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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 12 September 2024

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

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good morning. The first item of business is general question time. In order to get in as many members as possible, I would appreciate succinct questions and responses.

Net Zero and Just Transition Goals

1. **Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how it plans to achieve its net zero and just transition goals. (S6O-03709)

The Acting Minister for Climate Action (Alasdair Allan): The Scottish Government continues to develop Scotland's next climate change plan, which will provide strong and credible policy action to deliver emissions reductions. Those policies will be underpinned by our enduring commitment to a just transition to net zero and supported by the development of just transition plans for sites, sectors and regions to ensure a greener and fairer future for Scotland's people. Pending the passage of legislation in the Parliament and the setting of carbon budgets, we expect the next climate change plan to be laid in draft in summer 2025.

Sarah Boyack: I thank the minister for that answer; that is useful timetabling. Given this morning's announcement by Petroineos that 400 workers will lose their jobs in Grangemouth when it shuts its oil refinery, what support will those workers—with their skills, knowledge and experience—be given to ensure that we see a real just transition?

Alasdair Allan: Sarah Boyack is right to point to the importance of Grangemouth and the concern, which the Government shares, about Petroineos's announcement of its plans to cease refining in Grangemouth and the impact that that will have on many workers and their families.

I have made clear to the business community in Scotland, including that sector, the importance of a just transition for Grangemouth. The workforce there is highly skilled and perfectly equipped to support the deployment of new technologies at Grangemouth in the coming years. The first meeting that the First Minister had with the Prime Minister focused in part on the criticality of

securing just such a just transition for Grangemouth.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Full delivery of our ambitious net zero agenda will require full funding, and yet the Scottish Government faces an almost 9 per cent cut to its capital budget. Given the significant up-front cost to reaching net zero, to what extent will achieving our climate goals be contingent on the United Kingdom Government reversing capital cuts?

Alasdair Allan: Audrey Nicoll is quite right. Needless to say, the real-terms cut of 9 per cent to Scotland's capital budget has had an incredibly damaging effect on Scotland's ability to provide essential funding to a number of important projects and programmes, including those in the net zero space. The Scottish Government and other devolved Governments depend on the UK Government coming to appreciate that fact if we are to drive forward meaningful and impactful net zero policy.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Funding will be crucial to achieving our net zero targets, but part of that will come from resources from the ScotWind leasing round, which are to be diverted from that objective, as the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government announced last week. The GMB Scotland secretary, Louise Gilmour, condemned that as the money being "squandered" and said:

"Scotland's future in renewables is now being frittered away."

Does the minister agree?

Alasdair Allan: The Government is considering carefully how remaining ScotWind funding can be deployed. We wish to minimise the use of ScotWind money and put moneys back in the future, as we did in 2023-24. There is a 10-year just transition plan of £500 million for the north-east, for instance, which indicates our commitment to the future.

We appreciate—as I hope Liam McArthur does—the position that Scotland has been put in by the UK Government. I know that he, and other members, would not wish to see more money come out of public services to try to cope with that eventuality. Scotland has no levers available mid-year to deal with the difficulties that are imposed on us by the UK Government, other than through the reduction of spending on public services or through making sensible use of such resources as the one that Liam McArthur mentioned.

Domestic Abuse (Recorded Crime)

2. **Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to

the most recent recorded crime in Scotland statistics, which showed a 22 per cent rise in crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in a single year. (S6O-03710)

The Minister for Victims and Community Safety (Siobhian Brown): Domestic abuse is abhorrent. Although any case is unacceptable, the figures demonstrate that Police Scotland has been able to utilise the new domestic abuse offence powers proactively. I hope that that will further increase public confidence in reporting incidents of domestic abuse. I encourage anyone who is affected, whether they be a victim or a witness, to contact the police.

We are committed to working with a range of partners in the statutory and third sectors to tackle domestic abuse, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure that victims receive the support that they need. Our equally safe strategy, which is backed by annual funding of £19 million, aims to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls and focuses on early intervention, prevention and support.

Pam Gosal: Domestic abuse is an appalling crime that ruins so many lives in Scotland. The figures are shocking. Some 95 per cent of such crimes involve female victims. Current Scottish National Party Government policies are not protecting women sufficiently. I recently proposed the creation of a new violence against women unit in Police Scotland. Will the Government consider that proposal?

Siobhian Brown: I am pleased to hear that Ms Gosal is meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs next week. I am sure that the cabinet secretary would be happy to consider all proposals to make the lives of domestic abuse victims easier.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): It is important to highlight the women whose courage has brought into the open the misogyny and sexism that underpin domestic violence against women and girls and still exist in society today. With that in mind, what can the Government and the Parliament do to change such societal attitudes?

Siobhian Brown: The member raises a valid point. Those who perpetrate violence and abuse—the majority of whom are men—must change their actions and behaviour. It is only through fundamental societal change that women can be protected. We must root out and tackle the toxic masculinity and gender inequality that lead to violence, harassment, misogyny and abuse against women. We should stand against it and call it out whenever we see it.

As we announced in our programme for government, we will introduce a bill to create a

new offence of misogynistic conduct. The bill will be informed by the report of the working group on misogyny and criminal justice and the subsequent consultation on draft legislative provisions to implement the report's recommendations.

Renewables Economy (Support for North-east Scotland)

3. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the renewables economy in the north-east of Scotland, including through the retraining of energy workers and enhancing supply chain development. (S6O-03711)

The Acting Minister for Climate Action (Alasdair Allan): As our programme for government set out, the Scottish Government continues to take significant action to grow our renewables sector and to ensure a just transition. Through our just transition fund, we have already allocated £75 million to projects in the north-east and Moray, including £11 million for skills and retraining initiatives. We are investing up to £500 million over five years to anchor our offshore wind supply chain in Scotland. We are kick-starting that commitment with an investment of £67 million in the sector this financial year. Those investments form just part of the approach that we are setting out through our new "Green Industrial Strategy", which was published yesterday, and the energy strategy and just transition plan, which we will publish shortly.

Michael Marra: Instead of investing £460 million of ScotWind money in supply chain development and training in the north-east, which would have represented an investment for the next 30 years, the Scottish National Party Government has squandered it on simply getting through the next three months. The minister says that the position has been created by the United Kingdom Government, but he chooses to ignore the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the Fraser of Allander Institute and Audit Scotland, all of which say that it is down to SNP incompetence.

Surely the minister cannot ignore the views of the Deputy First Minister, who, in the chamber on 27 March, told the finance secretary that she wanted to ensure that the Government would not lament the money raised through ScotWind being poured into the SNP's black hole. Does he agree that the situation is indeed of the SNP's own making?

Alasdair Allan: Needless to say, all of that was nonsense. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear one another.

Alasdair Allan: I say that because the United Kingdom Government itself has pointed to a black

hole in its finances and has indicated that it intends to see things getting worse. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Again, let us hear one another.

Alasdair Allan: As I have indicated, there is a very significant cut to our capital budgets in the coming years. If the member has any influence with the UK Government, he will perhaps indicate those facts to it and suggest that it might be better if things got a little better in the future rather than worse, particularly when Scotland is in a position of seeking to meet public sector pay deals and to provide public services in the teeth of austerity from the UK Government.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): The Scottish National Party and Labour Governments are failing to support the oil and gas sector in the north-east. The SNP has a presumption against new oil and gas exploration, while Labour's disastrous windfall tax will risk 35,000 jobs and wipe £13 billion of economic value off the sector. Neither Government has a plan for a just transition. Will the minister end the SNP's attack on the oil and gas sector, stand up for the north-east and support the Scottish Conservatives' plans to create a national centre for green jobs in Aberdeen, deliver a jobs-first transition and give everyone the right to retrain?

Alasdair Allan: The Scottish Government is committed to giving people the right to retrain. As I have indicated, some of the areas in which the Scottish Government is active on that—not least in terms of the £500 million being allocated for offshore wind—

Douglas Lumsden: What about the presumption against oil and gas?

The Presiding Officer: I would be grateful if members did not interrupt when people were speaking. In that way, we can all hear.

Alasdair Allan: I presume that the member also does not want to hear about the £500 million just transition fund.

The Scottish Government appreciates the stresses that the north-east economy has experienced because of the changing situation in the North Sea basin and the changes that our economy will face. We are committed to reskilling and providing opportunities to people to make that transition a just transition into the future.

Modern Apprenticeships (Achievement Rates)

4. **Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the latest achievement rates for modern apprenticeships across all frameworks. (S6O-03712)

The Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans (Graeme Dey): Modern apprenticeship official statistics covering quarter 1 were published by Skills Development Scotland on 6 August. It is encouraging to see that the modern apprenticeship achievement rate is now 83.2 per cent, which is an increase of 5.7 percentage points, compared with the same quarter last year.

So far this year, just over 5,000 individuals have achieved their modern apprenticeship qualification, which is allowing them to continue progressing in high-quality employment opportunities within their chosen career path.

Daniel Johnson: Housing is critical infrastructure. It is critical for achieving net zero, critical for economic growth and critical if we are going to tackle the housing emergency. The minister quotes the figures overall, but those are not the figures for the construction industry. The latest figures show that, of those who are in building modern apprenticeships, only 62 per cent left having completed their apprenticeship. That is down from 71 per cent seven years ago. What plans and targets does the Government have to correct that? Ultimately, we need to improve achievement rates if we are going to take growth, transition and tackling the housing emergency seriously.

Graeme Dey: I absolutely agree with Daniel Johnson on that point: we need to improve those numbers for that particular sector. We are working very closely with the Construction Industry Training Board, among others, to address some of the issues.

Daniel Johnson will be aware that there was an apprenticeship backlog emanating from the Covid pandemic. There have been issues about how we have addressed that, but considerable work is ongoing in that regard and I am optimistic that that will be addressed. However, as I said, I absolutely agree with the point that he makes.

Instrumental Music Tuition in Schools

5. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what action it is taking to protect the provision of instrumental music tuition in schools. (S6O-03713)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth): This Government has transformed instrumental music tuition in Scotland's schools by supporting our councils to eradicate unfair charges. This financial year, we are providing £12 million of funding to local authorities to support the continued delivery of free instrumental music tuition, as part of record

funding of more than £14 billion that has been provided to local authorities in the budget.

Local authorities are ultimately responsible for ensuring access to music tuition for pupils in schools across Scotland. The most recent instrumental music survey, which was published in December 2023, showed that the number of pupils participating in instrumental music tuition is at a record high since the survey began.

Brian Whittle: In East Ayrshire Council in my area, the plan is to move music tuition from local authority control to a trust. Concerns have been raised by constituents that the definition of “free tuition” pertains only to those in secondary 3 to 6 who are doing Scottish Qualifications Authority exams and whose tuition will remain within council control as statutory school education. Music tuition for those out of that cohort will not be deemed to be statutory education, so after being transferred to the trust it will be outwith the council’s control and therefore under threat.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that music tuition is a statutory service, that it should remain within council control and that it should be delivered by local authorities? Does she further agree that offering music education is crucial to a well-rounded education experience?

Jenny Gilruth: The member raises a really important point. I am aware of the issue in East Ayrshire. There is another local authority—I think it is Highland Council—that delivers music tuition in a similar way. Ultimately, it is a matter for East Ayrshire Council in setting its budget. It is ultimately responsible for ensuring access to free instrumental music tuition.

However, I accept the principle of the member’s question. I have asked my officials to engage directly with East Ayrshire Council and its proposals. It is really important that there is no dilution of young people’s access to free instrumental music tuition as a result of the changes. I am happy to keep the member updated on that engagement, and I will speak to my officials again directly in relation to the proposals.

Schools (Absence Rates)

6. Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recent Centre for Social Justice report, “Where Have All the Children Gone?”, which found that there has been a 72 per cent increase in severe school absence rates in the last five years. (S6O-03714)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth): School attendance plays an essential role in supporting our children and young people to reach their full learning potential. Our own data on persistent absence, which was

published in March, paints a concerning picture, and I have been clear that there must be a renewed drive across Government and our education agencies to address that and improve the situation.

I have tasked Education Scotland with working directly with directors of education to improve attendance as a matter of priority. Education Scotland launched an online package of support for schools only last month, which included guidance, professional learning and exemplification. The interim chief inspector is ensuring that persistent absence is addressed in every school inspection and is identifying successful approaches that can be shared more widely.

Sandesh Gulhane: “Severely absent” means children missing 50 per cent or more of classes. In Scotland, 20,000 children have avoided school for two or more days, and 3,000 primary school children missed 50 per cent or more in a school year. One in three children is persistently absent from school. That is a truly shocking picture.

Worse than those dire statistics is the fact that the Scottish Government has not bothered to monitor severe absence, which means that it has no idea of the true extent of the problem. So-called ghost children are out of sight, out of mind and abandoned by the Scottish National Party Government. Is it any wonder that Scottish education is crumbling under this inept SNP Government? Will the Scottish Government finally begin to collect information about children who are severely absent from school?

Jenny Gilruth: The member will recall that the children to whom he refers are those who lived through a global pandemic and lost out on two years—

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): Dear, dear!

Jenny Gilruth: I hear heckling from the Conservatives. I am mindful that there is a school class right behind the Conservative benches today, and those young people—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the cabinet secretary.

Jenny Gilruth: Those young people had their education disrupted for two years. There has been an increase in anxiety, and there are a number of other reasons why young people might not be able to engage in their school education.

It is worth pointing out that a number of actions have been taken. I have been engaging with the member’s colleague Liam Kerr in relation to children who are persistently absent from school.

The challenge needs sustained effort, not just from Government but from local authorities, which have the statutory responsibility for ensuring that our young people attend school. Last year, I commissioned Education Scotland's report, which was published in November and was focused on improving attendance. As part of our response to that report, and as I intimated in my initial response, I have tasked the interim chief inspector to work directly with directors of education. That includes ensuring that persistent absence is addressed in every school inspection.

We have asked for additional data.

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, please, cabinet secretary.

Jenny Gilruth: The member speaks about missing children, but that is not how it is characterised in Scotland; our measures are quite different. However, we have added in a new data measurement, which specifically concerns persistent absence. That additional—

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

Fair Work First Guidance (Breastfeeding)

7. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to strengthen its fair work first guidance to support and promote the good-practice example, referenced in the guidance, of providing a private, healthy and safe environment for breastfeeding mothers to express and store milk. (S6O-03715)

The Minister for Employment and Investment (Tom Arthur): Our fair work first guidance provides good-practice examples of supporting women at work, including providing safe spaces for breastfeeding mothers. Parent Club, which is our national online parenting platform, provides practical advice and information on rights for breastfeeding mothers on returning to work.

I am happy to consider how best to provide advice to employers on supporting breastfeeding mothers in the workplace and to strengthen action, as required, to address labour market inequalities that are faced by women and other groups in our society.

Rachael Hamilton: I want to briefly share the experience of one of my constituents, who recently returned to work. She said that she was disappointed to find that the lactation room was being shared with blood donation and first aid. She added that there were overfilled yellow hazard bins and blood splatters on the pillows, and that the fridge that she was supposed to store her breast milk in was being used as a surface for blood collection. She felt that that was unhygienic

and that it was a possible health and safety issue. When she raised the matter with her employer, she was told that it was that room or nothing. Thankfully, an office space has been reallocated for her.

Does the minister accept that, although there is existing guidance, some women are still not provided with a private, healthy and safe environment to express milk at work? Is he prepared to meet me to discuss how the Breastfeeding etc (Scotland) Act 2005 can be strengthened?

Tom Arthur: I recognise the concerning set of circumstances that Rachael Hamilton has narrated to Parliament. We are in a period of refreshing our fair work guidance. I am happy to take on board the issues that the member raises and I am more than happy to meet her to discuss them in more detail.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general question time.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Grangemouth Refinery Closure

1. Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I want to concentrate my first question today on the announcement this morning that the Grangemouth refinery will shut after 100 years of operation. The decision to close Scotland's only refinery will see 400 jobs lost directly at Grangemouth. That is a devastating blow to the workforce, the Falkirk area and the entire Scottish economy.

Supporting the employees at this difficult time must be the priority of both of Scotland's Governments. A PWC report that was published this morning says that the economic contribution of the refinery, supply chain and employee spending was £403.6 million in 2023 and that the refinery is estimated to support 2,800 jobs across Scotland. Will the First Minister outline his Government's response to the announcement and say what support the Scottish Government will put in place to support the employees at this difficult time?

The First Minister (John Swinney): This is a profoundly serious issue. My first thoughts at the outset of the handling of the issue are with the workforce, who will face great uncertainty as a consequence of the announcement that has been made this morning by Petroineos.

There has been extensive engagement and dialogue between the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government with Petroineos about the issue. Both Governments have made the case for refining to be continued for as long as possible, and certainly not for the announcement to be made today that refining will end in quarter 2 of 2025. Mr Ross is correct: that will raise significant economic implications for Scotland. It was for that reason that I raised the issue in my first conversation with the Prime Minister after the election, on 5 July, and there has been good and sustained engagement with the UK Government on the question.

This morning, both Governments have announced the approval of the Falkirk and Grangemouth growth deal. That will see the investment of £100 million in the locality, which will provide assistance for it to recover from this significant economic shock. Secondly, immediate tailored career support for workers will be made available to support employees to find employment should they face those issues. Thirdly, there will be investment in the site's long-term future. The Scottish Government and United

Kingdom Government have jointly funded the project willow study, which has identified a shortlist of credible options to begin the building of a new long-term industry at the refinery site, including low-carbon hydrogen, clean e-fuels and sustainable aviation fuels.

We will put in all the effort that we can to support the workforce at this difficult and worrying time. There will be intense dialogue with the trade unions, the company and Falkirk Council on those questions. I give the Parliament the assurance that we will update members as the events take their course. The Government's commitment to that and to working collaboratively with the United Kingdom Government is absolute. We will support the workers of Grangemouth in their time of need.

Douglas Ross: It is right that the Parliament is united in supporting those workers at this difficult time. Scottish Conservative members for Central Scotland and, indeed, our entire group will work with both Governments to assist in any way that we can.

I will move to another issue that has been dominating many of the conversations that we have all been having with constituents in the past few weeks. The winter fuel payment, which was shamelessly cut by the Labour Government at Westminster, was devolved to the Scottish Government. In Scotland, the decision not to pay that money to pensioners is for the Scottish National Party Government. In announcing its decision to scrap the winter fuel payment, the SNP must have known the impact that that would have on 900,000 pensioners in Scotland. Labour said that that policy would kill thousands of pensioners across the United Kingdom. Due to our colder climate, a disproportionate number of those are likely to be in Scotland. Does the First Minister accept that his Government's decision will lead to unnecessary deaths in Scotland? If so, how many?

The First Minister: I deeply regret the fact that the Scottish Government finds itself in this position. We fully expected the winter fuel payment to be devolved to the Scottish Government, and were planning to pay that support to pensioners in Scotland universally. That was our plan, and that is what we were working on. With 90 minutes' notice, we were abruptly told that our budget would be cut by £160 million because of the United Kingdom Government's decision. That is not of our making or planning, and it certainly is not our choice.

Mr Ross also knows that, once the Scottish Government has established a budget for the year, we cannot increase the size of that budget unless there are positive consequential funding decisions from the United Kingdom Government. In this case, we have had a negative

consequential financial decision that cuts our budget by £160 million. I very much regret the fact that we will not be able to make those payments universally, but we have suffered a budget cut from the United Kingdom Government, and the Scottish Government is responding to that accordingly.

Douglas Ross: It was a straightforward question, so I will ask it again. Does John Swinney believe—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Let us hear Mr Ross.

Douglas Ross: Does John Swinney believe that, as a result of the decision that was taken by SNP ministers in Scotland, there will be unnecessary deaths? If so, how many? He must know. John Swinney also said that it was always the plan to continue to deliver the payment universally. That is not true. The Scottish Government's response to the consultation on the pension age winter heating payment, which was published in May, long before the Labour Government's announcement, said that it would

“continue to review the eligibility and scope of the pension age winter heating payment moving forward.”

The SNP was considering cutting that payment back in May. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Mr Ross.

Douglas Ross: That is in black and white in its own document.

Politics is about choices, and John Swinney's Government has chosen to pass on Labour cuts that could see 900,000 Scottish pensioners losing out. The SNP could have mitigated those cuts. It has a budget of more than £50 billion, and just this week—

The Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, Mr Ross.

Douglas Ross: —the number in Scottish Government's bloated civil service has reached a record high. Why are public sector pen-pushers more important to John Swinney than stopping pensioners from freezing in their homes?

The First Minister: In his last weeks in office as Conservative leader, Douglas Ross really is plumbing the depths in the questions that he puts in Parliament today. His interpretation of the document is, I think, a vindication of that comment.

Douglas Ross knows full well the way in which the Scottish Government's finances operate. If we suffer a cut of £160 million in our budget courtesy of the Labour Government, we have to respond to that, and we have to act accordingly.

I need no lessons from Douglas Ross about mitigating decisions of the United Kingdom

Government, because the Scottish Government is currently mitigating a series of decisions that were taken by Douglas Ross and his colleagues on an on-going basis on the bedroom tax and other measures. We picked up the pieces because of the odious decisions that were taken by the Conservative Government in London, so I will take no lessons from Douglas Ross on that point.

Douglas Ross says to me that there are choices. Of course there are choices. If we followed the Conservatives on what they have said about tax and spending, I would not be cutting the budget by £160 million—I would be cutting it by £2 billion, because that is the reality of the position that the Conservatives put to Parliament. I will take no lessons today from Douglas Ross, as he desperately clutches at straws in his last weeks in office.

Douglas Ross: Standing up for Scotland's pensioners is not clutching at straws.

Is it not telling that John Swinney has now twice been asked how many in Scotland could die as a result of his policy, and he refuses to answer? It is in black and white that the SNP was considering that in May this year. The SNP repeatedly calls for more powers, but when it is given the chance to act, it runs in the opposite direction and blames Westminster.

Surely the point of devolution is to make different choices, especially when lives are at risk—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: I am finding it very difficult to hear, as I am sure other members are, too. Let us conduct ourselves in a courteous and respectful manner, and let us hear one another.

Douglas Ross: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I was saying that surely the point of devolution is to make different choices, especially when lives are at risk. You cannot oppose Labour cuts at Westminster and simply pass them on at Holyrood by pretending that there is nothing that you can do about it.

Scotland is colder than the rest of the UK, and winter fuel payments must be an even greater priority here. The £160 million cost of the payments is just a fraction—0.3 per cent—of the Scottish Government's £50 billion budget. Surely the SNP Government can find the money, if that is important to it. Why is keeping pensioners warm this winter not a priority for John Swinney?

The First Minister: Douglas Ross raised a question about the exercise of new powers. When this Government acquired new powers, we took decisions to, for example, ask higher earners in Scotland to contribute more in taxation. I think that that was the right decision to make, because it has enabled us to fund the expansion of early learning

and childcare so that families across the country have the best childcare offering in the whole United Kingdom. I am very proud that our Government has put that in place.

That decision has also enabled us to spend more than £400 million on ensuring that we deliver the Scottish child payment, which is contributing—among other measures—to keeping 100,000 children out of poverty. Those are the choices that we have exercised as a Government, and I am very proud of them.

The difficulty that we face on the issue of winter fuel payments is that—

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): That is not a priority for the Scottish Government.

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the First Minister.

The First Minister: Within this financial year, our budget is being cut at the same time as we are affording pay increases for public sector workers—

Craig Hoy: The point is about priorities.

The First Minister: —such as nurses, teachers—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: First Minister.

To be quite frank, members know that they are not conducting themselves in a courteous and respectful manner. Where there have been previous opportunities to put questions, I would ask members to focus and listen.

The First Minister: At the same time as we have a budget cut of £160 million around winter fuel payments, we are affording more than £800 million to meet the additional costs of pay bills so that teachers, nurses and other members of the public services who are delivering vital services in our country—

Craig Hoy: This is about pensioners.

The First Minister: Why are you still shouting at me, Mr Hoy? You have to listen to the Presiding Officer—*[Interruption.]* You have to listen to the Presiding Officer, and stop behaving badly.

The Presiding Officer: I assure the First Minister that I am wholly prepared to chair this meeting. I will not allow any members to shout at one another, so let us start to conduct ourselves in a manner that is appropriate for this Parliament.

The First Minister: In the financial year that we face, in which we have an acute budget cut in relation to the winter fuel payments, this Government has been left with no choice.

I will take absolutely no lessons from Douglas Ross, who supported every act of financial vandalism of the previous Conservative

Government and every act of austerity that led to suffering among pensioners and families in our country. The Conservatives have no lessons to teach us.

Grangemouth Refinery Closure (Joint Government Response)

2. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** This morning, Petroineos confirmed its decision to decommission the refinery at Grangemouth. For the workforce, its families and the wider community, this will be a time of great anxiety.

Since the refinery closure was first proposed, Labour has called for both of Scotland's Governments to get round the table to find solutions. That is why Keir Starmer raised the issue with the First Minister during his first visit to Scotland after the election, and that is why the clear message this morning is that the United Kingdom Labour Government is ready to support the workforce and secure a viable long-term future for the site. I am sure that the First Minister, like me, welcomes that assurance. Will he join me in committing to continue that work, with the UK Government, in the interests of the Grangemouth community and Scotland's energy security?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I am very happy to give that confirmation to Parliament today. That has been the spirit in which the Scottish Government has operated since Petroineos raised the issues some months ago. There was sustained engagement before the change of Government in July and that has carried on under the new Government.

As I explained in my first answer to Mr Ross, this morning, the UK and Scottish Governments announced a series of measures that are designed to address the immediate issues. I assure Jackie Baillie that the Scottish Government will concentrate and focus on meeting the needs of the workforce at what I acknowledge will be an extremely worrying time.

Jackie Baillie: I very much welcome that commitment from the First Minister.

The plan that was announced today delivers a £100 million fund to drive growth in Grangemouth and to support the workforce. There will be investment in new energy projects; a new technology centre to support the use of low-carbon technologies; career and skills support for the existing workforce; and an employment hub to support emerging energy sectors and explore potential opportunities for Labour's national wealth fund in clean technologies, such as hydrogen and clean aviation fuel.

All that has been pulled together in the first nine weeks of a UK Labour Government, and it gives hope that there will be a strong industrial energy

future at Grangemouth. I welcome the joint investment by both Governments. Does the First Minister agree that that shows how the people of Scotland benefit from the Labour Government's approach, which is one of co-operation rather than conflict?

The First Minister: As a matter of fact—I have to be absolutely fair on this question—there was a lot of dialogue with the previous Conservative Government on the issue. The issue has been taken seriously by the United Kingdom Government of whatever colour, and it has certainly been taken deadly seriously by the Scottish Government.

The project willow study, which is a really important part of research about viable alternatives for development of the site, predates the existing UK Government, but I am glad that it has been supported as a consequence of the announcements today.

I very much agree about the basis of co-operation. It is no secret that the Scottish Government would like the United Kingdom Government to move faster on the authorising of the Acorn carbon capture and storage project. It has been of deep concern to me that promises about the authorisation of that scheme, which ministers in the previous United Kingdom Government made to me directly, have not been fulfilled. I feel deeply let down by the fact that that has not happened. Promises were given but not fulfilled.

I have made the point to the Prime Minister that an early authorisation of the Acorn carbon capture and storage project would be a significant boost to the efforts to find new opportunities at the Grangemouth site. I hope that the United Kingdom Government is listening carefully to the words that I am saying to Parliament today.

Jackie Baillie: I think that the First Minister will find that the UK Labour Government has been not only been listening carefully but acting in the interests of the people of Scotland. The new national wealth fund did not exist before the Labour Government came to power, and that can make change happen.

A UK Labour Government working with the Scottish Government is part of the promise that we made to Scots at the general election. Labour made a commitment that we would not leave communities behind. That is why we have got on with passing the legislation to set up Great British energy; awarding a record-breaking number of clean energy contracts; announcing the £100 million support package for Grangemouth alongside the Scottish Government; protecting Scotland's industrial base; securing the well-paid jobs of the future—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Ms Baillie.

Jackie Baillie: —and delivering the transition to net zero.

The new consensus does not appear to have lasted long on the Scottish National Party back benches.

There is more that we could and should be doing here in Scotland. It has taken three years for the SNP to publish a green industrial strategy. Although I welcome the enthusiasm with which the First Minister has engaged with the UK Labour Government in the past few weeks, does he agree that, to deliver new investment, good jobs and energy security for Scotland, we need to step up action here as well?

The First Minister: There is plenty of action on green energy and green opportunities in Scotland. One of my first engagements as First Minister was to announce the investment at the Ardersier port near Inverness. That was followed by the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy announcing the investment at Sumitomo in Nigg, which is another formidable investment in the renewables sector. On Monday, I had the pleasure of being in Buckie to inaugurate the operations and maintenance facility of Ocean Winds, which is leading the development of the Moray East and Moray West offshore wind farms. That is all happening on the watch of the Scottish Government, and I am delighted that it is happening.

Jackie Baillie is right that we must intensify the pace, which is why the green industrial strategy has been published. We would also be helped if we had control over the £150 million war chest that the Secretary of State for Scotland apparently has at his disposal. If the funding arrangements were working properly, we would have the money here for us to invest in the Scottish economy, to accelerate developments and, perhaps, to put even more than we have already have into the carbon capture and storage project that I was talking about a moment ago.

I am all for working together, but let us make sure that we have the resources here to end austerity, which would allow us to invest in the economy.

While we are on the subject of promises and what has been delivered by the Labour Government, Labour promised that it would reduce people's fuel bills by £300, but they are going to go up by £149 on average. That is not the change that people in Scotland voted for.

Green Industrial Strategy

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I certainly agree with the First Minister and others that our thoughts today must be with the workforce

and the community affected by the announcement about Grangemouth. However, the truth is that the Government has been well aware for years that Grangemouth urgently needed a just transition plan, and yesterday's so-called "Green Industrial Strategy" contained nothing new to achieve a fair transition away from polluting industries.

The workforce and the community have been failed by the private owners, but they have also been failed by both Governments. Why has the Scottish Government produced a green industrial strategy that looks like it was written by oil and gas lobbyists and that contains no transition plan for Grangemouth?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I welcome the comments that Mr Harvie has put on the record about the workforce at Grangemouth—*[Interruption.]*

I say to the Conservatives that I do not think that the hardship that is faced by the employees at Grangemouth is a laughing matter, to be honest. I welcome Mr Harvie's comments about the workforce because it is important that Parliament acts with solidarity when members of the public face difficulties.

In relation to the green industrial strategy, the first of the five opportunity areas in the strategy is about investment in the wind industry, which is a formidable contributor to that strategy. I know that Mr Harvie takes a different view from the Government on carbon capture and storage, but that is also an important element of our strategy, as is the development of financial products that will enable investment in the self-sustaining renewable energy industries that I have talked about, and the development of hydrogen-related possibilities, which have enormous significance, along with the export potential that can arise out of the investment that we are making in offshore wind.

I hope that that detail gives Mr Harvie confidence that the green industrial strategy is meeting the needs of the workforce at Grangemouth and that it also applies across the Scottish economy by providing new opportunities for transition.

Patrick Harvie: The news about Grangemouth this week makes it all the more important that the Government is truly honest about its climate action. However, the Government did not even want to tell Parliament about its legally required plan to make up for its missed targets. It slipped it out on Friday with no debate, no statement to Parliament and not even a press release about that legally required report.

No wonder that the Government is embarrassed by it. It is supposed to show what new climate action it will take to make up for falling further

behind on the climate, but it contains no new policy whatsoever. That comes after it has spent the past few weeks abandoning policies that the Greens achieved in Government: it has raided the nature restoration fund and the ScotWind money, and it is planning a big increase in rail fares, which the Greens had cut.

How can the Government publish that report with no new policy in it and still expect to be taken seriously as it is rushing through a new climate bill that kicks this ever more urgent issue into ever longer grass?

The First Minister: It is important that we look at all the detail that is relevant in this area. For example, in the programme for government that I announced last Wednesday, we set out our investment programme for a just transition fund in the north-east and in Moray, and we set out our plans to significantly enhance the Scotland's capacity to generate renewable energy. We have made formidable progress on the decarbonisation of electricity since this Government came to power and achieved significant improvements in that process. The programme for government includes material about the restoration of 10,000 hectares of degraded peatland and the creation of 10,000 hectares of woodlands. A variety of other measures in the programme for government also support our work on climate change.

I want to be crystal clear to Mr Harvie that the Government is absolutely committed to the journey that we have to take on climate. That commitment has underpinned our activities since we came to office in 2007, and it will underpin our activities in the years to come.

The transition has to be made, and it has to be made fairly for all communities involved. That is the approach that the Scottish Government will take.

Renewable Energy Generation (Planning and Consenting Regime)

4. **Bob Doris:** To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government plans to improve the planning and consenting regime for renewable energy generation can support the journey to net zero. (S6F-03346)

The First Minister (John Swinney): Robust and timely planning and consenting of renewable energy projects and infrastructure are key to growing our economy and delivering on our net zero commitments.

The steps that we take in relation to providing clarity and confidence to support renewables development and investment are critical to enabling Scotland's transition to net zero. That is why I set out in the programme for government last week a set of actions to deliver the

improvements that we need to see in the current regime. Those include establishing Scotland's first ever planning hub to build capacity and skills in planning teams, with an initial focus on hydrogen applications; making consenting faster and more consistent for proposals for projects over 50MW; introducing new guidance for transmission developments; and updating our marine planning framework.

Bob Doris: The green industrial strategy will be key in the context of Scotland's drive to net zero by 2045 and promoting a just transition. How will the actions that are set out in that strategy help Scotland to secure growth and investment?

Net zero also goes beyond renewable energy. What details can the First Minister give about what is contained in the strategy that will support the decarbonisation of the built environment and the construction sector, given that they generate 40 per cent of emissions?

The First Minister: Mr Doris makes a number of important points on the green industrial strategy and the steps that we have to take. As I outlined in my answer to Patrick Harvie, there are five key opportunity areas in which we need to take further action on the transition in relation to investment, innovation and entrepreneurship in a number of sectors: wind, carbon capture and storage, professional financial services, hydrogen and clean industries. We already have formidable leadership in that area, but Mr Doris is right to raise the construction sector and the need for it to reduce its emissions. We are working on decarbonisation in collaboration with the construction sector, through the Construction Leadership Forum and its codes, which set out agreed actions on decarbonisation.

The Presiding Officer: I am keen to allow as many members as possible to ask supplementary questions, if we can keep those concise.

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): The north-east is experiencing a dramatic increase in new transmission infrastructure to serve offshore wind. The affected communities deserve proper consultation, but that has been far from what has happened. For residents who bear the brunt of the new infrastructure, it feels like an unfair and unjust transition. As the Scottish Government looks to improve the planning and consenting regime for renewables—which the First Minister described as “making consenting faster”—is the First Minister willing to meet community representatives and campaigners to listen to their concerns and ensure that they are not left behind?

The First Minister: It is important that there is high-quality community engagement on all developments of any nature. If those who are taking forward developments engage in good

dialogue and engagement with individual communities, that helps to make the consenting and planning process more efficient.

I am familiar with the issues that Tess White raises, and I am sure that ministers would be happy to meet campaigners. Of course, ministers have to be careful about engaging on particular developments because of the need to observe the ministerial code in taking decisions on such questions.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the fact that the Government seeks to make consenting faster, because the First Minister is aware that delays have affected such things as the Berwick Bank offshore wind project. In his role as First Minister, will he facilitate a meeting on the Eskdalemuir seismic array in Dumfries and Galloway, which is causing problems for Community Windpower's development there?

The First Minister: On individual applications, I generally take the view that I will not say anything in Parliament, because that keeps me on the right side of the ministerial code. I am not sure of the status of the application that Mr Whitfield has raised, but I will take it away and consider whether it is appropriate for ministers to engage. I do not know the stage of that application, and it would be careless of me to say otherwise.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Shetland is the windiest part of the country so, for obvious reasons, it attracts both onshore and offshore wind developments. Islanders are aware of the contributions that such projects make to reaching net zero, but there is a view that onshore developments should not be built near existing properties and communities. Does the First Minister recognise the concerns about the proximity of wind turbines to homes and the impact of turbine noise and shadow flicker? What can the Scottish Government do in terms of planning and consent to ensure a specified minimum distance between properties and future onshore wind developments?

The First Minister: I understand the significance of the issues that Beatrice Wishart has put to me. My view is that the issues that she raises should be properly and fully considered in any planning process. I am happy to consider whether enhancements to the process need to be undertaken to provide the reassurance that she seeks.

From some of the dialogue that I have had with representatives of the community in Shetland, I am also conscious of some of the concerns that are raised about developments and about the relationship between power generation in the Shetland Islands and the cost of energy for local

residents, which I recognise as a very significant issue.

I am happy to have further dialogue with Beatrice Wishart on that question.

Police Scotland (Gender Self-identification Policy)

5. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to recent reports regarding Police Scotland's policy on gender self-identification for individuals charged with or convicted of serious sexual assaults. (S6F-03340)

The First Minister (John Swinney): The Scottish Government is clear that violence against women and girls is abhorrent. Through our equally safe strategy, we aim to prevent and tackle such violence and abuse and to address the underlying attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate the violence that too many experience.

It is only through fundamental societal change that women can be protected. The Parliament is well aware that the Scottish Government does not determine or interfere with operational matters of Police Scotland, which is accountable to the Scottish Police Authority and not to ministers.

Rachael Hamilton: In a letter to a Holyrood committee, Police Scotland said that it would allow a serious sex offender to self-declare their gender. That opens the door to a grotesque situation in which a male rapist can demand to be called a woman and further traumatise his victim. Echoing the language of the Scottish National Party, Police Scotland said that that was "consistent" with its values and promotes

"a strong sense of belonging."

That is an insult to the victims of rape and serious assault. The only strong sense that that should inspire is disgust. Does the First Minister agree with me and women across Scotland that male rapists should not get their own way, or is he content to let another Isla Bryson situation happen?

The First Minister: Let me be absolutely crystal clear with Parliament. I have never in my life believed, nor will I ever believe, that a male rapist should, in the words of Rachael Hamilton, get his way. I will not be associated with that language. Our law and legal framework make that abundantly clear.

In relation to the specific question about the guidance from Police Scotland, those are operational matters for Police Scotland. There would be outrage if I were to interfere in the actions and decision making of Police Scotland. The law is clear that I cannot do that. I am sure

that Police Scotland will have heard the exchanges in Parliament today and will consider the issues, if there are any that it wishes to address.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Behind the recording of crime statistics are real victims, such as the women who had to sit through court proceedings last year and hear the rapist referred to as a woman. I do not think that the First Minister can ignore responsibility. As Rachael Hamilton said, Police Scotland has said that that is consistent with its values, but the Government needs to be clear whether it is consistent with the Government's values. If a message is to go from the First Minister today, does it not make a mockery of the Government's violence against women strategy if violent male offenders can present as women and that could be accepted by the police? It is that critical.

The First Minister: The Government's strategy in relation to the tackling of violence against women is absolutely crystal clear that there is no place for violence against women in our society. The perpetrators of that violence must be confronted with and held to account for their behaviour. That is the foundation of our legal system.

Pauline McNeill is an experienced commentator and parliamentarian on issues in relation to justice policy. She knows that I cannot interfere in the operational business of Police Scotland. The law prevents me from doing so. However, the issues have been aired in Parliament today, and Police Scotland will have the opportunity to consider them.

Ash Regan (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba): Just to further underline the issue that we are discussing, stories have been running in the media this year discussing the increase in "women" committing sex crimes, when the reality is that those crimes are committed by men and are being recorded as women's crimes. That is offensive to women, and it is grossly disrespectful to the victims of those crimes. Why are Scottish institutions still acting as if self-identification is the law when it is not?

Institutions, however, have legal obligations, through the public sector equality duty, to record sex accurately. Will the First Minister show leadership and address this horrible situation urgently?

The First Minister: In the most recent year for which published data is available—2021-22—in all convictions of rape or attempted rape, the crimes were perpetrated by males. That is a statement of fact in relation to the most recent data that is available.

I acknowledge the concerns that are being expressed in the Parliament today, but I return to the fundamental point that the recording of information on those who commit crime is an operational matter for Police Scotland. It must be accountable for the decisions that it takes, and it is not for the First Minister to interfere or specify in operational matters of Police Scotland.

Hospice Care (Costs)

6. Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking in response to the reported rise in hospice care costs, including to ensure that employees in that sector have pay parity with NHS staff. (S6F-03333)

The First Minister (John Swinney): Independent hospices are highly valued and provide vital support to people and their families, as well as supporting other local health and social care services and teams delivering palliative care. I understand the pressures that hospices are currently facing, and the Scottish Government strives to support independent hospices where possible.

There has been engagement and dialogue with the hospice sector, and the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health is meeting Hospice UK and the chair of the Scottish hospice leadership group next week to discuss support options in more detail.

Carol Mochan: Given that hospice care is so valued, does the First Minister recognise that urgent action is needed? The sector is under serious financial constraints, with threats of closures. The Government must ensure that the hospice workforce does not conclude that it is undervalued and leave the sector. Hospices simply cannot take that impact. What action will the First Minister take today—right now—to reassure hospices and the workforce?

The First Minister: Let me make it clear that I deeply value, and the Government deeply values, the work of the hospice sector. I understand the financial challenges that are faced because of the wider pay deals that are being put in place or consulted on in relation to the agenda for change, and that creates difficulties for the hospice sector. There is ministerial engagement to address those questions, and that will be taken forward as a consequence of the points that have been raised by Carol Mochan.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): In 2012, ministers put in place a chief executive letter for hospices across Scotland. That resulted in a welcome situation, with the Government and the hospices mutually agreeing a funding calculation of 50 per cent of agreed costs. Since the

integration of health and social care, the letter is now not taken into account and that figure has collapsed to around 25 to 28 per cent of costs for hospices across Scotland. That needs to change. What future models of funding will the Scottish Government look at to ensure that we have a built-in mechanism to take into account the increased pay and additional costs that the whole hospice sector faces?

The First Minister: Miles Briggs is correct that the arrangements that were previously in place were superseded by the introduction of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. As a consequence of the act, it became the responsibility of integration joint boards to plan and resource adult palliative care services, including hospice services, for their area, based on local need. That is now the route by which the funding arrangements are resolved.

We will continue to engage on these questions to determine what is the best approach to take to meet local needs, which will vary in different parts of the country. The minister's meeting next week will provide us with the opportunity to reflect further on the questions.

Grangemouth Refinery Closure

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): My thoughts are first and foremost with the workers at the refinery in Grangemouth, for whom today's announcement will be a shock, if not a surprise. I am also mindful of the community, for whom a just transition will feel too far away. As a constituency MSP, I will do everything in my power to sustain the life of the refinery and to ensure that it and the important chemical cluster around it can be supported.

I note that the £100 million that has been quoted by the United Kingdom Government and the Labour Party includes £80 million that was already agreed as part of the growth deal for the wider Falkirk district, which included £50 million from the Scottish Government, and that those funds will not be solely focused on Grangemouth.

However, I can today make members aware that I have been working with a third party that hopes to purchase the refinery in its entirety. The matter is, of course, commercially sensitive and confidential, but will the First Minister meet me so that I can share what information I can, with the permission of the potential buyer?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I am happy to do so. This is an unnerving time for the workforce and it is important that we all act to ensure that there are good and positive opportunities for members of staff as they face such an anxious time. I am happy to explore all possibilities, but I reiterate what I have already put

on the record today, which is that the Scottish Government stands to support the workforce at Grangemouth to find the best way forward in difficult circumstances.

Commonwealth Games (Scotland)

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The First Minister will be aware that the Commonwealth games will no longer be taking place in Australia in 2026. However, Australia has offered £100 million to underwrite the cost of the games if they come to Scotland and a further £50 million is available from ticket sales and sponsorship. There is also a guarantee from the Commonwealth games council that the games will be fully funded without the need for any Scottish Government intervention.

Does the First Minister agree that bringing the games back to Scotland would be fantastic in promoting Scotland to the world and highlighting sporting excellence to the Scottish public?

The First Minister (John Swinney): We all have fond memories of the Commonwealth games in 2014, which were a marvellous spectacle, but it is important that everyone who is considering and discussing the issue is aware that the proposal that is being brought forward would not replicate the Commonwealth games of 2014, but would be a significantly reduced proposition in comparison.

There are also practical issues about the length of the preparatory time for the games. We had seven years to prepare for 2014, but there is just short of two years to prepare for any games in 2026. There are, of course, significant financial issues and Mr Whittle knows the pressures on the public purse at this time.

Discussions are under way with Commonwealth Games Scotland. The Government is engaging in good faith and will continue to do so.

Rural Visa Pilot

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The link between population growth and economic growth is of particular importance in the region that I represent. Keir Starmer has said that he wants to work on common ground with the Scottish Government. What indication has the First Minister had from the United Kingdom Government that it will devolve powers to this Parliament so that a rural visa pilot can be taken forward for sectors such as social care and hospitality?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I have put that proposition to ministers in the United Kingdom Government and discussed it specifically with the Deputy Prime Minister when she visited me in the summer.

As Emma Roddick will know from her constituency experience, there are acute shortages of workers in a number of sectors and a rural visa pilot would help us to address some of the challenges that exist in the Highlands and Islands, and which she fairly puts to me. I assure Emma Roddick that the Scottish Government is pressing the UK Government to act on those issues because, if it did, that would contribute towards stimulating further economic growth in Scotland, which I think we would all welcome.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. There will be a short suspension to allow those leaving the public gallery to do so before the next debate begins.

12:48

Meeting suspended.

12:59

On resuming—

The Late Rev John Ainslie

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-13909, in the name of Bill Kidd, on the late Rev John Ainslie. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the enormous contribution to the debate on nuclear weapons that was made by the late Reverend John Ainslie in the Glasgow Anniesland constituency, the Parliament and throughout Scotland; celebrates the publication, in an accessible and searchable digital form, of the archive of all of his reports by the Nuclear Information Service, and welcomes the return of the physical papers for safekeeping by the National Library of Scotland.

12:59

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Today, we are here to recognise the remarkable contributions of the late Rev John Ainslie to the debate on nuclear weapons. John was not just a leading figure in Scotland's anti-nuclear movement; he was someone whose life's work and deep commitment to peace profoundly shaped the discourse on disarmament here and abroad. I hope that his legacy will be honoured not only in words but in actions as we go forward. Although today's debate pays tribute to John's invaluable work, it also provides an opportunity to renew our commitment to nuclear disarmament and to a nuclear-free Scotland.

I welcome to the public gallery representatives of the Nuclear Information Service and the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Their efforts are vital, given the continued existence and proliferation of nuclear weapons here in Scotland and around the world. The Nuclear Information Service plays an essential role in the on-going effort towards nuclear disarmament, as it provides rigorous and reliable information on the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons programme. It is through such efforts that we can engage in informed debates and challenge the dangerous and costly status quo of nuclear armament.

After the debate, there will be a meeting of the cross-party group on nuclear disarmament and, later, an event at the National Library of Scotland to celebrate the return of the John Ainslie archives. That event will feature a panel discussion with Scottish CND, the Nuclear Information Service and journalist Rob Edwards,

and it will further highlight the importance of the Rev John Ainslie's work.

John's life was a journey defined by courage and conviction. Born in Aberdeenshire, he joined the Army in 1971 and studied international relations, becoming a junior officer. However, by 1980, his conscience led him to resign his commission, as a conscientious objector, and he became a passionate advocate for nuclear disarmament. On returning to Scotland, he pursued a degree in divinity and joined the Church of Scotland as a youth worker, while also emerging as a prominent figure in the disarmament movement.

In 1992, as the co-ordinator of Scottish CND, John made headlines by protesting against the arrival on the Clyde of the first submarine armed with Trident nuclear missiles. He did so with action, not just words, by paddling a canoe to confront the submarine—an act of bravery that led to his arrest by Ministry of Defence police. That moment symbolised his unwavering commitment to a world free from nuclear weapons.

John combined rigorous academic inquiry with grass-roots activism, which ensured that his contributions had both intellectual and practical impacts. He famously coined the phrase "Bairns not bombs", which is a powerful slogan that captures his vision of investing in our children and communities rather than in weapons of mass destruction. That simple yet profound message continues to resonate today as we advocate for a nuclear-free future.

The reports and research that the Rev John Ainslie produced, now digitised by the Nuclear Information Service, remain vital in shaping international discourse on nuclear weapons. Those documents are living tools that continue to inform global efforts towards nuclear disarmament, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The return of those original documents to Scotland's National Library is more than symbolic; it is a reaffirmation of Scotland's role in the global peace movement.

Nuclear disarmament is not just an idealistic goal; it is a practical necessity. Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity. Their use, whether by design, accident or miscalculation, would have catastrophic consequences, and it is our moral duty to work relentlessly to eliminate those weapons from our world.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which came into force in 2021, represents a historic step forward. Supported by a growing number of nations, the treaty explicitly bans the development, testing, production and possession of nuclear weapons. Scotland, through its people and its leaders, has consistently

supported the treaty and the broader movement for disarmament, and John's work laid much of the groundwork for that support.

However, significant challenges remain. Nuclear-armed states, including the UK, continue to resist such efforts, and they often cite deterrence as a justification. However, the doctrine of deterrence is fundamentally flawed. It perpetuates a cycle of fear and insecurity and increases the risk of nuclear conflict.

For as long as the UK maintains its nuclear arsenal on Scottish soil, we find ourselves complicit in that dangerous status quo. Yet Scotland has the potential to be a beacon of hope and a nation that leads by example, by advocating for disarmament and striving for a future where bairns not bombs is a reality.

As we honour the life and legacy of the late John Ainslie, let us commit ourselves to continuing his work. Let us strive for a Scotland and a world where peace, justice and human dignity are not overshadowed by the threat of nuclear weapons. John's example inspires us to challenge the status quo and to work tirelessly for a safer and fairer future. Let us use this moment to act, to renew our dedication to nuclear disarmament and to build a future where our children inherit a world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

13:05

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)

(SNP): I am pleased to speak in this important debate, which I thank my colleague Bill Kidd for bringing to the chamber. His commitment to nuclear disarmament is well documented. He is the co-president of the global organisation Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, and I applaud him for his unstinting work to get rid of the abomination of nuclear weapons from Scotland's shores and from the world.

I also applaud the subject of today's debate, the Rev John Ainslie. As we have heard, he was a son of the manse in Aberdeenshire who joined the Army in 1971, studied international relations at Keele University in Staffordshire and became a junior officer. By 1980, he had fallen out with the Army and resigned his commission, as a conscientious objector, and he became an active campaigner. After paying back his university fees to the Army, he undertook a divinity degree and entered the ministry of the Church of Scotland as a youth worker. He was one of Scotland's foremost disarmament campaigners, along with the late Canon Kenyon Wright.

In 1992, when the first submarine armed with Trident nuclear missiles arrived in the Clyde, John—by then the co-ordinator of Scottish CND—

was in a canoe buzzing the submarine when he was arrested by the MOD police. As we have heard, John did not just pay lip service to disarmament; he acted with bravery, and his arrest was a watershed moment in highlighting the absurdity of these weapons of mass destruction.

The Scottish National Party has a long-standing commitment to ridding our shores and the world of nuclear weapons. Until today's debate, I did not realise that the oft-used phrase "Bairns not bombs" was coined by John Ainslie. For me, that slogan says it all. We want our children to grow up without the threat of nuclear weapons. Scotland does not want them; they have no place here. I have been a lifelong supporter of nuclear disarmament, having visited Faslane and Greenham Common back in the day. In fact, I think that I still have the "Protest and survive" badges and other memorabilia from then, which I am keeping to pass on to my grandchildren.

The money that is spent on these useless weapons is staggering. We could use that money in so many ways to build a fairer, greener Scotland. For me, their presence here is symbolic of having paid no heed to what the majority of Scots want and believe. Nuclear weapons are morally reprehensible. As Bill Kidd said, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which came into force in 2021, represents a historic step forward, along with the research produced by John Ainslie, which is now digitised by the Nuclear Information Service.

I again thank Bill Kidd for securing the debate. I thank all peace-loving citizens and organisations for their work to end the abomination of nuclear weapons. The most fitting tribute to John Ainslie would be to rid the beautiful shores of Scotland of them—something that I am confident will happen when we are an independent country.

13:09

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, congratulate Bill Kidd on bringing this debate to the chamber. He and I have spoken in numerous debates on issues such as this one over the years.

I might be a strange choice to speak in this debate, for a number of reasons. I am an MSP with a keen interest in the work of our armed forces; I have the Faslane nuclear base in my parliamentary region, which I have visited multiple times; and I would describe myself as a supporter of our continuous at-sea deterrent. However, I would like to think that the Rev John Ainslie, if he was here, would cherish this debate and all speakers' participation in it. I have much that is positive to say about his work, even if he and I would perhaps have disagreed eye to eye on some of the substantive issues. The underlying

premise of his desire for peace across the world is one that I hope we all share, irrespective of our views.

The Rev John Ainslie was co-ordinator of Scottish CND from 1991, when I was just 11, right through until his untimely death in 2016. In doing my research for this debate, I was interested to read that he trained to be an officer in the 1970s and he completed a degree in international relations, specialising in NATO's nuclear strategy. He went on to serve in our armed forces in Ireland. I am reliably told that he possibly even worked in military intelligence, although I am not sure about the truth of that. Famously, he left as a conscientious objector, and he suffered and paid a price as a result of that. He faced tribunals and was forced to pay back some of his university fees.

At the time when Vanguard, which was the first of the Trident submarines, sailed up the Clyde, right in front of my home town of Greenock, he led a flotilla of around 50 small craft, with swimmers and canoeists in the water. The sight of that huge submarine of mass destruction alongside the tiny canoes and the swimmers must have been an iconic vision of that epoch.

In his many reports, which were very well received as being evidence based and well argued, he aimed to persuade the public of his convictions. Whether one agreed with his work or not, he provided a significant base of information about Britain's nuclear capabilities. Indeed, I would go as far as saying that it enriched the debate on Britain's nuclear deterrent. They are weapons of mass death and destruction. He was right about that. Of course, some would argue that that is their very purpose.

His campaign was born in a very different world. Let us look back to 1992, when his first report was published. The cold war was just over, the Berlin wall had just come down and the USSR had just collapsed. There was a feeling that a united Europe was giving way to a more united world. There was optimism at the time that the move towards an anti-nuclear world was gaining momentum and that disarmament would be universal.

However, that optimism and that sense of global unity have not lasted or stood the test of time. I believe that we are now in a far more dangerous and perhaps volatile world than we were in those days. I think that the on-going conflicts in Ukraine and the middle east and the tensions in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere reinforce the role that Britain plays in global affairs and the support that we give to and receive from our global allies. The nuclear deterrent is undoubtedly part of that. However, what the Rev John Ainslie did was challenge its existence through substance. He

scrutinised the standards of the deterrent and challenged the risks associated with it. The many reports, which I do not have time to go into, were fascinating to read, and I look forward to seeing the archive at the National Library of Scotland.

I would even argue that the UK's deterrent, as it is today, is all the safer as a result of much of the work that those who opposed its existence did. That work is clearly on-going, and those in the public gallery today are testament to that. Bill Kidd summed it up nicely. The Rev John Ainslie challenged the status quo. He asked difficult questions of people in power—perhaps questions that no one else was asking at the time—about the price of security, the meaning of deterrence, the legalities around its potential use and the realities of our global capabilities and those of our allies and our opponents. I believe that we are all safer for some of that research and work.

He made his arguments not through the prism of ideology, but through research and thought-provoking analysis, and he was never afraid to question the safety or indeed the costs of our nuclear deterrent. One thing that I am sad about is that he is not here to participate in this debate. Nonetheless, the movement, his friends, his family and those who continue to fly the flag for him, including Bill Kidd, who I have much respect for, keep alive his cause and the memory of those bold figures of the early CND who were never afraid to challenge the status quo. We should never be afraid to challenge the status quo, and that is something that we should all cherish in a democracy such as ours.

13:14

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank Bill Kidd for leading the debate on a motion that celebrates the life and work of John Ainslie. Last month marked the 30th anniversary of a publication that I do not think is in the archive. It is a pamphlet that John and I co-authored—a coproduction between the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Scottish Trades Union Congress: "Trident—Not Safe, Not Economic, Not Wanted" is its title. In it, we exposed the huge hidden costs of Trident and exposed the huge safety risk that it posed to the whole of central Scotland. It is a piece of work, three decades on, that I am proud of, not only because we were on the right side of the biggest moral question of our age—and I still firmly believe that to be true—but precisely because I worked on it with John. We would meet at 15 Barrland Street, on the south side of Glasgow, and at 16 Woodlands Terrace, in the grandeur of the STUC's offices, with its views redolent of the cityscapes of Oscar Marzaroli.

John's job title at Scottish CND at that time was administrator, but John Ainslie was no bureaucrat. He was an activist, a thinker, a campaigner, a writer, a protester, and a man of the highest principles. Just listen to his simple, but arresting, opening line in that pamphlet:

"A Trident submarine is designed to destroy a continent and to kill 200 million people."

In the ensuing years, he became an internationally respected authority on nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament, and no one knew more about the road convoys of warheads that were travelling through Scotland than John. Acutely aware of the dangers, the risks, the hazards—the unintended consequences—as well as the illegal and immoral intended ones, of the nuclear arsenal on our doorstep, he warned that central Scotland, from the Clyde to the Forth, could become a desert because he knew that a nuclear war could start by intent, but it could also start by accident.

The replacement of Polaris with Trident was controversial on its own terms. By 1994, when we wrote the pamphlet, according to the National Audit Office, there had already been an £800 million overspend, but Trident did not just bring about the proliferation of public money—it brought about the proliferation of public terror and, of course, it brought about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Now, 30 years later, we are drifting towards Trident's replacement with the Dreadnought programme. We are doing that

"in conjunction with the United States",

we are told, working closely to ensure that it is it is compatible with the Trident strategic weapon system. In other words, we remain a client state to the US, and this at a time when we know that there is a possibility of the return of Donald Trump to the White House.

Looking back 30 years ago, at the time I wrote:

"Trident is a triumph of the military complex over the needs of the impoverished. It is a triumph of foreign policy over social and industrial policy."

I stand by those statements. I cannot think of a better time to launch John Ainslie's archive than now, because he did ask the critical questions. He pioneered the use of freedom of information laws in search of truth and transparency. What better way to honour his memory than to continue with his work?

Finally, John knew that nuclear weapons do not bring stability; that they corrode the very foundations of our civilisation; that if we do not destroy these weapons of mass destruction, they will destroy us. I remain an inveterate and unrepentant supporter of unilateral nuclear

disarmament. In John's memory, we rededicate ourselves today to that great cause.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call on the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson, to respond to the debate.

13:19

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): I am delighted and honoured to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government. I sincerely thank Bill Kidd for lodging the motion and I express my appreciation to him and the wider cross-party working group on nuclear disarmament for their continued work on this important issue.

I realise that I am at risk of repeating some of what has already been said, but it is important to begin by recognising the work and the legacy of the subject of Bill Kidd's motion and the debate, namely that of the Rev John Ainslie, who sadly and prematurely passed away in 2016 after a battle with cancer. Today's debate is a testament to his years of campaigning and his research on nuclear weapons and disarmament.

As others have mentioned, he was a former British Army intelligence officer. He worked tirelessly for many years as part of the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and he was appointed its co-ordinator in 1992. That was also the year of the first of the Rev John Ainslie's 20 reports on nuclear policy, the last of which was published in 2016. The reports covered a range of issues, including the practicalities of British nuclear disarmament and Scotland's contribution to it, the costs and risks of the UK's nuclear weapons modernisation programme and the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons by the United Kingdom.

In addition to authoring reports, the Rev John Ainslie collected a vast number of documents—more than 3,000 of them—primarily related to the UK Government's nuclear weapons programme. It is fitting that this debate is taking place on the day when we celebrate the return of that archive to Scotland, with events here in Parliament and at the National Library of Scotland, including an exhibition of some of the original documents. The whole of the collection is being added to the National Library. All those who are involved in digitising the archive and returning the physical files to Scotland for permanent storage are to be commended.

I will briefly reflect on members' contributions, and I begin with Bill Kidd. I think that everybody in the chamber, regardless of their views on nuclear disarmament, unilateral or multilateral—I think, or

certainly hope, that we are all committed to one or the other—would agree that Bill has been an unceasing campaigner for nuclear disarmament and that he deserves recognition from us all. Some years ago, I was pleased to be able to attend the international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons with him, and I can attest to his deep commitment to the issue.

Rona Mackay rightly reminded us all of the phrase “Bairns not bombs”, which many of us have had on bumper stickers and which we closely associate with the feeling of relative priorities when it comes to nuclear weapons against social policy.

I have to say how gracious and thoughtful Jamie Greene was to make the contribution that he made. Notwithstanding the differences that he has with those of us who support a different approach to nuclear disarmament, he found a way of graciously marking his respect for John Ainslie without taking issue with his commitment to how we can secure a more peaceful world.

On the joint publication that Richard Leonard co-wrote with John Ainslie 30 years ago—Richard must have been a very young man then—I hope that, if it is not already in the National Library, it will be. I encourage him to check the inventory there—let us make sure that that is part of the wider collection.

The Scottish Government’s position on nuclear weapons is clear and long standing. We are firmly opposed to the possession, the threat and the use of nuclear weapons. They are strategically and economically wrong, indiscriminating and devastating in their impact. Their use would bring unspeakable humanitarian suffering and widespread environmental damage.

It is worth noting that every single signatory of the non-proliferation treaty—all states, including the United Kingdom—is publicly committed to nuclear disarmament. Frankly, we should get on with it. The Scottish Government has consistently expressed a commitment to remove nuclear weapons from Scotland in the safest and most expeditious manner possible, following a vote for independence. That position was last set out in one of the “Building a New Scotland” series of papers titled “An independent Scotland’s place in the world”, which I launched in March this year.

Nuclear weapons are obsolete, dangerous and impractical, yet in 2021 the UK Government broke its commitment to the international community by increasing the nuclear weapons stockpile to no more than 260 warheads. That is a 40 per cent increase from its 2010 commitment of no more than 180 warheads. In March this year, the Conservative Government published a command

paper that set out that the UK’s nuclear weapons are the

“Ministry of Defence’s number one priority.”

It is disappointing, if not entirely unpredictable, that the new Labour UK Government is launching its strategic defence review in July and has reaffirmed its commitment to the UK’s nuclear arsenal.

Breaking the commitment to the cap of 180 warheads is completely at odds with article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which the UK Government is a signatory. Two independent defence experts from the London School of Economics have also concluded that the UK’s increase of warheads constitutes a breach of article 6.

Nuclear weapons do not provide a meaningful deterrent to many modern-day threats, such as terrorist attacks, and nor have they proven to be a deterrent to other nuclear-armed states carrying out atrocious acts, even on UK soil. Rather than making repeated and damaging cuts to conventional military forces and capabilities, the UK Government would do better to use the £41 billion that it is spending on replacing Trident to invest in modern conventional capabilities that are relevant to today’s threats.

The Scottish Government supports the objective of the non-proliferation treaty and the international treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We recognise the key role that the international community has in collectively creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

As I have said, the Scottish Government firmly opposes nuclear weapons. We wish to see the Dreadnought programme to replace Trident scrapped and the £41 billion of taxpayers’ money put to better use. We will continue to call on the UK Government to do just that.

Finally, and most importantly, I again thank Bill Kidd for lodging the motion and members for their contributions. The Rev John Ainslie was not a person who sought the limelight but, through his expertise and his commitment to peace, he shone a light on the terrible weapons of mass destruction on our doorstep. I hope that, one day, we can achieve what he fought so long for—namely, a nation free of nuclear weapons.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I suspend the meeting until 2 pm.

13:26

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Social Justice

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon, colleagues. The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the portfolio on this occasion is social justice.

Any member who is looking to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question. I make the usual plea for brevity in both questions and answers.

Housing (Cladding Remediation)

1. Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the implementation of the Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and cladding remediation programme, including the Scottish safer buildings accord and single building assessment pilot programme. (S6O-03701)

The Minister for Housing (Paul McLennan): With the Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the single building assessment technical specification now in place, we are able to accelerate the pace of delivery. We will shortly provide a timetable for commencement of the 2024 act, prioritising the powers that are urgently needed, including the completion of the SBA standards to sit alongside the technical specification that has already been published.

Pilot assessments have been undertaken for 30 of the pilot entries, with works to mitigate or remediate risks having started on five of those. We continue to work with developers to agree a contract in order to ensure that they can play their part in speeding up progress.

Ben Macpherson: I welcome the progress that has been made through passing the 2024 act and undertaking what the minister has set out, and I appreciate the complex work that Scottish Government officials are doing on the issue. However, many of my constituents remain frustrated at the lack of progress and clear information coming both from the Government and from developers on their particular buildings.

Can the minister provide further insight into when my constituents will start to receive more regular, clear proactive information on when remediation work may start in their buildings and, when it has started, on progress thereafter?

Paul McLennan: I thank the member for that question, and I am grateful for his continuing commitment to his constituents on these issues. We are taking a number of steps to improve communications with residents, including a regular newsletter; improvement to the content and detail of the Scottish Government website; frequent engagement through the High Rise Action Scotland Group; and the development of a pre-assessment charter.

We are shortly going to be refreshing pilot SBA assessments, as we now have the legislative and robust technical basis on which to do so; we will be writing to relevant owners and occupiers to inform them and to ensure that we undertake engagement pre and post that work. I am happy to meet the member to give a detailed update on developments in his constituency.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I would have expected greater urgency on the matter, because Scotland was quite far behind the curve already, certainly in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom. I would have expected that the frustration that Ben Macpherson talked about would have been communicated to the sector and to the Government, and that action would have been swifter.

What will the minister do in the next few weeks to ensure that we get some progress? We will have that frustration for much longer if he does not address that.

Paul McLennan: We had a meeting this morning, and I have a meeting with colleagues this afternoon, to talk about that very issue. I previously mentioned the 2024 act, which gives us additional powers to ensure that developers move at a quicker pace. We will continue to meet with developers and officials to pick up the pace. I know that progress needs to be quicker; we have acknowledged that, and we will be ensuring that the work moves at a quicker pace.

Housing (Safe and Affordable Accommodation)

2. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reports of almost 10,000 children living in temporary accommodation and 110,000 households on the waiting list for affordable social housing, what progress it has made towards providing those affected with safe and affordable accommodation. (S6O-03702)

The Minister for Housing (Paul McLennan): From 23 March 2022 to 31 March 2024, 21,092 homes have been delivered towards the 110,000 affordable homes target, of which 15,964—76 per cent—are homes for social rent. In 2024-25, we will invest nearly £600 million in affordable

housing, the majority of which will be for social rent. That includes up to £40 million to increase the affordable housing supply and to acquire properties in order to reduce the number of households, especially those with children, in temporary accommodation. We are also providing £2 million in 2024-25 to local authorities that are experiencing sustained temporary accommodation pressures in order to support existing housing stock management and minimise void turnaround time.

Alexander Stewart: Scotland continues to be in the grip of a devastating housing emergency and, despite the Scottish Government's commitment to tackle that national crisis, there has been a 10 per cent increase in households becoming homeless compared with last year. Every 16 minutes, a household becomes homeless and, every day, 45 children become homeless. What does the minister have to say to those thousands of people who have nowhere to call home?

Paul McLennan: The Scottish Government recognises that these are exceptionally challenging times. The member mentioned the challenges, primarily in cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, whose representatives I meet on a regular basis. We are taking action to reduce homelessness and improve the supply of social and affordable housing. The cabinet secretary and I have met and worked with the housing coalition on a number of occasions, and we will continue to meet in order to focus on some of those points.

As I said, we are looking at the £600 million that we have invested. We are working closely with local authorities, specifically on what they need for the housing emergency action plans that they bring forward. We need partnership working at all levels. We need to speak to the United Kingdom Government and local government, as well as housing sector partners, whom we continue to focus on, but a large number of actions are being taken from the meetings that we have been having.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have a couple of supplementary questions, which I hope will be brief.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): As well as the Scottish Government's record on the delivery of social and affordable housing since 2007, will the minister detail how the proposed housing bill will build on Scotland's already UK-leading homelessness prevention policies and help to avoid the stigma and adverse childhood experiences that are caused by not having a safe place to call home?

Paul McLennan: The new homelessness prevention duties in the housing bill are groundbreaking and involve areas such as health

and justice because, through the new ask and act duties, there is a shared public responsibility to prevent homelessness.

We have been told by people with lived experience of the missed opportunities to prevent homelessness through earlier intervention, and we are determined to address those. Earlier intervention by a range of services, including local authorities, to prevent homelessness can mean fewer households with children going through the trauma, stigma and disruption to their lives that homelessness brings, as well as an easing of the pressures on housing supply. We continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that we have the right guidance in place for implementing the new duties.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The minister is aware of projects in my region that hope to make use of the rural and islands housing fund to develop new homes, including in island communities where two homes can have the same impact as dozens elsewhere. Can he speak to the availability of the fund and the support that is available to local housing providers to make use of it in the coming months and years?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please answer as briefly as possible, minister.

Paul McLennan: Supported by our rural and islands housing action plan, we remain committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 10 per cent will be in rural and island communities.

As well as considerable mainstream investment, support is also available through the demand-led £30 million rural and islands housing fund and the £25 million rural affordable homes for key workers fund. Between April 2016 and March 2023, we helped to deliver more than 10,000 homes in rural and islands areas and have invested more than £839 million.

Edinburgh and the South-east (Population Increase)

3. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment the ministerial task force on population has made of the reported population increase in Edinburgh and the south-east, including any proposals that it has made to address this, since it was established in June 2019. (S6O-03703)

The Minister for Equalities (Kaukab Stewart): The Scottish Government's population strategy, which was published in 2021, includes a more balanced work strand that focuses on ensuring that our population is sustainably distributed. That work strand recognises the pressures of both population growth and depopulation.

Last year, our ministerial population task force considered exploratory research to expand our evidence base with regard to the drivers and challenges of population growth, the findings of which will inform future policy development.

We continue to work closely with local authorities. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are members of the population programme board and jointly chair the local government population round table.

Miles Briggs: We are seeing a historic shift in population in Scotland—from west to east. By 2040, Lothian councils are set to see the largest percentage increase in our populations, and Midlothian is projected to see an increase of more than 30 per cent in its population. Therefore, the Scottish Government and public bodies need to plan now for the increased pressures that our public services will face.

As I said, 84 per cent of Scottish population growth is due to be based in my region over the next 10 years, so it is time for ministers to understand that we need to plan for that population growth and development.

Will the minister agree to take forward a cross-party summit with MSPs and public bodies, so that we can look now at the future challenges and opportunities that will face public services across the Lothian region?

Kaukab Stewart: Work is on-going. We take the issue very seriously and our population programme considers the challenges of population growth, as I mentioned. It has been a key consideration for the population round table, which, as I said, is jointly chaired by the Scottish Government, COSLA and representatives from all local authorities. I would be happy to meet Mr Briggs to discuss the issues that he raises in more detail.

The ministerial task force will continue to consider taking appropriate steps to address those challenges, in collaboration with key partners such as local authorities.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): The huge population growth in Edinburgh is having an effect on both rent and house purchase prices. Given that population growth, is the Scottish Government taking specific actions to address the issue in Edinburgh? Can priority be given to Edinburgh in relation to the £600 million of funding that is provided for affordable housing in the programme for government?

Kaukab Stewart: Our affordable housing supply programme investment in Edinburgh has been at a record level over the first three years of the parliamentary session, at £160 million. The

allocation for the city of Edinburgh for this financial year is £34.9 million. Nationally, efforts to boost affordable housing supply by acquiring properties to bring into use for affordable housing and to help to reduce homelessness have been given an uplift of £80 million over the next two years. We have allocated a further £14.8 million to Edinburgh, raising the allocation to the city this year to more than £49 million. We recognise the City of Edinburgh Council's strong track record of affordable housing delivery and we continue to work very closely with it to maximise affordable housing.

Social Security Scotland (Recruitment)

4. Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of its pre-budget fiscal update on 3 September, what the potential impact will be of its "review and reprofile of recruitment" at Social Security Scotland on the agency's provision of front-line services to clients. (S6O-03704)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government requested all public bodies to identify savings options to balance the 2024-25 Scottish budget. The review and reprofiling of recruitment in Social Security Scotland has protected and prioritised the provision of critical front-line services to clients, which remains the agency's and the Government's top priority.

Paul O'Kane: The cabinet secretary will recognise that the most recent workforce statistics have shown that, following the growth of staffing in Social Security Scotland, those figures have largely stabilised at approximately 3,800. We also know that, despite that, there have been on-going issues with service provision, long processing times, long call waiting times and complexities in the system. Those issues have been well debated in the chamber. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the decision will not have a detrimental impact on the progress that is being made?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am happy to give that reassurance to Paul O'Kane. The agency has reassessed its staffing requirements across the year to ensure that it fills the vacancies at the right time. The updated recruitment plans take account of the seasonal peaks in benefit delivery and the additional staff who are required to deliver pension-age disability payment.

I assure Paul O'Kane that I, the chief executive and everyone working at the agency are absolutely determined to maintain the performance levels. He is quite right to point out that call waiting times and processing times for some benefits were too long. We have seen improvements there, and we are determined that things will stay that way.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): With regard to the front-line provision of services by Social Security Scotland, will the cabinet secretary advise whether the need to mitigate Labour's bedroom tax and benefit cap is taking away resources that could be spent on further enhancing social security provision in Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The member raises a very important point. She will know that the Scottish Government is spending around £134 million this year mitigating the United Kingdom Government's welfare package, which totals £1.2 billion since 2013. There are many ways in which the Scottish Government would like to spend that money. For example, this year's mitigation alone would pay for 2,000 teachers or band 5 nurses. That demonstrates the difference that it could make to education, the national health service or other anti-poverty measures, including those delivered by Social Security Scotland.

Child Poverty

5. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what impact its national mission to tackle child poverty is having in the Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituency. (S6O-03705)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We are providing a range of support that will benefit families in Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley and across Scotland, including the investment in our game-changing Scottish child payment, early learning and childcare, and free bus travel for under-22s.

Between February 2021 and this year, our Scottish child payment has been made more than 157,000 times, which has been worth more than £22 million to low-income families in East Ayrshire. East Ayrshire will also be part of one of the five new fairer futures partnerships, which will include Kilmarnock, which is a key area of focus. That will ensure that services are integrated to help families where and when they need it.

Willie Coffey: Further to those figures, nearly 9,000 children in East Ayrshire are getting help from the Scottish National Party Government to keep them out of poverty. More than 100,000 payments totalling £13 million make a big difference. Contrast that with the attacks by the Tories that have been continued by Labour, that are meant to keep in place the two-child benefit cap, which will mean thousands more children living in poverty who could have been freed from it.

Nearly 10 years on from our country's vote on independence, does the cabinet secretary agree that Scotland and Scotland's children cannot put

up with the damage that is caused by the union any more? Will she continue to work hard to lift children out of poverty with every means at her disposal?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Mr Coffey is quite right to point to the work that the Government continues to do against poverty—particularly to eradicate children's poverty—and to the limitations of the current devolution settlement. He would also be right to point out that, according to data published by the End Child Poverty coalition in December 2023, more than one in 10 families in East Ayrshire are impacted by the two-child limit, with families losing up to £3,455 each year for every affected child. That was the Tory United Kingdom Government's policy. That is now the Labour UK Government's policy. Mr Coffey is quite right that, with independence, there would be no such policy under the SNP.

Fife Council (Housing Adaptation Policy)

6. The Deputy Presiding Officer: To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Fife Council regarding the impact of its housing adaptation policy. (S6O-03706)

The Minister for Housing (Paul McLennan): The Scottish Government has not had any recent discussions with Fife Council regarding its housing adaptation policy. However, we are taking forward a review of the policy and delivery arrangements of the current housing adaptation systems, and we will seek views from councils and other stakeholders. I expect to receive initial recommendations on how best to improve and streamline the system and maximise the impact of investment before the end of 2024.

Annabelle Ewing: I thank the minister for his answer, but it is important for him to know what is happening on the ground. The fact of the matter is that far too many of my constituents wait far too long for even the most basic adaptations to be made to their homes by Fife Council. That means that some cannot wash themselves properly. Some cannot even access a toilet and need to use a commode—in some cases, for years.

Does the minister agree that that is simply unacceptable in 21st-century Scotland? Will he now take up this breach of people's right to dignity with the chief executive of Fife Council, with a view to the council sorting out that continuing shambles once and for all?

Paul McLennan: Adaptations make an important contribution to supporting older people and disabled people to live safely, and the member is right to raise those points. Of course they need to be comfortable and independent at home. I note that some of her constituents are waiting for adaptations for their homes. My

housing officials will discuss the matter with Fife Council and get back to the member.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take a brief supplementary question from Foysoyl Choudhury, on the basis that it is about Fife Council.

Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): In July, I was contacted by Andrea, who cares for her two disabled daughters. Her home requires adaptations, but it is not large enough for the daughters' wheelchair or the specific bed that is recommended by the physiotherapist. Andrea's housing association will not extend the house and has no suitable homes available. Another housing association refuses to fit dropped showers.

How is the Scottish Government working to ensure that housing associations and local authorities uphold their duties to provide essential adaptations, including beds?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not sure that that was about Fife Council but the minister may wish to respond as far as he can.

Paul McLennan: If the member writes to me, I will be happy to pick that up for him and will get officials to contact him.

Social Security (Unclaimed Pension Credit)

7. Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, regarding any impact on the administration of Scottish social security benefits, what information it holds on the percentage of pensioners in Scotland who have not claimed pension credit for which they are eligible. (S6O-03707)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): As pension credit is reserved to the United Kingdom Government, we are reliant on Department for Work and Pensions statistics for take-up rates. The latest that are available cover the financial year 2021-22 and show that the take-up rate of pension credit overall in Great Britain is 63 per cent. However, they do not show rates for countries or regions. Approximately 125,136 households receive pension credit in Scotland, which suggests that around 75,000 households in Scotland are eligible for pension credit but do not receive it.

Karen Adam: Given that the estimates show that thousands of families who are entitled to receive pension credit have not claimed that benefit, and with Labour MPs at Westminster voting this week to remove the winter fuel payment for millions of pensioners, what more can the Scottish Government do to increase benefit uptake and ensure that our eligible pensioners receive the support that they so desperately need this winter?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The decision on the winter fuel payment originated with the UK Government, so it is imperative that it should undertake a benefit take-up campaign. I have asked the Secretary of State to do so, urgently. Scottish Government officials are working with the DWP and stakeholders to promote pension credit take-up, despite the fact that that benefit is solely reserved.

Our welfare advice services, supported by Scottish Government investment, are also working closely with people who might be entitled to benefits—devolved or reserved—but who have not yet applied. Those efforts include increasing awareness and take-up assistance to support people who are struggling financially. That is why we have committed to investing more than £20 million for the provision of free income maximisation support and welfare and debt advice services in 2024-25.

Minimum Income Guarantee Scheme (Cost)

8. Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how much it estimates it will cost to fund the minimum income guarantee scheme proposed in the "Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group: interim report". (S6O-03708)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The independent minimum income guarantee expert group's interim report set out important principles for its work, and the group is currently undertaking further development to consider costs and delivery. Given that the Scottish Government has not yet received a final report, we are not in a position to make any cost estimates. We remain ambitious in looking at innovative ways to tackle poverty and inequality, so we look forward to receiving the recommendations later this year. I take this opportunity to thank the cross-party strategy group, which includes Miles Briggs, for its continued support of that work.

Craig Hoy: According to the Scottish Government, under a minimum income guarantee, "everyone in Scotland" would have a minimum income regardless of their circumstances. The Institute for Public Policy Research has suggested that that could come at a cost of £7 billion per year. Given that the Scottish Government cannot put lunch on the table for primary 6 and 7 pupils, and is set to rob pensioners of the money to heat their homes, should the minister not now level with the public, and should she not be cautious of the costs and the complexity of any such scheme and focus instead on a growth-based economy with a fair and focused welfare system at its heart?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: What I am aware of is the costs—and the benefits, of which there are

none—of the £1.2 billion that this Government is paying for 14 years of austerity to mitigate some of the UK Government's welfare policies, which have now been adopted by UK Labour. I make no apology for the fact that this Government will continue to look at innovative ways of tackling poverty. Mr Hoy might be happy to leave those people behind, but I am not.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on social justice. There will be a brief pause before the next item of business, to allow front benches to change.

Drugs and Alcohol (National Mission)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a statement by Neil Gray on the national mission to reduce deaths and improve the lives of people impacted by drugs and alcohol. As the cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, there should be no interruptions or interventions.

14:25

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Neil Gray): I would like to update Parliament, following the most recent drug and alcohol death statistics for Scotland, which were published recently by National Records of Scotland. Importantly, I will outline the action that we are taking as part of the national mission to reduce harm and fatalities. Before I do, I hope that all colleagues will join me in wishing Christina McKelvie well in the treatment that she is receiving for cancer in her medical leave of absence. *[Applause.]*

In 2023, tragically, we lost 1,172 lives to drugs and 1,277 lives to alcohol. Every single one of those lives lost is a profound tragedy; behind those stark statistics are children, parents and friends who have left behind families and loved ones grieving unimaginable losses. The NRS statistics show that 2023 was the second-lowest figure in six years for drug deaths. However, the rise of 12 per cent from 2022 is, of course, a heartbreaking disappointment and worry. I offer my sympathies to every person who is affected by the death of a loved one to drugs or alcohol. Those losses are shared by all of us and they serve as a reminder of the work that we still have ahead of us.

Deprivation has a clear influence on the numbers of drug and alcohol deaths, with people in our most deprived areas being 15 times more likely to die from drug misuse than people in the least deprived areas and four and a half times more likely to die from alcohol misuse. That highlights that drug and alcohol dependency is not purely medical. It is deeply rooted in social determinants and structural inequalities.

As in previous years, we continue to see a high level of polydrug use. Opiates continue to be the drug that is most commonly implicated in deaths. However, deaths where cocaine was implicated have increased. The increasing prevalence of cocaine, especially injected cocaine, presents new challenges for our services.

We are also confronting a dangerously and continuously evolving drug landscape, with synthetic drugs increasingly infiltrating the market. Those highly toxic and potent substances elevate the risks of overdose and death, and their rapidly evolving composition makes regulation and enforcement exceedingly challenging. Public Health Scotland has recently issued public health alerts for nitazenes and xylazine through its rapid action drug alerts and response—RADAR—surveillance system. I urge colleagues to share those alerts and sign up to the RADAR reporting system.

It remains essential that we continue the work of our national mission to prevent deaths, reduce harm and improve lives. That unwavering commitment is driven by the belief that change is possible and necessary. It is important to acknowledge the significant progress that has been made through the national mission. Our approach has been ambitious, and we have pushed beyond existing levels of service provision, focusing on harm reduction, improving treatment, supporting our workforce and taking a holistic, person-centred approach.

Widening access to residential rehabilitation for people who use drugs and alcohol is a key part of our national mission. We have made £100 million available from 2021 to 2026 to ensure that 1,000 people receive public funding for their placement each year by 2026. We are on track to meet that target, with 938 publicly funded placements approved in 2023-24.

We have also seen significant advances in harm reduction. Police Scotland is the first force in the United Kingdom to issue naloxone kits to all front-line officers, and it has now administered the life-saving drug more than 450 times. Public Health Scotland estimates that, by the end of 2023, take-home naloxone had been supplied to nearly three quarters of all people in Scotland who are at risk of an opioid overdose. Those are remarkable strides, and we will continue to push for more widespread access.

The opening of Scotland's first safer drug consumption facility, scheduled for next month, is another significant milestone. The evidence-based initiative will provide a safe space for those who are most at risk of overdose and will serve as a model for other areas.

On our 10 medication assisted treatment standards, the progress has been equally encouraging. By July 2024, 90 per cent of MAT standards 1 to 5 were fully implemented, and MAT standards 6 to 10 showed strong early progress, with 91 per cent provisionally green.

Experiential feedback highlights improvements, fewer and shorter delays in accessing treatment,

more choice being offered for opioid substitution therapy and an increased sense of care and support from workers. That reflects the heart of our mission, which is to ensure that people receive the help that they need when they need it.

As we enter the delivery intensification phase of the national mission, we are putting in place a strategic framework to consider how we can carefully and collectively drive delivery and monitor progress. As the MAT standards benchmarking report of July 2024 showed, although we see tremendous progress in standards 1 to 5, we need to accelerate our efforts in areas such as psychosocial care and mental health support, which are critical components of treatment, especially for non-opiate substances.

We are developing a national specification for drug and alcohol care services, which will go further than our previously planned treatment target. That will provide clarity on what treatment and recovery services should look like and will ensure that people have access to high-quality, stigma-free, trauma-informed services.

Additionally, we are stepping up our response to the growing threat of synthetic drugs. Public Health Scotland is expanding its surveillance data to help us to respond more swiftly and to identify any sudden increases in the number of overdoses. We plan to establish public-use drug-checking facilities in Dundee, Glasgow and Aberdeen, and applications for the necessary Home Office licences are currently being processed. Those will be complemented by a national testing laboratory, located in and supported by the University of Dundee, to provide further confirmatory testing of samples.

Further, when it comes to the wider health and social care landscape—the national care service, regulation, inspection and funding—we are looking beyond 2026.

Recovery communities provide essential support, hope and a sense of purpose and belonging. During a recent visit to the Scottish Maritime Museum in West Dunbartonshire, I spoke to individuals who are benefiting from the Skylark IX Recovery Trust project, which is funded through the national mission Corra Foundation funds. Witnessing the dedication of the volunteers and staff, I was reminded of the widespread passion that fuels our efforts. The Skylark IX project is just one of 300 local and grass-roots projects that have been supported since the start of the mission. I thank the people who work on the front line, in the vital national health service, local partnership and third sector organisations, alongside the dozens of mutual aid and recovery communities who provide hope in such challenging circumstances. Their dedication is saving lives.

I turn to our focus on the prevention of alcohol harm. The Scottish Government has taken steps in its world-leading minimum unit pricing policy, with the minimum price increasing to 65p per unit from 30 September. That is intended to ensure that the public health benefits of the policy—the hospitalisations averted and the lives saved—continue and, indeed, increase. In *The Lancet*, international public health experts stated:

“Policy makers can be confident that there are several hundred people with low income in Scotland who would have died as a result of alcohol, who are alive today as a result of minimum unit pricing.”

However, we know that we need to do more to reduce harm. The earlier consultation on potential restrictions on alcohol advertising and marketing, which closed in 2023, made it clear that there is a wide range of views. I know that our doctors and nurses, who see harm to health from alcohol misuse every day, want action to be taken on alcohol marketing. I have also listened to business and industry concerns. I take all those concerns seriously. We remain committed to progressing that work to ensure that it will have the greatest impact, particularly on children and young people who are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, while striking the right balance when it comes to potential effects on business and industry. We need a route to achieve that.

It is clear that steps to reduce alcohol harm are vital to supporting good public health and to reducing alcohol-specific deaths. It is therefore vital that we are clear on the evidence that proposals would be effective, that action to reduce alcohol harm supports good public health and would reduce alcohol-specific deaths, and that the decisions that we take are led by evidence, balanced with the potential impact on the wider economy. Therefore, I will commission Public Health Scotland to carry out a review of the evidence on the range of options to reduce exposure to alcohol marketing in order to help us in that aim.

That work is for the future. We are also taking action right now by ensuring that people with problematic alcohol use continue to receive the same quality of care as those with problematic drug use. I can therefore confirm that the forthcoming alcohol treatment guidelines will also provide support for alcohol treatment, similar to the medication assisted treatment standards for drugs. In addition, the publication of Public Health Scotland’s review of how alcohol brief interventions are delivered is imminent, and we will incorporate its recommendations into our national treatment specification for drug and alcohol treatment.

We also continue to support innovative pilots, such as the managed alcohol programme and the

primary care alcohol nurse outreach service, which has recently been embedded into mainstream services in the Glasgow city alcohol and drug partnership.

We continue to strive to prevent deaths, reduce harm and improve lives, and we do that at a time of unprecedented and significant financial challenge. This Government has consistently warned of the challenge ahead with regard to our public finances, but we will continue to support people in services where they need it most. That is why, this year, the Government has made more than £150 million available to continue the progress that we have made as a result of the national mission. Three quarters of that funding is delivered through local alcohol and drug partnerships, which play a central role in delivery and responding to local need.

It is essential that we continue to address the stark inequalities that exist in drug deaths, particularly in our most deprived areas. We must focus on prevention through education. We must also target the structural and social determinants of health. That will require increased collaboration across Government departments and statutory and third sector partners.

It is clear that no single service can tackle the issue alone. No single intervention is or will be enough. Only by working together to deliver a range of harm reduction support opportunities can we create a Scotland where everyone has the support that they need. We must pull together, harness the incredible work that has already been done and drive forward with a shared sense of purpose.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for that, after which we will need to move on to the next item of business. I encourage members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons if they have not already done so.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing early sight of his statement. I, too, wish Christina McKelvie well and wish her a speedy recovery.

This week’s harrowing statistics expose the total failure of the Scottish National Party to tackle this health crisis. It claims that significant progress has been made through its national mission, yet this week we learned that 1,172 people died from drug misuse in 2023, which represents an increase of 12 per cent on the previous year. In addition, this week’s provisional data revealed that there have already been 589 suspected drug deaths in the first six months of 2024. As that represents a 2 per cent drop from the same period in 2023, some

might mistakenly claim that a corner has been turned, but the figure is up 5 per cent on 2022. Nothing is changing.

The SNP came to power more than 17 years ago and, in that time, more than 33,000 Scots have lost their lives to drug or alcohol-related illnesses. That is a damning indictment of the SNP's continued mismanagement. SNP politicians should hang their heads in shame, but, instead, they carry on, determined to prioritise decriminalisation and harm reduction over recovery. That is the wrong message. Where is the focus on recovery and rehabilitation? The SNP has no idea what it is doing. The University of Strathclyde's Scottish health equity research unit confirms that there is a "critical gap" between the SNP's understanding of inequalities—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I need a question, Ms Webber.

Sue Webber: —and what works to tackle them. It is clear that the SNP's strategies lack a rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness.

Does the cabinet secretary really believe that the right level of response to learning that alcohol deaths are at their highest level for 15 years is to commission a review into adverts?

Neil Gray: I thank Sue Webber for her contribution. I do not in any way shirk the responsibility that we have for the harrowing figures that are before us, and I absolutely do not deny the scale of the challenge that is before us. That is why I do not believe that any single intervention or single area of response is appropriate. We need to have a range of responses available to us, which is why we have been increasing the opportunity for support to be provided for recovery as well as for harm reduction. We can see from the statistics that are available from Police Scotland and alcohol and drug partnerships that the likes of naloxone have saved hundreds of lives.

Therefore, rather than focusing on one area at the expense of another, we must ensure that we take a range of approaches, including on alcohol advertising. We know that we cannot continue in the way that we are going. We need to see improvement in our relationships with drugs and with alcohol.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I echo the best wishes that have been expressed to Christina McKelvie for successful treatment.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's visit to the Skylark IX Recovery Trust, as it does great work in my constituency. However, last year's figure of 1,277 alcohol deaths is the highest number in the past 15 years, and it is a tragedy for each of the families affected. It is clear that what we are doing

currently, for both drugs and alcohol, is not yet working. There is a suggestion that the Government's priority is tackling drugs, and that that is eclipsing the efforts and resources that are needed to tackle alcohol problems.

Those of us with long memories will recall the SNP's cuts to alcohol and drug treatment services. Some £46 million was sliced out of the budget before the national mission was in place, and now we learn that there has been a 40 per cent decline in the number of people being referred to structured alcohol services.

Will the cabinet secretary separate the alcohol and drugs funding streams so that there is transparency? If he is looking to raise revenue, what consideration has been given to a targeted levy to claw back the money that supermarkets will make from the increased revenue from minimum unit pricing for alcohol?

Neil Gray: First, I once again pay tribute to the incredible work that is being delivered through Skylark IX and by a range of community and grass-roots organisations across Scotland. Although it was incredibly harrowing to hear the stories of families who have been impacted by losing family members through problematic drug use and drug dependency, it filled me with great hope that the family members in particular focused on the impact that has been made in reducing stigma over recent years, and the impact that the national mission has had on people, with both those with drug dependency and their families feeling that there are services and support for them. I put on the record my thanks to them for that incredible work.

On the investments that we are making into alcohol and drug partnerships, I hope that Jackie Baillie can take from the statement that I have just made that tackling alcohol and drugs is both a shared endeavour and an area of shared priority; it is not one over the other. Furthermore, I hope that the work that we are seeking to do on alcohol services is clear from my statement.

Jackie Baillie will know that consideration has been given to whether a levy should be administered as a result of the increase in minimum unit pricing, and we will give further updates on that in due course.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As members might expect, there is a lot of interest in the issue. Therefore, we will have to have brief questions and brief responses wherever possible.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): There is absolutely no escaping the deep complexities that are associated with tackling drug and alcohol harm. I know that the cabinet secretary agrees that the

commitment of those working in the sphere cannot be overstated.

In his statement, the cabinet secretary made reference to the workforce. Through my engagement with local ADP services, I am aware that concerns exist about workforce planning, specifically in relation to the option of a national qualification and a national training plan. Will the cabinet secretary provide an update on the work that is being done to address those concerns, thereby ensuring that we develop a highly skilled workforce and secure improved retention?

Neil Gray: I thank Audrey Nicoll for her question and for the engagement that she has had with her local ADP services in the north-east. The Scottish Government's drug and alcohol workforce action plan sets out the actions that we are taking to support improved workforce planning and to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge that are required to deliver services.

Specifically, the plan commits us to developing a learning pathway to communicate and signpost available training opportunities to the entire drug and alcohol workforce; to facilitate the development of competencies for workers who support people who use drugs and alcohol; to identify training opportunities; and to provide support for the development of continuous career development opportunities.

Across Scotland, training providers provide high-quality education to learners at all levels in support of that. We will continue to fund national health service boards to support their work in that endeavour, too.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I have to say that that was a very underwhelming statement on such a crucial issue. Sadly, it follows earlier statements that we have heard from the health team. Asked 10 times whether his Government had failed people who are suffering from drug abuse, the cabinet secretary refused to answer.

Just this week, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health called the level of alcohol deaths "disappointing". They are not "disappointing"; they are tragic, appalling—and avoidable, with the right policies.

The cabinet secretary will know that my member's bill, the Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill, has been published and is in the public domain. Is there anything in that bill that he cannot support? If not, will he tell us today that SNP members will support the bill?

Neil Gray: On Douglas Ross's point about the stark figures that are before us, I said in my statement that I accept that those are unacceptable and tragic. I echo his words in that

regard. There is no hiding from the fact that that is an appalling set of statistics—of course it is. That is why the Government has committed to engaging with Mr Ross on the measures in his bill.

I do not believe that there is a single answer to the questions that are before us; we need to make progress in a multitude of areas. Mr Ross, the First Minister and I have a meeting coming up in order to discuss his bill. We will seek to progress further interventions on both the harm reduction and recovery aspects that I described in my statement. I believe that there is hope and that we will see a difference being made through working together in the way that Mr Ross suggests.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests in that I am chair of Moving On Inverclyde, which is a recovery service in my local area.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that Inverclyde has the third-highest level of drug deaths and the highest level of alcohol deaths in Scotland. Recently, I hosted a round-table meeting of third sector and public sector organisations to enable them to share information and understand the issues that my community faces. What consideration will the cabinet secretary give to ensuring that Inverclyde is classed as a priority area for funding and for creating new initiatives to support local organisations in saving the lives of people in my community?

Neil Gray: I thank Mr McMillan for all his work to help local partners in Inverclyde to rise to the challenges that people face there. I received incredibly good feedback from Alison Byrne about the round-table meeting that he organised. Although we recognise the innovative approach that is being taken, and the commitment that delivery partners in the area share, we also note the particular needs of people in Inverclyde. With those in mind, we are keen to ensure that all possible support is available to partners in that area, and that will be a major consideration in future planning.

We need to ensure that support is available to people in all parts of Scotland. However, I point out that the distribution of national mission funding, adjusted through the NHS Scotland resource allocation committee—NRAC—formula, takes account of levels of deprivation and specific need.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): The first overdose prevention centre in Scotland opened four years ago yesterday. Staffed by volunteers, it supervised around 1,000 injections and saved eight lives. Now, four years later, the state has finally caught up with the challenges that drug and

alcohol issues present, but hundreds of people have died unnecessarily in the interim period.

I welcome the opening of the new OPC in Glasgow next month, but can the cabinet secretary assure members that it will not simply involve a box-ticking exercise? Will the centre be progressed to 24-hour operation and full integration with the routes to rehabilitation and other support services that are so critical to people's recovery?

The first person who came to the OPC four years ago said, "I am sorry—I am not used to people treating me so nicely." The core principles of our approach must be to ensure human dignity and to support people to access the pathways that they need if they are to survive.

Neil Gray: I absolutely agree with Paul Sweeney. I pay tribute to the work that he has done in that area, along with other members, and to Peter Krykant, who led so much of the campaigning for the centre to take shape. Mr Sweeney is right to say that our approach should be to provide person-centred dignified support for people who have often experienced lifetimes of trauma and stigma. We must treat them with dignity and respect, in a way that reduces harm, saves lives and helps them on the path to recovery. I absolutely take on board Mr Sweeney's questions about how we might further embed and expand such an approach. I will respond to him on those matters in due course.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): In our constituencies across Scotland, we are all aware of the countless unsung heroes and organisations that do so much to support people whose lives have been impacted by drugs and alcohol. Groups such as Men Matter Scotland in Drumchapel support 500 men per week on a variety of issues. Will the cabinet secretary join me in recognising and thanking those unsung heroes for their invaluable work? What support is the Scottish Government providing to such groups, in particular at this time of budget constraint?

Neil Gray: I echo Bill Kidd's thanks to the Men Matter support network in Drumchapel. I firmly believe that the progress that we have made on the national mission would not have been possible without the work of our front-line workers and volunteers in statutory services, third sector organisations and grass-roots projects such as Men Matter. Their dedication provides hope in the darkest of times, and I thank them for their tireless efforts.

Through the national mission Corra funds, we have distributed £13 million of funding this year to more than 300 projects across Scotland. The organisations that are delivering the projects are diverse—they range from small community groups

to public sector bodies that, together, have supported nearly 34,000 people this year. As I said, I have had the privilege of attending one of those projects—Skylark—to see the positive impact that it has made on the lives of people with drug and alcohol dependency, their families and their local communities.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I extend my condolences and deepest sympathies to every person who has been affected by these tragic deaths. Year after year, the figures offer a grim picture of the situation. Although I recognise the efforts that the cabinet secretary outlined to prevent deaths, they are clearly not enough.

Alcohol harm in Scotland is a public health emergency and a human rights issue. The cabinet secretary referenced the earlier consultation on restrictions on alcohol advertising and marketing, but no legislation was confirmed in last week's programme for government. Many advocates criticised the lack of progress on that issue. Will the cabinet secretary confirm whether the Scottish Government is committed to introducing those measures in this parliamentary session? If not, what actions are being taken in that area?

Neil Gray: I recognise Maggie Chapman's interest and her long-standing work on advocating on this front. I set out in the statement the work that I will be commissioning Public Health Scotland to do to review the evidence—as we have seen through minimum unit pricing, it is important to lead such work on an evidential basis. Depending on what we see in the report that comes back from Public Health Scotland on that evidence, we will consult on what more steps we can take to reduce the impact of alcohol advertising and marketing. Our response has to be proportionate and based on evidence, and we are taking those steps to ensure that that is the case.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am grateful to the Government for acquiescing to Liberal Democrat members' requests for the statement this afternoon. I have been in Parliament for eight years and, in that time, the news on this topic has never been good; it is always getting worse—occasionally, it gets less bad, but here we are again.

As we heard, next month, the new overdose prevention centre will finally become operational, and the UK Home Office has signalled that it may be willing to look at our evidence and roll out the approach across the UK. However, we cannot wait for the end of that pilot to start the preparatory work on rolling out those centres, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, will the cabinet secretary say how swiftly following the conclusion of that pilot we can roll out those centres across the country?

Neil Gray: I recognise Mr Cole-Hamilton's points and the efforts that he has made. The pilot's value is obvious in terms of gathering the evidence, but we should not be looking at that in isolation, given the other work that is being done, which I hope will make a major difference.

The testing centres that we hope to see in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow are potentially game changing, because of the new challenge that we are facing in relation to synthetic opioids and other substances that are coming into the market, such as nitazines and xylazine. Those substances pose a dangerous threat, as people literally do not know what they are taking or the quantities to take, so there is a huge risk of overdose. Alongside the safe consumption room pilot, those drug testing facilities have an opportunity to enhance the harm reduction that we want to see.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary spoke about alcohol and drug partnerships. Will he confirm that the Scottish Government has positive relationships with ADPs across the country, particularly in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders, and say how their crucial work will continue to be supported and encouraged?

Neil Gray: Yes. There is a programme of regular engagement between Scottish Government officials and ADP co-ordinators that is in place to ensure vital regular information exchange and collaboration on policy development at the working level. Our partners in Public Health Scotland work closely with us to actively support local areas in their MAT implementation effort and, although she is currently undertaking leave, the Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy is scheduled to meet local leaders across all localities to discuss progress on and improvement of partnership working and service delivery.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I draw members' attention to my declaration of interests, as I am a practising NHS general practitioner.

Really, there is nothing new in the statement. It is simply a rehash of previous decisions that have clearly failed the people of Scotland, failed families and failed the record number of people who died due to alcohol and drugs this year.

The facts are that alcohol treatment regimes work, and the SNP's flagship MUP magic bullet has not been enough to stop alcohol deaths spiralling to a record 15-year high. Will the cabinet secretary increase funding to treatment centres? Will he take the opportunity to offer a genuine apology to the families of those who died—unlike Jenni Minto, in her pathetic and woefully inadequate response in her STV interview yesterday?

Neil Gray: I thank Sandesh Gulhane for his question, although I do not think that personalising it in that way is helpful in addressing the very serious issue that is before us. The evidence is clear that minimum unit pricing has saved lives. The evaluation that was carried out by Public Health Scotland, which has been reviewed by the UK Statistics Authority and peer reviewed through *The Lancet*, has estimated that there has been a 13 per cent reduction in deaths as a result of minimum unit pricing. There is a particular impact in areas of higher deprivation, with the statistics clearly demonstrating the direct correlation between deprivation and alcohol and drug dependency.

As I have stated—I agree with Sandesh Gulhane on this point—no one measure or intervention is going to be enough; we need a range. I will therefore continue to engage with him and his colleagues on further areas that we can explore in order to reduce harm, save lives and get people on the path to recovery.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A number of members still want to ask questions, and I want to get them all in, so questions will need to be brief, with answers as brief as possible.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): Just like their relatives, the families of people who are affected by substance use experience stigma and isolation. They are often the first responders to their loved ones' crises. The rights of those family members must be protected and upheld, and they should be empowered to advocate for themselves and their loved ones. Will the cabinet secretary outline how the Scottish Government and its partners are funding support and working to ensure that it is available and accessible everywhere in Scotland?

Neil Gray: Collette Stevenson is absolutely right. I have set out in response to other colleagues the first-person testimony that I have received from families about the reduction of stigma that has taken place and the greater awareness of services being available to those with alcohol or drug dependency and their families. Our families framework sets out how we will improve holistic support for families affected by drugs and alcohol, by taking a whole-family approach and ensuring that families receive support that is free from stigma and is trauma informed. The framework states that families should be involved in the development and delivery of services used by them and their loved ones, at both local and national levels.

We are working with local areas to implement family-inclusive practice across alcohol and drug services. That framework is supported by investment totalling £6.5 million a year over the parliamentary session and by providing ADPs with

an additional £3.5 million per year over the session to help implement the framework locally.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I declare an interest as I led the team that produced the data that underpinned the work of the Dundee drugs commission in 2019.

I am afraid that the Government's account of progress on MAT standards does not tally with the experience of service reform on the ground in many parts of the country. For example, some of the most basic recommendations of the Dundee drugs commission from as far back as 2019 are yet to be fulfilled. Can the cabinet secretary tell me today when Constitution house in Dundee will be closed? If he cannot, will he endeavour to find out when that will happen? Is the cabinet secretary confident that MAT standards are now being delivered to such a high extent? Has their efficacy in dealing with the problem not been called into question?

Neil Gray: I have pointed out a number of times that no one single intervention will make a difference. In my statement, I set out the progress that has been demonstrated on the implementation of MAT standards, and I would be more than happy to meet Mr Marra to discuss the experience that he is narrating from his region. I believe that the progress that has been made is important and demonstrable, but I would be more than happy to meet him to discuss the issues that he raises.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): What evidence will be available to the review that Public Health Scotland will undertake that was not made available to the previous review into alcohol marketing? Will the cabinet secretary be commissioning a new consultation? If so, what role will the alcohol industry play in that process?

Neil Gray: The review that I will be commissioning Public Health Scotland to do will consider all the evidence that is available, both domestically and internationally, on the impact that alcohol advertising and marketing make. On the basis of the recommendations that come through the review and the evidence that is there, we will consult on any pragmatic and evidence-based measures that Public Health Scotland recommends would make a difference in reducing alcohol harm.

I will continue to have conversations with businesses about the economic impact, to make sure that that is proportionate, based on the evidence that is available, and I will seek to work with them so that they lead on areas where they can help us to reduce alcohol harm. There is important work to do here to make sure that we reduce harm, save lives and see people into recovery.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the statement. Before we move to the next item of business, there will be a brief pause to allow those on the front benches to change seats.

Programme for Government (Growing Scotland's Green Economy)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-14431, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland's green economy. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

15:01

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic (Kate Forbes): I know that the whole Parliament is united in expressing its disappointment at Petroineos's decision to cease refining at Grangemouth in 2025. It is deeply regrettable that, despite the collaborative efforts of the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments over two Administrations, Petroineos has chosen that course of action.

Our first thoughts are, of course, with the workers. That is why we have immediately announced a package of measures to support Grangemouth and the wider local geography, with a targeted skills intervention for impacted workers, an enhanced Falkirk and Grangemouth growth deal, and support for project willow, which is Petroineos's cross-site study to examine future low-carbon options for the site.

Today's news also highlights the urgency of the just transition, which is why the publication of our "Green Industrial Strategy" is so timely. It is now even more important that we seize the opportunities of a net zero economy. The green industrial strategy has a clear and powerful mission:

"to ensure that Scotland realises the maximum possible economic benefit from the opportunities created by the global transition to net zero."

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Before the Deputy First Minister moves on from our industrial past, would she care to comment on the situation at Liberty Steel? I hear some very concerning reports about the future of that plant. Has the Deputy First Minister had discussions with Liberty Steel? If so, what were the outcomes?

Kate Forbes: We are engaging on the basis of all of Scotland's key industrial sites and key assets. We know that there are challenges across the economy. Our commitment to the workers at that site and indeed other sites that are key to the just transition remains, and that engagement is ongoing.

We want to make certain that the growth of the world's net zero economy means good, well-paid jobs here in Scotland—jobs for today and jobs for future generations. That is not inevitable; it will not happen by accident. As I said, seizing the opportunities requires decisive action, and the green industrial strategy is decisive. It focuses on securing investment across Scotland in the critical national infrastructure that our new economy demands and in the ports, harbours and highly productive businesses that find their place in globally competitive supply chains.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The Deputy First Minister talks about good, well-paid jobs in Scotland. She may be aware of today's announcement by Alexander Dennis that it could be shedding about 160 jobs. It is blaming the Scottish bus fund, which has funded more vehicles being produced in China than anywhere else—or certainly than in Scotland. Will she say something about that serious issue?

Kate Forbes: That is an extremely important issue and it has received the attention of the First Minister as well as the Cabinet Secretary for Transport. We must find ways of supporting businesses, while operating within subsidy control measures. There is no doubt about the significant importance of Alexander Dennis.

I will get back to the subject at hand. We have choices to make now that will shape the future. In our green industrial strategy, we choose to make Scotland more prosperous for the next generation of Scots. We have chosen prosperity with a purpose—prosperity that is a vehicle to improve public services and a just transition to net zero that has fair work at its heart and leaves no one behind.

The green industrial strategy is not the start of the journey: we have solid foundations on which to build. Since 2007, Scottish gross domestic product growth per head has been higher and our productivity growth has been more than double that of the United Kingdom. Our unemployment has been at near record lows for the past eight years. Although those feats are impressive, we are tethered to a UK economy that has stagnated. Most parties agree with that.

Even if we do not have the full economic powers that independence would bring, there is still much that we can, and will, do to help Scotland to prosper. We face many challenges, from the pressures on our public finances, to the hurdles that we face to reach net zero by 2045. Those challenges are not insurmountable. The message is that they offer enormous opportunity. If we can create the conditions for long-term economic growth, the next generation of Scots will benefit.

That is what our programme for government did last week. It identified the actions that we are taking to create an environment that enables development, investment and job creation. Investment now is critical if we are to transform and grow our economy. We are seeing evidence of that already. Last year, the Japanese company Sumitomo confirmed its decision to build a £350 million high-voltage-cable manufacturing plant at Nigg. It is estimated that the plant will create around 330 jobs and bring £350 million of inward investment into Scotland. The company could have gone anywhere, but it chose to come to Scotland and the Highlands. That is just one of many projects that have made Scotland the top-performing region outside London for attracting inward investment for the ninth year in a row.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I appreciate the Deputy First Minister giving way. Industry members have said to me that a very large anchor contract with, for example, the Berwick Bank wind farm would provide a ballast within the supply chain and allow its development over a period of years. We know that there have been significant delays in sanctioning Berwick Bank. Could the Deputy First Minister give us any update as to when that might happen so that we can try to unlock the economic potential?

Kate Forbes: The member is experienced enough to know that that is a live application, so I will not comment on it, but I will comment on the principle. It is absolutely right that we want to build clusters where there is an activity that attracts more businesses to locate and invest in Scotland.

That is what we are seeing near the Port of Cromarty Firth. On top of the £300 million of investment by the Quantum Capital Group, there is a further £100 million of joint investment by the Scottish National Investment Bank and the UK Infrastructure Bank to put the Ardersier port at the forefront of Scotland's energy transition and offshore wind capability. We hope that that will inevitably create more activity in the area.

Just today, the Scottish National Investment Bank has announced a £20 million investment in ZeroAvia to bolster the aerospace supply chain and kick-start the market for hydrogen electric engines in Scotland. That is hugely exciting stuff.

I make it clear to the chamber and to those who are listening that Scotland is open for investment and that we are open for business. We want to work with industry to capitalise on the opportunities that are in front of us and, where we agree on the way forward, to work constructively with the UK Government and its institutions, too.

Businesses across the country have told me of the importance of speeding up our planning processes to unlock investment. That is why we

have created a new planning hub to make quicker decisions on renewables and housing developments, and launched a planning apprenticeship programme to build a pipeline of skilled future planners. The planning hub will be based in the Improvement Service and will provide direct and immediate support to planning authorities. In this first year, it will focus on practical action to improve consenting for hydrogen developments, increasing capacity in the system and giving investors confidence. We are also bolstering our resourcing across planning and consenting teams to improve engagement and introduce better guidance, and, ultimately, to increase the pace at which we determine applications.

We are creating a business environment in which Scottish entrepreneurs and innovators have the support that they require to take risks, to start up, and to diversify and expand. That includes maximising the impact of the Techscaler network, which already stands at more than 700 businesses, raising more than £70 million across them all since they joined the programme.

We must not forget that Scotland's greatest asset is, ultimately, our people. We know that the transition to net zero will continue to create demand for new skills, while our current businesses require a skilled workforce. That is why we are ensuring that workers in carbon-intensive industries can access the skills development that they need to seize new opportunities in growth sectors, and why we are supporting a range of initiatives through the just transition fund, such as the energy transition skills hub.

We are also undertaking a significant reform of the skills and education system, a core aim of which is to make it more agile and more responsive to the skills requirements of Scotland's economy. We are taking the lead on national skills planning and strengthening regional skills planning approaches. We are empowering people to join the workforce, taking important action to support women's participation in the economy—for example, through policies on funded early learning and childcare—alongside tackling workplace inequalities through the fair work first approach in public sector funding. We have prioritised the actions that will deliver the underlying conditions to enable our economy to thrive and deliver in the net zero future that we all want to see.

That also requires us to make substantial investment. The Scottish Government has limited borrowing powers for capital investment, and the strategy does not seek to compete with the scale of public investment, spending and subsidies attached to recent industrial strategies in the US or China or to the European green deal. We need a

UK Government that recognises and keeps pace with the level of capital investment that is required for net zero. Labour, I believe, once pledged that it would invest an additional £28 billion a year, recognising the importance of that capital investment.

Our strategy applies focus and sets a clear direction. It prioritises opportunity areas where Scotland has existing strengths and where those strengths are most likely to lead to growth, including our exports. We want to target those opportunities that have the potential to reach significant scale in terms of value, and create high-quality jobs and the capacity to unlock and enable other industries' markets and opportunities, with growth at home and abroad.

That strategy prioritises five key opportunity areas: wind; carbon capture, utilisation and storage; professional and financial services; hydrogen; and clean industries. Offshore wind is the single most important, and immediate, opportunity.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): On carbon capture, utilisation and storage, the Scottish Government announced £80 million of funding more than two years ago. We have had clarification that £2 million is going to be coming imminently. Is there a timescale for when the £80 million will be spent?

Kate Forbes: When it is required. The member will know that we have been waiting for quite a long time on CCUS, and I am sure that he has an interest in seeing that work progress as quickly as possible.

We are one of the best-placed nations in Europe to deploy CCUS, given our unrivalled access to vast CO₂ storage potential in the North Sea, but we urgently need the UK Government to make a final decision about the Acorn project; that is this Government's focus.

As I draw my comments to a close, I note that, in each of those five priority areas, we have the infrastructure, the talent and skills, and the enormous potential that we need. I appreciate that there will be slight differences of opinion across the chamber, which no doubt we will hear during the debate this afternoon. Nevertheless, the point still stands: we have unprecedented opportunity in front of us if we choose to take it.

The Scottish Government cannot deliver all of the benefits of net zero on its own—it will require hard work. In “Green Industrial Strategy”, we have been clear about where we will focus our efforts and attention, and we hold out the hand of welcome to any investor, developer, business or workforce that wants to work with us in order to unlock the potential of those sectors and deliver prosperity to Scotland—prosperity with a purpose

that will lead to resilient public services, tackle child poverty and enable us to meet our net zero targets.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the actions outlined in the Programme for Government 2024-25 to grow the economy, eradicate child poverty, invest in Scotland's public services, and tackle the climate and nature emergencies; welcomes the publication of the Green Industrial Strategy to ensure that Scotland and its communities benefit economically from the global transition to net zero, including the creation of good, well-paid jobs; acknowledges the need to translate Scotland's strengths into competitive advantages in the global race; agrees that actions to promote investment, attract and develop a skilled workforce, support fair work and encourage innovation are essential for transforming Scotland's economy, and recognises that, by laying out concrete actions to accelerate the transition to net zero and position the green economy for long-term success, the Green Industrial Strategy will help build internationally competitive clusters in sectors such as onshore and offshore wind, carbon capture and storage, and green professional services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Douglas Lumsden to speak to and move amendment S6M-14431.2.

15:15

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I will start by sharing our concerns about the announcement on Grangemouth today; our thoughts are with all the workers and families that we have relied on for decades to keep the lights on and keep the country moving.

Today's debate was supposed to be about the programme for government and growing Scotland's green economy. It was supposed to be an opportunity to focus on what the Scottish Government has achieved—or not achieved—over the past 17 years and what it plans to do to fix its mistakes over the next 18 months. Instead, we have a strategy document that was published yesterday, which focuses on a narrow part of our net zero ambition and misses out a huge tranche of policy work that the Parliament should be discussing.

We should be discussing the fact that the devolved Scottish National Party Government has missed eight of its 12 net zero targets, and the fact that funding has been cut in key areas that would help us to achieve our net zero targets. Those key areas of policy impact every one of us and our constituents. The transport, net zero and just transition budget was cut by £29.3 million; the rail services budget was cut by £80 million; the just transition fund was cut by three quarters; and support for sustainable travel was cut by 60 per cent.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): While Mr Lumsden is engaged in

this period of reflection, does he want to touch on the fact that the UK Government subsidy change, from renewables obligation certificates—ROCs—to contracts for difference, happened at a key time for onshore wind, and that the UK Government could have helped the onshore wind industry to be even further ahead than it is now?

Douglas Lumsden: I am sure that mistakes were made in the past as growing industries came forward and that all Governments could look back and want to change how things were done.

The future transport fund has been cut by 60 per cent; the green economy budget has been cut completely; the energy efficiency and decarbonisation budget has been cut by £9.3 million; and the energy transition budget has been cut by £33 million. I can see why the cabinet secretary would rather not talk about that today.

Kate Forbes: I appreciate that Douglas Lumsden and his colleagues will probably have to go through excessive negativity about Scotland's economy, but can he rise to the opportunity that is presented by our transition to net zero and reflect on the fact that, since this is the ninth year in a row that we have attracted the most inward investment outside London, inward investors must see something in Scotland that he does not?

Douglas Lumsden: Of course there are opportunities, and I will come to them, but we need to ensure that we make the transition in the correct way. I have concerns about the impact of transition on some communities, and I will address them as I go forward.

Yesterday, we saw the new strategy, although it would have been helpful if it had been available more than 24 hours before the debate. That would have given us more time to digest it and go through it, so that we could have had a better debate than we might have today.

The strategy makes zero mention of our biggest energy industry—oil and gas—and that cements the industry's concern that the Government is offering a cliff edge in terms of transition. There is no just transition to green energy without the inclusion of our oil and gas sector. While we continue to need oil and gas, we must work with the industry to produce it on these shores with high standards, lower transportation impact and costs, and support for our local industries, businesses and communities.

The strategy is a slap in the face to those industries, and the exclusion of our largest energy industry is simply a disgrace. The oil and gas sector is working tirelessly to move towards net zero and is investing billions in technology and research to achieve those goals. It is committed to developing new industries, some of which are mentioned in the paper, but it recognises that,

while we need oil and gas, it is best produced on these shores.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): On a matter of pure fact, the member talked about the investment that the oil and gas industry is making tirelessly in the transition. Does he not acknowledge the fact that the oil and gas majors globally are still putting vastly more investment into more fossil fuel extraction than they are into renewables? They have been described by the United Nations as making, at best, a marginal contribution to global investment in renewables.

Douglas Lumsden: Once again, Patrick Harvie seems to ignore the fact that much of the investment in renewables is coming from profits from oil and gas. If we switch off the oil and gas industry, those profits will not be generated and we will not have the transition that we all want. He has his head in the sand once again over this.

I do not know who the Scottish Government thinks will invest in new energy technology in the future. It is not going to be the chocolate industry; it is going to be the oil and gas industry. We need it to invest, and I am sure that the Government agrees with that.

Some 93,000 jobs rely on the oil and gas sector. It is the biggest provider of energy in Scotland and one of our biggest industries, but it was not mentioned in the strategy document. That is utterly shameful of this Government, which is intent on taking the industry off a cliff edge by failing to listen to its concerns, focusing on the central belt and ignoring the needs of the north-east.

In reading the strategy, one thing that struck me was the reliance on working with local government. I would be interested to hear from the cabinet secretary what discussions have been held with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the development of the strategy, particularly around the proposed changes to the planning system and the delivery of local development plans—a key area of work for our local authority colleagues.

The strategy states that land will be identified for affordable housing, but there is no detail about what that will mean for local authorities. Perhaps that can be covered in the cabinet secretary's closing remarks.

Kate Forbes: My intervention is in good faith. A lot of those actions have come out of engagement with local government. For example, when it comes to the planning hub or the masterplan consent areas, a lot of the ideas originated in the debates and discussions between the Scottish Government and local government. I hope that that gives the member some comfort, although I probably need to do some follow-up work by

talking to local government post publication of the strategy.

Douglas Lumsden: I thank the Deputy First Minister; that is very helpful.

There is much in the strategy, but I feel that it is lacking in detail and targets, and it misses so much. We would like to know when we are likely to see the energy strategy and just transition plan, the national marine plan and details on the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024, which is framework legislation with little detail. We also want to know when carbon budgets will be produced and when electric vehicle charging points will be rolled out.

I would also like to have more detail on hydrogen. I hope that Grangemouth will play a huge part in our hydrogen strategy going forward, especially after the news today. I would like to hear more about what we will do with the hydrogen when it is produced and how we will do it. I often get frustrated to hear that we can export hydrogen to other countries, because I think that we should be a bit more ambitious than that. Instead of exporting it to other countries for them to produce goods—

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

Douglas Lumsden: Of course.

Kevin Stewart: I agree with Mr Lumsden that hydrogen should not be only for export, but one of the things that was holding back hydrogen production was the inability of the previous UK Government to deal with storage and transportation regulations on hydrogen. I hope that the new Labour Government will do something differently from the Tories. Does he agree with me?

Douglas Lumsden: Any way that we can improve the market for hydrogen would be a good thing.

To go back to my point, if we are producing hydrogen, let us use it in this country to make things ourselves that can then be exported, and not just export the hydrogen itself. As for carbon capture, use and storage—about which I made an intervention earlier—I would have liked to see more detail on that. The Scottish National Party Government announced £80 million to support the Scottish cluster more than two years ago, but very little has been spent. I am a bit disappointed about the lack of detail on that in the strategy.

To deliver an industrial strategy, we need to make sure that we have the correct infrastructure in place around Scotland. When will roads such as the A9 and A96 be dualled? Those are key projects for the north-east but they are lacking any timetable, detail or budgetary considerations.

Yesterday, we debated ScotRail and the importance of rail as key to meeting our net zero targets when it comes to transport. Yet, the devolved SNP Government is doing everything that it can to push people off the trains and make them increasingly reliant on cars.

The Scottish Conservatives continue to be the only voice in the Parliament sticking up for the oil and gas sector, appreciating its vital place in our move to net zero and green energy. We are committed to prioritising energy security through a balanced mix of energy sources that will ensure our energy security for decades to come. We want to see more people on our trains—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Lumsden, I appreciate that you have been extremely generous in taking so many interventions, but you need to bring your remarks to a close and move your amendment.

Douglas Lumsden: I will come to a close soon.

We support the development of renewable technologies to build Scotland as a powerhouse of renewable energies, but we want to do that in a way that takes communities with us and we are against the mass industrialisation of the north-east. We will take a close look at what changes will come on the planning side, and we back nuclear energy.

I move amendment S6M-14431.2, to leave out from first “recognises” to end and insert:

“is disappointed with the actions outlined in the Programme for Government 2024-25, as they fail to set out an ambitious plan to grow Scotland’s green economy and tackle the climate and nature emergencies; notes with disappointment the short time available to MSPs, industry experts and vital stakeholders to scrutinise the Green Industrial Strategy, which undermines the Scottish Parliament’s ability to hold the Scottish Government to account; expresses dissatisfaction with the Scottish Government in its failure to publish the delayed Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan and its continued opposition to vital oil and gas extraction; condemns the UK Labour administration’s windfall tax, which risks 35,000 jobs and reduces the economic value of the oil and gas sector by £13 billion, and calls on the Scottish Government to deliver a jobs first transition and support the Energy Transition Zone in Aberdeen.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Sarah Boyack to speak to and move amendment S6M-14431.3.

15:25

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I welcome the publication of the green industrial strategy, but I would have welcomed it more enthusiastically if it had arrived sooner so that I and other colleagues—never mind stakeholders—would have been able to properly scrutinise the report before today’s debate. It is worth reminding

ministers that it was first announced in the programme for government in 2021, so we have been waiting a long time.

The points made by Douglas Lumsden, with whom I do not always agree, were very accurate about the raft of cuts being made by the SNP Government, delaying the progress that we urgently need, on things such as the climate change adaptation programme, the energy strategy, the solar ambition for Scotland and the sectoral just transition plans. We need a joined-up approach if we are going to deliver on climate change and deliver the thousands of jobs that we urgently require. Had the strategy come out earlier, we could have got to work, but instead we are lagging behind and losing out on skills and resources, while the Scottish Government dithers and delays. If we look at what is in green industrial strategy, it still feels like a rushed job, even though it has been hanging around for three years.

The Deputy First Minister mentioned the importance of a strategy for ensuring that our education and skills system is responsive to green economic priorities, but we still do not have that. Most of the plans outlined in the climate emergency skills action plan have never come to be, and the workers and our industries are still waiting for an offshore skills passport.

I attended an excellent conference of the Energy Efficiency Association yesterday, and it was striking to see the extent to which we simply do not have the skills to refit our homes and buildings, which would make them energy efficient and more affordable to heat and power. The lack of support for the supply chains was stark, and that support is crucial if we are going to decarbonise our homes and buildings. The message that came across from all the businesses there was that they need that support now.

We need more apprenticeships and more spaces in our colleges, and not just in a couple of cities—we need them right across the country, and we need them now.

We need support for people who want to install solar heat and power systems and innovative battery storage and heating systems. The fact that Mitsubishi announced last week that it might cut 440 jobs in Livingston is due to a decline in product demand. That is deeply worrying, given that its product is one of the solutions. We are not seeing the action on supply chains that is urgently needed.

In the past few weeks, we have also heard about the missed opportunities with the ScotWind contract, but the issue is not just about extracting the money and spending it to support supply chains. There has been a complete lack of conditionality with approvals and a lack of joined-

up thinking that would get more renewables manufactured in Scotland—not just in recent years but over the past 17 years.

I have had the privilege of seeing the work that is being done in the port of Leith, which will give us home-grown supply chains. Manufacturing renewables there would be a huge opportunity, and we cannot afford to miss it. It was good to see the work that is being done in Ardersier as well. There are companies that are prepared to invest, but we need more support for manufacturing. We cannot just keep relying on imports for key components.

The problem with “Green Industrial Strategy” is that it is too vague. We see the same words peppered throughout the document: “support”, “explore”, “consider”. They are nice-sounding words but bear little connection to actual action and implementation. We have had 17 years of warm words, and that is not enough for a critical economic sector for our economy and to tackle our climate crisis.

Kate Forbes: The member sounds hauntingly like the Conservatives in her negativity, and I am relieved to hear some positivity about the port of Leith and Ardersier.

The document is very action-oriented. One of the criticisms of it will inevitably be that we do not name check every sector under the sun.

On the member’s specific point, there are many examples of where the Scottish supply chain is outperforming international competitors. I put to the member the same question that I put to the Conservatives: why do international investors seem to disbelieve what the member is saying and want to invest?

Sarah Boyack: I am saying not that we have not had investment but that, whenever I meet people in the industry, whether from oil and gas or renewables, supply chains are the number 1 issue that they all mention, together with getting more support for their workers. We have fantastic natural resources and a wealth of skills, but we need to turn that into reality.

The Great British energy company will be critical. Last week, a raft of new offshore wind farms were approved across the UK. We need to make sure that such investment comes to Scotland. Labour’s national wealth fund is an ideal vehicle for investment in Scotland’s ports. We have talked about that before, but we need to get on with it. We could have a green supply chain infrastructure across the whole of Scotland, which would give us thousands of new jobs.

People want to do that. We know from talking to workers in oil and gas that they have transferable skills that can still work in oil and gas but can also

be brought into the renewables sector—especially the offshore sector. Oil and gas companies, which will be with us for decades, are now also investing in renewables. That joined-up approach is happening up in the north-east, but we need more of it, and it needs a just transition.

We need action on the skills passport, because we could get going now. The urgency is critical. We have already heard about other companies pulling out and about the Grangemouth announcement.

As a former planner, I welcome the reforms to planning consenting, but there is not enough detail and not enough about a timeline. The problem is that we should have been doing that years ago. Planners have left local authorities, which have faced cuts, and we need more new planners to deliver a speedier effective planning process that works for our communities and the renewables sector.

We need more information on delivery. Warm words are not enough. We have been critiqued by the Just Transition Commission, the Just Transition Partnership and work by the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Research is available that says that more needs to be done. The Transition Economics report was clear: we need a massive ramp-up in Scottish supply chains, so we need more work to be done.

We have had ambitious targets, which were supported across party, but we have not seen the necessary ambition from Government. We have lost vital skills, there has been lots of outsourcing of our industry and supply chains, and we have lost money that could have been raised and spent on more ambitious action.

We need a joined-up approach. It is not just about producing energy; it is also about where we use it, how we use it, whether we use it more effectively, and whether we use all the new innovations that are coming in transport, building, land, ports and the energy system.

We need to do better than the green industrial strategy. However, we will be constructive and we will work with the Scottish Government, because the alternative is more failure, more missed climate targets and more workers who have skills and experience losing their jobs. Our communities, our workers, our businesses and our planet cannot afford that.

I move amendment S6M-14431.3, to leave out from first “recognises” to end and insert:

“believes that one of the Scottish National Party’s biggest political failures is its failure to turn Scotland’s enormous renewable energy resources into jobs, wealth and social good for communities across Scotland.”

15:33

Lorna Slater (Lothian) (Green): Most who are in the chamber will know my background in heavy engineering and renewable energy. As my entry in the register of members’ interests indicates, until I was elected in 2021 I worked for Orbital Marine Power, building the world’s most powerful tidal turbine. The hull of that 72m-long 680-tonne machine was fabricated in Cupar in Scotland, with steel from Liberty Steel in Motherwell, and the turbine was assembled and launched at the port of Dundee. It currently operates in the Fall of Warness, off Eday in Orkney, generating clean predictable power as the tides change direction four times a day. An earlier iteration of the orbital turbine was the first tidal turbine in the world to produce clean, green hydrogen energy—also in Orkney.

I know at first hand the potential for manufacturing, renewable energy, and heavy and marine industries in Scotland, and I know the challenges that the sector faces. Scotland needs a new vision for our economy, which reinvigorates our manufacturing sector, creates jobs in growing low-carbon industries and builds a skilled workforce.

With the climate crisis upon us, we need to make a decisive turn away from oil and gas, phase out fossil fuels and reduce energy demand by regulating to decarbonise homes and buildings. All of that opens up enormous opportunities: offshore and onshore wind, green hydrogen, forestry and sustainable building materials, retrofit heat pumps and heat networks, solar power, tidal power, hydropower and all the supply chain and maintenance contracts that support those growing industries. Those are the specific industries that will create wealth for Scotland, jobs for people and move us rapidly along our path to achieving net zero by 2045, yet they are largely missing from the Scottish Government’s green industrial strategy, whose vision for renewables focuses solely on the already successful wind sector.

Green hydrogen is produced from water and electricity—both things that Scotland has in abundance. Green hydrogen is the ultimate in clean power. It can be generated off-grid and it is powerful and portable. It is the future power source for buses, tractors, heavy goods vehicles and heavy industry. Producing hydrogen from fossil fuels—sometimes called blue and grey hydrogen—is, at best, a way to temporarily mitigate some of the emissions from hard-to-decarbonise industries. At worst, it is accelerating climate change by prolonging fossil fuel extraction and use. However, the green industrial strategy does not differentiate. Green hydrogen, not fossil fuel hydrogen, is the future, and the Scottish

Government should say so clearly in its industrial strategy.

The green industrial strategy places a significant emphasis on carbon capture, utilisation and storage, which it presents as a core pillar of Scotland's green economy. Experts and campaigners such as Friends of the Earth argue that CCUS is a false solution, as it prolongs the life of fossil fuel industrial complexes and distracts from the need to rapidly phase out carbon-intensive industries. Carbon capture and storage is wildly expensive. It is also very energy intensive. If it works, it presents us with the prospect of paying for our energy twice—once when the oil and gas is extracted from the ground, and again when we try to pump the emissions produced back underground. Who will pay for that? That is not the route to cheap long-term energy.

To date, CCUS has not been demonstrated to work at scale. The only possible place for it is in the temporary abatement of hard-to-decarbonise industries while those industries are phased out or changed over to sustainable power sources. CCUS is not a long term or safe investment for our economy, and public money should not be spent in supporting it. Public money would be better spent supporting people into engineering and skilled trades, supporting Scotland's engineering and manufacturing businesses to expand, upgrade their information technology systems and machinery, and investing in harbours, cranes and the infrastructure that heavy and marine industries need.

Sarah Boyack: I very much agree that we need that infrastructure investment. Would the member agree that we also need investment in solar, whether it is heat or power, and in wave and hydro? There are other opportunities, in addition to renewable wind, that we should be seizing on now.

Lorna Slater: Having worked in the wave industry, I might take that up with the member separately. However, I absolutely understand that, in putting forth a green industrial strategy, it is right for the Government to choose big industries to help us direct. Solar in Scotland is an important power source, but it is never going to be that big industry that we need to redirect. I would like to see more action and support for solar, but I can understand why the Scottish Government is making a specific direction here. We absolutely want to support solar, particularly in domestic settings and in remote and business decarbonisation.

Instead of being invested in CCUS, public money would be better used to invest in public transport and build not only bus routes and train stations but hydrogen-powered buses and trains.

Douglas Lumsden: On CCUS, we have the Scottish cluster, but does the member think that that should just be scrapped and all the jobs lost?

Lorna Slater: Public investment is what I have a particular issue with. The member talked about the massive profits that oil and gas giants are making around the world. If oil and gas giants need to mitigate the harm that they are creating through their emissions, they can develop and invest in that technology—they certainly have the money. Expecting the public purse, which we could be using to invest in schools, hospitals and all those good things, to pay money to those industry giants to mitigate the harm that they are doing is not a reasonable course of action.

Douglas Lumsden: Will Lorna Slater give way again?

Lorna Slater: I am sorry, but I need to make progress in my speech.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member will need to move towards concluding her remarks.

Lorna Slater: In the green industrial strategy, it would have been good to see a tie-in with an ambitious heat in building strategy. Creating demand in Scotland for heat pumps would support Scottish manufacturing, including factories such as Mitsubishi Electric, which manufactures heat pumps. However, more than 430 workers in that factory face redundancy. Creating the conditions through regulation to increase demand for heat pumps would support Scottish manufacturers, create savings on their energy bills for home owners and reduce emissions.

I am disappointed and frustrated by the lack of a comprehensive plan to re-industrialise our economy and by the lack of vision to, at the same time, seize Scotland's opportunities to leap ahead on our journey to net zero. Instead, we appear to have an attempt to string along fossil fuel industries while continuing on a trajectory to miss the 2045 net zero target.

The green industrial strategy is nothing new. It is a feeble attempt to keep up business as usual for as long as possible, while failing on climate, failing to build industries with a long-term future—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Slater, you need to conclude your remarks, please.

Lorna Slater: —and failing to take our economy in a new direction.

I move amendment S6M-14431.1, to leave out from first "recognises" and insert:

"acknowledges the urgent need to invest in Scotland's economy to eradicate child poverty, tackle the climate and nature emergencies and to ensure that public services meet the needs of the people of Scotland; agrees on the need for a new vision for the economy, including a Green

Industrial Strategy that reinvigorates the manufacturing sector, creates jobs in growing low-carbon industries and builds a skilled workforce; regrets that the Scottish Government's Green Industrial Strategy fails to set an ambitious plan for growth in renewable energy beyond wind, including solar, wave, tidal and green hydrogen, and prioritises continued investment in fossil fuel extraction over long-term sustainability; believes that carbon capture, utilisation and storage remains speculative and that investment in these unproven technologies is a poor use of public funds during a climate crisis, and considers that the Scottish Government must not miss the opportunity to reduce energy demand, by regulating to decarbonise homes and buildings, which will stimulate skills, jobs and innovation in Scotland."

15:41

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Towards the tail end of the summer, I agreed to visit the Seagreen Wind Energy offshore wind farm, which is off the coast of Angus. As we sped over the choppy waters about 20km out, people were vomiting on either side of me. It was a joy to eventually reach the wind farm and to meet Maurice Golden, who was bouncing around on the boat—hard as nails, Maurice Golden—with a massive smile on his face, watching everybody else suffer on the journey.

When we got there, it was quite inspiring to see the wind farm. It is powering 1.6 million homes, which is a substantial amount of energy. It created 400 jobs, and there are 80 jobs in servicing at its base in Montrose. The disappointing bit is that most of the steelwork was done on the other side of the planet, which was a missed opportunity, because Burntisland Fabrications and other facilities in Scotland missed out on being part of that great innovation off the coast of Angus.

Kate Forbes: I thank Willie Rennie for being one of the first members to inject a bit of positivity, in that there are things that are working in Scotland. I agree with him on the principle that our assets should create jobs here and not elsewhere and I commend to him some of the early work that is being done. The whole point of the green industrial strategy is to change things so that, the next time we have something like that wind farm project, jobs are created in Scotland. I refer him to Flowcopter as an example of the Scottish supply chain completely disrupting the international market.

Willie Rennie: Kate Forbes is so enthusiastic that I will send her out with Maurice Golden on another trip to the Seagreen offshore wind farm to see how she copes with it. She might not be so enthusiastic the next time.

The hard thing for the people of Fife and Angus to take is that they are paying for that work off the coast of Angus through their electricity bills, but they are not getting the economic benefit in their pockets, and that needs to change. If the minister

is indicating that the new strategy will change all that, I am pleased—that will be a positive thing.

I have another positive thing to say. The Sumitomo plant up in Cromarty is a good step, but it is matched by many other disinvestments. Mitsubishi is a real concern, especially when we have so much of a focus on heat pumps, as is BiFab, which I have already referred to. In addition, although it has not been mentioned much, there is the Shell disinvestment from the ScotWind licence that it applied for earlier this year.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Willie Rennie might recall that, earlier today, during First Minister's question time—I think that it was during FMQs or general question time—I asked a question on the issue of the almost 9 per cent cut in our capital budget by the UK Government. Does Willie Rennie agree that, given that we are talking about the importance of inward investment, the cut must be reversed?

Willie Rennie: If we are going to get anywhere in this debate, we need to rise above the battle about whether it is Westminster's fault, councils' fault or anybody else's fault. We need to focus on the steps that this Parliament can take and the powers that we have to do things. We can have a debate about capital on another occasion, but I think that the strategy has been published in an effort to lift the debate and focus on what the Parliament can do.

If we are talking about money, the member needs to be careful, because all the income from the ScotWind round has now been spent on repairing the financial mismanagement of the SNP Government. The member should be careful about entering into a debate about finances.

Given today's decision about Grangemouth and my concerns about Liberty Steel, a sharp focus is required to make sure that the new strategy works, because the jobs that we are talking about will not be a bonus; they are jobs to replace the jobs that are being lost in other sectors. We therefore need to work incredibly hard to make sure that the strategy is a success, otherwise Scotland will not just lose out on the opportunity but will be left with a massive legacy.

I welcome the strategy that has been published, but it is very high level. We need to see a lot more detail if we are to make it work. In my view, the essential element is that we make sure that there is long-term continuity. Decisions that have been made by Governments elsewhere have resulted in short-term changes in the rhetoric and the plans, which creates uncertainty in the sector. That means that investors are less likely to make the

long-term investments that are essential in ensuring that we make a success of the sector.

We also need a swift and efficient regulatory process. There are huge concerns about that, especially because the ScotWind round was so large. There is concern that the regulatory process will not be able to cope with the massive number of applications. Given the volume of applications, the timely processing of those applications will be essential. We will need to encourage and give confidence to the sector to make sure that it follows through with the licences that it has successfully achieved.

The Berwick Bank project is an example of that. I know that it is complicated, but we need to make sure that the consent process meets the timescale for the next contracts for difference round, because if it does not, that will strike a real blow to confidence in the sector.

Finally, I would like to briefly mention a point that was made at yesterday's conference of the Energy Efficiency Association. It is an important point, and I hope that the minister will take it away and consider it with her colleagues. The latest round of area-based contracts for the insulation schemes has not been awarded. They were supposed to have been awarded earlier this year. That is causing significant concern among members of the Energy Efficiency Association, especially because the sector is subject to constant stopping and starting of the funding that is available through the industry or through the Government. I hope that the minister will take that issue away and do something about it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Back benchers' speeches should be up to six minutes.

15:47

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I am glad that the motion opens with a simple statement about a big ambition—that of growing the economy to eradicate child poverty. That is different from the austerity and the economic policies of the Tory Government, which enriched the Tories' millionaire and billionaire pals, and it is different from Labour's continued austerity, which continues to impact on the poor, the frail and the elderly, as we saw only the other week with the cuts to winter fuel payments.

The economic growth that we are talking about is economic growth that is focused on generating the resources to lift children out of poverty. It is economic growth that will go hand in hand with investing in our public services. It is economic growth that we can use to tackle the climate emergency and build the new green, net zero economy.

At the heart of the Government's ambition is the need to invest in growing Scotland's green economy. The green industrial strategy aims to maximise Scotland's wind economy; develop a self-sustaining carbon capture, utilisation and storage sector; support green economy professional and financial services; grow our hydrogen sector; and establish Scotland as a competitive centre for the clean, energy-intensive industries of the future.

That is in stark contrast to Labour reneging on the £28 billion of green investment that it once promised. By abandoning green investment in the net zero economy, it is clear that Labour's plan lacks realism and ambition.

Michael Marra: Does Kevin Stewart recognise that we have already put through legislation in the UK Parliament to establish GB Energy, that £16 billion has been committed to that work, and that that is critical to enabling the kind of investment that the Deputy First Minister is laying out today?

Kevin Stewart: None of us actually know what GB Energy is, because Labour has not spelled it out.

GB Energy was promised to be headquartered in Aberdeen, but there seems to be a shift away from that. I hope that, at some point in the very near future, Labour ministers will spell out what GB Energy is for, and that they will live up to their promise and base it in Aberdeen.

Support for oil and gas in a net zero economy is not support for the old economy, but for the new economy. Let us be clear that oil and gas will be at the heart of the shift to the new green economy. People may be moving towards driving electric and hydrogen cars, but those cars will be made largely of plastic from oil and gas and they will drive on roads made of tar from oil and gas. It is not about just transport: petrochemicals are necessary to provide vital goods, from the clothes on our backs to the medicines in our prescriptions.

Today's Grangemouth announcement is worrying. I wish Michelle Thomson well in her work to secure a new owner for Grangemouth. Without a home oil and gas industry, we will simply be left importing everything from abroad, which I am sure that none of us want.

We cannot allow Westminster to repeat the policy of Thatcher, who destroyed Scotland's steel industry, and have the same thing happen to our energy industry. The future of energy production in Scotland is 100 per cent renewables, and it is vital that Scotland's oil and gas sector transitions to renewable energy production.

At the core of that will be our oil and gas workers, who are the folk with the skills and talents to turn our hopes of a net zero future into a reality.

They are the ones who can lay the foundations for wind farms miles offshore and scale to the top of wind turbines to repair them. However, workers need work not only today, but in the future, and they need continued work throughout.

At the heart of a just transition and building a green economy, we have to ensure that workers can move seamlessly from the oil and gas sector to good jobs in renewables.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member will be concluding soon.

Kevin Stewart: That is why I am pleased to see core commitments in the Scottish Government's green industrial strategy to support people to retrain, to enhance the transferability of skills, and to encourage employers to invest in training.

Our offshore workers must not suffer the same fate under Labour rule from London as our miners suffered under Tory rule from London. Just this week, the TUC voted against Labour's plans and insisted that a comprehensive strategy be developed to ensure that all workers in the North Sea have equivalent employment opportunities.

It is vital that we get this right, not only for Aberdeen—the oil and gas capital of Europe, which I hope will be the renewables capital of the world—but for the whole of Scotland. Scotland's renewable energy sector is one of the greatest export opportunities—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stewart, you need to conclude.

Kevin Stewart: —that we will ever have for our country. We must grasp that.

15:54

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I start by making an abject apology to Kate Forbes, the Deputy First Minister; I have not yet had a chance to look at the document "Green Industrial Strategy", which arrived with me only yesterday. I would have liked more time to read it but, as she will well know, the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, which has landed in front of the committee that I am on, is taking up a considerable amount of my time. I apologise that I have only skimmed through the strategy document, but what I read on the first page was a requirement for "Maximising Scotland's wind economy". I want to drill down into that and explore how it will affect the Highlands.

The strategy says that the Government plans to increase the capacity of onshore wind farms from 8.8GW to 20GW. That is a huge increase—it is massive. Much of that capacity will be placed in the Highlands. I remind the Deputy First Minister,

who also represents a constituency in that area, that there are 49 onshore wind farms, with 840-odd turbines, scattered randomly across the Highlands. I am sure that she will know that there are currently 41 applications in scoping, 23 that are in planning, 28 that have been approved and eight that are under construction. If she adds up those numbers, she will come up with a figure of 100 new wind farms to go up in the Highlands. That probably means that another 2,000 turbines will be dotted around our landscape.

I will park my remarks on that aspect of the strategy at this stage and move on to the infrastructure that will support it. Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks has a policy that will invest £20 billion and lay 1,800km of new lines, of which 500km will be over parts of the Highlands, although some of them will be under water. That does not sound like much, but let me put that into context. As the Deputy First Minister drives down the A9 to come to work—as I do at the beginning of each week—she will see the Beauly to Denny power line. That is just one line, but I am reliably told that we will need another three such lines if we are to develop the strategy.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Edward Mountain: I will just finish the bit I am on first.

That is three further lines, which would make a total of four lines. The Deputy First Minister would probably not be able to see much of the Cairngorms as she goes past, because of the towers and power lines. On top of that there will be the battery storage facilities—which I am reliably told are now called "grid balancing facilities", because that sounds more reasonable—that are already dotted across the Highlands. The last one of those that I saw was more than 80 acres in size.

I will give way to the Deputy First Minister.

Kate Forbes: First, I agree with Edward Mountain on the importance of communities not just putting up with disruption but getting a benefit from that infrastructure. The second aspect is to focus very much on offshore wind generation. The third, on which I hope Edward Mountain will agree with me, is that the transmission work is determined by Ofgem; power over that is reserved to the UK Government. Although there is domestic generation through Scottish Government planning, the electricity and the grid are reserved. To make things clear to communities who might be listening, all parties have a stake in that issue and it cannot just be put at the door of the Scottish Government.

Edward Mountain: I do not blame the Scottish Government for that at all; I just make the observation that SSEN has a map—which it will

not disclose to us at the moment—that shows every single power line that it will need if we are to reach the 2045 target and every single connection that it is proposes to install across Scotland. Perhaps it would be better to display that information to communities rather than pretending that it is all down to Ofgem. SSEN knows what it needs, and Ofgem will give it the authority to do it, but SSEN ought to be more open.

Large bits of infrastructure are being dotted all over the Highlands, but there does not seem to be any rhyme or reason to the pattern of work other than that it is being done to connect wind farms. I do not dispute that those bits of infrastructure will create new jobs, but such jobs tend to be transient. They will not make much difference to local communities, who are being promised all sorts of things, including new village halls. Only a certain number of new halls can be built, or existing ones painted, on the back of wind farm installations.

Wind farms need to deliver a lot more for communities, who need to feel the benefit of such infrastructure. They need to see that something is coming to them. I totally disagree that a one-off payment of, say, 5 per cent of the capital value of a wind farm is enough. The communities that are going to be blighted by the infrastructure dotted around the place need to not just see the power going south but to get cheap power and some benefit from that infrastructure.

I am conscious of the time, Presiding Officer, so I will simply say that I am hugely disappointed with the Scottish Government. We were promised that the £750 million that was raised from ScotWind would go towards improving our ability to cope with the net zero ambition, but the Scottish Government has frittered it away. The Scottish Government has spent a great deal of time during this session saying, “If only we’d had a sovereign wealth fund because of the oil that we have got.” Well, we had a sovereign wealth fund as a result of ScotWind, and we have spent it—we have spent not only the income from it, but also the capital.

I will just say that, when the Deputy First Minister is going through the green industrial strategy, she should remember that it is the Highlands that will put up with infrastructure and will be littered with turbines and power lines, and she will have to come up with a strategy to ensure that the people who live up there benefit from the infrastructure and do not just have to see it.

16:01

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): I will just make a few short remarks—you can be sure

that I intend to come in well under the time allocated, Presiding Officer.

I welcome the initiative and, in my short remarks today, I will make a few points about it. However, I cannot speak today without making reference to the Grangemouth refinery, which is based in my constituency. I appreciate and understand that there is a long road to travel to try to get a positive outcome, and I simply note that I, as a constituency MSP, will play my part.

I welcome point 5 in “Green Industrial Strategy”, which calls for Scotland to become a centre for clean energy and the clean energy intensive industries of the future. I have always been ambitious for Scotland, and I am heartened to see us focusing on areas where we can compete at a global level. I am particularly pleased to note that, although there is considerable uncertainty about the facility at the moment, there is a prominent role for Grangemouth, with the document stating that a key part of the strategy involves utilising

“our existing industrial assets such as our port infrastructure, new Green Freeports and Grangemouth.”

I am also personally pleased to note the prominence given to the development of the hydrogen sector, not least as it is my belief that that is an area where Grangemouth has the potential to play a major role.

Innovation is recognised as being of critical importance and, in that regard, partnering with Scotland’s universities, Scottish business and the investment community will be key. I know that the Deputy First Minister understands the crucial role that our academic community can play, and that the return on investment can add real value, as well as positioning us for where we want to be. Since my election, I have spent time engaging with many of Scotland’s universities, particularly in relation to their research, and I add my voice to others who recently commended the work of the University of Dundee and its school of life sciences. I am pleased to see that the role of our universities is recognised in the strategy. However, I would like to see the retention of more commercialised research in Scotland. That is important.

The emphasis on partnership working is, of course, fundamental. The Government alone cannot fund all the investment that is required. We need to unlock the huge potential investment from business investors and the like. That will require strengthening the culture of partnership working where Government uses its convening power and financial heft where required. I give my now habitual reminder regarding the scale of investment that is needed globally. Although estimates vary, they are all counted in the trillions of pounds annually. As recently as March this

year, the Scottish Fiscal Commission indicated that the Scottish Government needed to spend £1.1 billion, on average, every year into the future, at current prices. However, one of the most telling conclusions of the Scottish Fiscal Commission's analysis was that

“the fiscal burden of reaching the UK's net zero target may fall disproportionately on the Scottish Government because a greater share of the UK reduction in emissions relating to forestry and land use needs to take place in Scotland.”

It therefore makes it clear that the mechanism of Barnett consequentialism will not be enough. The same SFC document also points out that the UK cannot and will not reach its net zero targets without Scotland.

I know that this is a matter that is dear to the heart of the Deputy First Minister. We need to ensure that our investment supports not only the growth and scale-up of existing businesses but also the creation of new businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators. My particular wish is for women entrepreneurs and business owners to take a fair seat at the table. I know that wish is shared by many in the chamber and it is something that I will continue to progress.

My final point is on housing. We need to build far more net zero homes. Although I welcome the increase in expenditure on housing in the recent programme for government, I believe that we need to do much, much more. I note the challenge of retrofitting existing housing stock, where there are no easy answers, and I welcome the efforts to court institutional investors and rebuild relationships with developers. However, the challenge for us all is significant.

16:05

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): It has long been my view that, if we are to rise to the challenge of the climate emergency, we need to think big and act radical. It has also long been my view that the Scottish Government is flat and pedestrian when we need passion, conviction and, above all else, a sense of urgency. This is not just about legislation; it is about leadership.

I have to say this: after 17 years in office, and over five years after the climate emergency was declared at the SNP conference, it is astonishing that the SNP Government has only yesterday finally got round to publishing a green industrial strategy that is focused on five so-called opportunity areas. I am perplexed that the Government limits its horizons in this way. Shouldn't every job be a green job? Shouldn't the whole economy be a green economy? Where is the ambition?

There are other elements of the strategy that I think we must debate, too. The Scottish

Government's continued overreliance on foreign direct investment means that there is no redistribution of power and wealth in the economy, green or otherwise. In fact, what we are witnessing is a growing concentration of wealth and power in the economy. Nearly two out of three workers employed by Scotland's larger businesses already work for companies owned either in the rest of the UK or, increasingly, overseas. Yet, with this latest strategy, what the Government is growing is not a green economy but a branch plant economy—and that has consequences. The steady erosion of decision making from the Scottish economy has consequences. Just ask the workers at the Grangemouth oil refinery. That imbalance of power leaves those workers and their families, and this strategic national asset, at the mercy of a billionaire tax exile and an overseas Government.

Despite “Green Industrial Strategy” talking about “Investing in strong research and development foundations”,

when it comes to business research and development, we are seventh out of 12 UK nations and regions, eighth as measured by employment generation—again, a consequence of being a largely subsidiary economy.

In the 1990s, I used to visit the oil rig fabrication yards at Nigg Bay and Ardersier. Back then, they were owned by Brown and Root—Halliburton—and McDermott, both global corporations and both, as it happens, headquartered in Houston, Texas. In its programme, the Government—and the First Minister, this afternoon, and the Deputy First Minister—talked about the redevelopment of those sites. Of course, we all want to see the redevelopment of those sites and we all want to see new life and new jobs in renewable energy as part of a just transition, but we cannot ignore the fact that Nigg Bay is being developed by a corporation headquartered in Japan and Ardersier is being redeveloped by a company that is owned and controlled by the Quantum Capital Group, which, again, is headquartered in Houston, Texas. That will make those yards vulnerable to decisions made in faraway boardrooms, and we will see all the wealth and all the profits being exported.

In the programme for government, we also read of the work of the Scottish National Investment Bank. It has, we are told,

“avoided, reduced, or removed 52,841 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent”.

How was that done? We know that one of the principal ways has been through a £50 million investment in Gresham House, which is now, incidentally, owned by a US private equity firm. The business of Gresham House is not to plant trees or to recover peatland—those are by-products. Its real business model is to help the

wealthy avoid paying their fair share of tax on inheritance and capital gains.

Just look, as well, at who won the ScotWind licences awarded by the Scottish Government: Italian, Swedish and Belgian companies; Spanish, French and German utilities; and Norwegian, Dutch and Australian corporations—some of them public, but most of them privately owned. The licences were all given away at a knockdown price. If there is any colonising going on—I know that some people in the SNP like to talk in those terms—we are being colonised by multinational corporations, global capital and financial markets.

As we have learned, the proceeds of ScotWind are not being used to support a just transition or indigenous business development. Our supply chains and our manufacturing base are not being invested in sufficiently. These funds are being used simply to pay for Scottish Government day-to-day expenditure.

Even the community wealth building bill is signalled in the programme for government as a matter for local government, when we all know that, if we are to see transformative change, it must be a matter for the Scottish Government, for national Government agencies, for the Scottish National Investment Bank and for public sector pension funds. It requires a boost to agencies like Co-operative Development Scotland.

We can grow Scotland's green economy, but if it is in the same hands as the existing economy, with the same distribution and concentration of power and the same gross inequalities that arise from that, then in my view we will have failed. It is high time that we had economic as well as political democracy. It is high time that we steered a different economic path. It is high time that we did think big and act radical.

16:11

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate on growing Scotland's green economy. I am going to take a slightly different tack from some of my colleagues. I mentioned the green industrial strategy during First Minister's question time earlier today, and in doing so I referenced the small section in the strategy that looks at the construction sector, given its role in carbon emissions and the very real need to make the sector less carbon intensive. I was encouraged to hear from the First Minister that there has been a clear and substantial engagement with that vital sector, not only because of the importance of reducing emissions on our journey to net zero, but because our construction sector is fundamental to ensuring that we all have a warm, damp-free and energy-efficient home to stay in.

Tackling housing need and fuel poverty and tackling our climate challenges must go hand in hand. For many of my constituents, that is vital. That will resonate more than talking about the green economy, but those things go hand in hand. I was therefore pleased to see in the green industrial strategy a reiteration of the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver on our ambition for 110,000 affordable energy-efficient homes by 2032. As a city boy, I note that 10 per cent of those are to be in remote, rural and island communities, which is important, given the unique challenges that they have.

I will mention some other things that "Green Industrial Strategy" contains in relation to the construction and built environment sector. It says that the Scottish Government will

"Explore the potential and impact of modern methods of construction in rural and island contexts."

It adds:

"This will include work with BE-ST, our innovation centre that supports and provides practical assistance with solutions that advance delivery of a zero carbon built environment."

I see that the Acting Minister for Climate Action, Alasdair Allan, is in the chamber. He often talks about the huge challenges that his constituents have in heating their homes, let alone getting to net zero, so that innovation by Built Environment—Smarter Transformation will be vital.

The strategy says that the Scottish Government will

"Reform and modernise compulsory purchase legislation in Scotland and consider the case for Compulsory Sales Orders."

I say to the Deputy First Minister that I hope that we will deliver swiftly on both things. The strategy also says that the Scottish Government will

"Support collaborative and place-based approaches to identify land for affordable housing working closely with Regional Economic Partnerships and our communities."

I suppose that what I am trying to do is ensure that the construction sector is not squeezed out of the discussion on the green economy. The Construction Industry Training Board estimates that, in 2021, 230,000 people were employed in that sector. In 2022, £13.3 billion was generated by that sector and, according to the Chartered Institute of Building, £4 billion of that came from public sector investment—so, the sector matters. I put it on record that construction does not just mean building homes: it is also about wider energy generation to deliver net zero. I note SSE's 4.1GW Berwick Bank offshore wind farm, Cerulean Winds' plans for three floating wind turbine projects and the 2GW West of Orkney wind farm. All those projects are mentioned in a report that says that

there is a good 10-year pipeline for construction in that sector.

The CITB warns that there is a need for an additional 3,910 people to be recruited each year. More workers are needed to meet the sector's demands and to deal with its employment churn; that is a challenge for Scotland's green economy that has to be tackled. I would be happy to hear in the minister's summing up what the Scottish Government is doing to address that.

The Scottish house condition survey clearly shows that the private rented sector has the highest emissions in terms of energy efficiency. However, 60 per cent of the private rented sector does not meet the housing quality standard, and 35 per cent is below the tolerable standard. That needs to be tackled on an industrial scale; the green industry should be doing that.

Mr Rennie spoke about area-based energy efficiency schemes, such as insulation measures. I note that, since 2013, the Scottish Government has spent £433 million on tackling that, with 100,000 households and hundreds of local communities benefiting. That is the green economy, and it is really important that we do not squeeze it out in debates such as this.

Finally—I will say this in a non-partisan way—capital budgets matter. We can have a debate about whether our Scottish Government is deploying its budget as the parties in this place see fit, but we know that there have been swingeing cuts to Scotland's capital budget, which really matters when we try to reach net zero. We need cross-party, non-partisan support in order to challenge the UK Government to tackle those swingeing cuts to Scotland. Likewise, we know that Scotland's revenue budgets have been deeply undermined by the previous and current UK Governments because of inflation and real-terms cuts. I will not rehearse all the arguments—

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member take an intervention?

Bob Doris: I apologise, but I am coming to a conclusion.

Let us maximise the Scottish Government's revenue and our investment in our green economy, and let us not undermine our ability to work together on that on a cross-party basis.

16:17

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): I begin on a positive note by agreeing with the First Minister. In his programme for government statement last week, he said that the policies that he announced

“will be rendered ineffective if we do not also address the greatest existential threat of our times. We must take

effective action to tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.”—[*Official Report*, 4 September 2024; c 30.]

That the First Minister recognises that is to be welcomed, just as I have always welcomed the ambition that the Scottish Government has shown in setting a high bar for climate action. As I said in last week's debate on the United Nations Declaration on Future Generations, ambition is nothing without delivering results. I hope that, in closing, the cabinet secretary will use the opportunity to set out more detail than we got in the programme for government and the subsequent green industrial strategy. There is much to be welcomed in the strategy, but it is very high level.

One area that has been mentioned concerns transition plans. We are told that there will be plans for transport, agriculture and land use, and for the built environment and construction, but we have not been told when those plans will be published. The same goes for the already delayed energy strategy and just transition plan, which will be especially important for the future of the north-east region.

There is also the continued uncertainty about the next climate change plan. I appreciate that the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill will set out the timetable for the new plan, but it would be useful if ministers confirmed today that the draft plan will be presented by summer. Otherwise, we risk running out of time for proper scrutiny and amendments before the 2026 election.

Bob Doris: Does Maurice Golden recognise that the UK Climate Change Committee said that it would recommend that the Scottish Government should not set draft plans until the CCC has reported on the UK position, which will be around March next year?

Maurice Golden: The point is that we should have had a climate change plan already. Given where we are today, I think that the timetable that I set out for publication of a draft plan by summer fits well with the point that the member makes.

I turn to areas of the green economy that have not been mentioned so far. The first is aquaculture, in which Scotland has great potential, in particular with regard to seaweed as a resource that can deliver benefits for our coastal communities. However, we need an appropriate regulatory framework, which was supposed to be delivered by early 2023. It would be useful to hear what progress is being made on that.

I also highlight spatial management. As ministers will know, there is increased competition for access to our inshore waters from industries such as fisheries and renewables. The fishing

industry regularly raises the issue, and it would be useful to hear from ministers whether the national marine plan 2, which was mentioned in the programme for government, will introduce a coherent system of spatial planning to ensure sustainable use of our seas.

On those issues and many more, there is an urgent need for more detail. How can we expect the public or businesses to lend their support or invest their money in policies for a green economy if they are unsure as to whether the Government can deliver? Whether the Scottish Government likes it or not, its rhetoric often does not match its actions, and that creates uncertainty.

By now, we are all familiar with the list of environmental failures from the SNP Government. That includes everything from the Government missing its emissions targets an astonishing nine times in the past 13 years, and failing to meet more than half its international biodiversity targets, to having still not delivered on its 2013 household recycling target, which is now more than a decade late.

The divergence between what the Scottish Government says and what it does is only going to get worse. In its “Programme for Government 2024-25”, the SNP claimed that it

“will continue to lead on climate action internationally”.

However, not only has it abandoned the key 2030 net zero target—it also hid its failure for seven months before finally having to admit that it was off track. It says that it is committed to delivering a circular economy, but it has already watered down the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 and largely limited discussion in its programme for government to waste and litter regulations.

There is divergence when the Scottish Government talks about a green economy at all, after having drastically cut funding that was meant to support the transition to a more sustainable economy. We need only look at the budgets that the Government has cut in the past two weeks: nature restoration; energy efficiency and decarbonisation; the just transition fund; sustainable travel; and, of course, the net zero and energy budget itself.

It is great that the First Minister recognises the need to act. He now needs to recognise that a green economy cannot be built on false promises and budget cuts.

16:24

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I associate myself with the remarks on today’s significant news that were made by the First Minister, party leaders and members who represent the Grangemouth refinery area. My

thoughts are also with all the workers and people who are involved in the refinery’s operation and in the wider economy throughout the Forth estuary area, part of which I represent. The closure of the refinery is a significant development in Scotland’s overall history of capacity for energy and electricity production, which has been really positive, including in recent years.

At this point, it is important to recognise Scotland’s remarkable journey in growing the green economy, particularly in the production of renewable electricity. For example, in 2010, the operational capacity for renewable electricity generation was 4.4GW and, in March this year, it was 15.4GW. Just through the projects that are in the pipeline, we envisage that more than three times that capacity could be realised.

As Kevin Stewart did, people often talk about the impact on energy demand, but if we think about the capacity that I mentioned and the huge progress that has been made, there is no doubt that Scotland’s green economy development has been a huge success.

In the context of the times that we have been in—austerity from 2010, which was a UK Government choice; Brexit, a development that has negatively impacted the UK economy; an unpredictable pandemic that affected us all in negative ways; the cost of living crisis and global issues such as the war in Ukraine—through all of that, Scotland’s renewable energy has increased and its green economy has strengthened.

For me, that is most clearly demonstrated in the recent story of the port of Leith. In about 2010, just before the financial crisis, the proposals were to drain the port of Leith and turn it into a residential development for people who work in the financial sector. After the banking crisis, those plans changed dramatically.

Now the plan for the port of Leith, backed by inward investment and patient capital, is to create one of the biggest renewable energy hubs in Europe, with £50 million of investment—something that I strongly support. As things stand, that plan is in a good position. There is an exciting proposal for Vestas, the huge Danish wind turbine manufacturer, to build in the port of Leith what might be Europe’s biggest offshore wind power production plant. I am working to support that and I am grateful that the Government is engaged in that proposal.

As others have said, the Berwick Bank development is connected to that work. I have previously raised in Parliament the issue of consenting times, so I welcome the planning hub proposals in the programme for government. That is an important step forward.

Colleagues should also remember that the concerns that RSPB Scotland raised about Berwick Bank relate to the biodiversity challenge that we face. If we are going to have passion for increasing our renewable energy production and protecting biodiversity, sometimes those matters have to be mutually considered.

Sarah Boyack: That is an excellent point. It is key that, when we do renewables, we also do biodiversity and tackle the nature crisis. Given the decades of experience that we have, if we shared best practice and experience on what works best for animals, birds and our natural environment, would that help to move that work on and get renewables going?

Ben Macpherson: I cannot speak on individual applications, because I am not close enough to the detail, but I envisage that an important balance of consideration is being undertaken with regard to the Berwick Bank proposal. I strongly support what that could unlock for the Vestas proposals in the port of Leith.

Whether it is in relation to the port of Leith or more widely—although I can speak for my constituency in particular—the skills that will be required to meet the demands of those new opportunities really matter. That is why I welcome the post-school education and skills reform bill, having considered such matters on the Education, Children and Young People Committee with others who are in the chamber today.

We really need to press ahead to make sure that our young people benefit from such huge opportunities. The work of those brilliant companies and the proposals that are being taken forward in our country can be realised through the hard work and talent of our people.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): We move to closing speeches.

16:30

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The Government's motion refers to

“concrete actions to accelerate the transition”.

That is certainly a description of what is needed from a green industrial strategy; sadly, in my view, it is also a description of what is missing from it.

I do not intend to focus too much on the fundamental economic differences that we have. Greens, in particular, have a critique of the predilection for economic growth as an end in itself. For us, there is direct conflict between growth and sustainability as objectives in an economy. However, the fact that the green industrial strategy emphasises growth over sustainability is not a great surprise, given that that

is the fundamental difference not just between the Greens and the SNP but between the Greens and every other party in the chamber.

However, even from a perspective that sees green industry as an alternative way of delivering growth in an economy as polluting industries decline, the strategy is lacking. Fundamentally, it offers no clear path away from fossil fuel industries—the dirty, polluting industries of the dying economy. The focus on carbon capture, utilisation and storage, and on fossil hydrogen, emphasises the problem for me. If both those technologies were to come to pass and to deliver on the scale that the Scottish Government clearly has in mind for them, they would lock us in to our overreliance on a fossil fuel economy and on the on-going extraction of fossil fuels.

During the debate, somebody—I apologise that I have forgotten who—made the point that plastics, paints and chemical feedstocks also come from hydrocarbons. The idea that those hydrocarbons will continue to be extracted if we stop using them for energy and only use them for other purposes is not a viable proposition. I do not think that we would find an oil and gas major in the world that would accept the idea that it carry on investing in extracting hydrocarbons without being able to use them as fuel.

Grangemouth is a clear example of the vulnerability and precarity of our economy through its overexposure to and overreliance on fossil fuel. Members from all parties have spoken of their concern for the community, the workforce and their families, who are now left high and dry without a clear proposition of how a just transition will be brought about.

However, Grangemouth is far from the only community in that position. I make the comparison with Longannet, to go back more than a decade. People had known for years that Scotland's last coal-fired power station was going to close—should close, would close, had to close—if we were to have any chance at all of reducing our carbon emissions. Despite knowing that, the Scottish Government, local government, the owners and—I am sad to say—even the union at the time kept on saying, “We're fully committed to the long-term future of the plant.” If we were serious about a just transition, the last 10 years of the operation of that plant should have been dedicated to investment in what the community needed when it closed. Sadly, what we got instead was that full commitment to its long-term future until the date for its closure was announced, which was followed by a decision to set up a task force.

That is exactly what we are seeing again right now, although I am not making a direct comparison between Grangemouth and Longannet, because there are other ways that we

could repurpose the Grangemouth plant. The issue is not about closure, which was a clear expectation. The issue is the need for a just transition. That has been a clear expectation for years, yet it is utterly lacking. That is the case not just for Grangemouth; detailed just transition plans for other communities that depend on such fuels are also utterly lacking from the green industrial strategy.

Other things are missing as well. Demand reduction has been mentioned in relation to heat in buildings by my colleague Lorna Slater, by Sarah Boyack and by one or two other members. It is worth acknowledging that the risk to jobs at Mitsubishi in Livingston results principally from a decline in the export market. Mitsubishi has been exporting heat pumps to other European countries, and that demand has not kept pace with expectations. The company has invested in production for domestic demand, and if the UK and Scottish Governments can work together to find a solution that protects those jobs, I wish them well.

However, the long-term viability of the incredible opportunity that the heat in buildings programme gives us will be realised only if the Scottish Government has the political will to face down the critics on its own back benches and regulate with great ambition to say that it is serious about the heat in buildings agenda. That will create the conditions for investment in skills, capacity and the supply chain, and in the innovation that is already happening.

Demand reduction needs to relate to resources as well as energy. The potential for repair and reuse skills becoming an important part of our circular economy needs to be part of our approach.

Finally, there is nothing in the green industrial strategy on ownership, decentralisation or the risks of financialisation. Some members slightly turned their nose up when Richard Leonard was making some very important and serious points on that issue. However, I do not want to swap a bunch of multinational fossil fuel companies for a bunch of multinational renewables companies. I want the agenda to be one that ushers in a new economy that is fundamentally more equal and that does not allow the wealth that needs to be invested in the green transition to be hoarded by a few billionaire tax exiles.

16:37

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour welcomes the publication of the long-promised and oft-delayed green industrial strategy—it was promised at the start of the parliamentary session. We are in a global race to

compete in renewable energies, and other countries have not been wasting their time as the Scottish Government has been. With every year that passes, it becomes less likely that Scotland can become a world leader in any of those industries. Some of that imperative is highlighted in the strategy, particularly when it addresses where to seize the opportunities in floating offshore wind.

Sarah Boyack pointed out the plethora of other key policy documents on which industry and investment rely that have been long delayed by the Government. I hope that we can see some of them soon, and perhaps with a bit more notice, as other members have mentioned.

Delays have been a common theme throughout the debate—critically, delays in permitting some of those developments. Ben Macpherson set out some of the challenges and opportunities very well. The Deputy First Minister—rightly—cites the Government's restrictions on what it can say about significant applications that are in place, but that does not negate the fact that they are taking far too long to be dealt with. She will, I hope, reflect on the implementation plan for the strategy—on what we can do, in legal and resource terms, to ensure that implementation happens.

The SNP has failed to live up to the promises that it has made in this area. A decade ago, the Scottish Government wanted us to be the green energy capital of Europe, with around 28,000 jobs in offshore wind alone; by 2021, we had an estimated 3,100 full-time jobs in offshore wind. Those were lofty aims, but the Government's failure to give a strategic direction to industry for a decade means that we have too often been idling while other countries have pulled ahead. The reality is that value chain investment is always about the employment that it can generate and the wage packets that it can provide for people.

Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government stood before Parliament to make the now annual announcement of emergency budget cuts, with nearly £1 billion in cuts and adjustments. At the heart of that was the £460 million being poured into the SNP's black hole, instead of being invested in public services. I was reminded of a quote from one Kate Forbes MSP, who said, back in March:

"We have often lamented the way in which, during the past 30 years, revenues from oil and gas have been squandered on annual running costs, rather than on establishing a sovereign wealth fund ... What plans does the Scottish Government have to ensure that we will not lament a similar situation happening with options fees from our great renewables potential in 30 years' time?"—[*Official Report*, 27 March 2024; c 14.]

The Deputy First Minister did not have to wait for 30 years; some 30 weeks later, she was losing the

debate in the Cabinet. Does the Deputy First Minister agree with Kate Forbes MSP or with the incompetent finance secretary about what should happen to those moneys?

Even today, we had protestations from the First Minister about the financial situation that, supposedly—as he said to Parliament—necessitated in-year cuts to his budget. That was fundamentally untrue. All the independent experts—the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the Fraser of Allander Institute, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Audit Scotland—agree that all that was long predicted and that it was up to this Government to get a grip of it. That is how we get proper, steady investment in the kind of programmes that are set out in parts of the document.

There is huge potential in that area. As Willie Rennie did, I recently spent some time on a boat out to the Seagreen wind farm—fortunately, not with Maurice Golden. It is inspiring, and is vital to our clean energy mission across the UK for reducing carbon emissions. However, we have to note that almost none of it was made here. Simply not enough of it belongs to us—as a country and as citizens. We should have stakes in such projects, because foreign Governments have, and they will generate billions of pounds for their citizens instead of ours. I agree with Richard Leonard on that. I read much of his work, which he published some 25 years ago, about the shape of our economy and where we want the benefits to flow.

The establishment of the GB energy company is critical to meeting that end. I know that the SNP abstained last week on the creation of that company—goodness only knows why—but I commend to Kevin Stewart the Great British Energy Bill, which sets out that wholly owned public company, and in particular clause 3(2)—

Michelle Thomson: On that point—

Michael Marra: No—I will continue. The question was asked of me from the SNP benches. Clause 3(2) sets out in full the objects that are to be created:

“(a) the production, distribution, storage and supply of clean energy,

(b) the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from energy produced from fossil fuels,

(c) improvements in energy efficiency, and

(d) measures for ensuring the security of the supply of energy.”

That is what GB energy is for. It is being created to enable us to take stakes in such projects, so that we can have benefits for our long-term future as a country.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Michael Marra: I am just closing; I am in my last 30 seconds.

In that, ownership is absolutely clear. We should see a new focus on that kind of community benefit—not £1,000 for the scout hall, but a share of the profits forever. Domestic manufacturing has to be a part of that. That is the real community benefit—jobs, wages and making sure that we can sustain community and country for the long term.

From start to end, the design and handling of the ScotWind process has been a case study in incompetence—from initially pricing the round at £75 million to selling it for a fraction of the price of comparable licences internationally. To use the Deputy First Minister’s term, that money is now being “squandered”. Let us face up to it. We have to ensure that we can invest against some of the aspirations and the risk, or no strategy will deliver the benefits that we need.

16:43

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):

To pick up on a theme of the debate, anyone who spends too much time with Maurice Golden will get themselves into choppy waters.

Members: Oh!

Graham Simpson: As a member for Central Scotland, I, too, have to mention Grangemouth today, because the news has been devastating. I hope that our two Governments can work together to save that facility. I think that it has a future, and I will go on to say why.

The title of the debate is “Growing Scotland’s Green Economy.” Earlier, I asked the Deputy First Minister about the announcement by Alexander Dennis, which is also in my region—it has two plants, in Falkirk and Larbert—that 160 jobs are at risk. In its press release announcing that terrible news, it mentions phase 2 of the Scottish zero emission bus challenge fund—ScotZEB 2.

Members may not be aware of what ScotZEB 2 is. It is a Scottish Government fund for zero emission buses or coaches, so it is very much in keeping with the debate. Alexander Dennis says that

“government zero-emission bus funding has disproportionately benefitted competitors from lower-cost and lower-security economies.”

In a letter to me, Fiona Hyslop confirms that 66 per cent—the majority—of the orders from that fund have gone to China and 17.6 per cent have gone to Alexander Dennis, which is Scotland-based. For me, that is a problem. We have Scottish Government money going to China and

not to Scotland or even the rest of the UK. There is an issue there, and the Scottish Government needs to take a good look at it.

Paul Davies, the managing director of Alexander Dennis, said:

“We are deeply disappointed that the ongoing effect of various government policies”—

he mentions the UK Government, too—

“is now threatening some of these jobs.”

He went on to say:

“Competition ... is healthy, but when taxpayer money is spent with little domestic industrial, economic or employment benefit and bus companies effectively are incentivised to buy from lower-security economies, it creates an incomprehensible dynamic and an uneven playing field.”

That is the effect of that Scottish Government fund. When we are talking about growing Scotland’s green economy, we really need to look closer to home.

I read with interest the green industrial strategy, which was published yesterday. There is some well-intentioned stuff in there. It talks about

“Maximising Scotland’s wind economy ... Developing a self-sustaining carbon capture, utilisation and storage sector ... Supporting green economy professional and financial services, with global reach ... Growing our hydrogen sector”

and

“Establishing Scotland as a competitive centre for the clean Energy Intensive Industries of the future”.

That all sounds good enough, but let us take just one of those examples—hydrogen. The strategy lays out the actions that the Government will take:

“Identify barriers to hydrogen production development ... Encourage domestic demand for renewable and low carbon hydrogen and hydrogen products ... Support the sector to develop new place-based hubs of co-located hydrogen production and demand”

and

“Maximise export opportunities for hydrogen and hydrogen products.”

When we see words such as “identify”, “encourage” and “support” in Government documents, it often means that nothing will actually happen.

Kate Forbes: In part, I agree with the member—I do not love words such as “support” and “encourage”—but I happen to be on the page that he has just read from, and underneath those high-level objectives he will see things that are specific, such as the Aberdeen hydrogen hub, which is a tangible example of the work that we are doing.

Graham Simpson: I can give the Deputy First Minister another idea. I have quoted in committee European Union regulation 2023/1804 on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure. Members will never have heard me say, “Let’s follow the EU”, but I do so on this one, because the regulation says that, by the end of December 2025, there should be one recharging pool at least every 60km—that is 37 miles—on the main road network in the EU.

The regulation also does a number of other things in relation to hydrogen infrastructure for road vehicles, liquefied methane for road transport, electricity supply in ports, electricity for aircraft, and railway infrastructure to include hydrogen and battery power. We are seeing hydrogen fuel stations being installed along main routes throughout Europe—measurable outcomes with measurable carbon emission benefits. If we do that, we create a market. If we create a market, people start to change behaviour.

It is the same with—

Kevin Stewart: Will Graham Simpson give way?

Graham Simpson: Actually, I will not, because I think that I am out of time, and I do not have any extra time.

There are things that we can do, but we are not doing them. We need to consider examples such as that one in order to create a market in hydrogen. If we can create a market in hydrogen, we can benefit places such as Grangemouth. It is the same with sustainable aviation fuel.

It is clear that, despite what the cabinet secretary claimed earlier, the Scottish Government’s record in climate change is poor. It has missed target after target, as Maurice Golden said. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill will not change the climate—the title is a misnomer. We do not know when carbon budgets will be set, we do not know what the new level of emissions reduction ambition will be, and the Government will be able to produce a climate change plan whenever it likes. Warm words will not cool the climate, but action might.

16:50

Kate Forbes: Well, I think that it has been a good debate. Members obviously do not have the same level of confidence as I do in their ability to read, digest and pontificate on a document that has been published a day before. I acknowledge that Graham Simpson did have time to read and to digest the strategy. I am very happy to pick up with colleagues over the coming weeks or, indeed, months once they have had a chance to read it,

too. However, I am not entirely confident that members' speeches would be that much different if they had had the opportunity to read and digest it before pontificating on it.

Richard Leonard: Does the Deputy First Minister accept that the Scottish Trades Union Congress has read "Green Industrial Strategy" as it was consulted about it? If so, how does she respond to the STUC saying that

"This is yet another example of government strategy that talks up potential without matching it with the necessary policy"?

Kate Forbes: I am delighted that Richard Leonard has put on the record the fact that we have engaged with partners and stakeholders in advance of the strategy's publication. The comments that they have made in public reflect comments and discussions that we had in private, although those were in more detail. The point that I made to them privately, which I will put on the record now, is that the document very much needs to be seen as one in a suite of documents.

What are we doing with this document? I know that many members have given suggestions and ideas about things that are missing from it. However, it cannot be an all-consuming document that does absolutely everything and namechecks everybody. The point of it is to be, in essence, a window into Scotland.

We hear time and again from investors and developers that we are not clear enough on our priority areas. That is one of the criticisms that came through from the investor panel: we must be clear about what we want to achieve and we must focus in on a few areas, and that is what we seek to do. The strategy will sit alongside the just transition plan; they have different audiences and are focused on achieving slightly different aims. This is very much a prospectus for potential investment.

On some of the other commentary that we have heard, I note that many members have made the point that Scotland has unrivalled natural resources, which I hope is a point on which we can all agree. However, the key is whether that creates jobs here in Scotland or overseas in other countries, and I accept that that is one of the biggest challenges for us to combat on the cusp of the green industrial revolution.

I see great examples of businesses and organisations that are doing that already. For example, in response to Willie Rennie, I mentioned Flowcopter, which builds autonomous air systems that will completely change the nature of the industry. As its chief executive put it to me yesterday, Flowcopter is a Scottish business in the Scottish supply chain and it is based in Scotland. It will completely disrupt the industry and, in

essence, make it cheaper to replace helicopters and safer when it comes to servicing the offshore energy industry.

We have to acknowledge what was at times exhausting negativity in certain comments but then rise above it to identify where things are working well and look to replicate that as the norm.

Lorna Slater is someone whom I have long respected—few in the chamber have the lived and professional experience that she has—so I take her comments on the green industrial strategy very seriously. She made a comment that I think gets to the heart of what we need to do. She said that, where private money is available, we should not displace that with public funding. At a time when there is limited public capital funding, it is absolutely imperative that that public funding is spent on public goods and public benefit, and that it delivers a return for the nation in a way that is sustainable and creates fairness.

That is why, in the green industrial strategy in particular, we endeavour to attract private investment in areas where the public penny cannot be spent. We will look at how we can do more to attract private investment in the right areas, in accordance with our priorities, in a way that delivers public benefit for communities, but we need to do that at a time when our public finances are extremely stretched. We have seen in the past week just how stretched they are.

Patrick Harvie: Will the Deputy First Minister come on to address the economic arguments that were made in relation to, for example, the hoarding of wealth by the super-rich—by billionaire tax exiles such as Jim Ratcliffe, who has failed the community of Grangemouth so grievously? Is that not a fundamental reason why Governments do not have the resources that they need in order to be able to invest in the green transition? Will the Government come on to address that issue of financialisation and privatisation, which is at the heart of the economic problems that we are facing?

Kate Forbes: In part, I agree with the argument that our natural assets in renewable energy must go towards delivering public good for the nation. We can see a different example of the same principle right now across the Highlands and Islands, where, as Edward Mountain mentioned, communities are seeing the privatisation of a natural asset but are not benefiting directly from that. We need to protect against that, in sharp contrast to what has happened before. Mr Harvie gave the example of Grangemouth.

On where we go next, it is a huge relief that would-be or potential investors appear to listen less to the Opposition and more to the facts, which is why they are interested in investing in Scotland.

We have made it clear in the green industrial strategy and in other documents that we have published that we expect investors who want to come and invest in Scotland to do so in a way that is consistent with our values and in a way that delivers a public good and creates good, well-paid jobs.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the Deputy First Minister take an intervention?

Kate Forbes: I think that I am running out of time, but go for it.

Douglas Lumsden: I will be brief. The Deputy First Minister has talked about investment coming in. What would help with that would be the release of the energy strategy. We were told that it was almost ready just before the general election, but it has been delayed. When will that strategy come out? Will it remove the presumption against oil and gas developments?

Kate Forbes: Mr Lumsden will be able to read that strategy when it is published. I cannot give him a specific date right now, but it is part of the suite of documents that we want to publish as quickly as possible. “Green Industrial Strategy” is the first of those documents.

I appreciate that I am running out of time, but, in my final minute, I will touch on a point that Michael Marra made—not just because I am delighted to have been quoted, but because I want to talk specifically about GB energy. We have had some really good engagement with the UK Government on GB energy. The point that I made to Michael Shanks in the first communication that we had was that we are willing to engage with GB energy. The first of the two things that we want in response is for the Scottish devolved institutions to be treated with parity. We want Crown Estate Scotland to be given the same respect and the same powers that the Crown Estate is given elsewhere in the UK, and to be involved in the same dialogue.

Secondly, we want GB energy to act as a boost for Scotland and to work with initiatives that are already happening. Rather than GB energy coming in and duplicating work that is already under way, we want it to come in alongside that work and build partnerships. Those are the two conditions that I set out, and which I hope will be delivered.

In summary, the green industrial strategy will deliver on our objectives, there is much more work to be done, everything is in implementation, and I look forward to working with all who have a stake in delivering a just transition and maximising prosperity for this generation and the next.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): That concludes the debate on the programme for government—growing Scotland’s green economy.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are four questions to be put as a result of today’s business.

I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Douglas Lumsden is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Sarah Boyack and Lorna Slater will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-14431.2, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, which seeks to amend motion S6M-14431, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland’s green economy, 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.

17:01

Meeting suspended.

17:03

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Douglas Lumsden is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Sarah Boyack and Lorna Slater will fall.

We come to the vote on amendment S6M-14431.2, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, which seeks to amend motion S6M-14431 in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland’s green economy. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I tried to connect, but the app would not work. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)

Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (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)

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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dorman, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caitness, 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) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-14431.2, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, is: For 30, Against 95, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Sarah Boyack is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Lorna Slater will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-14431.3, in the name of Sarah Boyack, which seeks to amend motion S6M-14431, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland's green economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect to the app. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: I confirm that your vote was recorded.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: I confirm that your vote was recorded. [*Interruption.*]

Bear with us for a moment, colleagues.

With regard to the points of order made by Clare Haughey and Angela Constance, I confirm that there has been an error and that those votes will now be recorded.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 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)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 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)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

(SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
 (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-14431.3, in the name of Sarah Boyack, is: For 56, Against 70, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-14431.1, in the name of Lorna Slater, which seeks to amend motion S6M-14431, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland's green economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 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-Innes, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)

Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 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)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 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)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 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)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) [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) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 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 118, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-14431, in the name of Kate Forbes, on the programme for government—growing Scotland’s green economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

The Acting Minister for Climate Action (Alasdair Allan): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app did not connect. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Dr Allan. We will ensure that that is recorded.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I think that I voted, but then my app kind of unrefreshed. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: I can confirm that your vote was 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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 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) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)

Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 35, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the actions outlined in the Programme for Government 2024-25 to grow the economy, eradicate child poverty, invest in Scotland's public services, and tackle the climate and nature emergencies; welcomes the publication of the Green Industrial Strategy to ensure that Scotland and its communities benefit economically from the global transition to net zero, including the creation of good, well-paid jobs; acknowledges the need to translate Scotland's strengths into competitive advantages in the global race; agrees that actions to promote investment, attract and develop a skilled workforce, support fair work and encourage innovation are

essential for transforming Scotland's economy, and recognises that, by laying out concrete actions to accelerate the transition to net zero and position the green economy for long-term success, the Green Industrial Strategy will help build internationally competitive clusters in sectors such as onshore and offshore wind, carbon capture and storage, and green professional services.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 17:15.

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Members and other meeting participants who wish to suggest corrections to their contributions should contact the Official Report.

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