



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Wednesday 12 June 2019**

**Session 5**



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**Wednesday 12 June 2019**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>LUNG HEALTH</b> .....	1
<i>Motion debated—[Miles Briggs].</i>	
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con) .....	1
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	4
Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab) .....	5
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con) .....	7
The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick).....	8
<b>PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME</b> .....	13
<b>TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY</b> .....	13
Road Freight .....	13
Strategic Transport Projects Review .....	14
ScotRail Services (Glasgow) .....	15
Road Network (South Ayrshire).....	17
Rail Services (East Renfrewshire Passengers).....	17
FirstGroup (Meetings).....	19
A77 (Safety).....	19
Alloa to Stirling Rail Service (Passenger Numbers).....	21
<b>JUSTICE AND THE LAW OFFICERS</b> .....	21
Police Scotland (Community Safety).....	21
Prison Estate Review (Glasgow) .....	23
Cashback for Communities Programme (Stirling) .....	25
Female Prisoners (Highlands).....	25
Addiction Recovery Services (Prison Estate).....	28
Serious Violent Crime .....	29
<b>SCOTTISH GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS 2017</b> .....	30
<i>Statement—[Roseanna Cunningham].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham)...	30
<b>VETERANS STRATEGY (UPDATE)</b> .....	42
<i>Statement—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey) .....	42
<b>CENSUS (AMENDMENT) (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 3</b> .....	53
<i>Motion moved—[Fiona Hyslop].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop) .....	53
Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con) .....	57
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....	59
Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green) .....	61
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD).....	64
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	66
Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con) .....	68
Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP) .....	69
Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP).....	71
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab).....	72
Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP) .....	73
Claire Baker .....	75
Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	77
Fiona Hyslop .....	79
<b>BUSINESS MOTION</b> .....	82
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION</b> .....	85
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	86

<b>HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES</b> .....	89
<i>Motion debated—[Johann Lamont].</i>	
Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab) .....	89
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP) .....	92
Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con) .....	93
James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab) .....	94
Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con) .....	95
The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell) .....	97

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 12 June 2019

[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:15]

## Lung Health

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** Good afternoon. I am glad that we have all remembered to be here at this strange time.

The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16939, in the name of Miles Briggs, on love your lungs week. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes Love Your Lungs Week, which takes place from 17 to 23 June 2019; understands that lung disease is a major challenge for the NHS, with lung cancer being the most common individual cause of death in Scotland, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease being the third most common; believes that lung disease places a huge burden on those who have the condition, as well as on their loved ones; notes that the theme of this year's Love Your Lungs Week is early diagnosis; understands that the British Lung Foundation's online breath test, which seeks to raise awareness of the early warning signs of lung disease, has been taken by over 460,000 people across the UK; notes the importance of early diagnosis to help people live well with lung disease, and celebrates the work being carried out by researchers, clinicians and charities, such as the British Lung Foundation, to encourage everyone to love their lungs.

13:15

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** In Parliament, it is always the quality of the debate and not the quantity of members present at members' business debates that matters, but I am grateful to colleagues across the chamber for signing my motion and allowing this debate to take place ahead of love your lungs week.

I thank the British Lung Foundation, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland and Cancer Research UK for the useful briefings provided ahead of the debate, and I commend all three organisations for their excellent work across Scotland and the United Kingdom. Just minutes ago, health spokesmen from across the parties were in the Parliament's gym observing the rehabilitation sessions that Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland provide. Running from the gym to the chamber is maybe why we are a wee bit out of breath.

As my motion makes clear, lung disease is a massive challenge for our national health service and a huge burden for those individuals who have

the condition, as well for as their loved ones. Lung cancer is the biggest single cause of death in Scotland. Each year, it is responsible for 7.1 per cent of all deaths—about 4,100 of our fellow Scots—and it remains the most common cancer for both men and women. Chronic lung disease, which is non-cancerous, accounts for 6 per cent of all deaths in Scotland, with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease the main contributor to those deaths.

The ban on smoking in public places and other measures designed to cut smoking rates will continue to make a significant difference going forward, but it is concerning that recent figures indicate that COPD mortality is on the rise especially among women in Scotland and that there is an expectation that more people will present with COPD in later life.

Estimates from the University of Edinburgh suggest that the cost of treating COPD alone in the NHS in Scotland will rise from £182 million in 2016 to £207 million by 2030, so we really need to address this issue. Today, there are about 141,000 COPD patients, and that number is increasing each year. COPD also accounts for more than 127,000 hospital bed days across our NHS annually. Therefore, I welcome that the key theme of this year's love your lungs week is the importance of early diagnosis, as early diagnosis can, of course, be vital for successful treatment and wellbeing.

We need to get the message across that breathlessness should not just be dismissed as a normal part of ageing, but should be investigated by a medical professional. The British Lung Foundation's breath test, which was launched in January 2016, is an online test that gives tailored advice based on individual responses, and it has been a great success. Since its launch, more than 525,000 people in the UK have used it, including 52,000 people in Scotland. An analysis of the responses of more than 355,000 people who used it indicated that 71 per cent were 50 years old or older and 18 per cent were smokers. Twenty per cent of people reported limiting breathlessness, of whom 29 per cent had not sought medical advice before taking the test.

I hope that MSP colleagues can help spread the word about the breath test and encourage people who are worried about breathlessness to take it, get the advice that they may need and engage with their general practitioner.

The British Heart Foundation and Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland are campaigning for more investment in pulmonary rehabilitation for patients. I give my strong backing to their campaigns. PR combines physical exercise with education, advice and support. The treatment is proven to be clinically effective and cost effective in reducing

hospital admissions, and it helps to improve fitness and strength and supports people to self-manage. It is a key part of clinical guidelines for treating COPD and it supports people to manage their conditions at home.

However, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland estimates that there is currently capacity for pulmonary rehab programmes for fewer than just 3,000 Scots, when almost 70,000 people across our country have COPD and could benefit from PR. That is despite Audit Scotland suggesting that four bed days per person could be saved by their completing a PR programme, with a potential cost saving of £2,000 per person. Doubling the current capacity of rehab programmes would therefore mean a potential cost saving to our NHS of almost £10 million. I would be grateful if, when he is closing the debate, the minister could set out what plans the Scottish Government has to expand PR programmes, given the huge potential that they offer for people with COPD and for the finances of our NHS.

I know from what I heard earlier today—and, as I said, from our workout in the Parliament's gym—that there is cross-party interest in the issue. As a member of the Health and Sport Committee, I also know that my colleagues Brian Whittle and Emma Harper have consistently championed the issue.

I will use this opportunity to highlight some of the positive work that is taking place to develop services and to support people with lung conditions in Scotland. I was recently made aware of the work of Andrew Deans, who is the lead research nurse in respiratory medicine here in Edinburgh. With his team, which is based in NHS Lothian, he is undertaking work with patients with alpha-1-antitrypsin deficiency. It is a rare disease that affects both the liver and the lungs. It affects people of all ages and, sadly, the average age of death in Scotland is around 57. There is currently no treatment that is licensed in the UK, and no centralised centre of expertise. Given that AATD is often overlooked within respiratory conditions, today's debate is an important opportunity to raise awareness of it, and of the need to increase the political and financial support for a national disease registry and national specialist services around that. I would be happy to share with ministers the information that I have received—in fact, I emailed the minister the information this morning. I believe that we can see real improvement and further discussions on the area of national service.

I wish all those who are involved in love your lungs week 2019 every success. I hope that it genuinely raises awareness of lung conditions, and of the need for people to seek diagnosis and support as quickly as possible. Again, I pay tribute to all the charities that are involved in lung health. I

know that they are eagerly awaiting the publication of the Government's new respiratory care action plan, which I hope will ensure that we can make real progress in tackling the prevalence and treatment of lung conditions in the years ahead.

13:22

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate and I thank Miles Briggs for securing it.

On world COPD day in October 2017, I was able to raise awareness of COPD here in the chamber. That day allowed us to focus on lung health and ill health and to keep the issue right up there on the agenda, which is what is needed in order to address lung ill health in Scotland.

As we have heard, love your lungs week runs from 17 to 23 June and is an opportunity for all of us across the chamber to set an example to others about the importance of taking lung health seriously. The lungs breathe life into our bodies. Every breath that we take draws air into our lungs, and most of us do that unconsciously.

Lung health is an area of great importance to me, as convener of the cross-party group on lung health, and as a registered nurse. Indeed, since the cross-party group's creation—which was suggested to me, and which I was prodded about, by my respiratory nurse consultant sister, who is studying for her PhD in the use of technology to assist persons with respiratory conditions—it has been instrumental in pushing lung health up the agenda. We have submitted several parliamentary questions that were taken in the chamber, secured garden lobby and committee room events and even had the first pulmonary rehabilitation choir—The Warblers—singing and demonstrating breathing techniques, all of which helped to promote better diaphragmatic strength and better breathing for better, healthier lungs.

All that work has contributed to awareness raising, which is key to tackling the root lung health problems that are seen across Scotland. This Parliament has now seen the Scottish Government's creation of a lung health task force—chaired by Dr Tom Fardon—which is creating a national respiratory action plan for the improvement of people's lungs across Scotland. I am pleased that Dr Fardon will provide an update to the cross-party group at a future meeting. Its next meeting will be Tuesday 18 June at half past 12.

I have been involved in local work to raise awareness of and, indeed, to support the better delivery of lung health treatment across Scotland, and I have participated in a local tai chi class with the huffin puffins, which was organised by Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's Katherine Byrne.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we have among the highest levels of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in Scotland. In August 2017, I was invited to officially launch the BREATH—Border and regions airways training hub—project at Crichton campus in Dumfries. The BREATH project involves a strong cross-border partnership that includes the Dundalk Institute of Technology in the Republic of Ireland, Queen's University Belfast and the University of the West of Scotland. The project is funded by €7.7 million of European Union Interreg funding, and it has established a world-class cluster of researchers who will help to look at the causes, treatment and prevention of COPD.

COPD is an incurable respiratory condition that is characterised by progressive airflow reduction, breathing difficulties and lung damage, and it includes diseases such as emphysema, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and many others. It can have a devastating impact on a person's life, and it is right that we research it further.

Miles Briggs described the economic burden. In 2011, the annual economic burden of lung health conditions across the EU was estimated at approximately €141.4 billion. COPD-related hospital admissions are particularly prevalent across Scotland and Ireland.

I am pleased to support the work of the integration joint board in Dumfries and Galloway to create a potential lung health hub. I am sure that that exciting programme will provide major insights into lung disease so that we can promote better breathing and better living for all.

13:27

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Miles Briggs for securing this important debate ahead of love your lungs week next week. I also thank Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland, Cancer Research UK and the British Lung Foundation for their briefings and for all the work that they do all year round. Miles Briggs touched on that.

I was pleased to sponsor the British Lung Foundation's event in Parliament last month, which focused on research and innovation and which the minister attended.

I was struck by what Emma Harper said about her sister and the important work that she is doing. A lot is going on that is positive and dynamic.

I was pleased to sponsor Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's event on pulmonary rehabilitation in the Parliament's gym today—that event explains why we were all a little breathless when we arrived. That event emphasises the fact that we come together on such issues and that different parties are working on issues that affect many people

across Scotland. I pay tribute to Emma Harper for the work that she leads for the cross-party group on lung health, which is really important.

Other members have mentioned COPD. We know that self-management for such conditions is critical to living well for as long as possible. However, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland has estimated that there is a significant level of unmet need for pulmonary rehab. We have just come from the gym and have heard about the difference that that makes to people's lives. The current capacity is for fewer than 6,000 people in Scotland, but almost 70,000 people who live with COPD could benefit. Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland has said that an investment of £1.47 million—we are not talking about huge sums of money—would double the current capacity of rehab programmes, from around 5,600 people to around 10,500 people. That seems to be a relatively small investment for such great rewards that would benefit many people. I would be grateful to hear today what the minister thinks about the event and what the Government will do.

We have heard some alarming statistics. Lung cancer is the biggest single cause of death in Scotland, and lung disease is responsible for 700,000 hospital admissions across the UK every year. Behind those figures are people, families and friends who are affected by poor lung health.

One of my grans sadly died of lung cancer. She was a smoker and spent much of her adult life working in pubs and working men's clubs, so she inhaled other people's smoke, too. As we know, this year we are celebrating and reflecting on 20 years of the Scottish Parliament, and the policy achievement that has been mentioned the most is the legislation that banned smoking in public places. For me, that is one of the most ambitious policies that the Parliament has pursued, and it has transformed workplaces and the places where we socialise.

Therefore, we know what can happen when the Parliament is focused, bold and ambitious, so we must apply the same ambition to other measures that will improve respiratory health. The development of a respiratory care action plan for Scotland is vital in order to translate research priorities into real benefits for patients. There has been some concern that progress has been slow, so I hope that the minister will be able to give us an update.

We are blessed to have fantastic organisations that ensure that we raise and champion the issues, and that give people with lived experience the opportunity to have their voices and experiences heard. They are able to persuade politicians to get into the Parliament gym, although we were in our working clothes—our suits and, in my case, our heels—so we will need to go back to

do a proper work-out. It is really important that we continue to engage with all such organisations. Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland is not talking about a huge amount of investment, but it would make a huge difference. That is the kind of difference that we can make if we continue to work together.

13:31

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I add my thanks to my colleague Miles Briggs for bringing the debate to the chamber and securing time to shine a light on a very important health issue for Scotland. I also add my thanks to the agencies for providing briefing papers prior to the debate and for the work that they continue to do throughout Scotland and the UK.

Although lung cancer mortality rates are decreasing due to research, earlier identification and developments in treatment, lung cancer is still the biggest single cause of death in Scotland, and the number of instances is increasing. Cancer Research UK has identified lung cancer as one of the four “cancers of unmet need”, given that there has been limited improvement in the past decade compared with that for other cancers.

I will focus on smoking, as it is obviously the biggest preventable cause of cancer—particularly lung cancer. As has been mentioned, Scotland’s smoking laws have been world leading, and it is to the Parliament’s credit that such laws were pushed through, with average smoking rates continuing to drop.

However, averages do not tell the whole story. Only 9 per cent of those in the top 20 percentile in Scotland smoke, but more than 34 per cent of those in the lowest percentile smoke. That suggests that there is still much work to do in this arena, particularly given that smoking is directly associated with a much higher risk of not only cancers but diabetes, COPD, strokes, dementia and heart disease. We have not managed to have the positive effect that we would all wish to have in those demographics. Life expectancy differentials between different socioeconomic groups remain stubbornly high.

Cancer Research UK’s briefing says:

“Smoking is a greater cause of health inequality than social position.”

On top of that, access to smoking cessation support varies across socioeconomic groups. People who are seeking to quit are more likely to succeed if they are from the least deprived backgrounds, so there is work to be done in that regard.

The drive needs to be in prevention and in trying to stop people starting to smoke in the first place. Once again, I highlight the role of physical activity

and sport in the equation. I have said many times that the cardiovascular system develops primarily in the early years, which lays the foundation for health in adult life. That is why it is vital that we continue to highlight the dangers to infants of passive smoking. Participation in physical activity will make it more unlikely that a young person will start smoking in the first place.

Sport and the promotion of sporting success—such as that of the women’s football team at the world cup, not to mention the women’s netball team at its world cup—along with giving our children the opportunity to participate and making it easier for them to do so should be central pieces in the cancer prevention jigsaw. However, we are nowhere near adopting that approach, which is why I continue to raise the matter in the chamber. I am increasingly frustrated by how far away we are from getting this right.

I want to mention my position on the e-cigarettes discussion. I recognise Cancer Research UK’s position on the issue, which is that evidence suggests that e-cigarettes are safer than tobacco—I prefer to use the phrase “not as dangerous to your health”—and that they have a place in smoking cessation programmes. However, I note that Cancer Research UK does not support regulation such as legislation to ban their use indoors because there is not yet evidence to support such legislation. I disagree with that position. As far as I am concerned, inhaling into the lungs any foreign particulates that are not medical can have only a detrimental effect on the health of the lungs. I cannot support a wait-and-see position.

My call—again—is for prevention to be at the forefront of policy, which means encouraging our young people not to smoke in the first place, and for smoking cessation services to be universally available across our society and to especially target the areas of greatest deprivation. For goodness’ sake, let us also make sure that opportunities to be physically active are available to all, irrespective of personal circumstances and background.

13:36

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** I am delighted to be able to contribute to this important debate by responding on behalf of the Government. I thank Miles Briggs for lodging the motion and I thank members for supporting it and allowing it to be debated. The debate provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer and other lung diseases, and on the steps that we can all take to reduce the impact on those who are living with those conditions. I am grateful to members across the

chamber for their contributions. This is genuinely one of the areas where I am keen—and I know that others are keen—for us to work together in order to make the progress that Monica Lennon mentioned.

Figures that the British Lung Foundation has provided show that, in the UK, someone dies from a lung disease every five minutes and lung disease is responsible for over 700,000 hospital admissions across the country each year. Those statistics really bring home the impact of such conditions on individuals, families and the population as a whole.

On lung cancer, the Scottish Government is determined to play its part by tackling all forms of cancer and ensuring that the right support is in place to help those who are affected by the disease. Significant progress has been made over the past 10 years. Overall, the cancer mortality rate has fallen by 11 per cent. However, more needs to be done to reduce the prevalence of the risk factors that are associated with cancer and lung conditions.

The current statistics from Cancer Research UK tell us that lung cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK. As we all know—and as we heard in the debate, particularly from Brian Whittle—smoking is the primary preventable cause of lung cancer in the UK. Each year, tobacco use is associated with 100,000 smoking-attributable hospital admissions and 9,000 smoking-attributable deaths in Scotland, which represents a fifth of all deaths.

Our tobacco control action plan, which was published in 2018, sets out our determination to prevent the uptake of smoking among young people and to provide the best possible support for those who want to give up. That is why we have introduced a challenging target to be tobacco free by 2034. Our aim is to create a generation of young people who do not want to smoke. That will not be easy, and Brian Whittle was correct to raise the specific challenge of socioeconomic factors in reaching that target.

Our efforts to tackle smoking and the inequalities of smoking have been recognised by Cancer Research UK. In 2018, it recommended that the rest of the UK adopt our approach of targeting stop-smoking services to the least well-off communities, where smoking rates are the highest. That approach is tackling inequalities head on and I am pleased to say that we are making real progress. Fewer than one in five adults now smoke, and the number of 15-year-olds who smoke regularly has dropped by more than two thirds in the past decade and is the lowest since records began.

The most recent figures show that we are making the most progress in deprived areas, where smoking tends to be most prevalent. As Mr Whittle said, we need to continue to target that particular challenge. We are making progress, but it remains a challenge and we need to continue that work.

Smoking is also associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other respiratory conditions. As Emma Harper and other members mentioned, we are currently developing our respiratory care action plan, which will identify the priority areas of respiratory care that are specific to Scotland and recommend actions for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of conditions. I am delighted that the British Heart Foundation and Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland are representing patients in the development of the plan, as that will ensure that the lived experience that Monica Lennon talked about is fully taken into account as we develop the plan. Our aspiration is for the plan to be developed during this year and published towards the end of it.

An important element of respiratory care is pulmonary rehabilitation, which many members have mentioned. As Miles Briggs and others said, pulmonary rehabilitation has a well-established evidence base that clearly shows its benefit in helping to support self-management and to reduce exacerbation and hospital admissions. Pulmonary rehab is already a key recommendation in national clinical guidelines, which we expect national health service boards to follow. I thank Monica Lennon for hosting the pulmonary rehab event today so that members across the Parliament can get a flavour of what it is about.

Members asked how we are going to take forward work on pulmonary rehab. I am pleased to confirm that it will form an important part of our respiratory care action plan for Scotland. It is really important to look at how we can develop the services. There are fantastic examples across Scotland of good pulmonary rehab services. I visited the service in Forfar, where everyone sings the praises of the service that NHS Tayside provides. They are such great folk because, although they said that the service is great for them, they also asked why everyone else cannot have such a good service. That is important.

**Brian Whittle:** Is the minister aware of the stroke physiotherapists in Crosshouse hospital, who have a community-based programme outwith the initial six-week rehabilitation, which is having fantastic results, financially as well as for the individuals?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** It is important that we look at all examples of best practice across Scotland. Some of them will be best practice for a particular

area because of the individuals involved, but others will be things that are working in one place and would work everywhere, so we need to ask why we cannot just do them everywhere. It is always important that we look at best practice and ensure that it feeds into our policies.

**Monica Lennon:** The minister has made what sounds like a welcome commitment. Will it be backed up by an improvement fund such as the one that Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland suggests of around £1.47 million, to increase the current capacity?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Let us get an action plan for Scotland that will work and then we can work out how it can be funded and implemented. There is no point in having an action plan if it is not implemented, so clearly we want to implement it.

We have talked a lot about preventing disease, which is important. Early detection is one of the most important things, so it is important to raise awareness through things such as love your lungs week. The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to supporting such actions.

I think that members across the chamber will agree that prevention is important, but research is essential if we want to make progress. Through the chief scientist office, the Scottish Government has an active programme of engagement with health charities that are working together to fund research. As Monica Lennon mentioned, that includes a partnership with the British Lung Foundation on exciting research into the potential use of existing drugs in the treatment of unresponsive lung cancer.

The high level of expertise in respiratory research in Scotland means that the chief scientist office receives some very high-quality applications in this area, and more than £3.3 million of its funding is currently committed to research into conditions including mesothelioma, respiratory tract infections and bronchiectasis. In addition to directly funding research, we support the running of clinical trials in the NHS through investing in research support infrastructure.

I thank Miles Briggs for highlighting the research that Andrew Deans is undertaking in NHS Lothian. My understanding is that alpha-1-antitrypsin deficiency makes people more vulnerable to the effects of inhaling smoke and other pollutants, which makes it more likely that they will develop conditions such as COPD. Research into the deficiency is therefore very important, and I acknowledge Andrew Deans's work in that area. More generally, I recognise the valuable contribution of research nurses across Scotland.

The chief scientist office's NHS Research Scotland career researcher fellowship scheme supports NHS professionals, including research

nurses, in developing a research career within the NHS by offering dedicated research sessions. That might be something that Andrew Deans wants to consider—it might add to the work that he is already able to do in the NHS.

In closing, I take this opportunity to pay a huge tribute to the support that health charities offer to people living with lung conditions. I also thank all the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly in our NHS to deliver our strategies for cancer and lung disease to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment and support for people with all lung conditions.

The unending commitment of staff and volunteers is invaluable in helping people to manage their diseases.

13:46

*Meeting suspended.*

14:00

*On resuming—*

## Portfolio Question Time

### Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

#### Road Freight

#### 1. **Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):**

To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to move freight off roads and on to rail, in light of it declaring a climate emergency. (S5O-03358)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** Our approach to supporting rail freight is outlined in our rail freight strategy, strengthened by new Network Rail targets to grow rail freight and backed by past and current investment, including a new £25 million control period 6 Scottish strategic rail freight fund and our mode shift grant system. In addition, our draft national transport strategy, which will set out the future direction for transport, reflects the declaration of the global climate emergency with climate change action identified as a priority. It also reiterates the role of transport in helping to deliver the 2045 net zero target.

**Claudia Beamish:** In evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee at stage 2 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, the Freight Transport Association stated:

“At best, we could get about 5 per cent of freight off trucks and on to rail”.—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee*, 28 May 2019; c 57.]

That is concerning. The Scottish Government funds a great deal more road projects than rail projects, which further marginalises rail freight.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that balanced funding is required for better targeting of small freight facilities grants, longer rail overtaking loops, restoration of double track, diversionary routes, gauge clearance and electrification, to name but a few measures?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** That is quite a lot, but never mind.

**Michael Matheson:** As I outlined, we undertake a considerable amount of work to encourage rail freight. I do not know whether it is now official Labour Party policy to cut the roads budget and transfer that money to rail instead.

**Claudia Beamish:** I said “balanced funding”.

**Michael Matheson:** I suspect that, in later questions, members will also ask me to make more investment in roads.

The £25 million that I announced a few weeks ago is a key part of helping to support industry to make the modal shift from road to rail freight, and we will continue to work with the industry to achieve that. We have also set out ambitious targets for Network Rail, to make sure that it is driving that approach forward in a way that sees more going into rail freight. We will continue to do everything that we can to encourage commercial businesses to make use of the rail freight options that are available to them as we work with the rail freight industry to make it an attractive proposition for businesses.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that Prestwick airport is well connected via rail. A huge amount of cargo goes through the airport and, inevitably, on to the road. What is the Government doing to better utilise that rail capacity—specifically, the Falkland junction? At the moment, it is an underused section of railway that could help to provide the modal shift that we need.

**Michael Matheson:** Companies’ decision to use rail freight is a commercial decision, and we provide funding to support them in making the transition. There are several key areas in which we know that there is a possibility of increasing freight—particularly timber transport—and we have taken forward work with the industry to encourage it to do that. My colleague Fergus Ewing chaired a meeting in London with members of the rail freight and forestry industries and Transport Scotland officials to look at how we can create greater connections in those areas. We try to make rail freight as attractive as possible but, ultimately, choosing to use rail freight rather than road freight is a commercial decision that companies make.

#### Strategic Transport Projects Review

2. **Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made with the strategic transport projects review. (S5O-03359)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** The second strategic transport projects review is progressing on schedule. As part of the evidence-gathering stage, Transport Scotland has successfully established 11 regional transport working groups. Those groups demonstrate the collaborative approach that is being taken by the review, and more than 30 stakeholder workshops have been, or will be, held across the country. That follows the publication of the Borders transport corridors study, on 5 March.

I am pleased to confirm that the south-west Scotland transport study will be published in draft format by the end of this month. In addition, later this year, members of the public will have an opportunity to give their input.

**Joan McAlpine:** I look forward to reading the draft plan for the south-west. The Scottish National Party manifesto commits the Government to better links for Dumfries to Scotland's central belt and the motorway, and to improvements on the A75. Will the cabinet secretary indicate how that commitment will be reflected in the STPR?

**Michael Matheson:** As I mentioned, the south-west Scotland transport study will be published in draft form by the end of this month. Part of the work that is being undertaken for that study is a detailed assessment of options to link Dumfries to key markets including the central belt. Emerging findings from that work will feed into the STPR2 process, and we will ensure that it is considered alongside all the other options. I assure Joan McAlpine that it is one of the areas that is being considered as part of that study.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the A737 will be included in the strategic transport projects review, given that it now takes some 8 million vehicles a year, is becoming increasingly congested and needs significant investment from the Manrahead roundabout at Beith to the B787 and from the newly opened Dalry bypass to Kilwinning?

**Michael Matheson:** The recently opened Dalry bypass—on which Kenny Gibson joined me just the other week—the improvements that are currently being constructed at the Den realignment and the design work for improvements on the A737 at Beith are all key commitments of the Scottish Government to invest in the A737 and support the North Ayrshire economy and communities. I reassure the member that the A737 forms part of the trunk route network and that it will be considered for inclusion in the strategic transport projects review 2.

### ScotRail Services (Glasgow)

3. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve the performance of ScotRail services in the Glasgow area. (S5O-03360)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** Further to the answer that I provided to James Kelly in the chamber on 9 May, more than nine out of 10 trains now run on time. In the Glasgow area, the Donovan recommendation for a right-time departure at Milngavie from the December 2018 timetable has seen a public

performance measure improvement across the wider Strathclyde electric network during the peak. Period 9, before the new December timetable, saw PPM at 73.3 per cent, and the latest period 2 PPM is now at 89.9 per cent, which is a marked improvement. However, there is more work to be done, and on-going delivery of the recommendations from the Donovan review and the remedial plan will support further performance improvement in the Glasgow area.

**James Kelly:** The cabinet secretary's answer does not stack up with the experience of passengers in the Rutherglen area, where, according to the latest statistics, 43 per cent of trains are not turning up on time. It is simply not good enough that people are being let down by ScotRail services. Will the cabinet secretary apologise to passengers for the appalling level of service and agree that it is time to call time on the Abellio contract, terminate it and introduce a contract process that puts the network into public hands?

**Michael Matheson:** The figures that I gave James Kelly are factual information on PPM, which is recorded and standard right across the industry. The member will understand that some 60 per cent of all delays and cancellations on the network are the result of infrastructure failures, which are the responsibility of Network Rail. We believe that Network Rail should be accountable to and responsible to this Parliament rather than the United Kingdom Parliament, so that we can address those issues more effectively. Some of the key work around the Williams review is being undertaken in order to do that.

James Kelly can be assured that we will continue to do everything that we can to improve services, including on the Rutherglen line, and to make sure that Network Rail is taking forward the necessary measures for greater reliability on our network. I hope that the Labour Party will get behind us and call for the devolution of Network Rail to this Parliament while the Williams review is considering the matter, so that we can deal with the issues in this Parliament much more effectively.

**Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that a rail line to the airport would certainly improve ScotRail services in Glasgow? Can he explain why the Scottish National Party has cancelled that project again?

**Michael Matheson:** I am sure that Mr Tomkins was here for my previous statement on the matter, and what I set out on that occasion still stands.

### Road Network (South Ayrshire)

4. **John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve the road network in South Ayrshire. (S5O-03361)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the trunk road network in South Ayrshire. Since 2007-08, we have invested more than £66 million in maintenance of the A77 and a further £44 million in maintenance of the A78.

In addition to those maintenance improvements, work is under way on site as part of the £29 million construction contract for the much-needed A77 Maybole bypass. That project will generate significant benefits for local communities and for people who travel from further afield to our key ports and beyond. The new bypass, which is expected to open in summer 2021, will separate local and strategic traffic, thereby relieving congestion in the town, and improving safety and journey time reliability on the A77.

**John Scott:** A decade ago, as part of the Scottish Government's strategic transport projects review, plans were considered for upgrading the A77 around Ayr from single to dual carriageway, and for grade separating the Dutch House, Whitlets and Holmston roundabouts. It was forecast that such improvements would cut congestion levels and result in a reduction of up to 50 per cent in the accident rate. No action has been taken on the proposals in the past decade. Will the cabinet secretary commit to progressing them now?

**Michael Matheson:** I am more than happy to give consideration to those issues, but as Mr Scott will know, we are now into the STPR 2 process. Projects that have not been progressed in the original programme will still be considered as part of STPR 2. There is therefore an opportunity for us to consider the proposals as part of the wider work that is currently being undertaken in the review process.

### Rail Services (East Renfrewshire Passengers)

5. **Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve services for East Renfrewshire train passengers using the East Kilbride line. (S5O-03362)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** Since May, ScotRail has been providing 1,000 extra seats daily on East Kilbride services, which benefits passengers at Busby, Clarkston, Giffnock and Thornliebank. However, existing infrastructure constrains the length, speed and frequency of trains on that route. The Scottish

Government has therefore allocated up to £24.8 million to Network Rail to develop designs for more capacity and carbon-free journeys. Over approximately 18 months, that will identify the right long-term solution, including options for electrification. The development work will focus on providing enhanced connectivity, improved accessibility to stations and better transport integration, with improved park-and-ride facilities and active travel provision.

**Neil Bibby:** Recently, I met ScotRail representatives and passengers at Thornliebank station to discuss issues including overcrowding on the East Kilbride line. A number of passengers asked about the Scottish Government's long-term plans for investment in that line. Further to the announcement that £25 million is to be made available for enhancements, will the cabinet secretary explain exactly what those enhancements will be? Will he clarify whether the Scottish Government is fully committed to the electrification enhancement proposals for the East Kilbride line that were set out in Network Rail's route study?

**Michael Matheson:** The work that we have commissioned Network Rail to undertake on the East Kilbride line will consider issues such as double tracking, extending platform lengths, electrification and improvements to stations to ensure that we can provide greater capacity on the line.

Neil Bibby will recall that the East Kilbride line was one of the key lines that would have been affected had we gone ahead with the Glasgow airport rail link, which would have reduced the capacity to extend the line that he mentions. At the time, I highlighted the negative impact that it would potentially have had on increasing capacity on the East Kilbride line. No doubt that slipped Mr Bibby's mind when he was calling for GARL, at that point.

We need to ensure that we take a balanced approach, so that the investments that we are making in rail—which, in the coming five-year period will be some £4.8 billion—get the infrastructure right for people not only in Renfrewshire and Glasgow, but in East Kilbride.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** For the benefit of my constituents who live in East Renfrewshire, will the cabinet secretary update Parliament on what action has been taken to improve capacity on the Neilston and Barrhead rail lines? Does he agree that electrification of the Barrhead line is an important future objective?

**Michael Matheson:** Since May, 3,000 extra seats have been made available on the Barrhead service. In addition, there are now more four-carriage and six-carriage electric trains on the Neilston service.

In developing our current pipeline of projects, we are fully committed to considering capacity increases on the rail network, together with electrification and other sustainable rolling-stock options. The need to provide decarbonised transport is a key priority for the Government in meeting its climate change challenge. The Neilston and Barrhead lines will be considered for further improvements alongside the other competing interests on our rail network.

### **FirstGroup (Meetings)**

**6. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of FirstGroup. (S5O-03363)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** Scottish Government officials last met representatives of FirstGroup on 4 June.

**Sandra White:** The cabinet secretary will be aware of FirstGroup's significant plans to pursue strategic options, through sale or other means, to separate FirstBus from FirstGroup. What input will the Scottish Government have to those plans? In my constituency and areas throughout Scotland, FirstBus is the first port of call.

**Michael Matheson:** FirstBus has reassured us that services and existing investment plans will continue as normal while the future of the bus business is decided. FirstBus has undertaken to keep us informed of developments, and has said that it will work with its employees and the trade unions to explain its plans and their implications. I assure Sandra White that we will continue to engage with FirstBus on the matter until it has clarity on its plans. We will continue to impress on FirstBus the importance of continuing with services, at present.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the sale of FirstBus offers an ideal opportunity for councils that want to run their own bus services, such as Aberdeen City Council? Will the Government support that?

**Michael Matheson:** It does. Amendment 68 to the Transport (Scotland) Bill, to create Lothian Buses-type schemes, which was passed by the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee today, and which was supported by the Labour Party, is one that I welcome, and which will allow councils to do that.

### **A77 (Safety)**

**7. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve safety on the A77. (S5O-03364)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** We are committed to improving safety on our trunk roads, including the A77. We have invested more than £66 million in the A77 since 2007 to ensure its safe and efficient operation.

Our annual assessment of trunk road safety performance identified the A751 junction between the Holmston and Sandyford Toll roundabouts for further investigation this financial year. We have delivered passively safe chevrons at Monktonhead roundabout and safety speed-management measures from south of Ayr to Ballantrae, and we are progressing a speed limit reduction to 40mph at that location. We are also completing road safety investigation works on the Monktonhead and Dutch House roundabout sections.

**Brian Whittle:** I appreciate the cabinet secretary taking the time to meet my constituent Colin Price and me to discuss Mr Price's campaign to close the gap in safety camera coverage on the A77, following the death of his wife in a collision with a boy racer. Given that much of the 32-mile safety camera stretch of the A77 was judged by the same criteria as were applied to the 2-mile gap in coverage and reached a similar measurement against those criteria, is not it time for common sense to prevail and for the gap to be filled?

**Michael Matheson:** I recognise the work that Mr Whittle has undertaken, along with Mr Price, following the tragic death of Mr Price's wife on a section of the A77. When I met Mr Price, I undertook that we would do a further speed safety audit on the relevant section of the road, and that we would consider the revised criteria for installing safety cameras. Mr Whittle will be aware that the outcome of that work indicates that the section does not meet the national criteria. However, we have considered whether further measures can be introduced in the area, including working with Police Scotland, which is undertaking targeted enforcement action on the route.

I assure Brian Whittle that, when we consider such issues, applying the national criteria is an important element that must be taken into account in determining whether deployment of safety cameras in an area will maximise their potential benefits. That approach is taken, and will continue to be taken, to all the average-speed camera systems that are installed across the trunk road network. However, in individual cases, we always consider whether we can introduce further measures to address issues on particular sections of a road. That has been the case in this instance, but following a further survey, the section does not meet the national criteria for installing average-speed cameras.

### **Alloa to Stirling Rail Service (Passenger Numbers)**

**8. Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how many people have used the Alloa to Stirling rail service since it opened in 2008. (S5O-03365)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** The total number of passengers travelling between Alloa and Stirling since the opening of the line is estimated to have been 4,194,574 until 31 March 2019.

Passengers using the route can now benefit from the Scottish Government's significant investment in electrification of the line, which has enabled the introduction of new electric rolling stock.

The recent timetable change delivered 4,000 additional weekday seats for passengers using Edinburgh/Glasgow to Stirling, Alloa, and Dunblane routes.

**Keith Brown:** I am sure that the cabinet secretary will agree that the success of the service has surpassed all expectations. In the light of the interest in the Longannet site from Talgo, have any discussions taken place about extending the passenger service eastwards from Alloa?

**Michael Matheson:** There is no doubt that the line has been extremely successful and has surpassed expectations. As Keith Brown will be aware, we have engaged directly with Talgo on its potential at the Longannet site. Since it announced that Longannet is its preferred option, we have been working with it on development of a factory that could create up to 1,000 jobs.

One of the options that I have asked Transport Scotland and Network Rail to consider is maximisation of rail connectivity to the site, including the option of extending the existing passenger route east of Alloa, and of electrifying the line to the Longannet site, and potentially beyond it to Dunfermline, if appropriate.

## **Justice and the Law Officers**

### **Police Scotland (Community Safety)**

**1. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that Police Scotland is accessing the necessary skills and resources to keep communities safe. (S5O-03366)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** Recorded crime has fallen by 42 per cent since 2006-07 and non-sexual crimes of violence have fallen by 49 per cent.

The recruitment, training and deployment of police officers is a matter for the chief constable. The police officer quarterly strength data, as at 31 March 2019, shows that there were 17,251 police officers in Scotland, which is an increase of more than 1,000 police officers on the position that we inherited in 2007. That contrasts with a decrease of almost 20,000 over the same time period in England and Wales.

All police officers and staff are highly trained and, through their dedicated service, day in and day out, they keep all our communities safe.

It is the responsibility of the Scottish Police Authority to allocate resources to Police Scotland. The Scottish Government is protecting the police resource budget in real terms, and we have given a 52 per cent uplift in the capital budget.

**Maurice Corry:** We know that the number of special constables in Scotland has more than halved since the creation of Police Scotland. Those officers have been described by Police Scotland as vital, and they undertake high-visibility work, such as patrolling, and are seconded to specialist teams such as road policing and CID. I have been saying for a long time that there is more to be done to exploit the valuable experience of our armed forces veterans in providing them with better routes into policing.

Does the cabinet secretary recognise the enormous capacity that our communities have lost since 2013? Will he commit to looking at the issue in more detail?

**Humza Yousaf:** I do not disagree with the general thrust of the member's question on the valuable work of special constables. I know about it from a personal point of view, because my cousin is a police officer with Police Scotland and started his police career as a special constable. I know the valuable role that special constables play from a personal point of view as well as from a professional point of view.

I hope that Mr Corry will forgive me, but it is important that I restate that these are operational matters for the chief constable. It would be more appropriate for Maurice Corry to take up his issues with Police Scotland directly. If he wishes, I will write to him after this question time session with contact details for the most appropriate person.

I do not, however, wish to take away from the general tenor of Mr Corry's question. I absolutely value the work that special constables do as part of the police family.

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** Thanks to the pressure from the Scottish Government, Police Scotland will now benefit from being able to claim around £25 million a year that was previously paid to the United

Kingdom Government in VAT. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government will continue to press the UK Government for a refund of the £125 million that was paid by Police Scotland in VAT between 2013 and 2018?

**Humza Yousaf:** It was, of course, the Scottish National Party Government-led pressure that got the UK Government to understand that it was treating the Scottish forces unfavourably and unfairly in comparison with the forces in England and Wales.

Having conceded the argument, however, the UK Government has not necessarily put its money where its mouth is, and the £125 million that was taken from Police Scotland in VAT is still to be refunded, as well as the £50 million that was paid by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Every time that a Conservative talks to me about increasing the budget for Police Scotland, it would be nice if they also wrote to the Treasury to ask for our money back.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 2 was not lodged.

#### **Prison Estate Review (Glasgow)**

3. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how it is working with the Scottish Prison Service to review the prison estate in Glasgow. (S5O-03368)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** The Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service are committed to modernising and improving our prison estate. The current priorities are the development of the new female estate, the replacement of HMP Barlinnie and then the new HMP Highland. The Scottish Government has allocated funds to the Scottish Prison Service to allow it to begin the site acquisition process for a replacement for HMP Barlinnie. Site searches began in 2014 and a suitable site has been identified in Provanmill. The planning process has begun and the first public information event was held last week, on Wednesday 5 June.

**Bob Doris:** A second pre-consultation event will take place on 3 July for the HMP Barlinnie replacement, with a view to planning permission in principle being sought by the end of the month and a final decision by Christmas. That is a tight process for such a major development.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the SPS must continue to engage extensively throughout that period with local communities, such as the community in Jerviston in my constituency? Given that the site has been selected partly due to its transportation hub potential, does he also agree

that the SPS, Glasgow City Council and others must look at better public transport links for Jerviston and the Royston corridor more generally, irrespective of whether planning permission is granted?

**Humza Yousaf:** Bob Doris raises a really important point. He has already had conversations with the Scottish Prison Service on the issue and I know that he will continue to engage as the process moves on. He is absolutely right that transport links are vital for any prison, as contact with family and services is hugely important for the potential rehabilitation of prisoners.

As Bob Doris knows the usual planning process, he is probably aware that, as with any planning application, it is anticipated that there will be a travel plan and a traffic impact analysis, which would form part of the application and be part of the conversation as we progress. The issue is vital for any prison—particularly for a prison the size of the replacement for HMP Barlinnie.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** I welcome the replacement of Barlinnie prison, which is long overdue. It was recently operating at 140 per cent capacity, and that is a regular occurrence. Can the cabinet secretary inform Parliament whether the new build will solve or rename the problem of capacity? Is he able to tell me—now or later—the extent of double bunking in Barlinnie prison?

**Humza Yousaf:** I thank Pauline McNeill for her very important question. I do not think that I have had the chance to welcome her to justice questions; I do not know whether she will be in her position permanently, but I know that she is taking over until the recess begins. I welcome her long-standing interest in all matters justice.

With regard to Pauline McNeill's hugely important question, we are not planning for the replacement for Barlinnie to be what the press has sometimes called a super jail. That would be the wrong thing for us to do, because we cannot build our way out of our prison population problem. There is a raft of reasons why the prison population is as high as it is. One factor has been the changes in home detention curfew that were made on the back of the two important reviews that took place after the tragic murder of Craig McClelland. The numbers have been drastic. We have to tackle the different factors around why the prison population is so high.

Pauline McNeill will forgive me, but I do not have in front of me the number for double bunking, but I will endeavour to get it to her. However, I say to her, as I said to the Justice Committee yesterday, that the high prison population—with an increasing trajectory, the third highest imprisonment rate in western Europe and the third highest correctional rate—is a stain on our

conscience that goes against the very progressive country that we are and want to be. I will be happy to furnish Pauline McNeill with details of the exact figures that she seeks, and if she would like a more detailed conversation about how to reduce the prison population, I will be delighted to have that conversation.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That was a good answer but a long answer. I would like shorter answers, so that everyone can chip in.

#### **Cashback for Communities Programme (Stirling)**

**4. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how many projects have been funded by the cashback for communities programme in Stirling since 2008. (S5O-03369)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** Between 2008 and 2018, the cashback for communities programme invested more than £1.5 million in the Stirling area, delivering more than 62,000 activities to support young people into positive destinations.

**Bruce Crawford:** I very much welcome the scheme, which reinvests criminal assets back into communities. How will the Government ensure that the next stage of the cashback programme focuses on projects that support those young people and communities most affected by crime? That was pretty short, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I was about to compliment you, but you ruined it—there is no point complimenting yourself; it undercuts it.

**Humza Yousaf:** I am never one to compliment myself—I leave that for other people to do.

Bruce Crawford's question touches on a hugely important point. I have had very good discussions with partners in the cashback programme who have operated in some of our most deprived communities. It is essential that, with every new phase of the cashback programme, we improve on the previous phase. Phase 5 will target the money back into the communities that have been blighted by serious and organised crime. Details of that programme will be available, and I will be delighted to share that with the member.

#### **Female Prisoners (Highlands)**

**5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to provide facilities for female prisoners in the Highlands, in light of the plans for the new Inverness prison being shelved until 2023. (S5O-03370)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** In June 2015, my predecessor

announced ambitious plans for the future of the female custodial estate, which include a new 80-place national facility to be built at Cornton Vale and up to five new community-based custodial units, each accommodating about 20 women, at locations across Scotland. The first two community custodial units will be located in Glasgow and Dundee. The Scottish Prison Service is working towards opening the first of the CCUs by December 2020 and the national facility by summer 2021.

The custodial arrangements for women from the north of Scotland will remain as they are at present. That means that, whenever possible, women who are sentenced or remanded by a court in the north of Scotland will be located in HMP and YOI Grampian, which offers a range of interventions and services that are specifically designed for women.

**Rhoda Grant:** Is the cabinet secretary aware of the incredibly long distances that families from the Highlands and Islands have to travel to visit people who are located in Aberdeen or, quite often, Glasgow? If people are placed hundreds of miles from their home, that has a huge impact on their children and wider family.

Around this time last year, HM inspector of prisons for Scotland, David Strang, called for more suitable accommodation for female inmates. I believe that a community custody unit could be built at the new site for the Inverness prison or, indeed, sooner at another site in Inverness. Will the cabinet secretary make female accommodation in Inverness a priority?

**Humza Yousaf:** Rhoda Grant should continue to have conversations with the SPS. I mentioned that the location of the first two community custody units has been decided, and the plans for those in Glasgow and Dundee are progressing well. That leaves another three locations, but I will not determine where those locations are, particularly because we want to wait for the evidence on how the first two are operating and where the next three could be located.

It is a difficult issue. It is fair to say that the number of women in custody who come from Inverness and the north of Scotland is very low—at the last count, it was about 13. Those women are at different stages along their journey of imprisonment, so it is not as simple as building a CCU, which is for women who are at a particular point in that journey. There are complexities, which I know Rhoda Grant will appreciate. I suggest to her that she continues to have conversations with the SPS about CCUs.

In the meantime, we will continue to invest in technology. Of course, I appreciate that that is not a replacement for direct contact visits, but it can

certainly bring families closer and help offenders on their rehabilitation journey.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Members will have to be brief from now on. I call Liam McArthur, to be followed by Edward Mountain.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)** *rose*—

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)** *rose*—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You were on your feet too soon, Mr Mountain.

**Liam McArthur:** Everybody wants to be Liam McArthur.

In January, the cabinet secretary told me that two of the five community custody units would be completed by 2020, and that the location of the other three

“will be dependent on a number of factors”—[*Written Answers*, 22 January 2019; S5W-20875.]

Although he cannot confirm the location of those units, will he at least give Parliament an indication of the timeline for making those decisions?

**Humza Yousaf:** We are taking a very evidence-based approach. We want to see how the first two community custody units operate, how successful they are and what impact they have. It is only sensible to then use that information to determine where the next CCUs will be, which will also have an impact on the timescales, because it takes time to plan, find a site and so on. Therefore, if Liam McArthur will forgive me, I will not nail myself to an exact timeline other than to say—as I did in a previous answer—that this is a priority for us. Associated with that, we want to continue to reduce the number of women who have to go into prison. Liam McArthur’s support for the presumption against short sentences is very welcome. I am delighted that we are progressing that policy.

**Edward Mountain:** More than 200 prisoners from the Highlands are being accommodated outwith the Highlands, which I am told is bad for their rehabilitation. Does the cabinet secretary agree?

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes, of course. There is a whole raft of reasons why people are sent to particular prisons. However, as a general premise, having people closer to their families and communities is better for their rehabilitation—I do not argue with that.

I hope that Edward Mountain understands that there are nuances as to why we have HMP Highland—the replacement for HMP Inverness—where it is in the infrastructure plan. These things are always reviewed depending on need and, after the female custodial units, HMP Barlinnie is very

much where the need is. However, I do not disagree with what Edward Mountain said about rehabilitation and closeness to family and community. I will endeavour to keep him up to date with progress on HMP Highland.

#### **Addiction Recovery Services (Prison Estate)**

**7. Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when the justice secretary last met the Scottish Recovery Consortium to discuss the provision of addiction recovery services across the prison estate. (S5O-03372)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** I last visited HMP Barlinnie, where the SRC has a recovery cafe, on 31 October 2018.

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, Joe FitzPatrick, is due to meet the Scottish Recovery Consortium next month—on 10 July—to discuss the work of that organisation in general as well as its work with the Scottish Prison Service to co-ordinate recovery development within the prison estate.

**Adam Tomkins:** I think that the cabinet secretary and I agree on the importance of recovery cafes in prison. We corresponded about that earlier this year with regard to the recovery cafe at HMP Barlinnie which, unfortunately, has closed down due to a lack of funding. When the cabinet secretary wrote to me about that matter on 21 May, he said that the Glasgow city alcohol and drug partnership would be considering a funding bid to reopen the recovery cafe in Barlinnie. Will he provide Parliament with an update on the status and nature of that bid?

**Humza Yousaf:** My understanding is that the Glasgow ADP has not come to a final decision and that we are still awaiting the decision which, of course, is one for the Glasgow ADP to make. Adam Tomkins is right that we have a shared appreciation for the work that is done by recovery cafes. It is worth putting on record the personal endeavour of Natalie MacLean—who I know he has met—in driving the work forward. If he will forgive me, I will see whether there is an update but, of course, it is not for me to say when a decision is expected from the Glasgow ADP.

I hope that the bid is successful, because recovery cafes do good work and I do not want to see them having to close down. As I said, I will try to get Adam Tomkins an update. If he wants a further conversation with me after that, my door is open.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Daniel Johnson—this has to be very brief.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Prisoners often struggle to register with a general

practitioner, which undermines their recovery. What progress is the cabinet secretary making on that issue, particularly in the light of the trial that is under way in three local authority areas?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will write to Daniel Johnson in more detail. However, I had a good conversation with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeane Freeman, who is considering the issue. We think that we have a way forward.

As we discussed at the Justice Committee on a previous occasion, there are complications. Nonetheless, we are making progress, and either I or the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will write to Daniel Johnson to give him an update. We are certainly progressing the issue.

### Serious Violent Crime

**8. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recent analysis recording a fall in serious violent crime over the last decade. (S5O-03373)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** We very much welcome the recent report into the changing characteristics of serious violence in Scotland. It found that most of the fall in serious violence over the past decade is due to fewer cases in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, often involving younger males and the use of a weapon.

Members will remember that, in not too distant memory, Glasgow was named the murder capital of Europe. What we have achieved is now being looked on as a role model, and is attracting interest from London, the United Kingdom and the World Economic Forum. Despite that progress, the research highlights, of course, that there is still much more that we need to do, particularly on repeat victimisation and tackling violence wherever it persists.

**Rona Mackay:** Serious violent crime has reduced by 44 per cent in East Dunbartonshire, which is the area that I represent. Does the cabinet secretary believe that the figures are more proof that the Scottish Government's evidence-based approach to justice and rehabilitation is working?

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes, I absolutely do. We should not move away from the public health approach. It is fair to say that that approach was started by the previous Administration and carried on by the current Scottish Government. I hope that, whatever the political make-up of the chamber in future sessions, we will continue to stick fast to that public health approach. It is the right approach, and it is clearly working.

## Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2017

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a statement by Roseanna Cunningham on Scottish greenhouse gas emissions in 2017. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:41

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The year 2019 is a significant one for Scotland's response to climate change. It marks the 10th anniversary of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, with its world-leading targets, and it will be the year in which we collectively make a step change in our response to the global climate emergency. However, today's statement requires us to look back a couple of years to Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions during 2017, for which statistics were published yesterday. That is the period prior to the current climate change plan, and it is worth remembering that those figures do not reflect recent action.

Scotland's emissions are reported in two ways. First, they are reported as the actual quantity of greenhouse gases emitted from Scotland. On that basis, the picture is positive, with emissions continuing to fall year on year. They were down by more than 3 per cent from 2016 to 2017, and they have almost halved since 1990. Scotland continues to outperform the United Kingdom in delivering long-term reductions. In the EU15, we remain second only to Sweden.

As in previous years, reported progress has been influenced by technical revisions to the greenhouse gas inventory. This time, revisions to historical forestry data mean that long-term progress appears less positive than was reported in previous years. Even though Scotland's emissions fell from 2016 to 2017, the long-term reduction of 47 per cent reported this year is less positive than the 49 per cent reported last year.

The statistics also include figures on the adjusted emissions basis used for reporting on targets under the 2009 act, which includes an accounting adjustment for the operation of the European Union emissions trading scheme. That adjustment is based on the assumption that Scottish industry uses a fair share of the permits that are available through the scheme. In recent years, the number of permits made available across the EU has increased, so the assumed number that have been used in Scotland has increased. Although that does not reflect reality on

the ground, on that adjusted reporting basis Scottish emissions rose by 3.7 per cent between 2016 and 2017.

Partly as a result of the EU ETS accounting adjustment and partly because of the inventory revisions, the fixed annual target for 2017 under the 2009 act of 43.946 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent has been missed by around 2.5 million tonnes. That is, of course, disappointing. However, the position in respect of year-on-year changes in actual Scottish emissions remains positive.

I want to correct some media reports that suggest that the target for 2016 was also missed. That is simply untrue. Scotland's statutory annual targets for 2014, 2015 and 2016 were all met, and progress remains consistent with meeting the current interim target for 2020.

Our new Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill includes changes to the target framework in order to improve transparency and allow for clearer scrutiny of progress. The bill proposes targets that are based on actual, rather than adjusted, emissions, and it includes mechanisms to manage the year-to-year effects of inventory revisions.

Looking at the statistics in detail shows that there have been reductions in emissions across most sectors since 1990. Emissions from energy supply and waste are down by almost three quarters; industrial emissions are down by almost 40 per cent; residential emissions are down by almost a quarter and those from public sector buildings are down by more than a third; and agricultural emissions are down by almost 30 per cent. It will not be easy to continue to drive down emissions in those sectors, and to tackle the sectors in which achieving reductions is more challenging, but we have to meet that challenge.

Transport remains Scotland's largest source of emissions, and we recognise that emissions from transport have been rising. Scotland already has the most ambitious agenda in the UK for decarbonising transport, which includes our commitment to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars by 2032. We continue to prioritise investment in active travel, the budget for which has been maintained at £80 million for 2019-20. We are taking steps to further strengthen our policy framework through the review of the national transport strategy, of which tackling climate change will be a core theme.

The Transport (Scotland) Bill includes provisions to support low-emission zones and improve bus services. In addition, we are supporting amendments from the Green Party on the workplace parking levy, which will be an additional

tool that local authorities will be able to use to tackle transport emissions.

I visited Glasgow City Council this morning. Glasgow has pledged to become the first carbon-neutral city in the UK. During my visit, I heard more about the Rotterdam, Umea, Glasgow: generating exemplar demonstrations in sustainable energy districts—RUGGEDISED—project, which involves the council, Transport Scotland and Scottish Power working together to deploy rapid electric vehicle chargers and to support the development of electric taxis in the city. I hope that other parts of Scotland will follow Glasgow's example.

The second largest source of Scottish emissions is agriculture. The UK Committee on Climate Change's scenario for net zero emissions recognises that the agriculture sector will remain the most substantial source of emissions, because the vast bulk of the sector's emissions are from biological sources that are inherent to food production. We are continuing to explore the potential for reducing emissions with the agriculture industry and our renowned scientific community in order to find solutions that are beneficial for the environment, Scotland's farmers and our wider food and drink industry. We should, of course, recognise that our farmers also contribute to emissions reduction through measures relating to forestry, land use and electricity generation, for which they must be given due credit.

Buildings also represent a significant source of emissions, which is why we are transforming Scotland's homes, businesses and public buildings so that they are warmer, greener and more efficient. By the end of 2021, we will have allocated more than £1 billion to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat. We are seeking views on the potential impacts of accelerating the energy efficient Scotland programme. Where we can move faster on our targets and continue to support a just transition to a net zero economy across rural and urban Scotland, we will do so.

The Committee on Climate Change acknowledges that

"Higher overall levels of ambition require more expensive and harder to implement options".

That is not a reason to avoid taking action, but it means that difficult choices will need to be made by not just Government, but Parliament and society as a whole. It also means that the UK Government will need to play its part, so I welcome the fact that the UK Government, following our lead and acting on the advice from the Committee on Climate Change, has

announced that it will legislate for a net zero target. The CCC was explicit in its advice that Scotland cannot achieve net zero emissions by 2045 unless the UK does so by 2050, given the number of levers that are still reserved to Westminster.

The CCC's advice that Scotland should aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2045, and that the UK should aim to do so by 2050, was published on 2 May. The Scottish Government immediately lodged appropriate amendments to the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, and I wrote to the UK Government to encourage it to amend its own legislation. In my letter, I also asked for an urgent meeting to discuss the collaborative action that is needed. I called on the UK Government to act by working on carbon capture, use and storage deployment; decarbonising the gas grid; redesigning vehicle and tax incentives to support zero emissions and sustainable transport choices; committing to adherence to future EU emission standards; reducing VAT on energy efficiency improvements in homes; and ensuring continued support for the renewables industry. I received a response yesterday, which was welcome, but, unlike the UK Government, I think that the issue is too important to discuss simply in the margins of a meeting on Brexit.

The response also fails to offer substantial updates on the specific areas of reserved policy action that I raised. I would have hoped that, now that UK Government ministers have finally decided to amend the legislation, they would be prepared to meet as a priority to discuss how reserved levers can be applied to achieve net zero emissions in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Delivering the transformative change that is associated with more ambitious targets means ramping up our own action, too. I have previously confirmed that climate change will be at the core of our next programme for government and spending review, and we will update the climate change plan within six months of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill receiving royal assent.

In my statement to Parliament last month, I outlined the specific steps that we had taken to strengthen our response since receiving the Committee on Climate Change advice, such as new and ambitious action on deposit return, agriculture and renewables and a change in our policy on air departure tax. That will continue as all cabinet secretaries look across the full range of policy areas to identify where we can go further, faster.

While Scotland is demonstrating strong leadership and making strong progress, to achieve the transformative changes that are needed in

response to the global climate emergency requires us as a country to go further, faster. That will be hard, and there will be risks and challenges to overcome. However, there will also be tremendous opportunities, not only in reducing emissions but in growing and diversifying our economy, improving the wellbeing of our people and protecting and enhancing our natural environment. When the First Minister declared that there is a global climate emergency, she said:

"Scotland will live up to our responsibility to tackle it."

That is exactly what we will do.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement. I intend to allow 20 minutes for that.

**Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con):** I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of the statement.

There is much to welcome today in the fight against climate breakdown. The UK Government has announced that the UK will be the first major country on earth to commit to net zero emissions, which is a game-changing decision that challenges the rest of the world to follow our lead.

In Scotland, we welcome the news that source emissions have declined. Unfortunately, when we factor in the EU emissions trading scheme, Scotland's emissions have increased by 3.7 per cent. A large part of the reason is that little has been done to tackle domestic transport emissions, which increased in the latest round of figures. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the time has come for this Government to replace words with action and mandate that public procurement defaults to electric vehicles where possible?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I thank Maurice Golden for the welcome for a significant part of the figures that have been published. I would want to say, as he might expect, that I think that Scotland is a major country and that, while the UK seeks to reach net zero emissions by 2050, Scotland doing so by 2045 puts us in the vanguard.

I also caution the member on the point about the EU ETS. In a sense, they are notional emissions. The number of permits has been increased and Scotland is presumed to have taken up a percentage, but in fact we have not done that. The reality is that that aspect of emissions is presumed, or assumed. That is why we are moving to look straightforwardly at actual emissions.

The member mentioned transport, which I have acknowledged is a serious challenge. It is not a challenge that is unique to Scotland, but one that most countries are having to face, and some are managing to do so better than others. I think that

we all recognise that the work that is happening in Norway is first class, but of course, Norway is able to look right across the range of policy levers, which allows it to make some of the decisions that it is making on electric vehicles. I hope that the member will add his voice to mine in asking the Westminster Government to think seriously about that. He asked about public procurement in particular. He knows that there are issues around that that are not simple and straightforward, but he also knows that, where we are able to do things, we will do them.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** As the cabinet secretary says, we face a climate emergency. Some of the sectoral emissions figures are uncomfortable and they are a stark reminder that we have significant challenges in meeting our net zero target. However, we know that it is possible with concerted and urgent policy action and Scottish Labour commits to making sure, along with members from across the chamber, that the reassessment of the climate change plan will be held to the highest standards.

It is completely unacceptable that transport emissions are rising year on year, yet the Government has blocked Scottish Labour amendments to the Transport (Scotland) Bill that would strengthen the low-emission zone proposals. Can the cabinet secretary explain that Cabinet contradiction?

Will the cabinet secretary meet me to discuss my amendments to set the just transition commission in statute in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, to ensure that affected workers and communities are supported in a fair way throughout the shift to net zero?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am aware that vigorous discussion is going on in connection with the Transport (Scotland) Bill but, as the member is aware, I am not absolutely directly involved in that. Although I have frequent conversations with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, at the end of the day, he will make the decisions that he considers to be right.

I am always available to speak to the member about just transition or any other subject. She knows that we have undertaken to look again at how we might go some way towards meeting what she wants. If she wishes a formal meeting, I am happy to oblige.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to questions. Concise questions and answers will allow everyone to make their contribution.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** The statement attempts to explain a missed climate target and restates existing climate policies, but, under section 36 of the Climate

Change (Scotland) Act 2009, when the Government misses targets, it is required to lay a report that sets out policies that will compensate. When can the Parliament expect that report, and will it cover public transport, which is missing from the statement?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Once again, I am being asked about a transport aspect, about which I am not 100 per cent certain. I am aware of the member's particular interest in section 36 of the 2009 act, and I undertake to have a conversation with him separately about that.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** As the cabinet secretary acknowledged, transport is the largest source of net emissions. Yesterday's figures confirmed that emissions from international aviation have increased by 181 per cent since 1990, yet the Government stubbornly continues its support for the Heathrow expansion. Will the cabinet secretary now accept that that position is incompatible with the climate emergency? Will she support my amendments to the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill that aim to ensure that the added impact of emissions at high altitudes is properly taken into account?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Of course, Scotland already includes a share of international aviation and shipping emissions in its reporting, unlike virtually every other country that reports on emissions. I understand that the Welsh Government has now decided to include those emissions, although I may be wrong about that. The member rightly draws attention to aviation increases, but Scotland is not alone in that regard. Aviation emissions have increased fairly rapidly in a large number of countries, and that needs to be worked on. However, by including a fair share of international aviation and shipping emissions in its reporting, Scotland is being much more transparent on the issue.

I am not aware of the amendments that Liam McArthur has lodged to the bill, but, as always, I am happy to discuss those with him. It needs to be said, however, that good international connectivity is vital for Scotland's economic prosperity, so a real balancing act has to be brought into play. The CCC advises that net zero emissions can be achieved by 2045 with emissions from international aviation and agriculture being offset through carbon sinks, so there is work to be done on that.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** It is very welcome that the UK Government has finally followed Scotland's lead and acted on the advice of the Committee on Climate Change to adopt a net zero emissions target date. Does the cabinet secretary agree, however, that, given that the CCC was clear on the need for action in reserved areas to meet our 2045 target, there is now an

urgent need for the UK Government to engage seriously with the Scottish Government?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The CCC made it clear that achieving our ambitions is contingent on UK-wide policies ramping up significantly. That is critical. I wrote to the UK Government on 2 May and again on 20 May, requesting an urgent meeting. We have not yet been able to organise that meeting, but we need to discuss the collaborative action that is needed. Although many levers are still reserved, the UK Government has an essential role to play in decarbonising Scotland, and it needs to accept that responsibility. Given the climate emergency, it is crucial that meaningful engagement takes place as a matter of urgency, and I hope to ensure that it does.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I declare an interest as a farmer. I welcome the cabinet secretary's acknowledgement of the contribution that farmers, crofters and land managers have made since 1990 and during 2017, but what additional support can she and the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, give to agriculture in financial terms and by using whole-farm measurements to recognise individual farmers' contributions to reducing emissions through peatland restoration, afforestation and decarbonised energy production on their land?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That question contained an awful lot of detail. The member will understand that the range of issues that he has raised makes it difficult to answer it in a short space of time.

I would be among the first to recognise the contribution that farmers make, but the way in which the statistics are compiled makes it impossible to reflect that in the stats in the way that they want. Of course, we are not in control of that process and, until that changes, we are not able to address that. I am absolutely of the view, and I believe strongly, that we should understand and find a mechanism by which to reflect the real work that is done across the range of sectors, including forestry and energy—indeed, energy was one of the areas that the member missed out—in which farmers are significantly contributing to emissions reduction without being recognised for it. That is a very important point.

The member will be well aware that, while the current Brexit discussion is going on, there is simply no clarity around future economic support. I think that I have said to the member before that it would be very helpful if the shared prosperity fund, which the current Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has referred to, was fleshed out a bit more to become something other than simply a phrase of three words.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** A target that has previously been touched on is the phasing out of new petrol and diesel cars by 2032. For many drivers, the cost of purchasing an electric car will be prohibitive. Can the cabinet secretary outline what she thinks needs to be done to make that a realistic proposition for people?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We recognise that higher up-front costs can be a barrier to consumers and businesses that are thinking of making the switch to an electric vehicle and that many of the vehicles that are currently available are in the premium vehicle class. However, that will change over the next few years as the market develops and as technology changes.

To support the take-up of electric vehicles right now, our low-carbon transport loan fund offers interest-free loans for individuals and business. In 2018 we increased that fund from £8 million to £20 million, enabling more consumers and businesses to make the switch. We have also put in place our plugged-in households fund, which is helping housing associations to improve access to electric vehicles. Through our funding and with the work of local authorities, Scottish electric vehicle owners also benefit from one of Europe's most comprehensive EV charging networks, ChargePlace Scotland.

If what I saw this morning regarding Glasgow City Council's plans comes to fruition, some remarkable advances will be made, the evidence of which will be clear for all to see before the end of the year.

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Waste management emissions increased by 2.6 per cent in 2016-17, which is disappointing given the efforts of the Scottish Government, local government and, indeed, the private sector. Can the cabinet secretary shed light on the reasons for that increase?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As the member would expect, on receipt of such statistics, we look very closely and carefully at what might lie behind them. Sometimes it is a fairly straightforward issue and sometimes it is not. I, too, was disappointed. Food waste easily converts to carbon emissions and is one of those linkages that people do not quite understand. I suspect that a fair bit of the increase lies there, which is one of the reasons why we are trying to drive down food waste. That will have a very significant positive impact on climate change emissions.

The work to look behind those statistics is now on-going, and I hope that the member will continue to take an interest in waste. We hope—I certainly do—that the introduction of a deposit return scheme will also make a big difference.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)**

**(SNP):** As the cabinet secretary mentioned, the Committee on Climate Change focused on Scotland's capacity for carbon sinks to help us to meet our ambitious net zero emissions target. Will she expand on that?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Carbon sinks and negative emissions solutions will be vital to achieving net zero emissions by 2045. However, some sectors will still be producing emissions then—most notably agriculture and international aviation. Those emissions will have to be offset through negative emissions solutions such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage and through what we choose to do with our land—for example, tree planting.

We must capitalise on Scotland's huge advantage in this area, which the Committee for Climate Change has also spotted—that is why we have been given the target date of 2045 rather than 2050. First, we have large expanses of land that, through different treatment, could sequester rather than release greenhouse gases. I encourage all members to read the report from Vivid Economics that was published earlier this year, which is very optimistic about the potential land-use solutions to climate change. Secondly, the CCC's analysis indicates that Scotland is capable of supporting up to 33 per cent of all UK bioenergy with carbon capture and storage. Scotland is the best-placed country in Europe to realise that commercial-scale deployment of carbon capture utilisation and storage technology, and we have the potential to repurpose our legacy oil and gas pipeline infrastructure. However, the UK Government is required to act on those matters—I have raised that as a specific issue with my Westminster counterpart.

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West)**

**(Con):** The cabinet secretary talks about the significance of emissions from housing and is looking to move faster on her target. I note my interest in housing in the register of members' interests. Will she now follow the will of this Parliament and support an energy performance certificate target of C or lower by 2030?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I know that there is fairly vigorous on-going debate on that issue. I remind the member that we have passed the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill and that we must ensure that the targets that we are achieving are aligned with that and not do anything on housing that will create a bigger fuel poverty problem. It is a complex interchange. We have to be certain that we do not disadvantage groups of people and cause an unjust transition. That is a danger if an unplanned target date that is not particularly well thought

through is imposed in an area in which the negative consequences could be quite grave.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):**

The cabinet secretary mentioned both transport and buildings in her statement. Sometimes the assumption is that electricity is the answer to everything, but does she think that hydrogen has a part to play—for example, in ferries, in trains and perhaps in the gas network?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Hydrogen and fuel cell technology are expected to play a significant role in the mix of drivetrain options for decarbonising the wider Scottish fleet. Paul Wheelhouse advises me that there is to be a policy statement on hydrogen early next year—he is nodding as I say that.

As well as allowing renewable energy to be deployed across the transport, power and heating sectors, hydrogen has particular benefits in heavy-duty transport and intensively used vehicles, which we have already seen in the deployment of hydrogen fuel cell buses in Aberdeen, which are soon to be joined by additional vehicles and a new bus fleet in Dundee.

Other heavy-duty vehicles that use hydrogen fuel, such as refuse collection trucks and street sweepers, have been trialled in Scotland, and we expect to see a wider deployment of them once council and other fleet operators decarbonise their operations on our journey to the net zero carbon target.

The Scottish ministers are keen to support the hydrogen sector to play the role that it can play in reducing emissions, as well as in realising economic benefits for Scotland. This is one of those areas where that is distinctly possible.

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I see only one mention of poverty in the statement, but I presume that the cabinet secretary accepts that actions to address rising emissions levels are likely to affect those on the lowest incomes and in more deprived areas the most. Are emissions reduction policies currently being poverty proofed? If not, how and when will they be?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We are constantly conscious of that, which is one of the reasons why we set up the just transition commission. We know how dangerous it can be if proposals are brought forward that are not thought through in terms of their impact on groups of people. We will continue to keep that under our eye.

Elaine Smith will have heard the exchange about the interplay between fuel poverty, housing standards and energy efficiency. We must be incredibly careful that we do things in the right way in order to avoid precisely what I know the member is concerned about.

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary think that the UK Government's decision to carry forward overachievement from the second carbon budget was the right one, given that the unequivocal advice of the Committee on Climate Change in February was that surplus emissions should not be carried forward, as that would not be consistent with the Paris agreement?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I wrote to the UK Government in March, saying that the Scottish Government would strongly oppose any carry-forward of emissions to future UK carbon budgets. I have to say that I am disappointed that it has decided to do so anyway. Although I note that the UK Government has said that the carry-over will be used only as a contingency against technical changes to the greenhouse gas inventory, the decision sends the wrong signals at an important time for domestic and international climate action. It is one of the things that I hope I will be able to discuss directly with my UK counterpart.

## Veterans Strategy (Update)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a statement by Graham Dey on an update on the veterans strategy. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:13

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey):** Last November, I informed Parliament of the launch of the strategy for our veterans. The strategy seeks to ensure that the whole of the United Kingdom is meeting its current and future commitments to veterans to 2028 and beyond.

The Scottish Government engaged closely with the other Governments of these islands during the drafting of the strategy, enabling it to be owned jointly by the respective Administrations. Of course, that approach puts veterans' needs before any political differences, and is in keeping with that taken here in this Parliament.

The launch raised the profile of veterans issues and provided an opportunity for the Scottish Government to highlight the priority that we place on promoting veterans and their families as assets to our society and on providing effective support to those veterans who need it.

Since becoming Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans last year, one of my priorities has been to seek to reinforce the positive narrative about veterans and to dispel myths around the scale of their needs. Although a small percentage will require additional and sometimes on-going support when they leave the forces, the vast majority of service leavers transition successfully to civilian life, bringing their unique skills and attributes to bear, both in the jobs that they go on to do and, more generally, in enriching society.

In December, members debated the strategy and support for veterans, and I was struck by the cross-party consensus and the constructive input from colleagues from all sides of the chamber. As we have taken the strategy forward, I have been grateful to members for continuing that productive approach.

Today, I will update Parliament on the work that has been undertaken in Scotland since that launch. In parallel with the UK Government's public consultation on the strategy, which concluded in February, in Scotland, we embarked on an extensive programme of face-to-face engagements with veterans stakeholders.

Building on work that the Scottish veterans commissioner had already carried out on some of the strategy's themes, we talked directly to around 60 different veterans groups and organisations, taking in more than 450 people—a process that proved to be valuable in understanding views in Scotland about how our veterans community is supported.

During the consultation, I was keen to leave no stone unturned. The breadth of our engagements ensured that we heard a wide range of opinions, including those of charities, local authorities, health representatives, employers, universities and the forces families federations. We also met many veterans groups in places such as Kinloss and Lossiemouth in the north, down to Dumfries and Galloway, and from Faslane through to Rosyth.

I was pleased to participate personally in many of the consultation events. That allowed me not just to learn what was said but to get a genuine sense of the emotion and strength of feeling that lay behind some of the views that were expressed.

A range of views were put to me directly from veterans champions across the country, charities large and small, groups of veterans whose breakfast clubs I attended and the veterans in custody to whom I spoke when I visited HM Prison Glenochil. Their views proved invaluable in helping me understand what people think. Veterans are rarely backward in coming forward, which has been a good thing.

The consultation that has been undertaken on the veterans strategy provides the most comprehensive feedback that has ever been gathered on support for veterans in Scotland, and it provides a firm footing on which to plan for the future. The UK Government is in the process of analysing the 4,500 responses that we received in response to the public consultation, including around 400 from Scotland, and it hopes to have initial findings ready to share with us in the next few weeks. Allowing for the analysis to be completed, current plans are for the Governments across the UK to announce jointly the outcomes of the strategy by the end of this calendar year.

Meanwhile, we have been considering the feedback that we gathered during our consultation. Today, I will outline some headlines that we will consider further with relevant stakeholders.

At a constructive meeting of the cross-party group on armed forces and veterans community last night, I was reassured that many points that I heard chimed with the feedback that we had during the consultation. The consultation indicates a largely positive position in Scotland on how we support our veterans community. Yes, in some areas, a need for improvement has been

highlighted, but often that will be a tailoring of approach, rather than a radical rethink.

It is interesting that a large amount of the feedback from the consultation was around the transition process, in which service leavers are prepared for civilian life. Given the fundamental importance of a successful transition if service personnel and their families are to adjust and thrive after life in the military, there were common views that the process needed to begin earlier, broaden the aspects of civilian life that are covered and have more consistent support from the military chain of command. Although the transition process is reserved, the Ministry of Defence is keen to hear what veterans in Scotland have been telling us. I will discuss that with members of the UK Government, including the Secretary of State for Defence, when I attend the ministerial covenant and veterans board in Whitehall next month.

The feedback has indicated a desire to simplify and improve the information and guidance that is available to veterans. A lot of excellent support is available, but the range of options can be daunting for some people, and we are exploring how we can make it easier for them to find the information that they need.

Many of the organisations that we spoke to highlighted the need to prioritise better data on veterans in order to inform plans and expected demand. There was a universal welcoming of a question in the 2021 census that will identify those who have previously served. Although the final decision on that still remains for Parliament, I am grateful that colleagues across the chamber have indicated their support for that proposal.

Many of the other areas identified for improvement are already being addressed in response to previous reports by our Scottish veterans commissioner, whose latest work I will touch on in a moment.

The positive picture suggested by the consultation reinforces the value of the decision made by my predecessor, Keith Brown, to establish a veterans commissioner in Scotland—a role that remains the only such position in the United Kingdom. It also reflects well on the more general work that Keith did in his role. We should rightly take comfort in the initial findings of the consultation, and I thank the relevant ministers and officials from the various portfolios for getting us to this position. We now need to address the serious work of making improvements where we can, to ensure that support for the veterans community remains effective for the next 10 years and beyond.

That brings me to the report published yesterday by the veterans commissioner, Charlie

Wallace, who is in the public gallery today. When the commissioner and I first met last year, after we had both taken up our posts, I was keen to discuss with him how the scrutiny function of his role could be fulfilled. Therefore, I am pleased to see such an in-depth analysis of where progress has been made since the 63 recommendations of the previous commissioner, Eric Fraser, were published in his four reports—on transition, housing, employability and skills, and health and wellbeing—and where we still have more to do.

Charlie Wallace's report paints a positive picture overall of the progress made and the attitude of this Government towards supporting our veterans and their families. As part of his work leading up to the publication of the report, Charlie had face-to-face meetings with a number of my ministerial colleagues, and I am pleased that the report emphasises the cross-Government commitment to the veterans community. However, I recognise that a few of the recommendations have still to be implemented. Most of those sit within health, which was the subject of Eric Fraser's most recent report, and it is therefore understandable that they have been less fully progressed.

On other recommendations, we can point to progress. For example, we have recently established an internal network for the armed forces community in the Scottish Government. One of the aims of that group is to provide increased support for ex-service personnel who work in the Scottish Government and others who are interested in the armed forces community. It will also help to inform our approach to future recruitment, although it is, of course, the case that being a veteran is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. We hope that that work begins to address the recommendation concerning jobs in the Scottish Government.

It is clear that, in the year ahead, we must continue to prioritise work to support veterans, working closely with our stakeholders and partners to both fully meet the challenges identified by the veterans commissioner and the consultation on the veterans strategy and take forward the consultation's findings. I look forward to doing that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow 20 minutes for that.

**Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con):** I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement. The strategy for our veterans identified employment, education and skills, and making a home in civilian society among its key themes. Those would be addressed, at least partly, by improving employment routes for veterans into emergency services and criminal justice roles. The creation of the four science parks in Helensburgh,

Lossiemouth, Rosyth and Edinburgh is also relevant to this issue. What discussions has the Scottish Government had about those roles and what is the progress in development of the science parks?

**Graeme Dey:** Maurice Corry has raised that issue previously. The Scottish Government is prepared to explore any viable opportunities to improve post-service employment, and the opportunities for military spouses to enter the workplace in order to retain skills in the local area. The proposal for such an innovation hub located in the proximity of Faslane or any other base would require active buy-in from stakeholders including the MOD, along with other local partners. I am aware that Helensburgh community council has been working with local veterans and other community groups to develop a proposal for the creation of a co-working hub for use by both the civil and the service communities and that Argyll and Bute Council has sight of that. We would be happy to engage with that, but we need to see MOD buy-in. I would like to see some commitment from the MOD, with a view to seeing how we could progress the proposal.

As well as looking to tap into the skill set of serving personnel in those locations, it is important that we look at the spouses' skills that are available. We are currently missing that.

I agree that the proposal about the emergency services is an opportunity.

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I am grateful to the minister for early sight of his statement. I am pleased to hear about the continued joint work to support veterans across the UK. A week after the D-day commemorations, I would like to put on record Labour's thanks to our armed forces personnel—past, present and future—for their service and for protecting Scotland and the UK.

How is the Scottish Government balancing the need to retain personnel in our armed forces and maintain their numbers with the need to create realistic and meaningful pathways into civilian employment for veterans? Specifically, how many veterans have been supported, from referral to sustained employment, by the work first and fair start employability services?

**Graeme Dey:** First, I associate myself with Mark Griffin's comments at the outset of the question that he posed, which is an important one. I do not believe that addressing the retention issues that the Army, in particular, faces, on the one hand, and improving the transition experience and pathways to rewarding employment, on the other, somehow run contrary to each other. Indeed, I argue that the latter can help to address the former. For example, serving personnel

sometimes leave the military early because they are dissatisfied and think that the grass might be greener on the civilian side. Some then discover that finding enjoyable, well-paid work is not as simple as they thought. If we, in partnership with the MOD, the career transition partnership and employers from the public and private sectors, can improve routes into employment that is financially rewarding and satisfying, we will be better able to point to how skills accrued during service can transfer into civilian opportunities. I hope that that would demonstrate the worth of remaining in the services for longer than is sometimes currently the case. I should add that I am currently finding a willingness on the part of the Army in Scotland to work with us on that, so there is a positive direction of travel there.

I do not have at my fingertips the specific numbers that Mark Griffin has asked about, but I will write to him with those.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to open questions. Brevity in both questions and answers would be appreciated.

**Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):** I know that Mr Dey has visited some of our health boards in his role as minister for veterans. How will he ensure that there is an equitable level of service for veterans of all ages, in all our health board areas? He will know that I am particularly keen to ensure that services in the NHS Grampian area are up to the level that is experienced elsewhere.

**Graeme Dey:** I completely agree with Mike Rumbles on his point about equity of access to service. All our veterans across Scotland, regardless of where they live, should have equal access to the services that they require. That view is very much shared by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, and it is the driver for my having undertaken a series of visits across the country.

Since Mr Rumbles last raised the matter, I have met those who provide and access veterans first point services in Galashiels and Irvine. I have also visited Inverness to hear from NHS Highland's board and local veterans about how services are provided across the Highlands and the challenges that are presented there, where they no longer have V1P. My officials have been seeking to arrange a meeting with NHS Grampian, and one is pending on that very subject. I hope that that meeting will take place during the summer recess, when I will also meet veterans' groups in Aberdeen.

I hope that that reassures Mr Rumbles that I have taken extremely seriously his concerns on equity and ease of access. I will be more than happy to engage with him further on those.

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that the abject and repeated failure of the UK Government to get even close to the targets for recruitment over a lengthy period has had a direct impact on veterans, including by limiting the opportunities that service personnel have for training and taking on new roles, as well as the opportunity to decide to leave the services at a time of their choosing?

**Graeme Dey:** I understand and agree with the concerns that Mr Brown expresses. We were told that there would be an increase in numbers to 12,500 by 2020, but we are nowhere near to seeing that at the moment. All that I can say to Mr Brown is that I will raise the matter when I am in London at the beginning of next month.

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** On 4 December 2018, I raised the appalling shame of the legacy allegations inquiry and the minister agreed to take the matter to the UK Government. Has he done so? If so, when did he do it and what was the UK Government's response? I realise that my question concerns a matter that is not devolved.

**Graeme Dey:** We tread warily on the issue, because charges have been brought and it would be inappropriate to comment on a current criminal investigation. However, there has been dialogue with the UK Government, which has centred on its plans to hold a consultation on the legal protections for armed forces personnel and veterans. Scottish Government officials have been in touch with the Ministry of Defence on the issue. We await the detail of the UK Government's proposals, which we will consider fully as part of the accompanying consultation process.

**Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP):** I know that the minister is aware of the fabulous work that is done at the Scottish War Blinded centre at Linburn in my constituency, and I hope that he will visit us some time soon. In the meantime, will he say what more can be done to signpost veterans with sight loss via the certificate of vision impairment process to services, including the fabulous service that Scottish War Blinded offers?

**Graeme Dey:** With its partners, the Scottish Government introduced the certificate of vision impairment Scotland form in April 2018. We have had constructive discussions with Scottish War Blinded and are now updating the accompanying CVI guidance to expand the signposting for veterans to necessary services, including Scottish War Blinded.

I had the pleasure of visiting Scottish War Blinded's Hawkhead centre in May and I was impressed by the facilities. I also had the pleasure of speaking at Scottish War Blinded's annual

conference. I would be delighted to visit the Linburn centre.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I welcome the specialist mental health provision and the funding that has been provided to Combat Stress and veterans first point, which a report from the veterans commissioner referred to. However, I am sure that the minister agrees that improvement is also needed in local mainstream adult mental health services, where waiting lists are far too long and 20 per cent of adults are waiting longer than the 18-week treatment time guarantee. Is that good enough? If it is not, what changes will the minister make for veterans?

**Graeme Dey:** On veterans mental health services, the Government has made it extremely clear that the mental health strategy covers veterans' issues. As Jackie Baillie said, we provide funding for Combat Stress and for addressing veterans' needs in all mental health services.

Issues also relate to the children of veterans. As recently as yesterday, I was told that, if a youngster in a service family goes on a child and adolescent mental health services waiting list and the family then move, as often happens, the child has to go on a CAMHS waiting list elsewhere. I have undertaken to the Army Families Federation that I will look at that issue in conjunction with the Minister for Mental Health.

I hope that that reassures Jackie Baillie that we are sighted on the issue holistically.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** How does the Scottish Government ensure that veterans who receive social care get the full value of their war pensions?

**Graeme Dey:** I confirm that the Scottish Government continues to provide £5 million of funding each year to local authorities to ensure that all veterans who receive social care at home or in a residential home keep the full value of their war pensions and armed forces compensation scheme payments, which are now exempt from financial assessments. That is estimated to benefit 1,300 veterans in Scotland, who now receive the full value of their war pensions. I know that those who are affected welcome that.

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** A report from veterans gateway said that financial advice is consistently one of the top three needs for people when they leave military life, and the veterans strategy said that, on leaving military life, veterans can be

"uniquely unprepared for balancing the financial demands of civilian life".

The minister spoke of his desire to improve the information and guidance that are available to veterans when they transition into civilian life.

What work is taking place to ensure that veterans have the guidance that they need and appropriate referrals to financial advice, including education when that is needed and appropriate?

**Graeme Dey:** Alison Johnstone is correct to highlight the issue, which has been identified before. I will answer her question in two ways. On access to education when that is required, if she means that in a broader sense, there is a piece of work going on.

On finances, I draw Alison Johnstone's attention to a pilot project that was carried out recently at an Army base in Scotland with Barclays Bank, which does wonderful work for our veterans in a variety of ways. Barclays was seeking to provide some sort of financial training for a number of people who intended leaving the services and others. What emerged from that pilot was confirmation of the need for that training. We would be happy to work with Barclays to see whether we can roll that out. We often recruit into the Army, in particular, young men and women from poorer backgrounds whose education at the point of entry into the military is not as extensive as we might want. That includes their education in the control of money and the ability to run a household budget.

We can do a number of things here, and I commend the Army in Scotland for its willingness to engage on this sort of issue.

**Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** How will the Scottish Government build on the "Welcome to Scotland" guide, to ensure that service personnel and their families who live in or are moving to Scotland can benefit from all that is on offer?

In that regard, does the minister share my disappointment that the decline in the defence footprint in Scotland continues apace, in breach of UK Government promises?

**Graeme Dey:** As I said to Keith Brown, I share that disappointment.

The "Welcome to Scotland" guide is a positive publication that highlights exactly what is on offer in Scotland. However, information is only as good as the ability to access it, and through feedback and some of the discussions that we have had beyond that, we have identified an issue around accessing the guide and its information for individuals and families who are based outwith Scotland just now. Those might be individuals who intend to return home or choose to live here.

We are doing a piece of work with the MOD, and the Army in particular, to see how we can make that guide and the information within it available to service families who intend to settle here.

**Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** The strategy for our veterans identifies 2028 as the target date for the achievement of its key themes. That will require work across Government and other organisations. Is the Scottish Government confident in its ability to meet those targets in time?

Additionally, the minister referred to the recruitment of Scottish veterans within the Scottish Government itself. However, Charlie Wallace's findings highlighted that as an area in which more work is needed. Will the minister set out how the Scottish Government plans to change that and lead by example?

**Graeme Dey:** As far as the Government is concerned, 2028 is not a target. We could do many things relatively quickly to bring about immediate improvement, and that is what we aim to do. I have no doubt about the willingness or the ability of this Government to deliver on those things.

I should also say that these things are delivered in partnership with local authorities and the veterans charitable sector in Scotland. That is one of the strengths of this country. They will also have to be delivered in partnership with the MOD. I look forward to taking our key themes forward, and I envisage being able to bring about meaningful change a lot sooner than 2028.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** With regard to ensuring the successful transition from a life in the military to civvy street, particularly the significant task of translating 1,000 separate military qualifications into recognised civilian qualifications, can the minister update members on progress on the Scottish credit and qualifications framework to ensure that qualifications obtained during a military career are recognised by civilian organisations?

**Graeme Dey:** Bruce Crawford raises a matter than has been raised with me directly by serving personnel. In response to one of the commissioner's recommendations, work is being done with the SCQF partnership, funded by the Scottish Higher and Further Education Funding Council, to look at translating military qualifications into qualifications that can be quantified by civilian organisations. That is a really important piece of work to help former serving personnel get into employment.

There are more than 1,250 separate qualifications to be considered so, given the scale of the task, initial work has focused on infantry qualifications, and a guide to them and what they mean in Scotland was launched in May. The SCQF partnership will continue that work to consider other military qualifications, and I look

forward to seeing significant progress in that regard.

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** The minister talked about the importance of partnerships. Most local authorities have a dedicated lead officer as well as a dedicated lead politician for veterans and support for the armed forces.

What kind of co-ordination takes place? I know that, in Fife, there was previously a politician who was dedicated and committed to that role. Is there co-ordination and joined-up work between local and central Government as well as in Government?

**Graeme Dey:** I cite Fife Council as a good example of a local authority with a veterans champion. Councillor Rod Kavanagh does a good job in that role, which is replicated across various parts of Scotland across the political parties. To answer Alex Rowley's specific point, we have perhaps not been as good as we ought to have been at pulling all that together and to sharing best practice. We are drawing up plans to have an event in the summer to which we will invite all the local authority champions. We will invite the services to have a round-table discussion about what service personnel and veterans require and to share best practice across local authorities so that we can have more equity in the delivery of support.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** Will the minister outline what support is available to veterans to access safe and secure housing?

**Graeme Dey:** Housing, and homelessness to a lesser extent, are very important issues in the context of veterans' support. We are doing some quite good work around identifying specific housing allocations in various parts of the country. In a broader sense, since 2012, more than £4.5 million of funding from the Scottish Government's affordable housing supply programme has been awarded to organisations to provide new homes and adapt existing ones for veterans in Scotland. During 2018, we revised and published a Scottish housing guide for people who are leaving the armed forces and for ex-service personnel. In February this year, we issued revised practice guidance on social housing allocations, which includes a section on allocations for people who are leaving the armed forces. Again, I accept that more can be done in that area.

## Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a stage 3 debate on motion S5M-17645, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill.

Before the debate begins, the Presiding Officer must make a determination on whether any provision of the bill relates to a protected subject matter; that is, whether it modifies the electoral system or the franchise for Scottish parliamentary elections. This bill, in my view, does no such thing. Therefore, the bill does not require a supermajority to be passed at stage 3.

15:42

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I am very pleased to open this stage 3 debate on the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill. The deliberations of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee through stages 1 and 2 have been considered. Although the bill might not have been extensive in terms of its size, it is certainly very important for Scotland's 2021 census, as has been demonstrated in the evidence that has been provided by stakeholders. I reiterate my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the bill process.

I also highlight again why it is important to support Scotland's census, which will include the provisions in the bill. The next census will be held on Sunday 21 March 2021, subject to the approval of the Scottish Parliament. It will be the 22nd census since 1801 and the 17th to be managed independently here in Scotland. It will be the first census since the Scottish Government pledged to make public services digital first. We are building a platform to enable people to complete the census form online, and we expect the majority of responses to be online, with support being made available for those who need it.

Scotland has relied for more than 200 years on the information that the census has given us, and it remains the best way to gather information that Government, councils, the national health service and others need. The information that we will gather will help us to understand who lives in Scotland and what sort of homes we have. It is the official count of every person and household in the country and it is the only questionnaire of its kind that asks everyone the same questions at the same time. No other survey provides the richness and range of information that the census provides.

The Scottish Government and other public bodies use census information to help them to

make decisions, including decisions on how money will be spent on the schools in which our children are educated, on the roads that we drive on every day, and on the hospitals on which we rely.

The key quality aspects of census data are that it must be able to count the whole population, it must be credible, people must have confidence in it and it needs to be consistent with comparators. We are very proud of the richness of the data that we hold and the consistency of approach that we can demonstrate over the past 200 years.

National Records of Scotland has responsibility for Scotland's census on behalf of the registrar general for Scotland. Work is well under way to ensure that the 2021 census is secure and that privacy is protected. Census records have been held securely and confidentially for 100 years.

The census tells us who we are and how we live and work in Scotland. In telling that story, it must reflect society—it is not a vehicle to lead change in society. National Records of Scotland has consulted extensively with groups all over Scotland in order to develop questions and to test them to ensure that they are acceptable to the public.

By asking questions that reflect Scotland as it is today, we will ensure that the census will continue to be a vital source of information for decades to come. The final decision about what questions are asked in 2021 will be for the Scottish Parliament.

Collecting census information is a substantial undertaking, as is producing outputs from that information. It takes considerable time to ensure that the information is complete and is of the quality that is required of national statistics. NRS will carry out a thorough process of capturing, coding and cleaning the data, and then ensuring that it is complete. It will then apply rigorous controls to the data, to ensure that we protect the confidentiality of the data and deliver on the legal commitments that have been made. That will take time, but it is essential to ensure the robustness of the data that is used across services.

NRS has announced its intention to publish the first set of estimates from the 2021 census within a year of census day, which would be considerably earlier than was the case for the 2011 census.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** What is the public consultation process? How will members of the public be able to engage in forming and stress testing the new questions?

**Fiona Hyslop:** There are two elements: users' needs and the need for population data. The consultation commenced years and years ago. The questions have been developed over a considerable time, as has the stress testing. There

are different elements to the consultation. There is consultation on the questions—there are questions on Gaelic for example—and the census form contains sections that relate to different communities. Development of the questions has taken place over recent years and latterly, in recent weeks and months.

Jamie Greene is a member of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee. I have encouraged officials from National Records of Scotland to keep the committee abreast of all the process related to, and progress on, the census.

I am about to move on to the content of the bill, but the whole census project goes far wider and deeper. Obviously, Jamie Greene will be aware that the fact that the census will be digital will also have an implication for stress testing. Its being digital adds a new dynamic to the census.

All remaining outputs should be published over the two years following the first set of estimates, including those on sexual orientation and transgender status and history. It is essential that we have quality data, so we must use the required time to achieve that. The bill is an important part of that. I am sure that everyone knows that the purpose of the bill is to amend the Census Act 1920, to allow questions on sexual orientation and transgender status and history to be answered on a voluntary basis.

It is widely recognised that there is limited evidence on the experiences of transgender people in Scotland, and there is no fully tested question with which to collect information. Therefore, the census will take a big step forward in order to ensure that we can develop the evidence that is needed to provide support and protection for Scotland's transgender population.

Sexual orientation is already asked about in most household surveys in Scotland, and it is proposed that the sexual orientation question for the 2021 census will mirror the question that is already used in those other surveys and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Society has changed significantly and rapidly in the years since the last census, so we must ensure that the census in 2021 reflects that. As I just reported in my response to Jamie Greene, the need for collecting the information was arrived at through a process of consultation and research. National Records of Scotland has worked, and continues to work, with stakeholders to understand the needs and concerns of the relevant communities.

The power to ask such questions to be answered on a compulsory basis already exists in the Census Act 1920. Refusing or neglecting to answer a census question is an offence under

section 8 of that act. We want to ensure that non-completion of the questions that are to be answered voluntarily will not result in the penalties that exist for non-compliance in respect of mandatory questions. It is critical that nobody is, or in any way feels, compelled to answer such important but sensitive questions. The bill therefore seeks to mitigate any concerns about intrusion into private life by making answering the questions voluntary, as was the case with religion when it was included for the first time in the 2001 census.

I am pleased that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee supported the general principles of the bill in its stage 1 report. I was likewise pleased by the support of parliamentary colleagues at the stage 1 debate on 28 February. In my stage 1 response to the committee and Parliament, I committed to lodging amendments at stage 2 to address the perceived conflation of sex and gender identity in the bill. I delivered on that commitment and, I am glad to say, the committee accepted the amendments.

National Records of Scotland worked with the Equality Network and others on the specific text of the amendments before they were lodged. That work included consulting other interested stakeholders—including the women's groups that responded to the committee's call for evidence at stage 1—to highlight the suggested amendments and to seek people's views on them. I am pleased to say that only support for them was received.

The amendments placed transgender status and history into schedule 1 of the Census Act 1920 as an entry on its own alongside religion and sexual orientation, and removed the provision in the bill that would have added "including gender identity" to the paragraph in that schedule that contains the word "sex". The amendments have ensured that the census order will be available to make the question on transgender status and history voluntary, which is one of the key purposes of the bill.

The census bill will allow questions on sexual orientation and transgender status and history to be voluntary. However, there is still a subordinate legislation process to follow, which will very soon be under way, to ensure that the questions are included in our 2021 census. I am grateful for the support of Parliament up to this point, and I look forward to the further extensive engagement that lies ahead.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:53

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** I thank fellow members of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, and the staff who work with the committee, for getting the bill to where it is. The reality is that never before—at least not since I joined this Parliament—has a one-page, 23-line bill caused so much debate and discourse, and attracted so much correspondence and controversy.

However, before I get on to the complex issues around sexuality, sex and transgender identity, let us start with the basics. What is a census and what is it for? One definition of “census” is:

“the procedure of systematically acquiring and recording information about all members of a given population”.

We can thank the Romans for that. What did they ever do for us?

As we know, in the modern age the census is important for many reasons. Completed every 10 years—with the next one coming in March 2021—it gives us a complete picture of the nation, as well as the sort of information that Governments need in order to develop policy, and to plan public services and how it will allocate funding to them.

The last census in 2011 was changed from the previous one—that is not unusual—and questions were added on race. That was a voluntary addition. The census changes, society changes, Governments change and attitudes—I hope—change, too.

The purpose of the bill is simple—it will allow National Records of Scotland to alter the census and vary the questions that it asks. It proposes to add two additional voluntary questions—on transgender status and history, and sexual orientation. We do not know what those questions will be or what guidance will go with them. We will address that when we have to. Answering the questions will be voluntary—not mandatory. People will not be forced to answer them, and there will be no penalty for not answering them. Answering the questions will not redefine one’s sex or change it legally. The questions will not confer additional rights or freedoms on anyone, nor will they remove anyone’s existing rights or freedoms.

The stage 1 report recommended

“that the mandatory sex question”

in the census

“should remain binary.”

I, along with another member, abstained from that recommendation. That was not because I took a view on it during the discourse on the stage 1 report, but because, in my view, that was not what the bill was about or what it proposed. That was

not the question that the committee was asked to respond to. The committee had a point to make with that recommendation, and it made its point.

The debate around the conflation of the terms “sex”, “gender” and “gender identity” is complex. That there has been so much fuss about a simple bill and that so much debate has come out of it might strike an observer as being slightly odd. I have a thought on that. It comes down to one thing: timing. Many members will be aware that a wider conversation is taking place about gender recognition legislation, the content of which we are yet to see. The subject inevitably stirs up emotions. I see the bill as something of a precursor to that debate, which will be wide ranging.

Let me go back to the real questions of why we need the data, who needs it, and what we are going to do with it. In the early days of the bill, a member of the Scottish Parliament said to me that it is none of Government’s business to ask such questions. To be fair, I have some sympathy with the notion of minimal Government interference in people’s private lives, but I think that the voluntary questions are useful additions to the census, and I will be happy to answer one of them, albeit digitally.

It is interesting that, when the Office for National Statistics looked at the legislation in England and Wales, it said that the inclusion of a “Prefer not to say” option might improve the response rate. We shall see what questions are put before us.

There is a shortage of meaningful data when it comes to information about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Scotland. Our public services need such data for making funding decisions and delivering service plans across health, education and social care services. We frequently hear that all those areas are underdelivering in the community.

As a co-convenor of the Parliament’s cross-party group on LGBTI+, I find that much of the research that I am presented with comes from third sector organisations such as Stonewall and LGBT Youth Scotland. Robust national data would allow public bodies to make better decisions. That is important, because we know from research that LGBT young people in Scotland experience higher levels of mental health problems, that nearly half of LGBT young people rate their school experience as bad, and that a quarter of LGBT people face issues in their place of employment. The data will help the Government to make decisions.

After the bill has been passed, Parliament will have two tasks ahead of it. First, NRS will present us with the new voluntary questions for our approval. It is absolutely right that the questions

should be the right ones, that they make sense, and that they are accompanied by appropriate guidance on how to answer them. A person who identified themselves in the old census using the sex question may now use the new voluntary questions as a means of doing that. We have to ensure that high levels of data are returned and that the quality of the data is reliable. Therefore, the devil will be very much in the detail.

The second and more important task ahead of us relates to the more difficult debate on gender recognition. That is not a debate for today, so all that I will say on the matter for now is this: please let everyone's voice be heard in it. Let us collectively, as a Parliament, condemn threatening or abusive behaviour wherever it appears, and from whomever it comes. If we are going to get it right—we must get it right—we must lead by example. I will do my bit, and hope that we will all do our bit.

15:59

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased that we are debating the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill at stage 3, as part of the preparation for the 2021 census. As the opening speaker for Labour, and as a member of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, I thank everyone who provided evidence throughout the bill's stages and those who provided briefings for today's debate.

During the stage 1 debate, I highlighted a number of drafting issues with the bill, and I am pleased that they were addressed by amendments at stage 2. We now have an important bill in the evolution of the census, and there is recognition of the need for relevance through the introduction of questions on sexual orientation and transgender status and history in an appropriate manner.

However, it has not been a smooth journey. The bill's progress took place against the backdrop of anticipated changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004. At times, the debate has been too divisive, aggressive and intolerant of alternative views. There will be time for parliamentary scrutiny and debate, and it is our duty to approach that work in an inclusive and responsible manner.

I return to today's bill and the census. The bill suggested that the terms of sex and gender would be conflated, which appeared to pre-empt the decision on any proposed changes to the sex question. The guidance that was provided with the bill added to such concerns, as the policy memorandum said:

"Looking forward to 2021, consultation has identified the need for a more inclusive approach to measuring sex. The sex question being proposed for the 2021 Census will continue to be one of self-identification and will provide non-binary response options."

National Records of Scotland provided additional written evidence to the committee, which said:

"We are currently considering whether or not to have a non-binary response option for the sex question, but it is too early to say if this will be the final proposal as testing and consultation continues."

That position was confirmed by the cabinet secretary during her evidence. The lack of clarity during our scrutiny of the bill was unfortunate, and it resulted in the committee taking considerable evidence on that issue, even though it is not the subject of the bill. However, important matters were raised that should inform National Records of Scotland in how it takes forward the next stages of the census.

There are questions to be addressed about the changes that were made to the guidance that was provided for the 2011 census, which made it clear that trans people should answer with their self-identified sex. It is important to recognise that the sex question is mandatory, and that answering it was difficult for transgender people; answering the question with their lived identity is consistent with how they present in other areas of their lives. However, there are arguments that the change has introduced a degree of uncertainty into the data that is gathered, and that sex and gender identity are now conflated into one question. The committee heard a proposal that there should be two questions—one on sex and one on gender identity.

I understand the concerns that were raised by the Equality Network, which said that reversing the position that was taken in 2011 would be highly problematic. Transgender people have legal rights to privacy, dignity and respect, and the organisation argued that it is not appropriate to insist that people disclose their biological sex at birth. Murray Blackburn Mackenzie argued that such an approach damages data integrity and quality, and that it sets a precedent for other data-gathering exercises and surveys, resulting in the loss of robust data on the protected characteristic of sex.

How do we resolve the situation that has already been created? We can reflect that there should have been discussion and scrutiny prior to the changes in 2011, and we can learn from that experience, but I would be hesitant about reversing the decision.

By including questions on trans status and history, the bill should enable policy makers and anyone else who is interested in the data to cross-reference responses and extrapolate figures based on sex and on gender identity. At the next stages of the census process, I would like reassurances on that point.

The committee, by majority, voted to retain a binary sex question. Although I abstained on the vote, given that the issue was not the focus of our work at hand, a majority of committee members were persuaded by the evidence that we heard from experts who use the information that is gathered from the census.

I raised an issue on that matter at stage 2, to which the cabinet secretary might wish to respond. I understand that the choice with which a non-binary person is presented does not reflect their lived experience. However, the NRS said that it would just assign a sex to the respondent. It said:

“If we ask a non-binary question—that is the big if and is obviously something for the committee to take a view on—we do not propose to produce outputs on a non-binary basis. In our conversations with stakeholders, we have always been consistent that it is about allowing people to respond in a way that reflects how they identify but that we will still produce outputs on a male and female basis.”—*[Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, 20 December 2018; c 43.]*

I would welcome clarity on what purpose a change to the binary question would serve. The response from NRS also makes assumptions about the number of people who would choose a non-binary term. I appreciate that NRS will undertake testing of the questions, but the number of people who will respond to the question, and how, is unknown. I ask the cabinet secretary to respond to those issues in her closing remarks.

I look forward to this afternoon’s debate.

16:04

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Given the volume of amendments to some other recent bills, it has been a while since we have reached a stage 3 debate and been in the position of saying essentially the same things that we said at stage 1. However, despite the much wider debate that specific census questions play into, the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill is not a contentious bill. It is short and really quite simple, and the Greens support it from the point of view of both effective data collection and the improvements that it makes in ensuring that Scotland is a country where everyone is treated with dignity and respect by the state.

The bill’s purpose is to ensure that everyone feels able to accurately complete the census—a principle that finds consensus here in Parliament. It will allow questions in future editions of the census regarding sexuality and what we are now referring to as trans status and history to be asked appropriately—namely as voluntary questions, rather than mandatory ones.

Compelling someone to provide an answer on something as intensely personal as their sexuality or trans status would be wrong even if we lived in

a society that was free from bigotry, but it is clear that we do not live in such a society, as was brutally illustrated by the monstrous attack on two queer women on a London night bus just last week and in the stories that members of the trans community told outside this Parliament just a few hours ago.

At the same time, though, the opportunity to collect that data from those who are happy to provide it is an opportunity to meet the needs of those who too often go unnoticed and unsupported. It is a small change to something that happens once a decade, but it is part of a process to ensure that people’s identities are respected, particularly when they engage with public services.

During its stage 1 deliberations, the committee received submissions in support of the bill and of trans inclusion more broadly from many national and long-standing equality organisations including the Scottish trans alliance, Stonewall Scotland, Engender, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women’s Aid, Close the Gap and Equate Scotland. I particularly thank the Equality Network for its evidence, for its helpful suggestion of an amendment, which the committee agreed with and the Government delivered on, and for its work in organising the powerful rally outside Parliament today, where the voices of trans people and their supporters across the Parliament were heard.

As I mentioned in the stage 1 debate, though, I am not the only one to have been frustrated and saddened by the process surrounding the bill and our committee consideration of it. I acknowledge that National Records of Scotland asked the committee to consider the potential questions, which will come through the census order after the bill is passed, but we should acknowledge the upset and anxiety that have been caused to many vulnerable people by the digression of the debate into matters that are outwith the scope of the bill.

At times, the very validity and existence of trans and non-binary people was called into question. I feel some shame that my Parliament has caused some of my friends stress and a fear that their rights, rather than being enhanced, could be rolled back. What should have been a small technical amendment to the Census Act 1920 to ensure appropriate wording has become an avenue through which a major debate has played out—and, to be frank, I do not think that it has played out in a way that any of us can be happy with. We can do better than the false framing of trans rights versus women’s rights, as all Scotland’s leading women’s organisations have so ably shown us.

I hope and expect that, when the Gender Recognition Act 2004 comes before us, we will do better than to hear evidence from just a single trans person. I certainly hope that those women’s

organisations, such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, will be invited to present their wealth of evidence and experience, showing that their trans-inclusion measures have not undermined the rights of cisgender women.

Legitimate concerns were raised through the consideration of the bill and they should be addressed in the broader debate on the introduction of trans-inclusion measures. How such measures intersect with services for women, including women-only spaces, is one example. As Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland highlighted in their written evidence once it became clear that that was where the debate had turned, their experience in providing support services in a trans-inclusive manner for women who have experienced violence has given them rich evidence. Their letter to the committee stated:

"It is very clear to us that trans inclusion in our own organisations has not given rise to substantive concerns or challenges. Rather, trans women have added to our movements through their support, voluntary work and as staff members".

Some questions that were raised were very much within scope, particularly around data reliability and comparability. It was suggested that questions being completed on the basis of self-identification, which is existing practice, and the inclusion of a third option in the sex question would harm the overall data set and in turn affect, for example, planning of sex-based services. I believe that the fears there are misplaced. I point in particular to the submission from the head of engagement for NHS National Services Scotland, which is the body that oversees the patient information database. The NHS uses its own data rather than the census data in service planning, and it already collects patient data on the basis of self-identification without issue. The coalition of national women's organisations, which has extensive experience with that type of data, stated that collecting the information in a trans-inclusive fashion would be beneficial.

I dissented from the committee's stage 1 conclusion in favour of a binary sex question. Like the respected women's and equalities organisations that I mentioned, I support a third option. Its inclusion would allow more people to complete the census and, as National Records of Scotland found, it would increase response rates, despite the conclusion in the committee's stage 1 report claiming the contrary. That option could allow us to gather valuable data on a small and vulnerable group for whom we cannot practically gather that information in any other way, and it would not negatively affect anyone else.

**Claire Baker:** I do not know whether Mr Greer noticed but, in the evidence that we received, National Records of Scotland said that, if there

was a third option, it would just assign a sex, so it seems as if the NRS would not actually gather any data on the group that presented as non-binary.

**Ross Greer:** That is why I said that the option "could" allow us to collect that valuable data. That is a choice that could be made. It is a policy choice for National Records of Scotland or the Scottish Government. Alternatively, the Parliament could make a decision on whether to reallocate the people whose data is collected in that group between the male and female categories. The point is that the collection of the data does not negatively affect anyone else. Indeed, for all other purposes, as the member mentioned, that random redistribution into male and female categories will happen. Therefore my question remains: why not make a change that positively benefits a small and vulnerable group at no cost?

As Claire Baker did, I ask the cabinet secretary to reflect in her closing remarks on whether the sex question—whether or not it has a non-binary option—will continue to be on the basis of lived sex, as has been the case previously.

I hope that, as the process moves forward, all members take the opportunity to listen to those whose lives and identities we are discussing. One role of the Parliament is to lift up the voices of Scotland's most marginalised, and the bill is one small opportunity to do just that, which is why I support it.

16:11

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** As others have observantly noted, the bill is somewhat short, with only three sections, so I am more confident than usual that everyone in the debate will genuinely have read the whole thing, which is possibly not something that we will be able to say about the Planning (Scotland) Bill when we consider it next week. However, as the cabinet secretary correctly observed, the bill's brevity does not translate into a lack of importance. Getting the census right is a once-in-a-decade task that is laid before the Parliament of the time. Just as with the previous census, the results of the next one will be reflected on for many decades to come.

Before I deal with a couple of points in the bill, I want to associate myself with the motion that was recently lodged by Jenny Marra and widely supported by members across the Parliament. As Jamie Greene and Ross Greer said, one issue that has hit the headlines or has at least been a feature of social media traffic is the importance of the census producing accurate information about sex and gender identity as a precursor to the wider legislative proposals that the Parliament will consider on those matters in due course.

This national Parliament, above all places, should not tolerate threats, intimidation and physical violence against women who articulate a view on the definitions of sex and gender. We must surely make a joint, concerted and strong stand against what happened recently at the University of Edinburgh in that regard, as Jenny Marra's motion rightly does. Someone who was involved in the university debate told me:

"This whole situation is distressing, and most distressing of all is the sense that those of us arguing for a rational debate, that allows arguments against simply replacing sex with gender identity across law and public policy to be properly heard, are being left vulnerable to defamation and threats of violence."

Any sympathy that I have for an argument evaporates when some of those who purport to make it behave in the way in which I understand happened. We cannot and should not tolerate that. That is not the Scotland that I want and it is surely not the Scotland that the Parliament wants. A rational debate about rights needs to be just that—rational.

It is important to be clear on what we are talking about today. As a result of the bill, the 2021 census will be equipped to gather more data about people's gender identification and sexual orientation. Of course, the actual questions that will be asked will be considered via secondary legislation in the form of a census order, and no doubt there will be further important debates on exactly how those questions are worded, which will be for later. However, during this debate, I have listened to those who have argued about how we shape the bill in order to get the census right.

Arguments have been made about the importance of robust data, and it is important to reflect on the policy memorandum, which explains that

"Government, local authorities, health services, the education and academic communities, the third sector, commercial businesses, and others need reliable information on the number and characteristics of people and households if they are to conduct many of their activities effectively."

That seemed to me to reflect the overwhelming weight of evidence that I and committee colleagues heard over recent weeks. Ensuring that bodies are equipped with robust data in order to carry out their services is therefore the overwhelming purpose of the census.

There have already been important reflections during the debate about how we ensure that the data is robust, with Ross Greer adding his perspective on that. I recognise the arguments that have been made about the importance of representation. The census will collect information that will be relied on. It is important, therefore, that

the snapshot that will be taken is able to accurately reflect Scottish society as it is at the time.

The trans community needs to be included in the census. That community deserves not just to be seen in the census but to be counted accurately in it. Those are the first steps to people having their rights realised, whoever they are and in whatever way, across Scotland. Our records do not know enough about the trans community. With the passing of the bill before us and other bills that will come, that will surely change and change for the better.

I believe that the bill is capable of doing what it was set out to do. That is surely to design a census that collects important sociodemographic information that is used in the design and delivery of public services. On that principle, we will very much support this measure.

16:16

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):**

Before I start, I associate myself with the remarks of Claire Baker, Jamie Greene and Tavish Scott in urging a civilised debate on these matters and in condemning all violence or threats of violence against women, as outlined in Jenny Marra's motion.

I thank the committee clerks and all the witnesses who gave evidence for our scrutiny of the bill.

I support the bill. Both sexual orientation and gender reassignment are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and it is appropriate to ask about them in the census on a voluntary basis.

Sexual orientation should be simple to quantify and data should be produced that is useful to our understanding of society. Trans status is more complex. As well as including transsexuals who have surgery after psychological therapy, Stonewall's trans umbrella includes people with no medical treatment who refute the contention that they have a psychological condition. It includes transvestites and non-binary identities, and it will be interesting to see how the census question captures meaningful information about this very different group of individuals.

I want to explain briefly why some feminists find the concept of gender identity problematic. In her book "The Second Sex", the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir argued that gender was a social construct, not something innate. Some so-called feminine characteristics such as passivity, concern for appearance and types of dress are roles that we adopt, not who we are. Feminists believe that a boy can like pink and play with dolls, and he is still

a boy; and that a girl can like toy trucks and crop her hair, and she is still a girl. To suggest that those who do not conform to those gender stereotypes must be a different sex is troubling for some feminists.

I reject the concept of innate gender identity, but I will vote for the bill in a spirit of pragmatism and compromise. I accept that, for a growing number of people, identity is of deep personal significance.

Sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and it has been a census question for 200 years. It is particularly important for women that sex is recorded accurately, because it is women who face most discrimination based on their sex. We also need to record sex to plan services such as health. The book “Invisible Women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men” by Caroline Criado Perez—a favourite of the First Minister—demonstrates that bodies differ not just in terms of reproductive systems but in many other ways, for example in the presentation of heart disease.

The proposed non-binary sex question was rejected by the majority of the committee and, crucially, by the Office for National Statistics. The ONS conducted a robust equality impact assessment on the census, whereas the same exercise by NRS was inadequate. For example, it did not consider sex as a separate characteristic.

The sex question should also be based on biological sex, in my view. In 2011, without any public scrutiny, the census included online guidance that said that the sex question could, for the first time, be answered according to how people felt. The briefing from Murray Blackburn Mackenzie points out that that decision was based on a flawed private consultant’s report that erroneously said that sex included gender reassignment. It also points out that as we have no idea how many trans-identifying people—including non-binary—live in Scotland, no amount of testing by NRS can tell us how the data might be affected in 2021 by a self-identifying sex question.

Professor Susan McVie, chair of quantitative criminology at the University of Edinburgh, who sits on the Government’s board for official statistics, told the committee that the self-identified question in 2011 was a mistake. In a further letter this week, she said:

“The conflation of sex and gender identity goes against existing inequalities legislation and risks the construction of inaccurate and corrupted data.”

The inclusion of a trans question for the first time means that people can express their identity and answer the sex question accurately. I am not convinced by briefings that refer to “lived sex”.

There is no definition of “lived sex” in either law or biology.

It has been suggested that feelings may be hurt if transgender people have to answer a question on biological sex, but there are other census questions that people could find distressing, such as those on mental health or disability. People answer them knowing that the census remains confidential for 100 years. Trans people will, of course, have to reference their birth sex on other occasions—not least in relation to medical treatment.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will take my points on board and, more importantly, the expertise of Professor McVie, Murray Blackburn Mackenzie and the Office for National Statistics. The census is the gold standard of statistics, and it is important that it is committed to both accuracy and material reality.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Annie Wells, to be followed by Stuart McMillan. I encourage members to keep to four minutes.

16:21

**Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** I thank all the organisations that kindly sent briefings ahead of the debate. It is only right that the census reflects the views of modern-day society, which is why I will support the bill at stage 3 today.

Things have moved forward since stage 1, and I am pleased to see that clarity has been provided during stage 2 on how questions on sexual orientation and gender identity will be formatted. I welcome further engagement on the wording of such questions, and the fact that the Parliament will have the opportunity to consider future questions once they are finalised.

The census is no insignificant task. Completed every 10 years—the next one is scheduled for March 2021—it gives us a complete picture of the nation, providing information that is needed by Governments in the UK to develop policy, plan and run public services, and allocate funding.

The census provides an opportunity to build on existing data so that public authorities can fulfil the public sector equality duty and consider the full needs of protected groups under the Equality Act 2010. Times have moved on. More and more people are openly identifying as LGBT, and it is only right that the census reflects that. The bill will allow National Records of Scotland to alter the current census to vary the questions it asks, resulting in the inclusion of questions on prescribed aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation.

It goes without saying that that all needs to be done with care and consideration. After all, the

purpose of the census is to collect data that is accurate and reliable. Questions should be clear and straightforward, and given the need for individuals' privacy, they should be answered only on a voluntary basis without the threat of penalty. We have to understand that not everyone will feel comfortable with providing the information, and that in homes where the form is being completed by the head of the household, young people in particular may not want to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. I am therefore pleased that those questions will be voluntary, and that National Records of Scotland has committed to ensuring that individuals can submit a private response to the census to replace any response submitted on their behalf.

I am also pleased that, at stage 2, the cabinet secretary altered the bill to place trans status and history as an entry on their own, alongside religion and sexual orientation, removing concerns about the perceived conflation of gender and sex.

It is reassuring to see that NRS worked with the Equality Network and others on the specific text of the amendments before they were lodged and that no issues were raised with stakeholders, including the women's groups that provided evidence at stage 1. Significantly, it is also welcome that, given that the actual inclusion or wording of any such questions is not within the scope of the bill, that will be subject to further engagement with NRS and stakeholders.

I am also reassured by the fact that the Scottish Parliament will have the right to consider and reject a future question should it see fit, meaning that all evidence can again be duly considered.

I reiterate my support for the bill at stage 3. This is a short but much-needed bill that will allow the census to reflect modern society. I hope that, by passing the bill, we can build on existing equality data and assist public authorities in fulfilling the needs of protected groups.

16:25

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** The bill, which is largely technical in nature, has caused a stir in terms of public debate. The bill simply seeks to amend the enabling powers in the 1920 act and, as has been stated by the cabinet secretary, a period of informal engagement with the committee regarding the questions will begin after stage 3.

My focus today is solely on the contents of the bill and what it is intended to do, but I will touch on one other aspect. I welcome the passage of the bill through Parliament and recognise how important it is to help keep the census up to date with society. During the passage of the bill, I realised that I was the only committee member

who was on the committee that scrutinised the order for the 2011 census 10 years ago. I was struck by how much society has changed in those 10 years. Society is more open and tolerant, but there is still a long way to go. The bill, which will allow the census to deal with today's society and beyond, is therefore important.

Ross Greer touched on the aspect of the census that concerns the voluntary question on transgender status, and talked about the issue of the NHS using its own data. Section 17 of the policy memorandum touches on the issue of the lack of data around people's transgender status. I can understand why the NHS will want to use its own data. First, other data is not there at the moment; and, secondly, when the census takes place in 2021, it will record the data at that time, and things will change hugely in the ensuing 10 years.

During the stage 1 debate on 28 February, I quoted paragraphs 11 and 75 of the committee's report. Paragraph 11 says:

"The Committee agrees that there has been considerable social change with regard to issues concerning sexual orientation since 2011."

Paragraph 75 contains this quotation from the cabinet secretary:

"The census does not lead public opinion; the census has to reflect society as it is just now and ask questions that maximise the response rate so that the data can be used."

Those statements were absolutely correct at that time; they are now; and they will be in future.

The bill recognises the importance and sensitivity of the new questions and it tries to mitigate concerns about intrusion into private life by placing the questions on a voluntary basis. The main policy aim of the bill is not to facilitate the asking of questions about transgender matters and sexual orientation but to make answering those questions voluntary, just as the religion question was placed on a voluntary basis by the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2000. The other census questions are compulsory.

I am genuinely pleased that this technical bill will be passed today, and that we will have a census that is fit for 2021—a census that can be delivered, that people can fill out, from which data can be gathered and that people can trust and have faith in. As colleagues have indicated, there will be plenty of time to discuss the gender recognition issues.

I echo the calls from colleagues across the chamber for people to carry out these discussions with respect and in a calm and professional manner. People's views will differ, and it is important that all views are heard.

16:30

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** Given some of the issues that we have touched on in the debate so far, it would be easier either to speak only for 30 seconds or for 30 minutes. I thank the committee for its work and endeavours in getting to a point at which we can debate at stage 3 without any amendments. I thank the organisations that gave evidence to the committee and provided briefings ahead of the debate. They have helped to inform my understanding.

To some extent, the bill's importance and significance are in inverse relation to its size. Many members have touched on that point, including Jamie Greene and Ross Greer, who described it as a short and simple bill. However, issues that are short and simple can perhaps find the fissures in our public discourse and considerably expand them. I agree entirely with the general principles of the bill; to an extent, the debate is a rehash of the debate that we had at stage 1. The bill places on a statutory footing the voluntary questions about sexual orientation and trans history, which is welcome.

I welcome the fact that the 2021 census will be predominantly digital, with provisions in place for people who are not able to participate digitally. It will be interesting to see the implications that that has for expediting the production of the data. I will be fascinated to see the data that emerges from the census. The 2021 census comes at a significant time not just for Scotland but for the world. I do not want to talk about tension but, in many quarters, a strong dialogue is taking place between different generations. Generation Z—those born in 1996—are now coming of age. Millennials like me, born between 1980 and 1986, are not quite at the knacker's yard, although it sometimes feels like we are heading that way. Do not worry—I will not go on to generation X, the baby boomers or the silent generation. I say "Hi" to James Dornan.

When it comes to shaping public policy, the data from the census has significant real-world implications. As Tavish Scott said, every decade, we have a task in getting the census absolutely right. The process of the bill has been commendable. I hope that the tenor that has characterised how the bill has moved through Parliament will inform the conversations and discussions that we will have in the next parliamentary year, when we look at the census order. I do not envy those who are charged with devising questions, as it is a complex issue. Identity is a complex issue. However, although a census is an event, it is also a cumulative, intergenerational process.

The 2011 census included a welcome question on carers, and, in that census, 429,000 people

identified as carers. In a subsequent Scottish health and care experience survey, 759,000 people identified as carers. There were a number of complex reasons for that. During carers week, it is appropriate to highlight that not everyone who is a carer realises that they are a carer, so there is a constant need for work and guidance to help people to understand the questions that they are being asked and to understand the relevance to their circumstances and experiences. I hope that, as we progress towards the census and consider the questions later in this parliamentary session, we will continue to take a moderate and considered approach.

16:34

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** I join other members in thanking the committee for its hard work in reaching this point and making things relatively straightforward for the rest of us. I associate myself with the remarks of Tavish Scott and others about the importance of having such a debate with respect and dignity, which should be applied universally.

The purpose of the bill is to allow questions on sexual orientation and prescribed aspects of gender identity to be answered on a voluntary basis. It is a big step but an essential one, because no one should be fined for not answering. As the cabinet secretary said, the bill will be followed by Scottish statutory instruments. There is always a catch—there are always SSIs.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Had the member been listening to the debate—I noticed that she was in conversation with her colleague for the first three quarters of an hour—she would know that it is not the same procedure as for any other SSI. The Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill introduces a different procedure that is not like any other procedure. When the final questions come, the role of the Parliament and, particularly, the committee will be quite different from their role in relation to regular SSIs.

**Pauline McNeill:** Oh, well—that will teach me. I apologise to the cabinet secretary if she thought I was being flippant. I did not mean to be.

I recognise the importance of the census as a tool in understanding the make-up of society. We are fortunate that we have been running it for 100 years. All of Scotland's citizens should feel able to complete the census. At the same time, the data collection purpose of the census allows Governments to adopt appropriate policies in providing services to the population.

In a helpful briefing, Stonewall outlined some of the important purposes of the bill as being to enable us to have authoritative data on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; to assist

local authorities in meeting their statutory requirements, which change over time; and to inform the planning of service provision to advance LGBT equality. The data can be used to build an evidence base and to measure progress towards meeting equality outcomes, which is important. We lack that kind of information, and we need it to decide how to shape services for the LGBT community.

We desperately need the data for trans people, who face difficulties in their daily lives. As an MSP, I recently took on the case of a transgender woman who was advised, seven days before an employment tribunal, that she would no longer get the legal representation that she had been promised. I believe that there are issues for transgender people that are deeply rooted in employment law. It is a real experience for those people, and we should consider giving support in that regard. In a survey that was carried out in 2017, LGBT Scotland found that transphobia was seen as an issue by 85 per cent of LGBT people and that 41 per cent of young trans people had experienced a hate crime in the previous year.

In the previous debate—when I was listening—I asked the cabinet secretary whether she could clarify the definition of a household and be sensitive to the fact that many LGBT young people are not comfortable with telling their family what their identity is, so that we can be sure that we deal with that question correctly. I look forward to receiving an answer to that question.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Will the member take an intervention? Oh, she has finished.

**The Presiding Officer:** Perhaps the cabinet secretary can add that point to her concluding comments.

16:38

**Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in this stage 3 debate on the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill. I, too, thank the committee clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre for all their hard work in connection with the bill.

As we have heard, it was not matters within the formal scope of the bill that were at issue, but wider matters regarding the wording of the mandatory sex question. That will fall to be agreed through secondary legislation, which I understand will be introduced next year.

Before turning to that issue, it is important to stress that there was consensus around the purpose of the bill. Specifically, all committee members supported the introduction of voluntary questions as to sexual orientation and trans status and history. The only issue that arose concerned

the rather confusing drafting in the original version of the bill, which risked conflating sex with gender identity. However, the cabinet secretary made it clear that it was never the intention behind the bill to conflate sex and gender identity, and, as promised, she lodged amendments at stage 2 to rectify matters.

The cabinet secretary also confirmed her support for the committee's recommendation that an individual's privacy rights should be respected when they are completing the form. I am pleased to note—it will perhaps give Pauline McNeill some relief to know—that National Records of Scotland is developing a system to allow individuals to complete forms in private, which is important progress.

As I understand the position, the next steps on the bill will be for the committee and wider stakeholders to have close engagement on the wording of the voluntary questions. I look forward to that process.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the wider debate that was generated on the mandatory sex question, even though, as I have said, it is not within the formal scope of the bill. Although the committee recognised the strongly held views on the matter, it nonetheless recommended—by a vote of six members in favour to one against, with two abstentions—that the mandatory sex question should remain binary. I entirely support that recommendation.

In that regard, evidence was received on the scientifically grounded theory of human sexual dimorphism, and we were reminded that sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Witnesses also queried how any other approach could ensure that the census would adhere to the highest statistical standards and provide longitudinal consistency. As the committee's convener has mentioned, Professor Susan McVie, the chair of quantitative criminology at the University of Edinburgh, has today said in a letter to committee members:

"The conflation of sex and gender identity goes against existing inequalities legislation and risks the construction of inaccurate and corrupted data that are not fit for the purposes for which the Census and other official data sources are required."

It is important to reiterate the point that I made at stage 1 about how National Records of Scotland would proceed if there were to be a non-binary question under the mandatory sex question heading. Claire Baker has also raised the matter in this afternoon's debate. However, the point gets to the crux of the matter, so I will mention again that the head of census statistics at National Records of Scotland, Amy Wilson, said in evidence to the committee that it would

“randomly assign people back into the male and female categories”

and

“still produce outputs on a male and female basis.”—  
[*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee*, 20 December 2018; c 43.]

That begs the question of what the point would be of including such a non-binary question in our national census—incidentally, a route that the ONS has recommended against being taken in England and Wales. That debate is for another day, but, given the considerable amount of evidence that was received on the subject, I felt it important to make mention of the issue this afternoon.

In conclusion, I stress my support for the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill, and I look forward to voting for it at decision time.

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the closing speeches.

16:42

**Claire Baker:** The debate has been interesting and has inspired conversations, as well as speeches in the chamber. While a debate is the final stage of the passing of a bill, in many ways this one has been the opening conversation on future debates on gender identity and the census, reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, and transgender rights. Although the debate has been wide ranging, we should not lose sight of what the bill will achieve. If it is passed, the census that will take place in 2021 will, for the first time, collect information on a person’s sexual orientation and transgender status and history—if they wish to answer the relevant questions.

The census strives to be accessible and relevant and to maintain integrity in its data. It is important that such questions are asked on a voluntary basis, which is a position that is widely supported. I understand that work is on-going to ensure individual respondents’ confidentiality and sensitivity to their needs, and I would appreciate an update on that work.

The census is important for public bodies to be able to make key decisions about resource allocation, policy development and how services are planned. By gathering such additional information, the needs of the LGBT community could be better served and understood, as Jamie Greene highlighted in his opening speech.

I return to the sex question. It is interesting to look at the work of the ONS, which is considering the same issue. It has concluded that there would be a risk to the data collected on sex if a third response option were to be added to that question. However, Ross Greer set out his belief

that that question should be included and made arguments in support of his position.

As we are agreeing today, voluntary questions will be added on transgender identity, and the ONS thinks that it can meet the needs of that group. As Annabelle Ewing has just stated, the committee has proposed that the sex question in the Scottish census should remain unchanged. It is interesting that, depending on the results of its testing, the ONS proposes to add a caveat to its sex question, to explain that a gender question will follow later in the questionnaire. It has said that that has been found to increase acceptability among the transgender and non-binary populations. It would be interesting to hear whether that option has been explored in Scotland.

It is concerning that elements of the debate have become toxic. The situation has involved misrepresentation and accusations, which presents the Parliament with a challenging environment in which to consider the reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which form a parallel issue to the debate that has added an intensity to the discussion of the bill that was perhaps not expected.

Murray Blackburn Mackenzie’s briefing sets out concerns about what it describes as “Losing sight of women’s interests”. Joan McAlpine raised those issues. There is concern that the protected characteristic of sex is being diminished and even ignored. Those points must not be dismissed; they need to be addressed. We must not close down debate, and open debate must take place without fear or threat to anyone.

I have heard the comment this afternoon that society is changing but, to ensure that Scotland is a safe, welcoming and respectful country for everyone, we need to make progress with understanding and work to achieve consensus. Reform of the GRA is necessary and, although I accept that that is not the cabinet secretary’s responsibility, the Government needs to be clear about its intentions and bring the debate for parliamentary scrutiny.

The debate that is dominating public discourse often does not recognise other issues that affect LGBT people. The LGBT population is subject to multiple disadvantages in the workplace, in education and in civic Scotland. We know that prejudice exists towards the LGBT community and that physical and verbal assault is all too common. Access to appropriate health services is not always easy, and that is compounded by Scotland’s geography. As Pauline McNeill highlighted, LGBT Youth Scotland has reported that 84 per cent of LGBT young people and 96 per cent of trans young people feel that they have experienced a mental health problem.

LGBT people can face isolation from their families and communities. I fully recognise the concerns that have been expressed about what changes to the GRA will mean for women and girls and for women's rights, but we must recognise that LGBT communities are often vulnerable and open to exploitation and assault. We need to chart a path through the debate in a sensitive and understanding manner that recognises and addresses the concerns of everyone about the impact of the proposed changes.

16:47

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am pleased to close for the Scottish Conservatives in the stage 3 debate on the bill. It has been interesting to hear the contributions from across the chamber. As a member of the committee that considered the bill, I welcome the progress that has been made and thank all who contributed, gave evidence, supported the process and gave us briefings. The depth of feeling is obvious.

This is a short but important bill that will ensure that future censuses collect information that helps us to better understand modern Scotland and the people who live here, as Jamie Greene outlined. We have heard good and balanced speeches from across the chamber—from Tavish Scott, Ross Greer, Claire Baker and Joan McAlpine.

As has been discussed, the Equality Act 2010 requires public sector organisations to consider the needs of groups with protected characteristics when they deliver services and in their employment practices, for example. Organisations must have regard to the need to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised; the need to ensure equality of opportunity between groups; and the need to foster good relations between groups, which is vital. My colleague Annie Wells itemised that. We have heard about the strong views that organisations such as Stonewall have expressed in briefings about what should be done and how our debate should be informed.

To perform the duties that are placed on them, public sector bodies require reliable data on protected characteristics. However, significant gaps remain in the data on sexual orientation and gender identity. National Records of Scotland says that there is not currently a reliable data source on the size and locality of the trans community in Scotland. That is a major reason for requiring an update to the census legislation, and I believe that the bill will allow public sector organisations to fulfil their equality duties better.

It is worth noting that similar information is being considered south of the border. A UK Government

white paper and the Office for National Statistics recommended that the 2021 census in England and Wales should include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity and that, as with our census, answering should be voluntary.

As my colleagues have outlined, the Scottish Conservatives want to ensure that the guidance on the questions clearly explains the difference between sex and gender identity, which are often conflated, and also that the questions on gender and sexual orientation are voluntary, with no penalties for those who choose not to answer them.

It is welcome that the wording of the questions will be tested, and that there will be consultation and engagement with National Records of Scotland and other stakeholders. However, we were still keen to ensure that a duty was placed on the Scottish ministers to review the success or otherwise of the proposed questions on sexual orientation and gender identity after they have been included as part of the next census. It is vital that that review happens.

At stage 2, Jamie Greene MSP lodged amendments on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives to seek to address some of those issues. Following discussion with the cabinet secretary, she indicated that, although the amendments could be lodged, she supported what they were trying to do and thought that there was little requirement to lodge amendments. We felt that that was appropriate and withdrew our amendments.

As we have already heard in the debate, the proposals have cross-party support and it has been great to hear what we have heard today. It is good for Parliament to have this kind of discussion, and it is good for Scotland to have this kind of discussion.

The changes that will be brought about by the bill also have the backing of organisations outside Holyrood, and we have had briefings from many of those organisations, saying exactly what they feel and what they think that Parliament should be doing to support communities outside Parliament. We had indications from the Law Society of Scotland, which welcomed the clarity that the questions will be voluntary.

In conclusion, we support the bill to include voluntary questions on gender identity and sexual orientation in future censuses, and we are content with the assurances that have been given. This will have a massive impact going forward. We believe that the bill is good for Scotland because it sets out exactly what is required. We look forward to seeing progress once the bill passes.

16:52

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am grateful to my parliamentary colleagues here today for another useful debate on these sensitive matters. I am pleased that stakeholders, the committee and Parliament have supported the key principles of the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill throughout the bill process.

It is right that the questions should be voluntary. It is also critical that all census respondents know that voluntary means just that and there will be no penalty for not answering the questions. From the beginning of the process, we have made it clear that the purpose of the bill is to remove criminal penalty from these questions and make them voluntary rather than the standard compulsory.

Work is in hand by National Records of Scotland to ensure that that is communicated, which includes embedding the words "This question is voluntary" in the text of the new questions, so that census respondents are not required to cross-refer to separate instructions to find that information. That was done with the religion question in the 2011 census. After discussions at stage 2, the registrar general also confirmed that he will make it clear in the covering message on the front of the census questionnaire, as well as in the supporting guidance. I am confident that the messaging that the questions are voluntary will be clear.

Stakeholders have been involved throughout the planning for 2021 to ensure that National Records of Scotland will ask the right questions in the right way. National Records of Scotland carried out a public consultation between October 2015 and January 2016 to understand what information users need from the 2021 census. It is worth stressing that the purpose of the census is to identify needs and to ensure that those needs can be met. We have had a number of good contributions about why we need more information, particularly about sexual orientation and transgender issues. A number of the contributors to the debate made that point, including Claire Baker and Jamie Greene and others. Work has been done directly with a wide range of stakeholders, involving thousands of people from across Scottish society.

The bill process has highlighted that we must continue to ensure the identity of all individuals and groups that have an interest in census matters and ensure that new relationships are developed between them and National Records of Scotland.

It is also critical that stakeholders continue to be kept informed and, where possible, are able to influence plans up until census day.

Pauline McNeill raised the issue of households. I replied to her after stage 1 with information, but I will also copy to her the information that we gave

to the committee, particularly about the sensitivities for households—especially individuals who may not have come out to the rest of the family but who want to take part in the census—and how work will be done to respect confidentiality and be discreet.

The census bill has been the first direct involvement in Scotland's 2021 census for the Scottish Parliament and it has clearly stimulated debate and interest in the census as we move forward to the subordinate legislation process. We have the critical requirement that a census order and census regulations have to be in force before we can have a census in 2021, which will involve extensive work by the committee. I appreciate the work that it has put in to date, but a considerable amount of work on those orders and regulations will be required. Work is already being progressed with the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee to ensure that it has the necessary information this year to thoroughly and appropriately consider these matters.

Passing the census bill will mean that we can ask questions on sexual orientation and transgender status and history on a voluntary basis, but Parliament will still have to agree that the questions will be asked in the 2021 census. I detect from the contributions today that there is a willingness and appreciation that that should be the case. Other questions and other census matters will be considered by the committee and wider Parliament as we progress through the process. The questions are clearly a critical part of the census.

National Records of Scotland is currently planning the whole operation for a successful digital census in 2021. There are only 648 days to go until census day, but the responsibility and influence of Parliament does not end at census day. In my opening speech, I mentioned that National Records of Scotland plans to process and output census data. The registrar general will prepare reports on the census returns, including on data content and operations, and lay them before the Scottish Parliament at the appropriate time after the census.

In addition to those specific reports, the registrar general will prepare a comprehensive report on the overall census operation. It will include an evaluation of the new questions that will be asked in 2021, including the voluntary ones on sexual orientation and transgender status and history, and will also be brought to Parliament for consideration. As members can see, National Records of Scotland has a thorough process in place to collect, process and output census data and also to ensure appropriate consideration and evaluation of those matters.

One issue that was raised in the committee report and in contributions from Ross Greer and Claire Baker is whether the sex question will be on the basis of lived sex. That issue is not the purpose of this bill and, indeed, I agree with Jamie Greene and his approach. The focus of his remarks was specifically on the bill's content, reflecting the fact that considering the actual wording will come next, as part of the process.

**Claire Baker:** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I want to make my point here. I have already communicated to the committee that it is really important that people will have confidence in using the census data and also in completing the data honestly. That will be one of the issues with regard to the wording. I stress—and this is the point that I made to Pauline McNeill—that the issue will be for the committee to consider on the basis of all the evidence that is provided, including the further testing that is currently taking place and consultation with stakeholders. Only when those have been done can we determine what the question will be.

That is what is quite different about this process, compared with other processes. When I present the final census order, I will need to know that there will be agreement on the completeness of the order. That is why the NRS will need to work very closely with the committee to share the evidence of what works and look at comparisons with other countries including the rest of the UK and also Australia, Canada and other places where this will be taking place. That is the right way to go. I cannot definitively give Ross Greer or anybody else an answer, because that is the collaborative and co-operative process that will be involved in putting the census together.

I thank everyone who has contributed throughout the process of the census bill and to today's debate. The 2021 census will be our first predominantly digital census, and for it to be successful, we must ensure that we ask the right questions in the most appropriate way. I repeat my thanks to all those who gave evidence to help to improve the bill during this parliamentary process and particularly to our colleagues in National Records of Scotland and the bill team. I commend the motion in my name.

## Business Motion

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-17671, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 18 June 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Portfolio Questions:  
Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Cycling Action Plan for Scotland

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Planning (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Committee Announcements

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 19 June 2019

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1.30 pm Ministerial Statement: The Scottish Government's Response to the Expert Review of Mental Health Services for Young People Entering and in Custody at HMP and YOI Polmont

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Planning (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 20 June 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Ministerial Statement: 2018-19 Scottish Government Provisional Outturn

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:

Health and Sport

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Planning  
(Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 25 June 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Management of  
Offenders (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Committee Announcements

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 26 June 2019

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1.30 pm Portfolio Questions:  
Communities and Local Government;  
Social Security and Older People;  
Finance, Economy and Fair Work

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 27 June 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.45 pm Decision Time

(b) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 19 June 2019, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer";

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 20 June 2019, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister"; and

(d) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 17 June 2019, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I draw members' attention to the fact that we have just provisionally agreed to have a 7 o'clock decision time on Tuesday and Wednesday next week.

**Members:** Oh!

**The Presiding Officer:** You have just voted for it. [*Laughter.*]

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-17672, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 (Modification of Schedule 1) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The first question is, that motion S5M-17645, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. As the question is on passing a bill, there will be a division.

### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (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)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (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, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)

Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 115, Against 0 Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

**The Presiding Officer:** The Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill is therefore passed. [Applause.]

The final question is, that motion S5M-17672, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 (Modification of Schedule 1) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

## Housing Co-operatives

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16487, in the name of Johann Lamont, on a new report calling for more housing co-operatives in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Co-operatives UK report, *Shared space—how Scottish housing co-ops build communities*; notes that the report identifies significant benefits delivered by co-ops through the key themes of affordability, empowerment, community and stronger social housing; recognises that the report states that Scotland has just 11 registered housing co-ops, compared to 685 across the UK, at a time when 150,000 people are on council house waiting lists; agrees with the report's findings that the decline of social housing stock in Scotland and parallel rise of the private rented sector has created a major challenge for those looking for affordable homes in the social rented sector; understands that the report highlights the excellent work of West Whitlawburn Housing Co-op, based in the Glasgow region, as an example of a housing co-op creating "a safer estate with warmer, more attractive homes"; notes that the report has recommended an eight-point policy plan to help deliver more housing co-ops, and notes calls for the Scottish Government to encourage more housing co-ops in Scotland in order to create safer and stronger communities that offer affordable rents and more power to tenants.

17:03

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** I am privileged to open this debate on the role of housing co-operatives and their potential to address some of the many housing challenges that we face in Scotland.

I thank all those who have supported the motion. I also thank the cross-party group on co-operatives for producing the report, "Shared space—How Scottish housing co-ops build communities", Co-operatives UK for publishing it and those, including West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, that shaped its findings. I welcome representatives from those organisations who are in the public gallery.

I declare an interest as a Co-operative Party member and Co-operative MSP. The Scottish Co-operative Party fully supports Labour's ambition to double the size of the co-operative economy.

The co-operative movement is, of course, a global movement, with values shared across continents. It is an international movement, but one that delivers change at the most local of levels, making a real and measurable difference to the lives of families and communities. It is a movement of high ideals, but based on practical action, empowerment, and democratic accountability and control. Its greatest aspirations

are judged and tested by the real results that it achieves. Historically, of course, Scotland was at the heart of the development of co-operatives—indeed, some might argue that we were there at the very start of that development—but the movement is as relevant and central to Scotland's present and future as it was to its past.

As the report so emphatically reveals, those values are absolutely at the heart of the success of housing co-ops in Scotland. The report recognises the flexibility and variety of housing co-ops, which meet the needs of students, people in retirement and young people in work, and which restore communities that were poorly served, ill designed and seen as places where people did not want to live. One small example of that variety is the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative, which has the potential to provide housing that is better quality and more affordable than the other options that students might have. It is a model from which many other students across Scotland could benefit.

I am immensely proud of the work of housing co-ops in Scotland, and I have seen at first hand the transformation that has been brought about by the tenant-led Rosehill Housing Co-operative in the Glasgow Pollok constituency and the West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative in Cambuslang. Those co-ops have shown how to create change not just in the kind of housing that is available, but in how it is planned and maintained, and in how the communities are then sustained. They understand that housing is about not just bricks and mortar, but the actions that are needed to help local communities to thrive. It is about not just the building but the broader environment. It is about providing services—as West Whitlawburn does—including access to affordable energy, digital services, employment and training opportunities, and welfare and money advice. The range of wider actions that co-ops undertake is as remarkable as it is creative.

From time to time, in our debates on housing, here and elsewhere, we are all drawn into playing a numbers game—focusing, for example, on the number of council houses that have been built. However, in truth, that ignores the reality and diversity of social housing. Some of our most effective housing co-ops emerged out of local campaigns by residents who were determined to take control from their local councils of the decisions that affected them so directly, and who were resolute in their belief that, as local people, they were best placed to determine and act upon the needs and priorities of their community—and their track record proves their case.

However, the motion does not just celebrate the reality of the success of housing co-ops; it also asks why there is so much unrealised potential

and unmet need. Why are there only 11 registered housing co-ops in Scotland, compared to 685 across the United Kingdom? Surely, that is a lost opportunity while too many people are being forced into a private sector option that has less certainty and fewer rights, and that comes at a higher cost. What is the role of the housing regulator? Is the approach to regulation such that it—whether unconsciously or deliberately—inhibits the establishment of housing co-ops? Will the minister reflect on that conundrum? Will the minister agree to meet representatives of the cross-party group on co-operatives to explore how any perceived barriers might be removed? Is the minister willing to consider, with the group, how the recommendations of the report might be progressed? How can we promote and advocate for the housing co-op model more effectively and see, as a consequence, an increase in the number of co-ops across Scotland?

I am proud that, very early in the life of this Parliament, the Labour-led Administration established Co-operative Development Scotland to promote co-operative models in the economy and in our communities. At that time, we deliberately chose to exclude housing from its remit, because housing was located in Communities Scotland. That agency focused on community and economic regeneration but had housing expertise at its centre, and it did immense work to improve Scottish housing. Communities Scotland is long gone, but the need for an advocate for co-op housing remains. I urge the minister to confirm her willingness to open up the remit of Co-operative Development Scotland to include housing and give it responsibility for willing the means to increase the number of housing co-ops—with all the benefits that that would surely bring. The evidence is there as proof.

I again underline my admiration for all those who are involved with housing co-ops, and who have transformed communities with focus, vision and determination. We have in our hands a means of enriching our housing provision and our communities, and of unleashing that potential further. I look forward to being part of future action to remove the barriers that are placed in front of housing co-ops, which will allow them to flourish. I again thank those who produced the report and all those co-op tenants who have inspired—and who continue to inspire—through their work in the creation of co-ops. I trust that the Government will recognise the key role of housing co-operatives, consider the report and act with all those who have an interest to ensure that housing co-operatives continue to serve our local communities. *[Applause.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I say gently to members of the public in the gallery that I

understand why you want to applaud, but we do not permit applause from the gallery.

17:10

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I congratulate Johann Lamont on securing the debate. Unusually—because these are not words that I often say—I also congratulate James Kelly, who I see is the author of the foreword to the report. The report is excellent, and it is a considerable credit to Parliament that a cross-party group can produce such a substantial contribution to a very important debate.

Johann Lamont referred to the imbalance between the number of housing co-ops in Scotland and the number south of the border. I am never afraid to pick up good ideas from wherever they come, including from south of the border, so I immediately turned to section 08 of the report to look at what it says. In my brief speech, I will not explore it in any great detail, but there are a considerable number of things to say.

The co-operative movement in housing is an important part of creating housing for people across Scotland. It can contribute a great deal to filling the gap that Scotland has suffered from—as the rest of the UK has—since the right to buy was introduced in 1980, which resulted in 2.6 million houses across the UK being sold out of public housing stock. Co-operative housing associations can play their substantial part in creating housing for people who otherwise find it difficult to get housing outside the private sector, in which housing is often very expensive and is not always of good quality, and in providing the living space that is essential for people who want a good standard of life.

Rent prices are going up, and people are being encouraged to invest in buy-to-let properties. The primary focus with such properties is the landlord's interest in making a profit. In co-operative housing, the people who live in it are at the centre of decision making. That is right and proper, and it unlocks the potential of many people who have, in too much of their lives, little opportunity for their voices to influence the important things in their lives. Co-operatives in general, and housing co-operatives specifically, can make a particular difference to people's quality of life. It is a neighbourly and collaborative way of making decisions that can encourage social bonds and collective responsibility, which strengthens society as a whole. When people in co-operative housing collectively decide what their priorities are for their area, the whole area gets something that is an example right across communities.

I was particularly interested in the example of West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, which

has been mentioned. Its work extends far beyond provision of housing. Johann Lamont referred to power bills being frozen, which comes from addressing fuel poverty—which has, of course, been before us in Parliament this week.

There is a challenge for young people, in particular. The number of young people who live in rented accommodation has risen and is higher than it was in my generation and in others that followed. It is important that we strike the appropriate balance between privately owned and social housing. Co-operatives can play a very important part in that strategy.

I think that Johann Lamont and I were both members of the Communities Committee—she was the convener and I was a humble back-bench member. I remember that time occasionally, with fondness. I remember her robust engagement on issues that came before the committee: she has always done that. I congratulate her again on bringing an important topic to Parliament and giving us the opportunity to discuss it. I also congratulate all the co-operatives and their members.

17:14

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Johann Lamont on securing this debate on an extremely important issue. I am a huge fan of housing co-ops. In Scotland, we have only 11, which is nowhere near enough. That issue does not come up only at the cross-party group on co-operatives; it has also been discussed at a meeting of one of the several cross-party groups that deal with housing. Therefore, the matter is on the agenda across Parliament.

I read the very good and illuminating “Shared space” report with interest. I focused on the case study of West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative in Cambuslang, mainly because it is running a very good project and is just down the road from where I live, so I know where it is. If the people in the gallery want to invite me along to their co-operative, I will be happy to come down the road from East Kilbride to see it.

The chief executive made a comment in the report that I thought was very telling. He said:

“The attitude of local authorities is another barrier. We are in South Lanarkshire and there is no history of, or appetite, to transfer council housing stock to community level; no appetite to give up control. Glasgow is supportive of the idea of housing co-ops but doesn’t have the stock. South Lanarkshire and others have the stock, but want to continue as a social municipal landlord. West Whitlawburn is sandwiched between two local authority estates which are failing abjectly. They are dreadfully managed and maintained. There is no tenant input or participation, no transparency.”

That sums up the problem that we have—it is a problem of culture. Some councils—he named South Lanarkshire Council—do not want to give up control; they want to keep the power and they have a “We know best” attitude. The tenants at West Whitlawburn have shown that councils such as South Lanarkshire Council need to give up control and accept that they should be more flexible. Housing co-ops have a great number of benefits. They can deliver affordable housing, help to build powerful communities and offer tenants far greater control over the things that matter to them.

As Johann Lamont said, England and Wales seem to be doing far better on the matter. We have only 11 housing co-ops, but there are 685 across the UK, so we have to ask why that is the case. What is holding us back here in Scotland? As I said, the culture is part of the problem. However, England has a community housing fund, which is a national programme that supports the development of a range of community-led housing and will run until 2021-22. The Wales Co-operative Centre is providing £50,000 a year for three years to promote, support and increase the number of housing co-ops in Wales.

Things are progressing better in the rest of the UK, so the Scottish Government and the cabinet secretary might want to say something about that situation. Perhaps the Scottish Government should be looking elsewhere, taking on board what is happening in the rest of these isles and doing it here in Scotland.

17:18

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** I join other members in congratulating Johann Lamont on securing this important debate on housing co-ops. I thank the members of the cross-party group on co-operatives for the work that they have put into producing the “Shared space” report. I welcome the members of a number of housing co-ops, including West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, who are in the public gallery.

This is an important debate on an important issue. I first spoke about housing co-ops shortly after being elected as an MSP in 2007, and I mentioned West Whitlawburn then. However, when we look at the statistics in the motion, we see that there are still only 11 registered housing co-ops in Scotland. That is a matter of deep regret. When I reflect back on that speech, I realise that very few new housing co-ops have been registered in Scotland in the 12 years since then. We have been left behind in relation to this model. The question that we have to pose is whether that is a good thing or a bad thing. I would certainly submit that it is a bad thing.

I will discuss the example of West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, which is mentioned in the report. I have observed it closely, not just because it is in the area that I represent but because it is close to where I stay. It was set up in the 1980s, and it took over the housing stock from Glasgow City Council. The reality is that the housing stock was in a very poor condition and there was a lot of antisocial behaviour. West Whitlawburn was a very challenging area at that time.

If members go to West Whitlawburn now, they will see that the area has been transformed. The original housing stock is still there, but it has been modernised to such an extent that there is great demand for places from people on the housing waiting list. However, it was not just a question of renovating the existing stock. There have been new builds, a community centre has been taken on and there is a communications co-op as well as an initiative to secure low energy prices. In addition to all that, rents run at a very competitive level compared with those of other housing providers in the area.

That is a fantastic example of how a local area can be transformed by a housing co-op. The secret of it comes down to the community involvement. In the main, it is due to the committee—many of its members go back to the early days, such as Anne Anderson, who is in the gallery tonight—and the strong leadership, working in co-operation with Paul Farrell, the director.

The challenge is that we have 150,000 people on social housing waiting lists in Scotland. Are housing co-ops something that can contribute to tackling the housing issues that we face? Of course they are. We can see the difference that has been made in West Whitlawburn. The fact that there are only 11 housing co-ops in Scotland compared with 685 across the UK shows that we really have been left behind.

The direct challenge to the cabinet secretary and the Government is that this debate should not just be a talking shop. I urge the cabinet secretary to engage with the cross-party group and with the experts on housing co-operatives, because they present an opportunity and a solution to some of the challenges that we face in housing. I hope that the cabinet secretary will respond positively in her closing speech and that she will take some practical steps to place housing co-ops at the centre of solutions to the housing issues in Scotland.

17:23

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** The context for the debate is that Scotland's housing is far from good and many people are struggling as a

result. There are 150,000 people on council house waiting lists, rents are continually rising and people are finding it increasingly difficult to find not just affordable housing but appropriate housing. Given that context, housing co-operatives can play an incredibly valuable role in alleviating some of the issues that the thousands of people who are looking for a home are facing.

I confess that I knew little about housing co-operatives before the motion was lodged. Researching them has been a very interesting learning experience. As others have said, there are only 11 registered housing co-operatives in Scotland, compared with more than 600 across the United Kingdom.

What interests me most is the community aspect of housing co-operatives, which is a huge strength of this type of housing. Community is essentially built into the design of a housing co-operative, given its nature of group living and decision making. Just a few miles from here in Bruntsfield, there is a co-operative that consists of eight people of all ages and at different stages living together in a large terraced house. In Co-operatives UK's "Shared space" report, tenants from that co-op detailed the huge benefits that they have gained from living in that genuine community.

A housing co-operative can be an alternative living option for older people, who may be retired, live alone or have gone through life-changing circumstances. According to Age Scotland, 100,000 older people in Scotland feel lonely all or most of the time, and communal living could be a remedy for some of those individuals. Therefore, pursuing the establishment of more housing co-operatives could help not only to meet the demands of housing shortages but to reduce levels of loneliness in Scotland.

People who have a disability are further disadvantaged when it comes to finding housing, particularly suitable housing. Housing co-operatives could be more of an option for those who need specific adjustments to their home but who have not had those supplied by the council. For example, Andy Duffin of West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative was able to move into a flat there that catered for the specific needs of his daughter, who is in a wheelchair. Given the communal ownership structure of a housing co-operative and the way in which decisions are made, it may be much easier for suitable adjustments to be made and people will not have to join the long queues that they often face in councils.

Housing co-operatives also have an economic benefit. Collectively in the UK, housing co-operatives have a turnover of £642 million. The housing is more accessible to those who cannot

afford rising rents and house prices and it provides an alternative to temporary accommodation and seemingly never-ending waiting lists. Ultimately, pursuing the creation of more housing co-operatives should be part of the Scottish Government's way of addressing housing needs, so I welcome the further inquiry into how that can happen. I congratulate Johann Lamont on bringing the motion to Parliament for debate.

17:27

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** Like other members, I welcome the debate, which has been constructive and informative, and I sincerely value the contributions from all the members who have taken part. In particular, I thank Johann Lamont for highlighting the publication of the "Shared space" report and for acknowledging the valuable contribution of housing co-operatives in delivering affordable community-controlled housing in Scotland.

Johann Lamont also highlighted the importance of the co-operative movement to public life more generally. To paraphrase what she said, it is a movement with high ideals but one that is rooted in empowerment and fairness. As the member who represents Clydesdale, which is the home of New Lanark, in which Robert Owen, who is considered to be the father of the co-operative movement, played a pivotal part, I certainly recognise the value that Johann Lamont attaches to co-operatives in many other areas of life, not just housing.

I also congratulate West Whitlawburn Housing Co-Operative in Cambuslang, as it celebrates its 30th anniversary, on all its achievements in creating safe, warm and more attractive homes for its tenants. That is 30 years of positively impacting on the lives of people from many generations. The co-operative deserves our thanks for its dedication and commitment, and I am pleased that many of its members are in the public gallery this evening.

Coincidentally, this morning, I attended the annual conference of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations in Glasgow. As the national membership body for housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland, its ambition is that everyone has a good home in a successful community with a range of high-quality, affordable and accessible homes that meet people's changing needs and aspirations throughout their lives. That ambition reflects our view that housing is essential to our shared endeavour to build a fairer Scotland—it is certainly more than just bricks and mortar.

Housing supports our ambitions to embed the place principle at the core of how we work. The

approach seeks to ensure that we make better decisions that have people and communities at their heart, so as to deliver positive outcomes. Crucially, the place principle recognises that local decision making and delivery, informed by the people who live and work in a community—the experts on their community—are key to the social, economic and physical success of places. I know that that inclusive and co-operative approach is embedded throughout the social housing sector in Scotland. Johann Lamont and others made that point.

Housing is a diverse sector, where housing co-operatives are one of several social landlord constitutional models that are delivering good-quality houses and services to their local communities. The housing co-operative model has remained relatively small in Scotland because, unlike other parts of the UK, we have a strong tradition of community-controlled housing associations. Co-operatives, along with the associations, play a really important role in delivering affordable housing and democratically accountable services to local communities. Given the significant tenant involvement in housing associations in Scotland, there has not been the demand by tenants to grow the co-operative housing model here, but I am happy to further engage with Johann Lamont to understand the barriers that she feels may be there unintentionally and that stymie that demand.

The Government is committed to delivering affordable housing. We have committed to delivering at least 50,000 affordable homes over the course of the parliamentary session, with 35,000 of them for social rent. To achieve that, we are investing more than £3.3 billion in our affordable housing programme, which is the single biggest investment in affordable housing since devolution.

**Johann Lamont:** I very much appreciate the cabinet secretary's willingness to meet the cross-party group on co-operatives, as there is a range of issues of which we are aware. Could the cabinet secretary outline the funding around the wider action work that is done by housing co-operatives? The lesson in Glasgow and elsewhere is that it is not enough just to build houses, as we end up knocking them down later because we have not built in the thing that sustained the communities in which the houses were built.

**Aileen Campbell:** Absolutely—that is why I mentioned the place approach, which ensures that we do not just build houses, but include the spaces in-between that enable children to play, while ensuring that the houses are warm and safe places where children can comfortably do their homework and people can live independently into their old age. The approach also provides spaces

that enable communities to engage with each other. I absolutely take on board what Johann Lamont says. This is not just about bricks and mortar; it is much more important than that. We need not just to build houses but to have sustainable communities, too. All those aspirations are rooted in the national performance framework.

On the commitment to the delivery of affordable housing, I point out that the official statistics that were published yesterday show that we have delivered more than 86,000 affordable homes since 2007, including 59,000 for social rent. That is a significant achievement to ensure that folk have the homes that they deserve. Since 2007, the Government has taken a range of actions to improve housing outcomes for the people of Scotland beyond those ambitious targets. We are certainly proud of that record. We ended the right to buy; we introduced the Scottish social housing charter and the independent Scottish Housing Regulator; we strengthened tenants' rights in the private sector by introducing the private residential tenancy; we fully mitigated the bedroom tax through discretionary housing payments; we introduced universal credit Scottish choices; and we have worked to cut household bills by improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty. We have a strong tradition of involving tenants in decisions about their homes and communities, and we are the only country in the UK where there is a statutory basis for tenant participation—an important point to make in the debate.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's reports on the Scottish social housing charter show that nine out of 10 social housing tenants are satisfied with the homes and services that their landlord provides and with their opportunities to participate. The charter continues to deliver good outcomes for tenants and service users, and I am really pleased that the regulator's report confirms that it is working and is delivering better services and standards year on year. Although that shows that lots of progress has been made, we are certainly not complacent, and we certainly understand that there is still much more to be done.

Turning to the future, when the First Minister launched our programme for government last September, we made a commitment to plan together with stakeholders for how our homes and communities should look and feel in 2040 and for the options and choices to get there. Since then, we have been engaging extensively with a variety of stakeholders, including housing associations, co-operatives and tenants, to help shape a draft vision and principles for 2040.

We will undertake further consultation with stakeholders on a draft vision, themes and outline options in the autumn. Output from that next round

of consultation will help us to inform the vision and route map to 2040, which we will publish.

I reiterate our desire for that to be a shared vision with widespread support from all housing sectors and from across the political spectrum. I will happily meet Johann Lamont, James Kelly, Graham Simpson or anyone who wants to further the point that co-operatives need to play a full role in shaping the future housing system in this country. I hope that the offer is received in the spirit that it was intended, so that we can work through our collective vision for housing in Scotland and how co-operatives can play their part in that.

It is an opportunity, and a time to re-imagine a housing system and create a vision for housing between now and 2040. To do that, we need to build on the collective wisdom of our wide and varied housing sector. I certainly invite the CPG to send in its views.

Housing co-operatives, along with housing associations and local authorities, play an important role in meeting our housing aspirations and ambitions. We really welcome the "Shared space" report from Co-operatives UK, which provides a valuable contribution to the debate on creating a vision for housing between now and 2040.

I congratulate Johann Lamont on bringing the debate to Parliament, and, importantly, thank the co-operative members who have attended. I hope that we can ensure that their views and expertise are also captured as we shape our new housing system for Scotland's future. I sincerely thank everyone who has taken part.

*Meeting closed at 17:36.*

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