriend project; Keep The Heid, a marvellous mental health cafe in Tranent, North Berwick and Haddington; those who walk our streets of Tranent as the Tranent Wombles; those who organise the tea dances in North Berwick; the work of the Eildon Housing Association with the Cyrenians, and their opportunities for active lives—OPAL—service for older people in Peebles, Galashiels and Hawick. I want to express my thanks to all of them because, without those volunteers, day-to-day life would be that little bit harder. Watching volunteers work, and sometimes participating, brings a smile, and that is what today and tomorrow should be about.

18:42

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Kevin Stewart on securing this incredibly important debate. Volunteers are the backbone of our communities, and this week gives us the chance to recognise, celebrate and thank our incredible volunteers for all that they contribute to our local communities.

This year is extra special, given that it is the 40th anniversary of volunteers week. Today, we celebrate that milestone and pay gratitude to the volunteers in our constituencies. I have had the privilege of meeting many volunteers in my constituency over my three years as an MSP, and over a number of years as a councillor before that, so I know just how hard they work. I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a former councillor.

As I have so many outstanding volunteers in my constituency, a four-minute speech does not, unfortunately, provide enough time to name them all. However, I will have a go, and I will name just a few of them. My sincere thanks go to the volunteers of Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels, Milngavie in Bloom, the Dalmuir Barclay church community pantry, Improving Lives, Faifley food share, Bearsden in Bloom, Golden Friendships, Clydebank men's shed, Clydebank Asbestos Group, Milngavie and Bearsden men's shed, Isaro Community Initiative, Clydebank group holidays, West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, the Recycle Room, Milngavie Old People's Welfare Committee, Clyde Shopmobility, the flourishing Faifley group, Stepping Stones and so many more.

I would also like to thank some volunteers who have sadly passed in my community, who gave everything to their cause. Bob Dickie and Hope Robertson of the Clydebank Asbestos Group, you will forever be remembered as stalwarts of the

campaign for truth and justice for asbestos victims and as dedicated volunteers.

The contribution that volunteers make is often unseen, but it never goes unnoticed by me. I know how hard they all work, and we can see the level of dedication, commitment and passion that they bring to our towns. The work that volunteers in my constituency do has never been more vital, so it is time that we celebrate them for all that they do.

Volunteering not only is beneficial for our communities but has been shown to improve wellbeing, and it can help people to gain valuable skills and experience and to boost their confidence and even their job prospects.

In my Clydebank and Milngavie constituency, there has always been a community spirit of looking out for one another. The volunteers in the area harness that spirit. They truly come from all walks of life, and they have different goals, such as providing food parcels to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry, helping those with disabilities to access services and mobility scooters, litter picking and protecting our environment, and providing practical and emotional support and spaces to tackle social isolation. However, they all share one thing in common: they aim to make a positive difference to the lives of others.

Volunteering also has a ripple effect beyond the services that volunteers provide. Those acts of kindness and service inspire others to give back and help to foster the community spirit that keeps our towns going. I know of many individuals who have chosen to give back to the community after experiencing support and kindness from local volunteers. Even if that is just for a couple of hours a week or month, it can make such a difference. I know that many groups in my constituency are always looking for more help. Please reach out to them if that interests you. Every contribution matters, no matter how small.

To conclude, I say to the volunteers in Clydebank and Milngavie and Bearsden North, past and present, that I am forever grateful to them for what they have done for our constituents. Their selflessness, dedication and passion for helping others and improving our communities are truly awe inspiring. They have touched countless lives, and their communities are a better place for their being in them. I thank them so much.

18:47

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I am pleased to speak in this debate to mark the 40th anniversary of volunteers week, and I thank Kevin Stewart for bringing the debate to the chamber.

There are many positives to volunteering. It can provide opportunities for people to develop new skills, improve their self-confidence and make new friends. We know that volunteering can improve health and wellbeing and strengthen feelings of connection to others in the community.

Across Scotland, more than one million people volunteered in 2022. That represents more than a fifth of all adults in Scotland taking advantage of the many volunteering opportunities that are available to contribute to their communities. In Scotland, 89 per cent of voluntary organisations are local, and 36 per cent are in rural areas.

In my constituency, there is a strong culture of community service. That is evidenced by the 272 registered charities, three community interest companies and 239 community groups on the islands. The umbrella group Voluntary Action Shetland plays an important role in supporting organisations across the isles. Searching on its website for volunteering opportunities brings up nearly 150 opportunities that are available right now. There is a diverse range of roles, including co-ordinating charity collection boxes for Guide Dogs Scotland, serving food at a daily charity lunch club and marshalling at the weekly parkrun event. That snapshot illustrates the variety of skill sets that volunteers can use and learn through volunteering.

Many inspiring examples of Shetland's community spirit are demonstrated through volunteering, fundraising and community action. From the life-saving work of Royal National Lifeboat Institution crews and Dogs Against Drugs to the volunteers from Sound primary school who cook 100 Christmas dinners, and from the volunteers who train young people to sail tall ships to the people who volunteer their time to fundraise for local charities, many people give their time and energy to the causes that they care about.

I recently met the isles' first youth-led charity, Open, and heard about the work that it does for young people's peers in Shetland. Voluntary Action Shetland runs volunteering awards as well as the national Saltire awards scheme for young people. Such schemes recognise important contributions to volunteering and inspire others to get involved.

Community life is dependent on people giving up their spare time. I cannot think how the biggest event in the Shetland calendar, Up Helly Aa, would function without the legions of people of all ages taking on myriad diverse roles, from torch making to baking, which contribute so much to making those spectacular events run smoothly.

That is not to say that the voluntary sector does not face challenges. Recent reports from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations show

that 76 per cent of organisations report an element of organisational finance in their top three challenges, citing rising costs and fundraising difficulties. More than half of organisations are also concerned about energy prices, and significantly more are concerned about the impact of those prices on the people and communities that they serve, with 70 per cent of organisations believing that financial hardship has become worse.

Although the third sector and volunteers rose to the challenge of the pandemic, showing how communities can pull together when facing difficulties, as we continue to recover, organisations report that volunteers have not always returned. At the same time, demand for services from the charity sector has increased, placing pressure on voluntary organisations.

Voluntary organisations and the third sector in general need to be provided with as much certainty as possible, through funding—from local government and national Government—that recognises the valuable contribution that they make to Scottish society.

I thank all volunteers in Shetland and across Scotland for dedicating their time and skills to their communities.

18:51

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I, too, offer my thanks to Kevin Stewart for lodging the motion for debate.

Volunteers week, the 40th anniversary of which we are now marking, gives us all the opportunity to celebrate the invaluable, inspirational and often unsung contribution that volunteers make to our communities. Ranging from providing support pre-birth, through childhood, into adulthood and then into older age, volunteers improve the lives of individuals, families and whole communities at every stage of life.

The Covid pandemic shone a stark light on how fragile communities can be and how vulnerable some of our citizens are, as well as on how much we all crave and need connection to others. Research estimates that 12.4 million people across the UK participated in volunteer activity at the height of the Covid-19 crisis and, of those, 3.8 million had volunteered for the first time.

In my Rutherglen constituency, the Blantyre official coronavirus support group swung into action, alongside many volunteers from Halfway, Cambuslang and Rutherglen, co-ordinated by Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust and the LEAP Project. They delivered food and prescriptions to those who were shielding or who could not get out, and they provided friendship and

support through phone calls, as well as myriad other types of practical assistance to locals.

Although those were very dark days, the number of people who stepped up to assist their family, friends and neighbours was quite remarkable. The challenge now is to try to harness the benefits of that community and volunteering spirit to further promote social cohesion, maintain community resilience and further improve the lives of others.

Unsurprisingly, I will use the remainder of my time in the debate to pay tribute to a host of voluntary groups in my constituency—from Bonnie Blantyre at one end of my constituency, which has done incredible work to spruce up and green the town, including by creating a community garden, to the Rutherglen rotary club at the other, which, among other things, fundraises for local and international causes, including to build schools and toilets in Africa and Asia. Between them geographically, there are organisations such as Grow 73, Burnhill action group, friends of Cambuslang park and friends of Holmhill's wood, to name but a few that have created and nurtured green spaces for people and wildlife to use and thrive.

Although many voluntary groups are unique to the areas in which they are based, our communities also benefit from national volunteering organisations. Scout, cub, guide and brownie leaders provide invaluable opportunities to local children and young people, and many have done so for many years. Two such volunteers in my Rutherglen constituency, Nigel MacDonald and Claire Quinn, have, for years, given hours of their time to help local kids to develop new skills and have fun.

Local sports organisations would not exist without the dedication of many local people. Coaches and volunteers, including Jimmy Whelan at Blantyre Soccer Academy, Andy Rundell at Eastfield United Football Club and Colin Henderson at Rutherglen amateur swimming club, all provide children, young people and adults with the opportunities that only sport can give.

In my constituency, churches including Rutherglen West and Wardlawhill parish church and Blantyre old parish church run warm hubs and cafes, which act as social hubs for local people and are all run by local volunteers. At St Columbkille's church, bereavement and dementia support groups, again run by volunteers, provide a lifeline for many local people.

As an MSP, I have the privilege and pleasure of trying to improve my constituency, but many people do that voluntarily and out of love for their communities, including those on community councils in Blantyre, Halfway, Cambuslang,

Burnside and Rutherglen. For example, Cambuslang community council has been behind projects such as the bank hub on Cambuslang Main Street—which has been a godsend since all the major banks left the town—and streetscape improvements, and it is included in the partnership that has created the Clyde cycle park.

I could mention many more local individuals and organisations that make my constituency a better place to live, work and grow, but time is against me. All the organisations that I have named, and those that I have not, are successful due to the individuals behind them, whose only motivation is to improve the communities that we live in. I thank each and every one of them for what they do.

18:55

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I thank Kevin Stewart and all those who have taken part in the debate. Politics does sometimes work by consensus and tonight has been consensual—at least until I speak.

I have the privilege of convening the cross-party group on volunteering and I would welcome any member who wanted to come and join the group. I have been convener of the CPG for the past couple of years and it has been interesting and inspiring to hear what is happening across Scotland.

Volunteering helps the volunteer as well as the project or community, so there is a benefit for both individuals and organisations. When I was in hospital at the end of last year and beginning of this one, our morning and dinner-time tea and coffee were served by volunteers. What was far more important than the tea, coffee and biscuits was the conversation—for patients who had very few visitors, that was often the only conversation that they had with anyone other than nursing staff.

We have heard many inspiring stories from those who have spoken today, but we face a problem. Last year, for the first time, the number of people volunteering in Scotland fell below 1 million. One of the few positives that came from the pandemic was that individuals volunteered and got involved in their communities. As we have returned to normality, people have been pressed—

Kevin Stewart: Will Mr Balfour give way?

Jeremy Balfour: I will be happy to after I finish this sentence.

People are pressed by work and family commitments and may not be able to volunteer in the same way, which is something that all of us, from all parties, should reflect on.

Kevin Stewart: I do not want to be overly political in what has been a very good debate, but we must recognise what some volunteers have faced in their own lives of late. I have spoken to a number of folk who have previously volunteered but who are unable to do so now because they have had to take on second jobs to make ends meet during the cost of living crisis. We must take cognisance of that. I will leave that there, because I do not want to get too political, but we must recognise what today's world is bringing folk.

Jeremy Balfour: I absolutely accept the member's comments. There are a number of reasons for the fall in volunteer numbers—SCVO has done quite a lot of work on that—but we should address the issue now, before the numbers fall any further. There is also a challenge for businesses to allow people time for volunteering, because volunteers are often the engine that keeps Scotland's third sector moving.

I have one issue to raise with the minister. I hope that she will reflect on the PVG application fee waiver and come back to us. She will be aware that those in the third sector are deeply concerned by the financial implications and what that will do to volunteers. I hope that the Government will look at that afresh and give some reassurance to the organisations involved.

Finally, I thank the hundreds—thousands—of people who volunteer in the Lothians. Tonight, cub groups, scout groups and so many other groups will meet, only because of volunteers who give up their time. We can all unite in thanking people for what they do across our country, and I look forward to more people volunteering in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I invite Kaukab Stewart to respond to the debate.

19:00

The Minister for Equalities (Kaukab Stewart): I have been delighted and heartened to hear the contributions from members from across the chamber, and I thank Kevin Stewart for securing the debate to allow us to highlight the contribution that volunteers make.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of volunteers week, it is clear that each and every one of us in the chamber recognises the value of volunteering. I will refer to some of the organisations, across the length and breadth of the country, that were mentioned by my colleagues.

As is very important, I give my whole-hearted thanks to all who freely give up their time to help others. Volunteers are truly the backbone of not only the third sector but our society as a whole. I, along with the rest of the Scottish Government,

hugely value the contributions that they make to the lives of people across Scotland.

The experience of the past four years has demonstrated the powerful impact of volunteers during times of crisis. Clare Haughey mentioned the contribution of the volunteers who stepped up in amazing fashion to respond during the pandemic. Ukraine was another opportunity in which volunteers came forward, as were severe weather events—and, of course, volunteers have helped out during the cost of living crisis.

However, we all know that volunteers are there not just during times of crisis but every day, in our communities. Their unpaid efforts help us to address some of the biggest challenges that we face, from mental and physical health to social isolation and loneliness. Kevin Stewart mentioned community radio stations, which play an enormous role in connecting and entertaining communities across Scotland and locally.

As I have mentioned, the unpaid efforts of volunteers help us to address some of the biggest challenges that we face. Volunteers have shown, time and again, their extraordinary commitment and huge enthusiasm in helping others. Marie McNair mentioned a very impressive list of the many volunteer groups and opportunities across Clydebank, Milngavie and Bearsden North. She also highlighted the kindness and generosity of spirit that is involved in volunteering.

Without volunteers, many community activities would simply not take place. Martin Whitfield mentioned gala days, which many people go along to enjoy. I wish him good weather for the gala in Prestonpans. There is no doubt that volunteering brings communities together and helps people to feel valued and part of something good—there are many benefits to volunteering.

I recognise some of the challenges that have been mentioned by my colleagues. Alexander Stewart and Jeremy Balfour mentioned PVG fees. I reassure them that no decision has yet been made on that. I am grateful to everyone who has engaged with the recent consultation on future fee policies for Disclosure Scotland. Work is under way to apply vital feedback—and we will take feedback from tonight's debate as well—to help with that policy development work.

Before I run out of time, I want to make sure that I mention everybody. Beatrice Wishart talked about the valuable work that Voluntary Action Shetland does and the challenges that it seems to manage in a brilliant fashion in order to play its important role in co-ordinating so many groups across islands. I pay tribute to its work in that rural challenge.

Beatrice Wishart talked about funding. In May 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

wrote to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee to report on progress against the Government's expectations on fairer funding commitments. I refer Beatrice Wishart to that and I encourage her to come back to me for any further information.

I take the opportunity to highlight the Government's commitment to volunteering. Colleagues mentioned the challenge of recruiting volunteers. The Scottish Government's 10-year volunteering action plan is a living plan that seeks to increase participation and reduce barriers to volunteering. Volunteer Scotland is leading the implementation of the plan with the combined efforts of the voluntary sector and partners. The plan will help to create a Scotland in which everyone can volunteer more often and throughout their lives. It acknowledges the reach of volunteering and the vital role of volunteers in the delivery of services across Scotland.

I will bring my remarks to a close, because time is pressing. I continue to be inspired by our wonderful volunteers across the country, who go above and beyond to support others. Whatever volunteering they do, I hope that they know that their help, support and care make a wonderful difference in the lives of others. What better way to mark the 40th year of volunteer week than by celebrating that?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate, and I close this meeting of the Parliament.

Meeting closed at 19:07.

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