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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 9 June 2021

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

Portfolio Question Time

Net Zero, Energy and Transport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus, and ask that members take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use only the aisles to access your seats or to move around the chamber.

The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is net zero, energy and transport. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or, if they are joining us online, type "R" in the chat function during the relevant question.

I ask members who ask questions to be succinct, and I ask the ministerial team to be likewise with their responses.

Gas-fired Boilers (Phasing Out)

1. **Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to provide support with the phasing out of gas-fired boilers in homes. (S6O-00001)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): At least 1 million homes and 50,000 non-domestic buildings will need to change to zero emissions heating systems by 2030 to help us to meet our climate change targets.

The Scottish Government runs a number of advice and funding schemes to help homes and businesses to make the transition to zero-emissions heat. For example, households can access up to £13,000 cashback per home for zero-emissions heating and energy efficiency measures, and we are extending that scheme until at least 2023.

We have increased our overall investment in our heat, energy efficiency and fuel-poverty support schemes to £268 million this year, which is an uplift of £85 million on last year's budget. Across those schemes, we are supporting increasing numbers of zero-emissions heating systems.

Daniel Johnson: Given the International Energy Agency's recent announcement that gas-fired boilers should be phased out by 2025, some of those timescales will have to be brought forward somewhat. Indeed, by the end of this session, we will need to be well on our way to replacing all gas-fired boilers in homes.

However, heat pumps cost up to £18,000, and despite the grants that are available, they remain unaffordable to low-income and middle-income households. Will the cabinet secretary be bringing forward further plans to ensure that this important component of transition is affordable to all?

Michael Matheson: The short answer is yes. We are continuing to look at the development of technology in the area. Daniel Johnson referred directly to heat pumps, but they are only one form of technology that can be used for net zero domestic and non-domestic heating systems. We are looking at the new technology as it develops and leads to a wider range of net zero heating systems being available.

However, there are a number of issues that we need to take into account. For example, some of the standards that apply to the technology are reserved to the United Kingdom Government, so we are working very closely with it to try to agree national standards that will allow us to move forward at pace on the standards that are to be applied to domestic and non-domestic heating systems.

Nevertheless, I assure Daniel Johnson that we are looking at how we can build on the existing arrangements to support people in making the transition.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The Scottish Government's "Draft Heat in Buildings Strategy" states that workplaces and homes account for more than a fifth of emissions. I note the cabinet secretary's initial answer, but will the Government also consider our proposal for a help-to-renovate scheme to support and incentivise energy efficiency improvements in owner-occupied properties?

Michael Matheson: We have a range of programmes in place, and anyone who is looking at installing a new heating system in their property, whether through a renovation or in a new build, should consider those schemes and the free-of-charge advice that is available. I encourage individuals to use such schemes to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information in making decisions.

Tarbolton Landfill

2. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure the suitable long-term monitoring

and management of Tarbolton landfill. (S6O-00002)

The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): I am pleased to say that the first phase of work to begin to reduce the environmental and amenity impact of the site will begin later this year. Although the Scottish Government is not responsible for the site, we have agreed to fund that initial work, which is part of a longer journey to remediate the site. I am grateful to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency for agreeing to commission the work. We will continue to work with our public partners to consider further recommendations from a site investigation for longer-term restoration of the site.

Brian Whittle: I have raised the topic in Parliament many times over several years, and it has bounced around SEPA, South Ayrshire Council and the Scottish Government. The lack of any significant action has resulted in leachate pouring into the local waterways and in gas blowing across local land. The matter has to fall within the Scottish Government's remit, because it is in nobody else's. The site has fallen into disrepair, and the people who used to own it are no longer there. When will decisive action be taken so that the local communities can be rid of that anomaly?

Màiri McAllan: I thank Brian Whittle for his supplementary question. I understand that he has had great concern about the matter over a number of years, so I want to reassure him.

The co-operative working that has led to the initial work is to be commended. I understand that he and the community—and, indeed, SEPA and South Ayrshire Council—will want work to be done in the longer term. I assure him that we will continue to approach that longer-term work, which everybody acknowledges has to be done, in the co-operative way that has got us to this point.

Incineration of Waste

3. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it will begin and conclude its review of the role of incineration in Scotland's waste hierarchy. (S6O-00003)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): Our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and transitioning to a net zero society by 2045 is unwavering. With that in mind, the Scottish Government is committed to reviewing the role that incineration plays in Scotland's waste hierarchy, and is considering options for taking forward that review. Parliament will be updated on plans for that by September this year.

Monica Lennon: I thank the cabinet secretary for his response. However, communities such as Stonehouse in my region do not have the luxury of time. For the second time, the community is fighting proposals for construction of a large-scale incinerator at Overwood farm near the former Dovesdale site. They do not want a situation in which the can is being kicked down the road. Will the Government commit to a moratorium until the review can be completed?

Michael Matheson: I am aware of the case and of concerns around the matter. Christina McKelvie, in her capacity as constituency member, has raised the issue with me in the past few weeks. I assure Monica Lennon that we will undertake the review in a very thorough and detailed way, in order to ensure that we arrive at the right decision on the role that incineration can play in a waste hierarchy in the future. We need to consider that process in detail, in order to identify appropriate terms of reference for it and a timescale under which it will be taken forward.

Clearly, decisions on planning matters are local issues and are for the local authority to consider and decide upon through its own processes. However, I assure Monica Lennon that I will, as I said in my earlier answer, update Parliament on the matter in September, once we have had an opportunity to set out the matter in much greater detail for the chamber.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It is quite clear that, at the moment, there is a free-for-all for planning applications for incinerators in Scotland. Given that in the national planning framework there is a moratorium on nuclear power stations, and that in the next NPF there will be a ban on fracking, will the Government also consider putting a cap on incineration capacity in NPF4?

Michael Matheson: Mark Ruskell will be aware that work is currently being undertaken on NPF4. It is important that, in our wider strategic approach in Government, we make sure that there is alignment between reaching net zero, planning and the waste hierarchy. It is appropriate that the Government looks at how we can ensure that those are all co-ordinated and aligned. I assure the member that, as part of the review and through the wider work that we are undertaking in the Government, including the work on the national planning framework that is being undertaken at the moment, we will seek to do that and to achieve that balanced approach.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for that information. How quickly will the review into incinerators link up the strategy and approach across net zero, waste management and planning policies? Decarbonisation of the grid has been

successful, but energy-from-waste technologies can no longer be considered to be low-carbon solutions. Does the cabinet secretary agree that decisions on future management must be based on the most current and accurate data possible, and that climate change impacts must be minimised by preventing proposed planning applications for incinerators from having a detrimental impact on achieving our net zero targets?

Michael Matheson: Stephanie Callaghan has raised a number of important issues. I echo the point about the need to ensure that there is a clear link between our strategy and approach to net zero, waste management and planning policies. As she will be aware, we are conducting a national planning policy review, which is due to be published as part of the draft NPF4 programme in the autumn. We want to ensure that “Scotland’s Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement” is also updated to reflect our approach to net zero and waste management. We want to ensure that there is co-ordination across the various elements of government, so I assure the member that that will be part of our thinking and planning as we move forward on the issue.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I want clarity from the cabinet secretary. He has already been asked whether he favours a moratorium on new incinerators, pending the review that he has announced. I am not clear about what he thinks about it. Should there be one or not?

Michael Matheson: I clarify that, as I said, I will update Parliament in September on the purpose of the review, its terms of reference and the approach that we will take with it.

Queensferry Crossing

4. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made to address the problem of ice falling from the cables of the Queensferry crossing. (S6O-00004)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Ice accretion and precipitation sensors were installed on the towers and deck in 2020. Weather forecasting, bridge monitoring and traffic management procedures have been continuously improved, and the mechanism for ice accumulation specific to the Queensferry crossing is now much better understood. A working group comprising Transport Scotland, the bridge operating company BEAR Scotland and a number of expert consultants has been established. The feasibility of a number of possible solutions is under consideration.

Murdo Fraser: I welcome the minister to his new position. Twice, over the past winter, my constituents in Fife and people across the east of Scotland faced huge disruption from the closure of the Queensferry crossing. They do not want to go into another winter with a similar situation happening. From the minister’s response, it sounds as though any long-term solution is still some way off. Can he give any comfort or reassurance to my constituents that we will not face more winters of disruption?

Graeme Dey: As members will know, I cannot speak for the weather—weather interventions are beyond our control. What I can offer is some comfort on the extent to which we are working to find solutions. It is worth noting that no single solution has been identified for any bridge that faces similar problems anywhere in the world. We are getting into the issue in great detail. Potential options that have been identified merit further research and development work. Those include cleaning the stay cables, robotics and applying hydrophobic coatings and de-icing compounds to the cables and tower faces. We are designing a system of optical and infrared cameras to be installed in the tower tops, which will focus on the cables and help us to better understand the mechanism of ice accreting and falling off the cable stays. There is no shortage of effort or imagination at play in the process.

We are also developing a Forth estuary transport model to investigate further improved links between the two bridges so that we can use the old bridge more readily if we need to because of circumstances involving ice.

Road and Rail Infrastructure (South of Scotland)

5. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when it next expects to make an investment announcement for road and rail infrastructure in the south of Scotland. (S6O-00005)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Consideration of potential improvements to all strategic transport infrastructure, including road and rail, across the whole of Scotland continues to be undertaken through the second strategic transport projects review. That work will create the evidence base for transport investment decisions by the Scottish Government for the next 20 years. STPR2 will conclude later this year, with publication of recommendations for investment and an appropriate statutory consultation period.

Finlay Carson: I invite the minister to drive the A75 and A77 to see at first hand how unfit those routes are for the volume and type of traffic using them each day

Regarding the second strategic transport projects review, it is a concern that the first phase of the review includes no capital investment for the A75 or A77, which reinforces the belief that that corner of Scotland is forgotten, ignored, neglected and deprived. Will the minister reassure me that he will be the first minister to work constructively with constituents, businesses and ferry companies to address the woeful 0.5 per cent increase in the national infrastructure spend that is currently allocated to the south-west? That holds back economic growth, not only there but across Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom, as recognised in Sir Peter Hendy's union connectivity review.

Graeme Dey: STPR2 is taking a two-phase approach, due to Covid-19. The first phase, published this February, identified short-term priorities. Phase 2 will make longer-term recommendations to ministers. There will be a public consultation, with the draft programme that will emerge from that being launched towards the end of the year.

The results of the south-west transport study have been fed into the consideration process and contain a number of recommendations. Those include making targeted improvements to the A75 and A77 and a number of suggested rail packages, including new links between Dumfries and Stranraer and Stranraer and Cairnryan. Those proposals, along with others, are the subject of detailed consideration.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Given that the strategic transport projects review was delayed even before the pandemic, does the minister envisage seeing major improvement plans being implemented on neglected roads in the south of Scotland during the lifetime of this Parliament? That might include the A75 or A77 in the west or the A1 in the east.

Graeme Dey: I expect that we will have a set of detailed proposals to consider later this year. This is a 20-year programme that is designed to deliver for the whole of Scotland, and it will do so.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I have written to the minister regarding the progress in infrastructure projects around South Scotland, such as the reopening of the Beattock railway station and the upgrading of the A75 and A77. Those projects were identified as part of the STPR2 process through community consultation that involved more than 2,000 people, whereas the UK Government union connectivity review engaged with no people in South Scotland. I therefore press the minister to give timescales for the implementation of the STPR2 recommendations, which will improve the lives of people across South Scotland.

Graeme Dey: I note the chuntering from the Conservatives at the mention of the union connectivity review. As those members should be aware, Emma Harper knows that transport infrastructure is devolved to the Scottish Government. Decisions on investment will therefore be taken by the Scottish Government, following evidence-based processes such as the capital spending review and the infrastructure investment plan, which allow cross-Government decisions about spending to be taken in a robust manner.

The second strategic transport projects review, not the union connectivity review, will be the evidence base that we use to support decisions about transport investment that focus on improving lives, boosting our economy, supporting communities and working towards net zero. I can confirm to Emma Harper that a new station for Beattock is part of that mix, along with changes to the A75 and A77.

Net Zero Targets (Community Support)

6. Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support communities to play their part in achieving Scotland's net zero targets. (S6O-00006)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): We have provided more than £110 million through our climate challenge fund to enable communities to play their part and we will continue to support community-led climate action as a key part of our just transition to net zero. We are building on the achievements of the CCF by developing networks of regional community climate action hubs and climate action towns. Those initiatives will run alongside the recently launched net zero nation campaign which aims to showcase and inspire climate action across Scotland, including in our communities, using the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—as a catalyst.

Elena Whitham: The transition to net zero will require every one of us to play our part. The cabinet secretary will be aware that investment through the Ayrshire growth deal would see Cumnock leading by example and propelling us on to the world stage in its ambition to become the first carbon-neutral town. Scotland is centre stage this year with COP26 taking place in Glasgow. Will the cabinet secretary outline the Scottish Government's plans to help secure a Glasgow agreement that will see all countries committing to taking the action that is needed to tackle the climate crisis?

Michael Matheson: The member has raised an important point. I very much welcome the work

that has been taken forward by the Ayrshire growth deal partners, a deal that I was fortunate enough to sign with them on behalf of the Scottish Government, setting out the ambitious plan for Cumnock to be a leading example of a carbon-neutral town. That fits the approach that the Scottish Government is taking in encouraging local communities to play their part in our becoming a net zero nation. It will also act as a clear demonstration of the inspiring leadership at community level in Scotland for global leaders as they arrive in Glasgow in November for COP26.

Between now and COP26, we will set out the range of measures that we will take as a country to achieve net zero and ensure that Scotland continues to be seen as a world leader in this area and that we get not only the environmental but the economic benefits of becoming a net zero nation.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): What plans does the Scottish Government have to ensure that local employment opportunities, particularly for young people, will be a key part of Scotland's transition to net zero.

Michael Matheson: It is important that we get not only the environmental and social benefits of becoming a net zero nation but the economic benefits. That includes working with partners to deliver the skills that will be necessary to become a net zero nation and building on the progress that we have made to date. That is why we are setting up, with partners, the green jobs workforce academy, which we have said will be launched in the first 100 days of this Government. We are progressing the development of that, with a focus on providing programmes that support retraining and upskilling to ensure that we have a just transition to being a net zero nation. That sits alongside our young persons guarantee, which also provides young people with environment-related opportunities to support our national mission of a new, good green jobs recovery.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: James Dornan, who is joining us remotely, will ask question 7.

Oil and Gas and Energy Transition Strategic Leadership Group

7. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer, and welcome to your new position.

To ask the Scottish Government when the most recent meeting of the oil and gas and energy transition strategic leadership group was held. (S6O-00007)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The most recent meeting of the oil and gas and energy transition strategic leadership group was held on Thursday 18 February. That was its ninth meeting,

which was chaired by the then Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands. The date of the next meeting is yet to be agreed.

James Dornan: Given the major role that the oil and gas sector, along with the supply chain, has in the Scottish economy and the part that it will play in economic recovery from Covid, can the minister provide an update on any initial plans that the sector has on economic recovery and how that will support the workforce and ensure that the energy transition agenda continues to meet our net zero emissions ambition?

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government recognises the crucial role that our oil and gas workers continue to play not only in maintaining the secure supply of energy to consumers but in sustaining critical national infrastructure, as they have done throughout the course of the pandemic. In June last year, the Scottish Government announced some £62 million for the energy transition fund, which has a focus on supporting the energy sector to recover from the economic impact of Covid-19 and supporting investment in areas that can help the move towards net zero.

That work will continue, and we will continue to ensure that we engage with the oil and gas sector to support its transition to a net zero industry. Key to that will be making sure that we help to secure and sustain the skill sets in the workforce. A key part of the strategy that we will take forward is supporting the oil and gas sector to ensure that staff, or workers, in the sector have the skill sets necessary for moving into the renewables sector and green jobs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The final question in this portfolio—number 8—is from Pauline McNeill, who joins us remotely.

Public Transport Connectivity (Glasgow)

8. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve Glasgow's public transport connectivity. (S6O-00008)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): The Government is already making significant investment in public transport connectivity in the Glasgow city region. That includes rail enhancements from Glasgow to Barrhead and East Kilbride, and work to reallocate road space on parts of the Glasgow motorway network for buses as part of a £500 million investment in bus priority infrastructure across Scotland. Applications to the bus partnership are being evaluated.

Any future Scottish Government investment will be informed by the second strategic transport projects review. The phase 1 report recommendations were published in February.

That includes a workstream on transforming cities, which is supportive of a Glasgow metro.

Pauline McNeill: The report, “Connecting Glasgow: Creating an Inclusive, Thriving, Liveable City”, concluded that Glasgow has a good overall network by British standards, but that the city falls substantially short of what has been achieved in similar-sized cities in other countries, and that, with the exception of the 10.5km Glasgow subway, the entire fixed public transport network is made up of heavy rail lines. The report says that the absence of a modern mass transit system serving inner urban destinations is a glaring omission. What financial commitments is the Scottish Government making to ensure that there is a modernised rail-based system, including a modern air link system, as suggested in the report, or is the Government content to leave Scotland’s largest city behind?

Graeme Dey: No, we are not. We are considering the case for a Glasgow metro with a link to Glasgow airport as part of STPR2. In phase 1 of the review, which identifies 20 strategic transport investment interventions for the short term, we set out that the progression and development of the business case for that was a Government priority.

The Government supports Glasgow City Council’s approach to exploring the key challenges of such a proposal, and Transport Scotland is working with the council’s Glasgow metro feasibility study project team on that. However, I hope that the member recognises that a project of the scale of the Glasgow metro requires a strategic business case, to ensure that taxpayers’ money is invested to achieve the best possible outcomes and that we need to take a whole-system approach to planning transport infrastructure to ensure that decisions are taken that benefit the entire region. Our conversations with the council continue, as does the process.

Rural Affairs and Islands

Regional Land Use Partnerships

1. **Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the rural affairs secretary has had with the land reform minister regarding measures to be put in place to introduce regional land use partnerships. (S6O-00009)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): I am in regular discussion with the Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform, given the close links between our portfolios. This week, we met to discuss regional land use partnerships.

Stakeholders will be fully engaged as those develop.

The Scottish Government remains committed to regional land use partnerships emerging in 2021. They are one mechanism to help maximise the contribution that Scotland’s land will make to achieving our climate targets. In February, we announced five pilot regions to test practicalities around governance, stakeholder engagement and working across regional boundaries. Learning from the pilots will inform any wider roll-out of partnerships across Scotland.

Liz Smith: On the back of concerns from NFU Scotland and those of some witnesses who gave evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee during the previous parliamentary session, I lodged a written parliamentary question in February to ask the Government whether the funding for the regional land use partnerships would be made available through the rural affairs budget. I was told that the Government’s intention is to make the money available through the environment, climate change and land reform portfolio programme. Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether that is the case, when the money will be made available in 2021 and whether it is the Government’s intention to ensure that the partnerships become permanent and do not remain as pilots?

Mairi Gougeon: I can confirm that that is the case in relation to funding. As I said in my first answer, the objective of the pilots is to test and explore the practicalities around governance, local engagement with communities and stakeholders, and working across the partnerships’ regional boundaries. We have already provided some resource funding to facilitate the establishment of the pilots this year. The funding will cover the costs of developing governance and facilitating the local engagement and stakeholder meetings that are necessary to establish the pilots. The pilots will be designed collaboratively by the regions and the Government, which will provide policy support throughout.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary outline what steps the Government will take to improve Scotland’s system of land ownership and use, so that our land can contribute to a fair and just society by balancing public and private interests?

Mairi Gougeon: That is a vital point. The Government is committed to on-going, bold land reform.

That has been demonstrated by, for example, the establishment of the Scottish Land Commission and our world-leading land rights and responsibilities statement, as well as the legislation to establish a register of persons with a

controlled interest in land in order to improve the transparency of land ownership in Scotland. In our manifesto, we committed to doubling the Scottish land fund to £20 million over the lifetime of this Parliament and to taking forward a further land reform bill.

Land Reform (Co-operation Agreement)

2. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of its announcement regarding a potential co-operation agreement, what discussions the rural affairs secretary has had with the land reform minister regarding an assessment of the Scottish Green Party's manifesto commitments on land reform. (S6O-00010)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): I reiterate that I am in regular discussion with the Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform, given the close link between our portfolios. The talks between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party will cover a number of issues, and further updates on those talks will be given in due course. The way in which land is owned, managed and used is centrally important to a variety of outcomes. Everyone has a stake in Scotland's land and everyone should benefit from it. We are committed to a programme of bold land reform, including introducing a new land reform bill, and to doubling the Scottish land fund to £20 million per year by the end of this session of Parliament.

Liam Kerr: I hear what the cabinet secretary says, but many commentators have suggested that the Greens' land proposals are very poorly thought through. For example, rural stakeholders have suggested that the plans to introduce a land ownership public interest test and to make Scotland's land rights and responsibilities statement statutory are incompatible with human rights legislation. Adopting Green plans would put thousands of rural jobs at risk, including those in the cabinet secretary's Angus constituency, and would lead to a lack of investment in some of our most remote and fragile environments. Will the cabinet secretary therefore rule out adopting those land reform proposals before entering any deal?

Mairi Gougeon: It is disappointing to hear the member reiterate those scare stories that are going around. As I said, the talks are on-going but, right now, the Government is committed to delivering what is in our manifesto. We have bold ambitions to introduce another land reform bill and double the amount that is available in the Scottish land fund. That is our focus, and we will deliver it.

Farming (New Entrants)

3. Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to encourage new entrants into farming. (S6O-00011)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government continues to implement a programme of initiatives to help generational renewal in the agriculture sector. Key initiatives include facilitating land opportunities through the farming opportunities for new entrants group; providing a Scottish land matching service for those who are considering joint ventures; providing basic payment scheme entitlements for new and young farmers; delivering a farm advisory service; providing a network of new entrant groups; offering a free mentoring programme; and supporting partners that are delivering pilot apprenticeship schemes. To add to that package, and in line with our manifesto commitment, we plan to provide support through a specific new entrants fund.

Sandesh Gulhane: In August 2018, the Government stopped the capital grants scheme for new agricultural businesses. Now, three years later, there is no detail or funding. The importance of new entrants and young farmers cannot be overstated. Research that was published by the James Hutton Institute in March 2020 showed that new entrants are notably more active in their intentions for diversification and renewable energy on their land. With all that in mind, will the cabinet secretary commit to reintroducing a fully funded scheme for new entrants to help to harness that potential and to address the three years of missing funds for new entrants?

Mairi Gougeon: As I said in my initial answer, establishing a new entrants fund is exactly what we are looking to do. I absolutely agree with some of the points that the member made about the importance of getting new entrants into farming. That is why we made the commitment in our manifesto. The previous schemes that the member talked about were successful. Both of them were popular, but that was particularly the case with the young farmers scheme. Despite the fact that the budgets were topped up twice, both schemes closed to new applications in 2018 because the available budgets were exhausted. However, that was not before the schemes had supported more than 205 young farmers' new businesses with the associated funding, as well as 49 smaller new enterprises.

The evaluations of those schemes are under way, and those will assist our thinking in planning for a specific new entrants fund, as included in our manifesto.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Attracting new entrants to farming must be a key long-term priority. Looking ahead to our new support system, are any changes being considered to the reference-year payment model to ensure that new entrants are not unfairly disadvantaged when it comes to support payments?

Mairi Gougeon: All those factors will be taken into consideration as we look to develop our new funding schemes.

Island Lifeline Services (Disruption)

4. **Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what cross-Government action it is taking to ensure that island communities are protected from the effects of disruption to lifeline services. (S6O-00012)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): I know that ferries are a lifeline service to our island communities, and I share the frustration at the current disruption and the impact that it is having. I have been working with the Minister for Transport, who, as well as meeting senior CalMac representatives to provide support, has met local MSPs to hear their concerns, and he is continuing to have regular dialogue.

Katy Clark: A North Ayrshire Council-commissioned Fraser of Allander institute report put the value of the ferry to Arran's community in supporting jobs and livelihoods at £170,000 per day. The cabinet secretary said that a number of meetings have taken place. Would she be willing to meet me to discuss how the voices of islanders and, indeed, CalMac workers are included in the decision-making process to ensure that we have a reliable and safe ferry service, that there is no race to the bottom on terms and conditions, and that support is put in place for Arran's businesses and islanders, who are trying to cope with the present disruption?

Mairi Gougeon: I do not for a minute underestimate the impact that such disruption can have on island communities. That is why the Minister for Transport got straight to work and made the issue one of his top priorities when he came into post. He is trying to identify solutions and measures that can be put in place over the short, the medium and the longer term to resolve the situation and to build resilience in the ferry services that are available. I believe that, during last week's topical question time, he said that he would be willing to engage constructively with any members on the matter, and I reiterate that.

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

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): More than half of the vessels in Scotland's state-operated ferry network fleet are beyond their original life expectancy, with 16 out of 31 of them being more than 25 years old. The residents of Arran and many other islands are simply scunnered at the current ferry network situation in Scotland, which is a disgrace.

How far and wide is the Scottish Government looking in seeking to acquire or lease new vessels right now to offer some temporary relief to our island communities and to the network?

Mairi Gougeon: I can assure the member that no stone is being left unturned by the Minister for Transport in trying to find workable solutions and a resolution to the situation. As I mentioned in my previous response, there are short-term measures that are being looked at. I believe that an opportunity has arisen—which is supported by communities—to charter the MV Pentalina, which is owned by Pentland Ferries. That would enable an increase in the size of the major vessel fleet that is available to CalMac, thereby supporting the continued operation of lifeline ferry services and increasing their resilience.

Today, we had the news that the procurement process to build a new ferry for Islay is under way. Again, that will bring added resilience to the fleet. In addition, £580 million will be invested over the next five years to build resilience in the longer term. As I said, I do not for a moment underestimate how frustrating the current situation is for people who live in island communities or how vital such services are.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: All this talk of ferries gladdens my heart, but it is time to move on to question 5.

Farming and Food Production Future Policy Group

5. **Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when the farming and food production future policy group will publish its report. (S6O-00013)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The farming and food production future policy group, which comprises representatives from the farming and food production sectors, was established as an independent group to make recommendations on the future of farming and food production policy. Environmental and land management representatives also sit on the group. Earlier this week, I held an introductory meeting with the group to discuss potential publication of its report.

Foysoil Choudhury: In January 2019, the Parliament agreed that the group should be set up. Two and a half years on, we have still not seen

its conclusions. That delay is symptomatic of the Government's indecision and inaction when it comes to setting out the future of post-common agricultural policy rural support.

When will the Scottish Government bring together the recommendations of the farming and food production future policy group and of the various farmer-led groups and set out the details of future support?

Mairi Gougeon: I completely disagree that there has been indecision and inaction. We sought to engage with the industry. That is why the farmer-led groups were established. I do not think that members across the chamber think that that was a bad idea. It is vitally important that we engage with the people who work in the farming and food production sectors, who will help to drive forward the policies.

A number of other reports have been compiled, including by Farming for 1.5°. We also have the climate change plan update. The farming and food production future policy group report will feed into that, as well as the reports of the farmer-led groups. We have to take all of that information into consideration. That is also why we set out that, in the Government's first 100 days, we will establish an implementation board that will drive forward the recommendations of the farmer-led groups and get the policies moving. We do not underestimate the urgency with which this work needs to take place.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I totally agree with Foyso Choudhury about the Government's indecision and inaction. NFU Scotland's Andrew McCornick said in February:

"Give Scottish agriculture a policy roadmap now."

Months later, there is no plan. It is totally ridiculous. I say to the cabinet secretary that there must be no more excuses. Where is Scotland's future farm policy document? How much longer will Scottish farmers have to wait? Why is the Scottish National Party disadvantaging Scottish farmers?

Mairi Gougeon: I simply ask the member whether she would prefer it if we did not engage with the farmer-led groups or had not established them in the way that we did. It is important that we get those recommendations. That is exactly why we have said that we will move that forward within our first 100 days in government and build an implementation board that will drive those recommendations forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Collette Stevenson joins us remotely.

Food and Drink Sector (East Kilbride)

6. Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take to support businesses in East Kilbride working in the food and drink sector. (S6O-00014)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): We have committed support of more than £10 million over 2020 to 2022 towards the food and drink sector's Covid-19 recovery plan, which contains 50 actions to help businesses across Scotland to recover from Covid-19 and the disruptions of Brexit. That includes our 100 days commitments to publish a local food strategy and provide grants from the regional food fund to support local and regional food festivals and initiatives.

South Lanarkshire Council has paid out to businesses over £1.2 million through the local authority discretionary fund, which empowers local authorities to direct funding to specific groups or sectors that are affected by Covid-19.

Collette Stevenson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. I am interested to know whether the Clyde climate forest will present an opportunity for the many qualified recreational deer managers in the central belt. Does the Scottish Government believe that there is a need to support the establishment of fit-for-purpose processing facilities to use the venison locally?

Mairi Gougeon: The Clyde climate forest is a significant and well-timed initiative that showcases all that is good about tree planting, including a partnership arrangement with eight local authorities that are working together on a major woodland creation initiative. Sustainable deer management is key to the success of woodland creation, and recreational deer managers play a vital role in delivering that.

As we recognise the importance of processing facilities for venison to support deer management and local supply chains, we are working with the Scottish Venison Association on possible options to support processing in areas where those facilities might be limited.

Island Communities (Scottish Government Priorities)

7. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its key priorities are for Scotland's island communities. (S6O-00015)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): As detailed in the Scottish National Party's manifesto, the Scottish Government is committed to delivering a number of priorities for Scotland's island communities, including the new islands programme, which will

invest £30 million of capital funding over the next five years to support delivery of the national islands plan.

Dean Lockhart: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response. It is interesting that she did not mention connectivity. In recent months, residents and small businesses across Scotland's island communities have lost millions of pounds due to disruption to multiple ferry services because vessels are operating beyond their scheduled service lives, as my colleague Jamie Greene highlighted.

Two new replacement ferries that were meant to service the islands remain unfinished on the Clyde, more than £200 million over budget and more than three years late, with no prospect of being in service any time soon. Will the cabinet secretary take this opportunity to apologise to island communities for the massive disruption? What assurances can she give today that it will not continue?

Mairi Gougeon: As I have outlined in my responses to previous questions about ferries this afternoon, the Scottish Government absolutely recognises the frustration of communities at the disruption and the impact that it is having. That is why, as I have reiterated, we are doing everything that we possibly can to build resilience in the fleet and mitigate some of those problems. We are supporting CalMac to maximise available capacity across the network and ensure that there is timely resolution of the issues.

We are also delivering new tonnage to support communities, and we are working with CMaI, CalMac, MSPs, community representatives and others to develop investment programmes for major vessels and small vessels. As I said previously, that investment amounts to more than £580 million over the next five years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will try to get the supplementary questions in. They need to be brief, as do the responses.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I have called before for an island-proofed recovery. Will the cabinet secretary commit to timely guidance for the islands on life at level 0 and beyond?

Mairi Gougeon: Yes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was commendably brief.

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the minister how the Scottish Government will support Orkney Islands Council in its efforts to ensure that the people of Orkney will be able to benefit fully from the islands' renewables potential.

Mairi Gougeon: I am more than happy to engage with Orkney Islands Council on that. I hope to visit Orkney at some point soon, in line with the restrictions, and to have those conversations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am glad that I allowed those supplementaries.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The Scottish Government has failed our island communities. It has failed to provide the new ferries that are required and to maintain the ones that it has, which has led to the current fiasco. At a time when capacity is 35 per cent of what it would normally be, will the cabinet secretary commit to leasing the MV Pentalina, buying the ferry that has been identified by the Mull community and identifying further tonnage that will meet demand and create the capacity that is required on our islands?

Mairi Gougeon: The Minister for Transport set straight to work on that as soon as he was appointed. This afternoon, I have outlined repeatedly the measures that are being undertaken to do exactly what the member has outlined—the measures that we are looking to introduce in the shorter term to build resilience in relation to on-going investment. I reiterate to the member that the matter is a big priority for the Government and for the transport minister, who has gone straight to work on addressing the issues.

Sand Eel Fishing (European Union Quota)

8. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take in response to reports of Danish and Swedish boats intensively fishing for sand eels just off the Firth of Forth. (S6O-00016)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The terms of the trade and co-operation agreement that was established between the United Kingdom and the European Union in December 2020 entitle those vessels to fish their quota in UK waters. Through the bilateral agreement for 2021, which was finalised last week, a total allowable catch level has been set for sand eel, giving EU quota to fish against.

However, given the importance of sand eels to the wider ecosystem and the subsequent benefit in aiding the long-term sustainability and resilience of the North Sea, it remains an overarching and long-held Scottish Government position not to support fishing for sand eel or other industrial species in our waters. I have therefore instructed my officials to consider what management measures can be put in place to manage activity in the most sustainable way possible.

Willie Rennie: That is very good news. The kittiwake population has been cut in half in the past 50 years, partly as a result of industrial sand eel fishing. In the past month, more than 20 Swedish and Danish boats spent days off the Fife coast hoovering up tonnes of sand eels for pig meal. Local fishermen and RSPB Scotland are very concerned about the impact on seabirds. A previous Government took action at Wee Bankie, and we need action now. I want the minister to think of the puffins and to set out the urgent action that will be taken on sand eels.

Mairi Gougeon: Absolutely. I appreciate the concerns that Willie Rennie has raised, and I completely understand the one regarding sand eels. The issue is the wider ecosystem and the impact that such fishing has on species whose numbers are depleting. That is why I have committed to looking at the issue as a matter of urgency, to see what measures we can put in place. I hope that Willie Rennie takes assurance from that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions.

Coronavirus Acts Report

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on “Coronavirus Acts: seventh report to Scottish Parliament”. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement. There should, therefore, be no interventions or interruptions.

14:49

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): This is my first statement to Parliament to accompany the publication of a Scottish Government report on the coronavirus acts. I pay tribute to Michael Russell, who not only led the two Scottish coronavirus bills through Parliament last year but subsequently oversaw the publication of six reports on operation of the acts.

Today sees the publication of the seventh report on the coronavirus acts, so I will—particularly for members who are new to the process—take this opportunity to set out the context in which the reporting exercise takes place.

In addition to those in the United Kingdom Coronavirus Act 2020, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020 contain extraordinary measures that were required for us to respond to an emergency situation. In recognition of the far-reaching and unprecedented nature of some of the provisions, the Scottish acts contain a number of safeguards. They include: that the relevant provisions in the acts automatically expire less than six months after they come into force—although the period can be extended by the Scottish Parliament for two further periods of six months; that the Scottish ministers have the power to bring provisions in the acts to an end earlier, when ministers consider that they are no longer necessary; and that, every two months, the Scottish ministers are required to report on the continued need for the measures and on use of the powers in the Scottish acts.

Over the past year, some of the two-monthly reports have recorded significant change in the status and operation of provisions, although some changes have been less significant. With the exception of the anticipated expiry of certain provisions, the seventh report is a relatively routine record of the status and operation, from 1 April to 31 May, of the provisions in the coronavirus acts. Nevertheless, for as long as the acts are in place, the Scottish Government will continue to meet its commitment to publish reports and give Parliament the opportunity to scrutinise them.

The Scottish Government remains committed to expiring or suspending specific provisions as they become no longer necessary. Nevertheless, it is clear that some provisions in the acts will be required after the current expiry date of 30 September this year, in response to the on-going threat that Covid poses to public health in Scotland.

The Scottish coronavirus acts contain provisions that make temporary adjustments for us to respond to the pandemic and to protect the health of people who live in Scotland. The provisions are subject to an expiry date that has been extended by regulations, but which cannot be extended beyond 30 September 2021. To ensure that public services are able to discharge their functions in the way that was intended, a coronavirus (extension and expiry) (Scotland) bill has been prepared, with a view to its being introduced later this month to allow scrutiny by Parliament before the summer recess.

The bill will amend the expiry date of the Scottish coronavirus acts to 31 March 2022—a six-months extension—and will give the Scottish Parliament the power to extend the acts for a further six months, to 30 September 2022. At the same time, the bill will expire a number of provisions that are no longer considered to be necessary. Many provisions in the Scottish coronavirus acts have already been expired, in line with the Government's commitment to remove provisions that are no longer necessary to support the on-going public health response.

The decision on whether to extend part 1 of both acts is, of course, for the Parliament to make. We look forward to hearing the outcome of consideration of the matter.

As is required by section 15 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and section 12 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020, the Scottish ministers have conducted a review of the part 1 provisions of both acts and have prepared the seventh report. We are satisfied that, as at 31 May, the status of the provisions that are set out in part 1 of both acts remain appropriate.

We have also undertaken a review of the Scottish statutory instruments to which section 14 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020 applies. The Scottish ministers are also satisfied that the status of those SSIs at the end of the reporting period is appropriate.

A review has also been conducted of the provisions of the United Kingdom Coronavirus Act 2020, for which the Scottish Parliament gave consent. We are satisfied that the status of those provisions is appropriate.

The provisions that we report on today are part of Scotland's on-going response to the pandemic.

The Government will continue to do our duty to report to and be held accountable to Parliament on use of those powers.

Coronavirus continues to pose a significant threat to public health, and the Scottish Government is committed to taking all necessary steps to address that threat. For that reason, public health measures that are needed to control and limit the spread of the virus continue to require significant adjustment to the lives of people who live in Scotland, to businesses in Scotland and to how public services are delivered and regulated. Current guidance continues to require businesses and public authorities to operate very differently to how they have done previously. All restrictions will be kept under review in the event of new developments, such as the emergence of a new variant of concern, to ensure that they remain proportionate and necessary to support the on-going public health response.

However, as a result of the work that has been undertaken over the past year and the sacrifices that have been made by the entire nation, real progress has been achieved, and we are moving cautiously but steadily into the recovery stage.

In my statement to Parliament on 27 May, I set out the Government's on-going response to Covid, our approach to recovery and the immediate steps that we intend to take to bring the necessary energy and direction to that activity. The Government's first priority is to lead Scotland out of the pandemic and to reopen the country as quickly and as safely as we can. In carrying on with our work on recovery, we will also act to boost jobs, tackle the climate crisis, support our children and young people and protect the national health service.

Alongside the extraordinary efforts that have been made by all our people over the past 14 months, the success of the vaccination programme has allowed us to be optimistic about the future and to start the journey towards national recovery. Roll-out of vaccination continues at pace. As at 7:30 this morning 3,422,431 people had received the first dose of the Covid vaccine and 2,313,695 people had received the second dose.

The last figure that I would like to cite is that 2,162,865 people aged 50 and over have now received their first dose of the vaccine, which accounts for 99 per cent of the total over-50 population. That is an impressive milestone and a massive logistical achievement for all our vaccination teams across the country. We remain on course to have offered first doses to all adults by the end of July.

The challenge now is to build forward on a fairer basis, but the Government cannot meet that

challenge alone. That is why we are committed to bringing together people from a wide variety of sectors and backgrounds in pursuit of the strongest possible recovery. Recovery from the pandemic will be achieved only if the people and institutions of Scotland unite in common cause. We must work together across organisational, sectoral and political boundaries to make sure that the recovery is broadly based and enjoys the full support of the people of Scotland.

Finally, I reiterate the commitment that was made by the First Minister: the Government is intent on co-operating with all political parties to put the interests of the country first to guide Scotland through the pandemic and into a recovery that supports the national health service, stimulates the economy, creates sustainable employment and contributes to our ambition that Scotland will be a net zero nation.

We welcome the opportunity for engagement with Parliament, as it considers the seventh report on the relevant legislation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business. Members should press their request-to-speak buttons now if they wish to ask a question.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement and for the detail on the latest report. I join him in paying tribute to his predecessor, Michael Russell, with whom we always had constructive engagement, although that was not always apparent in the chamber.

I would like to ask the cabinet secretary about the proposed new bill, which would extend ministerial powers for up to another year from the end of September. It is hard to justify extending the extraordinary and unprecedented powers that were granted last spring to deal with a health emergency for that additional length of time—two and a half years from when they were first acquired—particularly given the success of the vaccination programme, which the cabinet secretary referred to.

Even more worrying is the proposed timetable for the bill. In the two weeks before the summer recess, the Scottish Government is trying to railroad through Parliament a new law extending extraordinary powers, with no time for detailed consultation and scrutiny, and more than three months before the current powers are set to expire. Why can it not wait until early September, by which time we will all be much clearer about the Covid situation going into the autumn and whether the powers are still necessary? Further, the

Government will have more time to consult on the bill over the summer. Why can we not do that instead of rushing the bill through in the next two weeks?

John Swinney: Let me try to reassure Murdo Fraser about the issues that he has raised. First, the bill will provide for a temporary extension of some of the powers that are already in place. That temporary extension is for a six-month period; then, if Parliament agrees, it can be extended for a further six-month period. It is therefore not accurate to say that the extension is for 12 months; it is for two six-month blocks.

Secondly, the bill will introduce no new measures. It will set out the basis for taking forward a depleted set of provisions that Parliament agreed to put in place under the previous arrangements.

Thirdly, the bill needs to be in place before the summer recess because the existing provisions will expire at the end of September 2021. We have been through the election period and summer recess is now coming up, and we want to make sure that there is no doubt for the public services that depend on some of the provisions to execute their current functions. As Mr Fraser will know, some of the extraordinary arrangements do not give ministers a lot more powers; they give organisations that exercise functions, such as the courts, the ability to operate under a different model. I suggest that the courts and other such organisations will require more notice than they would get if we were to handle the legislation at the start of September.

Finally, I have asked for the maximum amount of parliamentary time to be available for the consideration of the legislation before Parliament rises for the summer recess. The Government will propose to the Parliamentary Bureau that the debate is not held over one day, which is often the way in which emergency legislation is handled, but is conducted over three separate days, which will provide members with the opportunity to reflect on the provisions in the bill. I stress that Parliament has already legislated for the provisions in the two current coronavirus acts.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Everybody will agree that this has been a really tough year for people. Key elements of the coronavirus legislation have provided a safety net for those who are struggling to get by because of the impact of the pandemic. People who are struggling to stay out of debt or keep a roof over their head must continue to be protected. As the furlough scheme unwinds, more people may lose their jobs and so will struggle to make ends meet.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that eviction proceedings are already before the courts. There

were 16 in Edinburgh yesterday and there are 28 in Glasgow today, so it is imperative that we maintain the safety net.

Can the cabinet secretary confirm that he intends that the new coronavirus bill will keep in place vital lifeline protections, including eviction bans in relation to people who are living in level 1 and level 2 areas and the extension of eviction notice periods, in a package of measures that will make it more difficult for somebody to lose their home?

John Swinney: Jackie Baillie raises entirely legitimate issues, and I acknowledge the seriousness and significance of the points that she makes. Indeed, the substance of her question illustrates why we need to put in place longer-term protection for the exercise of public functions and for individuals.

Jackie Baillie raised in her question specific points about eviction provisions, but what she set out is not contained in the existing legislation. However, she raises a legitimate question about whether it should be. I give her the commitment that the Government will engage constructively on that question, recognising the seriousness of the issue and the threats that are posed to individuals as a consequence of eviction. We are living in unsettling times for many individuals who face disruption to their income and their livelihood as a consequence of Covid.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): In February, I moved a motion to extend the self-isolation support grant so that it would become universal, which would ensure that no one would be forced to choose between working and isolating. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People at the time agreed to further extend eligibility but argued that universal provision could cost a whopping £700 million a year. Given that only £2.5 million has been spent on self-isolation grants this year and that over 40 per cent of those applying have been rejected, will the Government look again at making provision universal?

John Swinney: I would certainly be very happy to look at that question and explore whether the provisions that we have already extended are satisfying the needs and requirements of individuals who have to self-isolate. I think that Mr Ruskell will accept that this is an area where we have to make sure that provisions are appropriate to the need in society. The Government accepts that principle and will use that as the guide for the analysis that we will undertake on the question that he raises.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The previous coronavirus legislation—passed, as it was, in those weeks of high infection

as the nation moved into lockdown—went through this Parliament at breakneck speed, by necessity. As a result, some disabled people had certain rights suspended, and we still have illiberal mental health powers. In addition, the Government would have ended hundreds of years of trial by jury in a single line of text had Liberal Democrats not worked with others to stop that. That is why scrutiny matters.

Further to Murdo Fraser's line of questioning, will the Government publish the bill now, so that we can consider what measures are still required, allow everyone to have their say over the summer, then give Parliament adequate time for scrutiny when it returns in September? Surely we can give lead-in time for changes that need to be made in the courts and other such places.

John Swinney: The issue that Alex Cole-Hamilton raises will, I hope, be addressed by the provisions, of which he will be aware, that the Government has to go through to introduce legislation to Parliament. Legislation has to be considered by the Presiding Officer. Those provisions are being fulfilled and we want to publish the bill at the earliest possible opportunity, when we are able to do so, and my hope is that it will be published on 18 June.

Obviously, members of Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise that legislation over an extended timetable, compared to the original timetable that was in place back in early 2020. I reassure Mr Cole-Hamilton that we have now published the seventh report on the application of the provisions of the coronavirus acts, so we can see in detail how they have—or, in some cases, have not—been used, which I hope will provide Parliament with a substantial evidence base to inform the scrutiny of the legislation when it looks at that detail.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Fulton MacGregor is joining us remotely.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary to his new role.

I want to ask about the guidance around transition events for children and young people, particularly nursery graduations, which parents have been contacting me about in great numbers over the past week. Such moments are obviously special for children and parents. Just last week, we acknowledged in the chamber that children have in many ways taken the brunt of the restrictions over the past year and a bit. Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether events such as nursery graduations are permitted to go ahead under the guidance, subject to appropriate mitigation, and can he outline what steps have been taken to ensure that local authorities,

nurseries and parents understand what is and is not permitted, and whether there is work to suggest alternatives, such as holding such events later in the summer?

John Swinney: The Government takes advice on that question from the advisory sub-group on education and children's issues. The Covid-19 safety guidance that emerged after the taking of that advice seeks to minimise the number of contacts that children and staff in early learning and childcare settings have, by limiting adult visitors to those who are strictly necessary. The application of that guidance would mean that such events, which involve parents attending the nursery or its grounds, would generally currently not be permitted. Obviously, that advice is available to local authorities and through the work that is undertaken in the education recovery group.

Of course, a number of early learning and childcare settings are bringing forward alternative ways in which they can celebrate those landmark moments, which do not involve groups of parents gathering at settings. The Government will certainly be happy to share information on the different alternatives that are being taken forward by a variety of ELC settings to inform wider discussion on that question.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Deputy First Minister will be aware that the powers of the Scottish Government to introduce health protection measures, such as introducing or relaxing restrictions, arise not under the Scottish coronavirus acts but under the overarching UK coronavirus legislation. That UK legislation remains in place. Does he therefore agree that, in terms of health protection, there is no need to extend the Scottish legislation beyond 30 September 2021?

John Swinney: I do not accept that point. It lies fundamentally at the heart of the judgment that we have to make about ensuring that we have in place appropriate arrangements that enable our public services, among a wide variety of other examples, to be conducted within a context that is compatible with the current public health environment in Scotland. The question that Mr Cameron raised needs to be addressed by considering the public health emergency that I expect we will still be facing in September, because of the nature of coronavirus and the mutations of the variants that we are all facing and having to respond to. On that basis, the necessity of the provisions being in place is apparent for me.

However, I stress the point that I made to Murdo Fraser a moment ago, in that we are already dealing with a depleted range of measures that are in place, because we have removed any provisions that are no longer necessary. The bill

that is brought forward will do that as well. It is important that we have those provisions in place to provide the necessary protection for members of the public.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have eight more questioners, and I would like to get everybody in. It would therefore be helpful if we could have succinct questions and answers.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): As the cabinet secretary will know, the situation has been challenging for some time, particularly in recent weeks, when the numbers of cases have meant that different areas have required different degrees of lockdown measures. Will he provide further information as to how that will inform the Scottish Government's decisions regarding the expiring provisions of the coronavirus acts?

John Swinney: That judgment lies at the heart of the bringing forward of the legislation. As Mr McMillan rightly indicated, we are facing an increase in the number of cases just now. We are monitoring those cases very closely to see what the implications are for acute and serious ill health. The number of cases today was more than 1,000, which is an indication of the development of the new variants. We therefore have to make sure that we have in place a legislative framework that adequately addresses the public health emergency, which is the issue that I addressed in my response to Mr Cameron.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I heard what the cabinet secretary said in response to colleagues about wanting to be constructive in the forthcoming bill. Mental health has been a huge issue across the nation during this period. He will be aware of the concerns that have been raised by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and others about provisions in the legislation on the detention of people, particularly in relation to mental health.

Mr Swinney will also be aware that provisions such as debt repayment programmes, in which there has been a 21 per cent increase over the period, have undoubtedly had a positive impact on health and mental wellbeing across Scotland—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could we get to a specific question?

Paul O'Kane: In the forthcoming bill, will the cabinet secretary commit to removing provisions that are dangerous for human rights and implementing those that are more positive for mental health?

John Swinney: I am happy to engage in those questions. I am not in a position today to give specific commitments to Mr O'Kane, but he raises legitimate issues and highlights the fact that this

bill gives us not only an opportunity to remove certain provisions that are no longer necessary but also an opportunity to maintain provisions that are necessary to protect members of the public. I will engage constructively on all those questions.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The UK Government plans to end the job retention scheme in September. That will cause great concern for sectors of the economy that, for understandable reasons around stopping the spread of the virus, are unable to open. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on the Scottish Government's latest engagement with the UK Government on the issue?

John Swinney: That is an important issue, because the furlough scheme that was initiated by the United Kingdom Government has been an absolutely central tool in enabling us to withstand a severe economic shock of the magnitude that many of us feared. The removal of the furlough scheme has the potential to lead to economic and employment disruption. For that reason, the First Minister raised the continuation of the furlough scheme with the Prime Minister at the Covid recovery summit that took place last Thursday and in which I participated, along with ministers from the devolved Administrations and from the UK Government. I give Mr Coffey the assurance that ministers are regularly raising that issue with their counterparts in the UK Government.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): The vaccination programme has been described by the First Minister as a route out of restrictions. Why, then, does the Government need to extend powers to introduce restrictions after the point at which the vaccination programme will have delivered two doses to all adults and, potentially, many children as well?

John Swinney: We are in a situation where we still do not have absolute clarity on whether we could extend the vaccination programme to children. The situation looks encouraging, but we do not have absolute clarity and authorisation to do so. Indeed, there will be many individuals over the age of 18, at the very least, who will still require the second dose of the vaccination, and they will not get that until later in the year.

The provisions that we are discussing are not new ones that have been introduced. To reiterate the point that I have made a number of times already, we are simply extending certain provisions to ensure that we have the capacity and the capability to manage the public health emergency if we need to do so.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): International travel has been quite a contentious issue, especially in relation to which countries are on the list that requires people to go into

quarantine after having visited them. Will that be touched on in the bill, and how is the Government considering that?

John Swinney: The Government undertakes that analysis based on work that is prepared by the joint biosecurity centre, which uses methodology that is endorsed by the four UK chief medical officers. The travel regulations are devolved public health measures but, obviously, we work across the other countries of the UK on that question.

Last Thursday morning, I took part in a discussion with ministers from the devolved Administrations and the UK Government at which the decision in relation to the situation arising in Portugal was taken, which was the subject of announcements by the UK Government in the course of the day.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): My constituent Pauline Boris runs LBS Event Design and Wedding Planners in Glasgow. She got in touch with me today to highlight her frustration that another wedding season is being lost because there is no flexibility on the number of attendees or on any form of outdoor entertainment, and her business has been specifically excluded from further financial support. Meanwhile, she is watching big corporate organisers being allowed free rein to set up a Euro 2020 fan zone for up to 6,000 people a day on Glasgow green, with no testing or vaccination safeguards. The obvious unfairness of those double standards is now undermining the credibility of ministers' public health advice—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we get a question, Mr Sweeney?

Paul Sweeney: Will the Government now urgently extend financial support to the wedding industry and put in place a level playing field, so that all outdoor sport and entertainment events can take place again, and not those just those that are run by big corporate interests?

John Swinney: The work on financial support for individual companies is kept under constant review by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, who updates the Parliament on such questions. Clearly, a number of changes have been put in place regarding the arrangements for weddings and other life events as a consequence of the change in levels. It has been a disappointment to us that, when decisions were taken on levels 2 and 1, we were not able in some parts of Scotland to get to the lower levels that we had hoped for. However, I assure Mr Sweeney of the Government's determination to make progress in that direction as swiftly as possible and to move to lower levels when it is safe for us to take that action.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):

Will the cabinet secretary confirm that guidance for local authorities on how to respond to domestic abuse will continue to be regularly refreshed in order to reflect any changes in the lockdown measures that are in place?

John Swinney: One of the central features of the legislation that the Parliament has passed—and, to go back to the point that Jackie Baillie raised with me earlier, another argument for continuing such provisions—is the great focus on tackling domestic abuse. On no occasion should it be tolerated in our society but, clearly, in the context of the restrictions during the pandemic, it has been of heightened concern.

The Government makes guidance available and funds a range of services along with our local authority partners. We will continue to do so, in order to make sure that the scourge of domestic violence is not present in our society.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, cabinet secretary. I am afraid that I have to move on now to the next item of business. I will pause for a moment to allow the front bench team to change over.

Climate Emergency

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

15:22

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): In Scotland, we are already seeing the impact of the global climate crisis in warmer temperatures, more extreme weather events, rising sea levels and the subsequent impact on the health and prosperity of our society and economy. That will only increase if temperatures continue to rise. It is estimated that every degree of warming in Scotland will cost us 1 per cent of our gross domestic product—in effect, eliminating the prospect of growing our economy.

I will lay out the groundwork for the next five years of the Scottish Government's approach to tackling the climate crisis, I will acknowledge what Scotland has achieved to date, and I will set out the significant opportunities in delivering a green recovery and a fairer, more sustainable future. I want to be absolutely clear on the challenges that the nation faces in achieving our goal and in the critical decisions that we must take together.

Scotland has taken a world-leading, distinctive and ambitious approach to tackling the twin crises of climate change and ecological decline by putting in place legislation, targets and governance for reducing emissions, building our climate resilience and protecting our environment—and, what is critical, doing so in a just and fair way. We recognise that climate change is not just an environmental and economic issue, but an opportunity to drive greater social justice. That is why a just transition to net zero is enshrined in law and why we have put people at the heart of our international climate action.

Scotland can be proud that we have already halved our greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. As the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee stated, Scotland

"has decarbonised more quickly than ... any G20 economy since 2008."

We have already shifted almost 100 per cent of our electricity use to renewable sources, and our funding for energy efficiency has benefited more than 150,000 households since 2013. Drivers in Scotland benefit from 25 per cent more public charging points per person than there are in England and from double the public access that there is in Wales and Northern Ireland, thanks to the £45 million that we have invested to date in

our electric vehicle infrastructure. Over the past two years, Scotland has created more than 22,000 hectares of new woodland, which is approximately 80 per cent of UK woodland creation. Our forestry industries are now supporting about 25,000 jobs and are generating £1 billion for our economy every year.

However, it is already clear that the second half of the journey to net zero will be far more challenging. We must achieve in the next 10 years what it has taken more than the past 30 years to achieve. This will be a decisive and defining decade for us all. Our climate change plan update puts Scotland on a pathway to meeting its world-leading targets over the next decade, bringing together nearly 150 policies to drive our delivery. It includes a bold and credible package of measures to reduce emissions, such as our commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030 by encouraging more active travel and use of public transport. That is tied to the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods, which will allow people to access key services close to where they live.

Alongside reducing our emissions to net zero, we, as a nation, must build our resilience to the impacts of global climate change that have already been locked in. Our climate change adaptation programme sets out more than 170 policies and proposals on how we respond to the main climate risks for Scotland over the period to 2024. Our response to climate risks includes our ambitious 10-year programme for £250 million of investment in peatland restoration, which will deliver co-benefits for climate change, biodiversity, flood management and water quality. The funding has already helped to restore more than 25,000 hectares of degraded Scottish peatland—an area almost the size of Edinburgh.

The journey to net zero will transform every aspect of our lives, including how we live, how we work and how we travel. I want Scotland to seize the opportunity that becoming a net zero society presents. We want to grow our economy and enhance our natural environment so that we can improve health and wellbeing for all in our society. We need to ensure that we have a just transition and that, in responding to a changing climate, the journey is fair and creates a better future for everyone, regardless of where they live, what they do and who they are. By capitalising on Scotland's strengths in energy, natural capital and innovation and on our skilled workforce, we can be at the forefront of growing global low-carbon markets in the future.

Opening applications for local authorities to develop the first green growth accelerator projects is one of the key steps that we are taking to unlock additional investment from emission-reducing infrastructure that supports our transition.

Supported by £1 million this year, the green growth accelerator will speed up the delivery of low-carbon infrastructure projects across Scotland and will provide extra resources and technical support to local authorities to get projects off the ground more quickly. Once it is fully opened, the programme will unlock £200 million of public sector investment to drive our transition to net zero.

The inward investment plan, which was recently published by the Scottish Government, identified energy transition and the decarbonisation of transport as two areas of competitive strength here, in Scotland. The way that we heat our homes is a perfect example of that. We estimate that 24,000 jobs could be supported each year by the roll-out of zero-emission heating. Scotland must move quickly from new heat technologies being a niche concern to their rapid deployment, doubling installations year on year. I want to see green jobs and skills as part of a burgeoning clean heat sector, as well as greener and more efficient homes and workplaces across Scotland.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware that Glasgow plans to deliver electric buses but that it has been suggested that those buses will use as much energy as would be required to heat 10,000 homes. Will the cabinet secretary outline the Scottish Government's plans to develop a network that can deliver that level of energy resourcing?

Michael Matheson: That is a good point. I visited the Caledonian depot just last week for the launch of the installation of the bus charging points. Three parties have taken forward that programme: the Scottish Government, First Bus and Scottish Power Energy Networks. The programme will ensure that we capitalise on the capacity within the network so that we can support the transition to using electric vehicles. It is similar to the programme in south Lanarkshire and to the one that is run in the west Highlands with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, both of which capitalise on the capacity within the network. We must ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to support those programmes.

Regulation plays a key part in unlocking the transformation of domestic heating. Although we will maximise our efforts in devolved areas, we need the UK Government to take urgent decisions on the future of the gas network so that long-term planning and delivery can be unlocked. We also need a UK-wide approach to reforming our energy markets that puts consumers first and aligns with our shared objective of reaching net zero.

Although the Government and Parliament have a clear role to play in our just transition to net zero, any decisions about how the benefits and the costs are equally distributed must be taken here,

in Scotland. It is imperative that we use all the levers that are available to us—including regulation—such as the UK emissions trading scheme and incentives such as those offered by the Scottish National Investment Bank and other business supports.

Our ambitions and the actions that we take as a Government will mean little if we do not bring people with us. The UK Climate Change Committee estimates that more than 60 per cent of the necessary changes will require at least some element of individual or societal change in behaviour. Many habits and behaviours are ingrained over long periods of time, so behavioural change and demand management, alongside technological solutions, will be required.

To meet our targets and harness the opportunities, we must ensure that decisions and changes benefit the many rather than the few. That will require collective leadership and cross-sector collaboration. We have seen how unplanned structural change in Scotland's past left intergenerational scarring and caused deprivation. The opportunities that arose from recent rapid economic growth, globalisation and digitalisation have left many people behind. The costs and benefits of those shifts have been unequally distributed, often leading to the exacerbation of inequality.

The scale of the economic and social transformation that is necessitated by our transition to a net zero society requires us to tackle persistent inequalities such as child and fuel poverty. Delivering a just transition means maximising economic, environmental and societal opportunities while mitigating the risks that arise from vast system changes. We must address that.

My mission, and that of the Scottish Government, and my challenge to this Parliament is to deliver lasting action that will take us towards our net zero future. That is of paramount importance as we move towards COP26 and as we set ourselves the same levels of ambition and action as other global leaders do.

The mission was set out in our commitments for the Government's first 100 days, alongside my appointment and that of Richard Lochhead as the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work. The actions and commitments that I have set out here are just a small example of where the Scottish Government has lowered emissions and where it will continue to do that, support the creation of jobs and develop new skills while fostering a culture of innovation to lead us into a net zero future.

I look forward to working with colleagues across the Parliament to provide collective leadership and clear support for actions towards a greener future,

delivered through a just transition to net zero emissions both here and internationally.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that addressing the twin climate and biodiversity crises remains a critical priority; recognises that the Scottish Government will continue to deliver action to support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a just transition to net zero and a climate-resilient Scotland; agrees that this must be a shared and national endeavour by all sectors of the economy and society as a whole, and commits to working together, Scotland prepares to welcome the world to Glasgow for COP26 and beyond, to restore nature and become a net zero nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Liam Kerr to speak to and move amendment S6M-00278.2.

15:35

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Few things are as urgent as tackling the climate emergency and preventing its disastrous consequences for people all over the world. The motion, which the Conservatives shall vote for, describes it as “a critical priority” and is correct to do so. Of course, both the UK and Scotland have among the most ambitious climate change targets, but it is way beyond time that we focused on delivery. I know that the cabinet secretary agrees with me on that.

Throughout the debate, my colleagues will cover specific areas of progress on the journey to net zero. Maurice Golden will talk about the long-awaited circular economy bill, Brian Whittle will talk of the role of the private sector in driving technological change, and Sharon Dowey, in her maiden speech, will look particularly at roads and associated emissions.

For my part, I wish to explore three principal areas. First, I was interested in the motion's specific reference to the need to “restore nature”. That is laudable, but on that, too, we must start delivering. The cabinet secretary talked about biodiversity, but Scotland signed up in 2011 to the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets. When NatureScot recently assessed Scotland against the 20 targets, it concluded that insufficient progress had been made and that only nine of the targets had been met in full.

In our manifesto, we committed to introducing a nature bill to strengthen environmental protections on land, in rivers and at sea. Those protections would include new nature corridors that would allow species to move between habitats; a commitment to redevelop derelict sites in towns and cities into green spaces; piloting of new highly protected marine areas; and increasing new tree planting to 18,000 hectares a year by 2024. We are convinced that those ideas still hold true, so I hope that the cabinet secretary will meet me in

short order to discuss bringing some, if not all, of those measures forward.

Secondly, we know from a Friends of the Earth Scotland briefing that transport is the largest sector that is creating climate change emissions. We also know that there was an increase in car use across Scotland before the pandemic—it was up 7.7 per cent for the five years to 2018-19. This week, Department for Transport figures suggest that British traffic is now nearly at pre-pandemic levels, while public transport use remains at around half to two thirds of its previous level. However, electric vehicles account for less than 6 per cent of the 3 million licensed vehicles on Scotland's roads.

That is why I was pleased to see that central to the UK's industrial decarbonisation plan for a £12 billion green industrial revolution is more green transport. We could be on the cusp of exponential growth in electric car use, but range anxiety, limited recharging networks and high purchase costs are holding it back. That is why I agree with the cabinet secretary about increases in infrastructure and why we must accelerate the programme by ChargePlace Scotland to install a charging network. That will be helped by Ofgem's announcement of £48 million of funding to support 23 projects, including more electric vehicle charging points. In addition, Shell's purchase of Ubitricity and BP's purchase of Chargemaster will, among other outcomes, help to integrate EV charging in existing forecourts.

In light of the cabinet secretary's comments on delivery, perhaps the Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform could set out in her closing speech her view on our manifesto promises to develop a new action plan to deliver a complete national charging infrastructure by 2025 and to subsidise the installation of charging points in homes and workplaces.

I will stay with transport. There is much to be done on rail. I was pleased to see that, although it accounts for only 1.1 per cent of emissions, ScotRail reckons that it is on track for net zero emissions by 2035. Part of that will be about electrification, but given that only 25 per cent of the network is currently electrified and that £33 million has been cut from this year's rail infrastructure budget, electrification cannot be the whole solution. Part of the solution might be hydrogen trains. I am very pleased by the progress of the Scottish hydrogen train project at Bo'ness, and I hope to present soon a paper to the cabinet secretary on the possibilities of using hydrogen trains.

Those are all incremental changes in which innovation, entrepreneurialism and collaborative working between the public, private and academic sectors drive the changes that we need. Of

course, nowhere is that more apparent than in the energy sector. No one—least of all the energy industry itself—denies that there is an issue. Extracting oil and gas from the UK continental shelf is directly responsible for about 3.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, but the industry's response has been to set targets to cut emissions by 50 per cent by 2030.

By the end of 2020, 10 out of 15 oil and gas majors had announced net zero emissions pledges, backed by a 34 per cent increase in capital investment in the energy transition. The industry is working with the University of Aberdeen to set up the centre for energy transition. The industry is making changes to such an extent that a recent study by the Robert Gordon University concludes that, 10 years from now, most of the UK's offshore energy jobs will be in the low-carbon energy industry. That is, of course, supported by the UK Government's commitment to a 40GW offshore wind target, which is projected to help to unleash about £20 billion of private investment in renewable energy by 2030.

That is all evidence of the motion's call for a commitment "to working together", as is the UK Government's transformative North Sea transition deal, which will invest up to £16 billion to reduce emissions and secure 40,000 jobs across the supply chain.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Ofgem is about to carry out a review. Does Liam Kerr agree that, in relation to transmission charges, its mission should include net zero, which is currently missing?

Liam Kerr: That is an important point. The more that agencies come forward and say, "Yes, we need to be talking net zero, and we need to be driving net zero", the better. There is something in that. That was a reasonable intervention.

Earlier this week, Lorna Slater was right: I am worried about the Greens. Like workers, families and businesses across the north-east of Scotland, I am terrified of the consequences of the Greens and their knee-jerk cliff-edge intentions ever getting near the levers of power. Last year, workers heard Lorna Slater say that her ambition is to shut down the oil and gas sector in two to five years, despite the fact that the sector still provides 100,000 jobs and three-quarters of the UK's energy needs, having met 70 per cent of demand last year.

Members will recall that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published in October 2018 a special report on achieving a global warming limit of 1.5°C. The report states that carbon capture utilisation and storage are important tools for emissions reductions and meeting the Paris agreement goals. SSE Thermal

says that it could capture 1.5 million tonnes of CO₂ annually. I know from his answer to my written question yesterday that the cabinet secretary agrees, because he said that it is “proven technology”. The Committee on Climate Change describes CCUS

“as a necessity not an option.”

What is the Green Party’s view? Page 16 of its 2021 manifesto says that the party opposes

“public investment in carbon capture and storage ... as it is unproven”.

Members may have heard of OGTC Ltd, which opened in 2017 with £180 million of support from the UK and Scottish Governments. Its mission is

“to accelerate the oil and gas industry to a net-zero future, developing and deploying technology to make the energy transition affordable ... decarbonising of hydrocarbon production, unlock investment in carbon capture and storage, develop a low-carbon hydrogen economy and secure sustainable high-skilled jobs.”

That is great stuff. What is the Green Party’s view? Page 17 of its manifesto specifically singles out by name OGTC to demand that we do not support it.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Will the member give away?

Liam Kerr: I am in my last minute, Mr Ruskell.

The Green Party’s policy of absolute zero emissions is neither realistic nor practical, and nor is it in line with either the UK or Scottish Governments’ policies. The Greens’ policy would put the economy of Scotland—especially that of the north-east—and our genuine net zero ambitions at risk.

There are several ways to approach the extraordinary challenges that we face. Ironically, some MSPs prefer the slash-and-burn approach based on dogma and ideology, which is a sure-fire route to economic and social chaos.

However, there is an ambitious forward-thinking and collaborative approach in which the public, private and academic sectors work together to address the greatest challenge that we face, and in which they support and lead innovation and technology in Scotland to create a new net zero economy, not destroy the existing one. If the cabinet secretary wants to take that option, he will find a willing partner in the Scottish Conservatives. We will support the motion today.

I move amendment S6M-00278.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises the importance of Scotland’s energy sector in delivering the transition; welcomes the UK Government’s North Sea Transition Deal, and calls on the Scottish Government to work collaboratively and constructively with the sector to support businesses through the transition.”

15:45

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Climate change and nature loss are undeniably the greatest global threats that we face, so we welcome the debate, which is my first as Scottish Labour’s net zero, energy and transport spokesperson. Labour members will miss the passion for, knowledge of and dedication to the environmental movement that Claudia Beamish brought to her parliamentary work. Claudia’s leaving is a loss to the chamber, although we know that her commitment to tackling the climate and nature crises will continue.

I am grateful to Sarah Boyack for her leadership on those vital issues, and I am pleased that we will hear from her later in the debate. I also looking forward to hearing from my new colleague Mercedes Villalba, who will be making her first speech in Parliament. Of course, I wish all new members the very best.

Scottish Labour will support the motion at decision time. We fully share the concerns about, and ambitions to address, the climate and biodiversity crises, and we strongly agree that we need a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Although our words and votes in the chamber matter, our actions outside the chamber matter more. We need to act fast, and we cannot afford any more missed opportunities. In a few months, the eyes of the world will fall on Scotland when we welcome the COP26 conference to Glasgow. That will be a crucial milestone, as it commences the decade in which the Paris agreement measures take effect and in which significant emissions cuts are required in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Scottish Labour would like the Scottish Government to lead by example and will support every endeavour towards that. We agree with the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund. It has made really important points to think about ahead of COP26, including that we must confront deep carbon inequality, because those who have done least to cause the climate crisis are suffering most. With the right action, Glasgow and Scotland can help to put the world on the road to a recovery that is green, just and fair.

That takes me to our amendment. We need action, which is why our amendment refers to the need to prioritise a circular economy bill. As colleagues will know, Friends of the Earth Scotland has said that

“a circular economy would save Scotland 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050—a quarter of our current total.”

The bill must include targets to reduce material footprints and carbon footprints, including

emissions that are embedded in imported goods and services.

It will not surprise the cabinet secretary to hear me raise the issue of incinerators, because we had a discussion about them earlier today in the chamber. Building new incinerators will lock us into years of wasting resources by burning them instead of reducing, reusing and recycling. In a members' business debate in the previous session of Parliament, I urged the Government not to turn us into an ash-heap nation. However, worryingly, large-scale incinerators continue to be proposed in my region and across Scotland. In Central Scotland, the Dovesdale Action Group has campaigned tirelessly on the issue. Although the commitment to review the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy is welcome, without a moratorium on building new incinerators, it will simply be too late.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Monica Lennon: I was just coming on to mention Maurice Golden, but I will give way.

Maurice Golden: Does Monica Lennon agree that it is an absolute disgrace that 30,000 tonnes of recyclable waste were sent to be burned last year in Scotland?

Monica Lennon: I agree—that figure is horrifying. Although we can all do more to tackle our throwaway culture, we also need big system change, which is why regulation is important. I confess that I might have lobbied Maurice Golden to set up a cross-party group on the circular economy, and now the whole Parliament knows about that. Anyone who wants to volunteer to provide the secretariat should get in touch with me or Maurice Golden.

On the throwaway culture, we need faster action, including on fast fashion. I want to name-check a business called Bag the Dress in my area of North Lanarkshire, which specialises in selling pre-loved occasion wear, including bridal dresses and so on. That is really interesting, but we all need to do more—not just to encourage lifestyle changes, but to get the big system change that Maurice Golden talked about. With COP26 just around the corner, Scotland can lead the way in tackling the pollution and waste that are created by the fashion and textiles industry. We all want to see progress being made on a bill that enables us to do that.

Last week, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland. One of the guest speakers was the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, Professor David Boyd. He was really interesting, but the real stars of the event were the young people from the Children's

Parliament. Looking back, we can see that tackling climate crisis has been a key issue for the Children's Parliament since its inception 25 years ago. Its work has included its ecocity project and, more recently, its investigation for the Climate Assembly UK. Some of its ideas are brilliant and would be so simple to implement—for example, the idea of a national tree planting day, which is, as the oak champion in the previous session of Parliament, close to my heart, and its proposal to ban use of plastic packaging and single-use plastics.

I have also met young campaigners from Teach the Future who are fighting for climate justice. Their research and passion have convinced me that we need to embed climate justice in the heart of the curriculum. That is why in our amendment we ask the Government and the Parliament to agree to that. Although I recognise that the Government has made progress, we need to do more to embed climate education in our classrooms. That is a cause that should unite us all.

Beyond embedding climate justice in education for our young people, we must embed climate solutions in people's everyday lives and take a joined-up approach across Government, business and all of society. We need greater investment in public transport and active travel to reduce emissions, and we cannot allow rhetoric to triumph over reality. In my area, the loss of the X1 bus service—which was a crucial link between Hamilton and Glasgow—has been devastating, so I would welcome a meeting with the Minister for Transport on that, if he can find the time.

More broadly, the Scottish Trades Union Congress is right when it talks about the need for a people's recovery and investment in a green new deal. We need serious investment in infrastructure and renewable technology—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you bring your remarks to a close, please?

Monica Lennon: Of course.

There will be lots that we agree on today, so I hope that Parliament will support our amendment.

I move amendment S6M-00278.1, to insert at end:

“; agrees that progressing a Circular Economy Bill must be an urgent priority; commends children and young people in Scotland who have raised awareness about these twin crises and campaigned positively for the shift to net zero, and supports their calls for the embedment of climate justice education throughout the curriculum as part of learners' entitlement to Learning for Sustainability.”

15:52

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Like so many people across Scotland and around the world, I have been deeply inspired and moved by the school climate strikes, and I feel ashamed—in particular, as a father—of the burden on future generations that we are set to leave. However, at the same time, I am really hopeful and positive that a greener, fairer future is possible, and I think that we have all the tools in the box to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. We just need the political will to break from business as usual and drive that transformational change.

It is fair to say that, so far, we have enjoyed a fairly leisurely pace of change. An early retirement of coal-fired power stations, a first wave of onshore wind development and the recycling of household waste have all helped to halve emissions over the past 30 years, but halving them again in the next nine years demands an absolute step change. Tokenism just will not deliver. Deep system change will be needed to tackle climate change.

I think that that will be a real test for the Parliament, our committees and the political culture that we create here. It will mean making hard decisions that will not please everyone in the short term. It will be a case of seeing those decisions through and making the transition work so that no one is left behind, and it will mean sharing thinking and ownership of the solutions and taking some political risks. That is a challenge for everyone and every party in the Parliament, including the Greens.

If we look at the climate change plan, which is our only real route map to net zero in this Parliament, we can see that there are major challenges in there. For example, we all know that the 20 per cent reduction in vehicle mileage target is attempting to reverse a trend of traffic growth that has been relentless for the best part of 70 years.

Like many in the chamber, I grew up with access to a family car and I benefited from that, as have my children. However, our overdependence on the private car is not only killing the planet but ruining our health and wellbeing and dominating the public space that is needed for economic regeneration in our towns, while excluding many people because of their age, disability or income.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Ruskell: I am pushed for time as I have only four minutes for my opening speech. I will come back to Mr Kerr later.

Such a target will not be met without transformative change and investment. If we want

our towns to move and feel like Copenhagen, we will have to act now and make non-essential car use a harder choice than public transport, walking, cycling or wheeling. Likewise, if we want communities to be reconnected to the rail network and to get freight off the roads and on to rail, it will mean diverting a big chunk of trunk road capital spending into that priority.

We will at times disagree on more challenging ideas such as workplace parking levies, but if parties in this Parliament reject the solutions, the responsibility will be on them to put forward better solutions, rather than backing a status quo that is now completely untenable.

The Green amendment mentions the 166 improvements to the climate change plan that four committees in the previous session of Parliament called for just a couple of months ago. That was a remarkable level of cross-party consensus at a time when we need ideas and action like never before. It is the responsibility of the new Administration to respond meaningfully to that will of Parliament and bring forward a revised climate change plan as early as possible in the current session.

Time is not running out; it has already run out. We need urgency, drive, innovation and a can-do attitude from all of us, and that has to start today.

I move amendment S6M-00278.3, to insert at end:

“; notes the 166 recommendations made by four parliament committees to improve the Climate Change Plan, including necessary changes to land use, transport, energy and housing policy; recognises the need for urgent and transformational change in these sectors to deliver on Scotland’s climate commitments, and calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a revised Climate Change Plan early in the current parliamentary session, demonstrating a credible pathway to achieving the 2030 target.”

15:56

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am grateful for the chance to speak in what I hope will be a genuinely constructive debate.

As the Government’s motion sets out, tackling the climate emergency must be a shared and national endeavour, and that is why the Scottish Liberal Democrats are proud of the part that we have played in working with others to force the pace of change so far. Our 2030 target for a 75 per cent reduction in emissions, which the Scottish Liberal Democrats supported and worked hard with others to secure, is one of the most determined in the world, and experts recognise that it pushes us to the very brink of what is possible. Chris Stark, the chief executive of the UK Climate Change Committee, described it recently as “very, very stretching”.

Now, the work of making that target a reality really needs to bite, because more warm words will just make for an even warmer planet. The measure of our commitment will be ascertained not in the ambition of the targets that we set, but in the rate and reach of their achievement. My amendment speaks to the specific challenges that are presented by the transport sector, and that is what I intend to spend much of my time discussing.

We will not have a chance of meeting our climate change targets unless options for transport are truly, rapidly and radically decarbonised. The First Minister said that she recognised that in her reshuffle and arranged the portfolios accordingly. I welcome that. In 2015, transport became Scotland's single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. It accounts for more than a third of our emissions. Progress has been made in other sectors, but transport has not budged. If that does not change, we will be in trouble, so that has to be one of the main missions in the current session of Parliament.

Car travel has been on the increase since the end of world war two. In 2019, 48.7 billion vehicle kilometres were travelled by road—up 10 per cent in a decade. The pandemic means that people are—understandably—nervous about getting back into the groove of using public transport, and surveys have shown that people are even more inclined to favour their cars above other forms of travel. Getting people out of their cars is one of our biggest challenges. Let us not shy away from the issue of active travel. We have, so far, failed to make Scotland a cycling nation.

My critics will point to the fact that I helped to lead a campaign that forced the City of Edinburgh Council to shelve plans for a low-traffic neighbourhood in my constituency. That is entirely true, but I opposed that scheme not because I oppose active travel—I do not; far from it—but because, had the city council bothered to ask my community, it would have discovered that it was proposing to close routes into what was largely a low-traffic area to begin with. In doing that, it would actually have compounded congestion and pollution on arterial routes.

I passionately support the principles of LTNs. I like what they have achieved in Waltham Forest, but I particularly like the five public consultations and the co-production that went into their creation there. None of that took place in my constituency, which was a great shame. As the council knows, its approach in seeking to strong-arm my constituents into permanent lifestyle change has set back the active travel agenda in our city. That is typical of the disconnect between political aspiration and delivery on the ground.

The 10 per cent target for 2020 completely failed to materialise, and last September's statistics show that the share of car journeys that are instead being taken by bike has fallen to 1.2 per cent. Put simply, cycling needs to be made as easy as possible. Lockdown showed that when people feel that cycling is a safe option they are eager to take it up. With quieter roads, whole families were taking the opportunity to get out and get active in a safe and sustainable way. The streets of Amsterdam are not filled with bikes by accident. The Government there gave people the infrastructure and support that they needed so that both young and old could feel safe, secure and comfortable enough to get on their bikes.

There are many things that we could do in Scotland to help people to feel exactly like that. We could use planning processes to make sure that roads have space to keep everyone safe, and we could make funding available for facilities such as showers and changing rooms in workplaces. We could also get cycling proficiency training in schools back on track. At the moment, its availability is plummeting, which makes no sense at all.

Electrification must be the way forward for journeys for which active travel is not an option. Again, confidence will be key. Half of those asked say that they would consider buying an electric vehicle if they felt that the charging network was there to support them. We want to help people along the way by switching police cars and vehicles that are used by councils and the rest of the public sector to electric. That would help to motivate the roll-out of the charging network and build people's confidence so that they can make that switch.

My amendment signs off with a challenge. Heathrow airport is already the single biggest producer of emissions in the UK. A third runway would go directly against all our green ambitions—the flights that would come to Scotland as a result would release 600,000 tonnes of emissions into our environment. Despite that, the Scottish National Party has a contract to support the building of that third runway. That flies in the face of the climate emergency and everything that we are trying to achieve. [*Interruption.*] I am afraid that I am in my final minute.

When the First Minister stood in Parliament and declared a climate emergency, we were told that difficult decisions would have to be made and everything would be under review—everything, it seems, except for that contract. That cannot be allowed to stand. Therefore, I urge all colleagues in the chamber to support my amendment.

I move amendment S6M-00278.4, to insert at end:

“; recognises that rapidly reducing emissions in the transport sector will be critical to Scotland meeting its 2030 and 2045 targets; considers that achieving sustainability will require the acceleration of work, including the opening of new railway lines and stations, establishing a network of well-maintained rapid chargers for electric vehicles and additional support to rapidly increase active travel, and believes that, as an indication of its commitment to sustainability, the Scottish Government should immediately withdraw from its written agreement with Heathrow Airport to support the building of a third runway, which is incompatible with the climate emergency.”

16:02

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary to his new role. Climate emergency issues need to run through every portfolio as a central backbone. I agree that a green recovery must embed the just transition and that the just transition commission needs to be central to our work.

The biodiversity crisis also needs to be addressed alongside the climate emergency, and I pay tribute to Roseanna Cunningham for her work on the Edinburgh declaration. I also pay tribute to her and to Stewart Stevenson for their leadership on climate change. We all need to challenge ourselves constantly on what more we can do and how much faster we can go to make an impact.

It is 14 years since I made a speech in the chamber as a back bencher, and I want to reflect on my Linlithgow constituency, but I also want to reflect on some global and national issues. We need shared ambition, constructive accountability and an attitude that we are all leaders in this mission.

At the international level, global political leadership can no longer put off, abrogate or dilute action or responsibility. Cultural climate diplomacy matters, and the virtual miles travelled by the UK Government, as hosts of COP26, need to deliver now if the November summit, which is only months away, is to be effective.

The US's increasing ownership of the global role may be a welcome reflection of its new President, but I hope that it is not about filling a vacuum. Although Scotland must use COP26 as a showcase to demonstrate our capabilities, at the end of day it has to be about binding decisions made by state Governments to produce action.

At the national level, this Parliament set out our ambitions on carbon reduction—and it did so collectively. Scotland's targets might be extremely challenging, but all parties support them, so we bear collective responsibility. I warn that difficult decisions will have to be made if we are to deliver on the targets. Knee-jerk opposition and the cherry-picking of decisions that members do not like must and will be called out.

We can come together to support the Scottish Government's proposed circular economy bill and the billion-pound national infrastructure plan to catalyse emission reductions. We can come together to support the green growth accelerator, which was announced today.

All our public bodies must contribute. The Scottish National Investment Bank is capitalised with £2 billion of investment and has a net zero core mission. Historic Environment Scotland is a world initiator, driving change—along with California—in relation to the science, technology and skills that are needed in the heritage sector, and founding the global Climate Heritage Network.

I turn to the community and constituency level. Pre-pandemic, many of my constituents commuted by car to Edinburgh and Glasgow. With hybrid working, 25-minute neighbourhoods, cycle park and ride and the planned new Winchburgh rail station, we can deliver a step change in commuter emissions.

The community in Linlithgow has driven practical change by selling community bonds in two phases. Funded by local people, the bonds allow ethical investment to enable local sports clubs, organisations and businesses to deliver community energy, including solar panels, and they provide better interest than banks provide. The initiative invests in local community energy, helps clubs to save money and has created a surplus—and it is scalable.

The Linlithgow Community Development Trust is making sure that it builds on the work that community groups and churches have done throughout the pandemic and on the many successful initiatives on transition and climate action. I support the trust's view that communities need to be empowered and funded directly to run local energy schemes, if systemic change is to happen.

We are talking about a whole-town approach: the aim is for Linlithgow to be the first net zero town in Scotland. I ask Màiri McAllan, who will make the closing speech in the debate, to consider accepting an invitation to visit Linlithgow to hear about developments in the town and plans for the future.

Many of my constituents work at Mitsubishi, which employs more than 1,000 people and produces commercial heat pumps. Use of such technology in housing retrofits will develop skills and grow jobs.

Digital, innovation and technology are key. I am a keen supporter of hydrogen: we need not only to research and pilot projects but to implement and deliver them, following up on positive interest from Germany and elsewhere.

On industry, we cannot and must not offshore trading emissions. A careful industrial balance to prevent that will be key.

Renewable energy transmission costs in Scotland are punitive and prohibitive and must change.

We need sectoral approaches. Food and drink and tourism, for example, are already delivering on serious plans. Culture has much to offer, too.

On construction, the greenest building is one that is already built, when we consider the energy that is involved in aggregates extraction and transportation. The UK Government could take the simple and rapid measure of introducing a VAT reduction for construction work on existing buildings, to match the position for new buildings. I am pleased that the built environment is prioritised in the Scottish Government's draft heat in buildings strategy. The issue, along with energy, must be considered in the context of the green skills academy.

On finance, our business minister yesterday welcomed—virtually—3,000 delegates from more than 100 countries to the global Ethical Finance summit, which is a staging post on the way to COP26.

With shared ambition, shared responsibility and constructive accountability when it comes to supporting and driving change, and with the attitude that we are all leaders in this place, we can serve constituency, community and country, and we might—might—have a fighting chance of helping to save humanity from itself and making an impact internationally.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Sharon Dowey, who will be making her first speech in the Parliament.

16:09

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): I thank each and every person who voted for the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party in the south of Scotland, and I thank everyone who helped me in my campaign.

I also pay tribute to John Scott, who served in this place for 21 years. He has helped thousands of constituents and made a huge difference in his community. I thank him personally for all his encouragement, wish him well, and hope that he can now enjoy a well-earned rest and spend more time with his wife, Sheila, and their family. *[Applause.]*

I am not a career politician—I am a lassie from Maybole. I have worked since I was 14, and for the past 35 years in retail. I entered politics because I want to make a difference.

I have the honour and privilege of being able to represent the area where I was born and grew up—Carrick, Cumnock and Doon valley—and the area that is now my home, Ayr. I feel lucky to live in one of the most beautiful and diverse parts of Scotland. Other members might have said that of their areas, but I intend to use my time here to change their mind.

I was born in Girvan, which is now famous for its palace—the gin palace, that is, at Grant's distillery, the home of Hendrick's gin and Grant's whisky, among others. For those wanting a taste of Ayrshire, we can offer more than gin, however. The south-west of Scotland has the potential to be a premier tourist destination within the UK, because of Robert Burns, Culzean castle, Dumfries house, Heads of Ayr farm park, Craig Tara, a dark skies park and observatory and superb golf courses, including Turnberry—which is even more famous than its celebrity owner. That is not forgetting that it includes the main route to the port of Cairnryan, the link to Ireland. We boast nationally and internationally renowned businesses: Nestlé, McCulloch Rail in Ballantrae, Begg's in Ayr, Emergency One, EGGER and the many aerospace companies at Prestwick airport. We have colleges and a university, an airport and a talented local workforce.

Yet, with all that in our favour, we are being left behind by a lack of investment in our forgotten corner of Scotland. Some 27 per cent of children in Ayrshire live in poverty, compared with 23 per cent in Scotland as a whole. The unemployment rate for 18 to 24-year-olds is 12.8 per cent, compared with 8.3 per cent nationally. Last week, as I listened to speeches from other members, I was encouraged to hear Kate Forbes say:

"We know that, to achieve a successful recovery, we must ensure that no one is left behind."—*[Official Report, 2 June 2021; c 19.]*

Well, it is time for the Scottish Government to put its money where its mouth is. Ayrshire is being left behind and I challenge the Scottish Government to change that.

The Ayrshire growth deal—a collaboration between the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the three Ayrshire councils—will bring a much-needed boost, but investment barely goes further south than Prestwick airport. To encourage investment and growth further south, we badly need investment in our infrastructure. Dualling of the A77 is a priority, but currently there is no plan for where it would be routed, let alone how it would be funded. The A70 is also badly in need of an upgrade, as it deals with traffic en route to the port of Cairnryan. South Ayrshire would be in prime position for a free port if we were not being let down so badly by the poor quality of local roads. On top of all that, countless people have

been affected by the unnecessary crashes that regularly occur on those two roads, and emissions continue to blight town centres such as the one in Girvan.

That brings to mind comments that Fergus Ewing made last week. He noted that

“one key element of a vibrant economy is good, safe and reliable transport links”.

He went on to say:

“it may not be widely known, but the risk of serious head-on collisions is far greater on non-dualled roads because there is no crash barrier”

and

“we are not anti-roads; we are anti-emissions.”

That was echoed by the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, Ivan McKee, who said:

“I will ensure that my colleague the Minister for Transport takes on board his point about the dualling of transport links”.—[*Official Report*, 2 June 2021; c 34, 65.]

Of course, I am delighted that we have achieved cross-party consensus so soon, and I look forward to sitting down with the Scottish Government at the nearest opportunity to discuss its plans to upgrade South Ayrshire’s roads.

In this debate about addressing the climate emergency, I cannot finish without mentioning the environmental ticking time bomb that is Tarbolton Moss landfill site. The landfill was closed three years ago and, since then, has reportedly been seeping pollution and gases into the environment. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Scottish Government are well aware of the situation, yet we are still waiting for action to be taken. Given the recent report on the quality of bathing water at Ayr beach, questions need to be raised as to whether the two issues are connected. In a new study of the UK beaches with the dirtiest water, seven of the top 10 were in Scotland, and three of them were in South Ayrshire. That is simply not good enough. We have a right to know the truth, and the statements and answers that we hear should reflect that.

To conclude, I have three asks of the Government: stop hiding and delaying reports to members and start to use the knowledge and expertise in this place to fix them; stop talking about what you are going to do and start delivering; and stop the division and start rebuilding.

16:15

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): We all know what the targets are, and now we need the action and system change to deliver on them. There is a lot in the motion to cover, but I

want to concentrate on one element of it: just transition.

I have spoken about the issue many times, as it is affecting my constituents right now. A just transition is essential for people who work in high-carbon industries. In Aberdeenshire’s case, that is those who work directly in oil and gas as well as the people who rely on the supply chain for their living. The economic health of the communities in which those workers live will also be adversely impacted if this is not done right.

In the past couple of years, I have lost count of the number of friends and neighbours who are trying—unsuccessfully—to exit the oil and gas sector with a view to working in the renewable energy sector in particular. We are talking about highly skilled and experienced people. One of my friends was a project manager in the drilling sector, and he could not even secure a job as a delivery driver once he lost his job. Out of sheer necessity, he has now gone to work in the middle east without his family.

Off the back of hearing that anecdotal evidence of difficulty, when I was re-elected I launched a survey for oil and gas workers so that I could get on the record their experiences of transitioning. I have had an incredible response, and the survey will remain open during the summer to give people the time to complete it.

As many members will know—because I have mentioned it a few times—my parents moved from Clydebank to Aberdeenshire in the 1970s because there was no just transition for those who had been working in heavy engineering. It is fair to say that my parents were the lucky ones. Moving gave my dad a new career in oil and gas, and gave my family a secure future. However, many of his friends in Clydebank never worked again, with some of them even moving to Canada to avoid unemployment.

We cannot have a repeat of what happened to Scottish mining, steel and shipbuilding communities in the 1980s, but it is not enough just to say so. We need to find out what the issues are and how to work with the sector to address them as quickly as possible.

The funding that my colleague Fiona Hyslop delivered for the north-east last year was hugely welcome, as was the young persons guarantee and green jobs fund. However, there are other structural and regulatory difficulties that need to be looked at, although they are not all directly in the hands of the Scottish Government.

Liam Kerr: I am grateful to the member for taking an intervention, and I must say that I am enjoying her comments today.

Eleven years ago, the SNP predicted that there would be 28,000 jobs in offshore wind by 2020, but there are only 1,400 today. Can the member detail any action that is being taken to reassure the workforce that she is, rightly, talking about?

Gillian Martin: I am glad that Liam Kerr mentioned that. One of the reasons why there is not the number of jobs that we predicted is that there is a regulatory issue. The number of jobs in renewables comes up time and time again, and Liam Kerr has led me beautifully on to that part of my speech.

Last week, I submitted a topical question on one of those blockers to fulfilling our potential in renewables. The question was not chosen, so I will refer to it now; the minister might want to pick up on it during her closing remarks. A report by RenewableUK highlights that the transmission charges for Scotland's electricity are dramatically higher than others in the UK market, specifically that in the south of England. Power generators that are located in the north of Scotland pay 16 times more for using the transmission system than many EU countries that export electricity into our grid. Might our home-grown renewables sector potential be limited because of those unfair charges? What potential for jobs are we losing out on?

As I said in my intervention in Liam Kerr's speech, Ofgem has recently indicated that it is considering a full review of locational charging within the significant code review. However, Ofgem is not currently required to regulate for the delivery of net zero and therefore has no legal basis for making changes to the charging regime to reflect that policy objective and make electricity from renewables more competitive. I think that the majority of people in Scotland would like to have their electricity come from renewables. I would like the minister to outline what representations are being made to the UK Government and Ofgem on those points.

I am going to use the rest of my time to deliver direct quotes from some of the respondents to my survey, as a bit of a teaser for when we put them into a report. They pinpoint other things that need addressing as we put the just transition and the green jobs plan into place. A female chemical engineer with 10 years' experience in oil and gas said:

"There should be an accessible framework that allows people to clearly see where their core skills can be transferred into existing roles within the renewable sector. Tangible pathways to identify a route and role destination in the renewable sector"

are essential.

A male oil and gas worker with 21 years' experience said:

"I have been made redundant and cannot find full-time work. The cost of Global Wind Organisation certificates can be prohibitive."

A male oil and gas worker with more than 30 years' experience said:

"Transfer the skills and stop having to train to do OPITO, GWO and STCW as the courses are basically all the same, just amalgamate them, this would also save people out of work money."

A female engineer with more than 20 years' experience said:

"Is there professional training that could be offered part time, in the evenings, that"

oil and gas

"professionals like me could undertake whilst still in employment? This would encourage my active transition, instead of waiting until I am made redundant or have no choice."

I look forward to formalising more of the testimony that those people have provided me with in a report in late summer, which I will send to the cabinet secretary and industry bodies.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I call Mercedes Villalba. This is Ms Villalba's first speech in the chamber.

16:22

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, and congratulations on your role.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in today's debate on the climate emergency, because it is an issue that I care deeply about and one that is especially relevant to people in the north-east. North East Scotland is, of course, the region that I was elected to represent by people who entrusted Scottish Labour with their vote.

I stood for Scottish Labour because Labour in Parliament is the political wing of the wider labour movement. That is important, because workers in my region and in the rest of Scotland need parliamentarians who will be on their side, who will fight for them and who will fight for the planet. I make the link between people and planet because tackling the climate emergency and improving workers' rights go hand in hand, because climate justice is inextricably linked to economic and social justice.

There are two fundamental challenges facing us: the class inequality that still blights our society and smothers the potential of millions and the climate emergency that threatens life on earth. For too many, work is defined by low pay, zero-hours contracts and unsafe conditions—all in order to maximise profits for those who already have more than enough. At the same time, those at the top are fuelling climate catastrophe by destroying

habitats, polluting our air and poisoning our oceans.

The root cause of insecure, low-paying work and disasters such as the pandemic is our economy. The capitalist system has consistently prioritised short-term profit over long-term sustainability and quality of life. Why are people homeless while properties lie empty? Because it makes someone money. Why are people forced to choose between heating and eating, even though we have ample food and limitless potential for renewable energy? Because it makes someone money. Why are people in poorer countries priced out of life-saving vaccines? Because it makes someone money and because, for too long, Governments have been in thrall to the idea that privatisation leads to better services.

Climate change, public health and unemployment are all intrinsically linked by our economic system, and that has done great damage to our society and our planet. The great opportunity that we have is that we can tackle both by implementing a socialist green new deal with democratic public ownership at its heart. Energy, water, transport, mail, and telecommunications are natural monopolies that should serve the people, not profit. More than that, they are also our tools in the work of building a healthy society and planet.

We will need to retrofit our homes to reduce carbon emissions and end fuel poverty. That means job creation. We will need electrified and expanded public transport to boost our city centres, connect communities, and reduce car use and pollution. That means job creation. We will also need to green our public spaces, creating active travel routes, biodiverse, green corridors, and accessible parks. That means job creation—but not just any jobs. We must strengthen trade unions and promote worker ownership so that, when we create those jobs, we build an economy that is resilient and fair for all.

We can do that by ensuring a just transition from carbon-intensive sectors through a streamlined retraining programme and the guarantee of unionised pay, as well as by using public procurement to promote decarbonisation, restore the environment and guarantee fair work both at home and further afield through international supply chains.

Our green new deal must be global. Unless we cancel debt and freely share technology and resources, we condemn those who are least responsible for climate change to bearing the brunt of its effects. If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it is that we are all connected. A pandemic that began thousands of miles away has wreaked havoc on society right here. The choices that we make in Scotland on our environment and our economy are equally momentous.

We must choose a sustainable and fair economy, we must choose to empower workers and we must choose to create a society that values people and planet over profit. We must do so because, in the end, there really is no other choice.

16:27

Lorna Slater (Lothian) (Green): As I am keen on co-operative and consensus-building politics, I was very pleased to read a copy of the cross-party committee recommendations on tackling the climate emergency that were produced during the previous session of Parliament. Those are the 166 recommendations that are mentioned in Mark Ruskell's amendment. They represent 166 actions that this Parliament has already agreed are necessary to tackle the climate crisis, and they can be the basis for a credible pathway to meeting the ambitious targets that have been set by this Parliament.

Targets are all very well, but now let us have action. A report from the International Energy Agency last month said that, for the rise in global temperatures to stay within 1.5°C, there must be no new investment in fossil fuel projects. However, the UK Tory Government has refused to rule out new licences for exploration and production of oil and gas in the North Sea. According to a survey that came out yesterday, barely one in four people—only 27 per cent—support that. Most people in the UK—63 per cent—want the UK Government to switch billions of pounds of public money away from North Sea oil and gas towards funding low-carbon industries instead.

As I mentioned last week, I am deeply sceptical of the UK's North Sea transition deal, because its entire premise is that the UK Government intends to give yet more money to oil and gas companies to allow them to extract and burn yet more fossil fuels, in the hope that they can invent and implement new carbon capture technologies quickly enough to still meet our climate targets. They cannot. It is not possible. That is a fantasy. Carbon capture is needed to absorb out of the atmosphere the carbon that is already in it. It is not a free pass to keep burning the stuff; it is needed to keep us from reaching 3.5°C of global warming.

Liam Kerr: That is rather different from what is in the Green Party's manifesto, so I would be interested to hear Lorna Slater talk about that, but my question is whether she still wishes to shut down the oil and gas industry within the next four years.

Lorna Slater: Liam Kerr will be delighted that the entire manifesto was written by and adopted by the party, and is not up to me to say, so we will be going with what is in the manifesto.

According to the survey, almost two thirds of Scots support the creation of a concrete plan to wind down the existing extraction of oil and gas in the North Sea and other waters around the UK. The approach of winding down the industry therefore has wide public support. I am more than happy to talk about a specific timeline that would make Liam Kerr happy.

Fortunately, within the 166 cross-party recommendations from the previous session of Parliament, I see plenty of good news on jobs, which I know is an issue of concern to the Scottish Conservatives, particularly when it comes to the North Sea. The recommendations include the proactive consideration of future workforce needs, support to get people into green jobs and the collection of better data to monitor trends in jobs to ensure that the support goes where it is needed. There will be a lot of jobs to be had in forestry and peatland restoration if we invest in those things. I see that there is cross-party support for funding for retraining and job guarantees for young people—of course, we would like to see a jobs guarantee for oil and gas workers, too—and I see lots of support for the growing rural talent initiative for rural jobs. I also see recommendations for investing in the green jobs fund and more.

Those are things that we have already agreed on. That is a great start. Let us do the work to join up those practical recommendations to create the jobs that we need to recover from the pandemic and allow a planned phase-out of oil and gas extraction.

16:31

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Worldwide, we are in the midst of a climate and biodiversity emergency. It is the actions of leaders across the world that will determine the future of our world for future generations.

We know that the science is real. Climate change is real and human activities are the main cause of it. Scientifically, we are now firmly in the Anthropocene, a period of unstable global warming in which global temperature has risen by 1.1°C in the past 100 years. That temperature increase has caused immense damage, but it is not too late to act.

I grew up watching Sir David Attenborough and have witnessed his shift to being more protectionist with regard to our environment and biodiversity. At the age of 95, Sir David stated that he cannot just stand by, and I agree with him. In his latest television show, he said:

“We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never before have we had the power to do something about that ... The future of humanity and indeed, all life on earth, now depends on us.”

Those are powerful words, which we must all heed.

What we have learned during the pandemic is that society is able to come together to take radical action for the common good and, as we head into recovery from Covid-19, we must keep that spirit alive to build a sustainable recovery.

In Scotland, we are already delivering to address the climate and the biodiversity emergencies. In government, the SNP has made Scotland the first country in the world to declare a climate emergency and has since passed legislation for the world’s most ambitious emissions reduction targets, which aim to bring us to net zero emissions by 2045. We have already halved our greenhouse gas emissions since 1990 and we are world renowned for having underpinned our net zero targets with a legislative commitment to a just transition, ensuring that no one is left behind. We have committed to a green recovery from Covid-19 and have announced a £62 million investment in an energy transition fund. Further, we have been active on the world stage, leading the Edinburgh process on biodiversity and publishing the Edinburgh declaration, which calls for increased action to tackle biodiversity loss.

Scotland is playing its part, but we must have an international approach as well as a local approach that takes our communities and citizens with us on this vital journey.

Scotland is leading the way in the UK on tree planting, with 82 per cent of UK woodland being in Scotland. In 2019-20, we planted 11,050 hectares of new woodland, exceeding our annual 10,000 hectares target. That is extremely welcome. However, if we are to be truly serious about addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency, we will have to change land use as we currently understand it and focus on forest and woodland, peatland and renewable energy.

I have been contacted by some constituents who have concerns about proposed forestry, woodland and wind farm developments across the south of Scotland. Those concerns range from the percentage of Sitka spruce compared to the percentage of native broadleaf species that are planted, to the visual impact of offshore and onshore wind farm development. I am interested in pursuing thorough community engagement so that offshore wind farming could be created if it were to bring good green jobs and much-needed community benefit—especially to Wigtownshire in my region of South Scotland.

I am pleased to see the commitment from the Government in the revised climate change plan to hold

“early engagement, consistent communication, and genuine dialogue between different groups and communities.”

I ask the cabinet secretary to outline how that engagement will be done, and whether local authority planning frameworks will be changed to enable development, given the urgent need.

The Government has funded the restoration of more than 25,000 hectares of degraded Scottish peatland. Some of that funding has come direct to the Crichton Carbon Centre and the Galloway Fisheries Trust in Dumfries and Galloway, where peatland expert Dr Emily Taylor and the team are restoring more than 17,000 hectares of peat in the River Luce catchment area. That is important work, as peatlands are capable of absorbing and storing 50 per cent more carbon than some of our trees can.

When I visited a peatland restoration project with Dr Taylor, at Carsegowan Moss near Wigtown, we measured the peat bog at 6m deep. That is good, because deep peat is normally measured at 40 cm. One issue that Dr Taylor raised with me was that there is currently no international agreed definition of deep peat. Given that peatlands have a proven ability to sequester carbon, I ask the cabinet secretary to pursue an international agreement on peat level definitions, so that carbon sequestration can be calculated more efficiently.

I welcome the debate and the progress that is being made on the climate and biodiversity crises in Scotland, but I repeat the need for international co-operation and for bringing people with us on the journey.

16:36

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):

The Parliament is agreed that we need to achieve net zero, but the past five years have seen the SNP Government presiding over a catalogue of failure to meet its own targets. If we are to create a circular economy, improve biodiversity and truly tackle climate change, we will need a step change in approach.

Plastic pollution is a growing threat and runs the risk of accelerating climate change. If we do not change, there will be more plastic in the seas, by weight, than fish. Moreover, the light-absorbing properties of microplastics pose a risk to the arctic regions, potentially speeding up the melting of ice caps. Microplastics also contribute to biodiversity loss. They weaken ecosystems, damage economies and impact on human health, either through the ingestion of contaminated seafood or through airborne particles that lower the air quality in our towns and cities.

Plastic pollution is right on our doorstep. From its survey of Scottish waters between 2014 and 2020, Marine Scotland revealed a worrying picture. In five of the areas studied, concentrations of microplastics were comparable to the North Atlantic and North Pacific—areas of open ocean that are infamous for their vast patches of rubbish. Some efforts have been made to tackle the problem—for example, by banning some single-use plastics, such as small cosmetic beads. However, such sorts of plastic account for just 2 per cent of seaborne plastic pollution, according to research from the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology.

Both the Marine Scotland and Galway-Mayo studies found that fragments of larger plastic items caused the most pollution. In fact, fragments of tyres, road markings and synthetic fibres account for a staggering 70 per cent of seaborne microplastics, according to the Galway-Mayo research. We need to establish a plastic pollution baseline for Scotland, with a dedicated survey vessel, to properly inform future policies.

We should launch a public awareness campaign to remind drivers to keep tyres properly inflated. That would reduce abrasion and thus reduce microplastic fragments. It would be a simple measure, but it could have a long-lasting impact.

About one third of plastic pollution is from textiles, yet the SNP cancelled Zero Waste Scotland’s textiles programme and pulled out of the Love Your Clothes campaign. Meanwhile, around 50 per cent of textiles are still going to landfill, in addition to those that cause sea pollution. Moreover, just 2 per cent of our plastic waste is recycled here in Scotland, yet the SNP has still not committed to a new plastic recycling facility or microrecycling facilities and waste hubs for rural communities, all of which I have been calling for since 2017. The overall household recycling rate is now worse than it was in 2016, and the SNP has still not met its 2013 household waste recycling target.

Progress is really concerning in key areas. SNP-run Dundee City Council recycles less than 35 per cent of its waste, while SNP-run Glasgow City Council cannot even manage 25 per cent. What an absolute embarrassment! That is in stark contrast with areas where Conservatives are in power, such as Angus, which recycles almost 60 per cent of its waste, and Perth and Kinross, which recycles 52.7 per cent.

The SNP failed to deliver its 2021 landfill ban on biodegradable waste, so it has decided to burn waste instead, with incineration capacity skyrocketing by 400 per cent. What a terrible message to send out as the world arrives in Scotland for COP26: Scotland, the ashtray of Europe. Instead, we should introduce a

moratorium on new incineration capacity, as my colleague Monica Lennon said.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): If Maurice Golden had been in the cabinet secretary's position, would he have given a firmer answer than Mr Matheson gave me earlier when I called for just that moratorium? Would Maurice Golden call for that immediately?

Maurice Golden: Yes, I would. If I had been in the cabinet secretary's position over the past five years, I would have helped the SNP to meet all its targets. Such issues could be dealt with in a circular economy bill, which was promised before the pandemic but is now missing in action.

Also missing is any serious deterrence to illegal waste dumping. Last year, there were only 17 convictions in Scotland for fly-tipping. That is an abysmal figure that makes a mockery of the law. Is it not now time to hand prosecution powers to SEPA?

Added to all those failures, we have a biodiversity crisis, with one in nine species threatened with extinction. However, the SNP has not published a biodiversity strategy since 2013, and fewer than half of public bodies are failing to comply with the duty to publish reports on biodiversity compliance.

The SNP's catalogue of inaction and missed targets, including the legal emissions targets for the past two years—it has even reduced Zero Waste Scotland's operating budget—makes it difficult to believe that it can deal with the growing problem of climate change.

I will end on a consensual note. The SNP must now work across the chamber with MSPs who have the knowledge and expertise to deliver our climate change targets, create a circular economy and establish Scotland as a plastic-neutral nation.

16:43

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Last night, I watched one of my favourite television programmes, "Yes Minister". Sir Humphrey said that the problem with politicians is that they start to believe their own speeches. As I look back at the number of speeches that have been made in the Parliament on this subject, I suggest that we need to get past the speeches, to clear action across all areas. I welcome the cabinet secretary to his new post, because it means that there is an opportunity to try to make that happen.

My understanding is that all the amendments that have been lodged will, in the interests of consensus, be accepted. The amendments mention issues that we should have tackled by now. They should have been tackled during the past 14 years of SNP Government, which has

failed, but successive Governments since 1999 have also failed to tackle some of the issues.

Michael Matheson made the point that, if we are to succeed, we need to take people with us and build a movement of change that wants to tackle climate change in this country and across the world.

Mark Ruskell's amendment for the Green Party mentions housing policy. We, in this country, could make a major investment in housing infrastructure now. I find it difficult to accept that more than 24 per cent of households in Scotland live in fuel poverty and that 12.4 per cent of households live in extreme fuel poverty. That means that more than 300,000 households in Scotland live in extreme fuel poverty, despite all the speeches made in the Parliament in the seven years that I have been here. The figures are incredible.

We could set out a clear plan to bring forward the targets to end fuel poverty. We are talking about real people. Helping those who are in fuel poverty would be a massive boon for them, but we should link things up and also talk about joined-up Government. Those who live in fuel poverty will access NHS services more often because of their poor health, which is caused by the dampness and condensation and the conditions in which they are expected to live. There is a clear, factual, evidenced correlation there. There is also poor, inadequate and substandard private rented housing. This is one area where we could start immediately to tackle some of the issues that we are talking about, as well as some of the big problems that people are living with.

The Government motion talks about a just transition. I am from Fife. I have seen shipyards compete and compete to try to get work. I have seen windmill jackets being transported halfway around the world while the yards sit empty. Although I have welcomed the investment that has gone in, we must see far more if we are truly to take advantage of the jobs that will come with that transition. If that does not happen, we will not take people with us. If we end up as a low-wage, low-skill economy, we will never take people with us. That is the danger. We can have a low-wage, low-skill economy, or we can invest in research and development and work with the private as well as the public sector to get the jobs that will come.

The Liberal Democrat amendment mentions electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It is fine for Michael Matheson to say that we are doing better than England, Wales and Ireland, but we are still not doing very well. There are mixed messages. Fife Council, before the pandemic broke, put a paper to a committee on the introduction of a range of charges for the electric vehicle charging network. Again, it is the poorest who suffer. Someone who lives in the north-east of Fife would

find it cheaper to nip across and charge their car in Dundee than in Fife. Someone who owns a house, however, with a driveway and so on, will charge their car at their house. That is a lot more difficult for people like me, who live in flats, and it is usually poorer people who live in areas where they cannot just drive their car into their garden.

I do not know whether anyone has looked into how much electric cars cost, but there is a cost barrier there. Someone who is wealthy can run about in an electric car and do their bit for the environment; someone who is poorer will be priced out. Many of us here probably do not use buses, but members would be amazed, if they got on a bus, to see what it costs. Trains are the same. I have complained before, when Michael Matheson was the transport minister, that people cannot afford to use the trains. Poorer people are paying the price.

If we are serious about taking people with us, we must look at all those issues. There is a lot that we can do now. We could have an ambitious programme to tackle some of the big issues in Scotland and, at the same time, work on the environment while taking people with us.

16:49

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I welcome Mr Matheson and Ms McAllan to their new roles, and I congratulate Sharon Dowe and Mercedes Villalba on their maiden speeches, both of which were passionate. I look forward to working with them going forward.

It was also lovely to hear Ms Hyslop being able to concentrate on her local constituency and speak about some of the work that is going on there. It reminded me of some of the things in my constituency, which I will tell members about and encourage them to visit. In my constituency, we have the Building Research Establishment innovation park for house building, which has retrofitted houses that show how existing Wheatley-style houses can be adapted to be more energy efficient as well as examples of energy-efficient new-build housing. It is an interesting place to visit. I also have in my area Greenhead Moss community nature park, which is on the site of a former coal mine and in which we have protected peatland. The park is also the home of the small pearl-bordered fritillary, of which I am the species champion—so there is another champion in the chamber this afternoon.

I thought, almost to the last moment, that this was going to be a consensual debate, but Mr Golden might have soured it a little.

“O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!”

We sometimes become insular in this place, but it is interesting to see the world's view of what we are trying to achieve in Scotland at the moment. At the United Nations climate action summit in New York in 2019, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Professor Espinosa, said in a tweet:

“Congratulations, Scotland, for demonstrating bold leadership on #ClimateAction ... This is an inspiring example of the level of ambition we need globally to achieve the #ParisAgreement.”

We have the most ambitious legal framework for emissions reduction in the world. Although the targets are, indeed, challenging for us as individuals and communities—as has been discussed in the debate—as well as for the economy and our environment, the climate and biodiversity crisis must be a critical priority for all of us in the chamber. The aim is a 75 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2045. We have the policies to achieve those things and, with the appointment of the first-ever Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, we have the leadership to implement those policies.

I will highlight just a few of our policies: investing £120 million in zero-emission buses, driving forward a decarbonised future for Scotland's bus fleet; a new £180 million emerging energy technologies fund to support the development of hydrogen and carbon capture and storage, and to add impetus to the development of negative-emission technologies; and the cashback scheme for householders, which will provide eligible households with access to up to £7,500 towards the cost of renewable heating systems and a further £6,000 for energy-efficiency measures. It is such policies that will help us achieve the targets.

Liam Kerr: The SNP's 2021 budget cut the funding for zero waste, which encourages recycling and a move to a circular economy, by £4 million. How does Ms Adamson square that with the comments that she has just made?

Clare Adamson: In this parliamentary session, we have all signed up to the climate target agreement, for which there was unanimous agreement in the Parliament. It is incumbent on us all to look to how we can achieve the target. I want to look to the future and the policies that are coming that will help us to reach that target.

Mr Ruskell and other members have talked about younger people, and Monica Lennon mentioned the Children's Parliament. During the election campaign, I was written to by some primary 4 pupils from Calderbridge primary school, in my constituency, about their concern for their futures—it was all to do with the climate crisis as they saw it and their worries for the future. One pupil raised the issue of wildfires in Australia and

their terrible impact on the wildlife there, including on endangered species. Another pupil was concerned about the destruction of the rainforest and the possibility that that could lead to food shortages in the future. Another pupil was concerned about litter in his community and about the wider impact of plastics in our oceans, which was mentioned by Mr Golden. Another pupil expressed concerns for bees and wildlife, the impact of the loss of habitat and the use of insecticides.

One child wondered whether there would be polar bears when he grew up to be my age, and one young lady said that, having persuaded her parents to get her a puppy, she was sure that she could persuade the adults she knows to do the right thing and change their behaviour and habits to prevent damage to the environment. I say to Ms Lennon that I directed that young lady to the Children's Parliament, and I am sure that we will see her here one day.

As the saying goes, "from the mouths of babes". I was absolutely blown away by the knowledge and interpretation of those young people, as well as by the fact that they knew that the issues are all interlinked. We have talked about many of the issues today, including participatory planning for communities and the fact that our skills and development must meet the aspirations of what we are doing. That is why I am delighted that BRE works so closely with New College Lanarkshire on the skills that are needed for retrofitting, using the builds that are on site.

Those young people understand the threads that link everything and build our environment and the sustainability of our world. I was absolutely blown away by their knowledge and understanding—they get it. As Mark Ruskell said, it is incumbent on us to do the right thing by them and ensure that we live up to the targets that we all signed up to in the previous session of Parliament.

16:56

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The debate has been excellent, and there were first-class first speeches from both Sharon Dowey and Mercedes Villalba. It is great to have them among us, and I look forward to their further contributions.

We have so much to do—if nothing else, today's debate has shown us that. We need to plant millions of trees and heat our homes and all our buildings without burning fossil fuels, as we do at the moment. We should have whole towns running on renewables, using ground-source and air-source heat pumps and district heating systems. We need to switch from millions of polluting cars to electric vehicles and get the charging networks in

place. Liam Kerr spoke very well on that topic. He also talked about the need for carbon capture and storage, and I absolutely agree that it is part of the solution. CCS works, but it is not a get-out-of-jail-free card, and it must be done in tandem with a radical overhaul of how we all live our lives. He talked extensively about the quandary of the north-east. It is a quandary, because we cannot just pull the plug there. We need a just transition, and Gillian Martin was right to address that point.

As a critical part of our endeavour, we need to restore nature around us and recognise the inexorable link between the nature emergency and the climate emergency—they are deeply intertwined. Both the cabinet secretary and Lorna Slater mentioned the need to restore our peatlands. Some members may know that, in the previous parliamentary session, I was the RSPB Scotland species champion for the rusty sphagnum bog moss—they called me "the moss boss". Members may laugh, but the proliferation of bog moss is key to Scotland's efforts to reduce our emissions. If the moss is sufficiently irrigated, it grows on peat, and it is one of the best absorbers of CO₂ that grows in Scotland. When we dry and cut peat, we release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. That is why restoring our peatlands is important, and I will continue to campaign for it even if I am not the moss boss in this session.

Monica Lennon articulated well the need to deal with the waste products of the various industries in our society. That theme was picked up by Maurice Golden when he talked about addressing the massive problem of plastic pollution. We need to get rid of all single-use plastics. In Scotland, an estimated 300 million plastic straws, 276 million pieces of plastic cutlery, 50 million plastic plates and 66 million polystyrene food containers are used annually. At a beach clean-up in South Queensferry, in my constituency, we pulled from the beach 174 single-use wet wipes that had been flushed away and had not degraded in the sea.

I am sure that, during the election campaign, every member in the chamber felt the public will for change. All parties were elected on promises of a greener and fairer future. In her spellbinding first speech, Mercedes Villalba really captured the point about a fairer future. She reminded us of the substantial barrier to progress that profit creates in existing business practices. She also reminded us that climate injustice and poverty are inexorably linked. Alex Rowley was right to say that it is easier for someone to go green if they have money to do so.

The message from young people, in particular, is clear. I am glad that the Labour amendment refers to the work of the Teach the Future campaign, which my party fully supports. Young

people have already had an incredible impact on the conversation around the climate emergency, and the school strikes of 2019 made a huge difference. When young people marched down the Royal Mile and knocked on the Parliament's door, I was with them, along with my teenage son Finn.

The declaration of a climate emergency finally followed, along with our new emissions reduction targets, but we cannot make progress only when we have people knocking on the door of the Parliament, demanding it. Where sensible policies are implemented, real systemic change can happen. The plastic bag charge is one example of that, but we need more such measures.

There are many promising policies in the realm of the circular economy, such as the deposit return scheme, which the Scottish Liberal Democrats have long campaigned for. Likewise, a latte levy would help people to get back into the habit of taking their reusable cups with them. I am concerned that the strictures of the pandemic have caused us to lose our way and have reversed some of the progress that people had made on reusable options.

Of course, those are all problems on which we need to work together. Mark Ruskell talked about cross-party consensus. I have worked with him before, and I look forward to working with him in this session to find that consensus.

We need to work together internationally as well, because we need countries to come together and companies to change their ways and methods of production if we are to realise the phase shift that we have defined in the debate. COP26 gives us the opportunity for new international thinking. It is a chance to show Scotland and the UK at their best and to prove that we are ready to play our part on the international stage. However, it will not be easy. We need politicians to be constructive and to work together. Such events are no place for divisive and toxic discourse between Governments, and the Scottish and UK Governments really need to step up.

We need to be completely focused on recovery from the pandemic and recovery for the planet. Every delay reduces the chance of our avoiding catastrophic climate change and temperature increase, as well as species loss. Every delay will cause more pain for the countries that are already living with the impacts of climate change and that are most at risk of the worst damage. Alex Rowley is absolutely right that we need to get past making well-meaning speeches. Distractions could be fatal.

17:02

Mark Ruskell: I welcome the minister and the cabinet secretary to their new posts, and I

welcome the many members who have given their first speeches in the Parliament this afternoon. I was particularly struck by Mercedes Villalba's points about the transformative role of the state in investing in solutions and the importance of a green new deal that involves the unions and workers in the transition.

I have been looking at what is happening in the US under Biden's Administration, with the absolutely transformative investments in new technology and industries there. That is not just about fixing markets; it is about creating new markets, so these are exciting times.

I say to Labour colleagues that, if the Parliament had more borrowing powers and powers over electricity regulation, we could fix things such as the unfair transmission charges. However, this is a consensual debate, so let us hope that, in this year of COP26, we can achieve a new spirit of co-operation with the UK Government and that it will understand that Scotland's contribution to tackling the climate emergency is absolutely critical. The UK Government needs to allow Scotland and our industries to thrive.

It is important that we define what a just transition is. Claudia Beamish, who used to sit near me in the chamber, was absolutely pivotal in getting measures on a just transition into legislation, and I miss her work greatly. I absolutely get that the transition has to be just and that nobody should be left behind. That is why, in the Greens' manifesto, we proposed extending the jobs guarantee to workers in the oil and gas industry.

Over the past five years, Gillian Martin and I have had a lot of conversations about a just transition, and I am struck by the strong work that she is now doing to survey workers in the north-east and to find out where the skills gaps are. It is hugely important that we learn the lessons from the 1980s, when coal mining communities across Scotland were absolutely decimated. In recent years, we had the closure of Longannet with no transition for the 360 workers there. Rather than involve those workers in a conversation before the closure, everything that was done to secure their employment happened after the event.

I say to Liam Kerr and other members that, although the transition has to be just, it also has to be a transition. It is not a transition from the current estimated level of extraction of oil and gas resources from the North Sea—around 5 billion barrels—by licensing for 20 billion barrels to be extracted. Well, it is a transition—it is a transition to the extraction of four times that level of resource, which is simply incompatible with the Paris climate change agreement.

To answer Mr Kerr's question about where we draw the line and how much time there is left for the oil and gas industry to transition, we must start with the science of climate. We must look at what the carbon budget is under the Paris agreement and work back from that. As a lawyer, surely Mr Kerr understands the importance of international legal agreements. We must stick with that.

There are even signs that the UK Government now understands that. In its North Sea transition plan, it is starting to question the policy of maximum economic recovery. It is starting to turn the corner. It is not doing so quickly enough, but we can get there. I say to Mr Kerr that, if the UK Government turns that corner, it will join other Governments that are dangerous: the Governments of Ireland, New Zealand—New Zealand has Greens in Government, too—Denmark, which is now Europe's largest oil and gas producer, and France are all drawing a line under licensing and moving on.

Carbon capture and storage is the wrong priority at this point. Even the Tories on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee agreed that we cannot meet the target of a 25 per cent reduction in emissions using CCS. Therefore, we must move on, work collaboratively together and test one another's arguments to destruction. There are some inconvenient truths that need to be addressed, and in today's debate we have just started to uncover and examine those.

17:06

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I agree with other members that it has been an excellent debate. Our challenge is what comes next in this session of Parliament, because this is the one that really matters.

I welcome the range of excellent briefings that we all received from organisations across the environmental movement in the run-up to today's debate. We have also had some excellent meetings, such as the nature champions meeting and this week's climate emergency meeting. The focus must be on ensuring that we have a joined-up approach, so that, when we tackle our current health crisis, we do so alongside tackling our nature and climate emergencies. That was argued powerfully yesterday.

As we work to build our recovery from Covid and address our climate crisis, we need a global and a joined-up approach. As others have said, this year's COP26 in Glasgow gives us an unprecedented opportunity to lead by example and to deliver the success that we need for our world's future. As Fiona Hyslop said, we need to bear collective responsibility for the task that we

face—it is up to all of us. That means providing leadership nationally and locally across Scotland.

In our amendment, we call for climate justice to be included in the curriculum. That has been called for by young people, who understand the vital need for urgency in tackling our climate emergency. By the time we reach 2045, today's secondary school students will be in their 40s, but the tipping point for action in their lives will be during this session of Parliament. Therefore, we need to act. I am okay about us disagreeing on different issues, as long as we come together on the big issues and push hard to move further forward.

In replying to what has been said in the debate, I would like to welcome the first speeches that have been made. In particular, I congratulate my colleague Mercedes Villalba on her excellent first speech. She will be a powerful voice for Scottish Labour and for Scotland on the environment and biodiversity.

It is time that the climate and biodiversity emergency is taken seriously across Scotland. Last week in our capital city, we saw the publication of the City of Edinburgh Council's draft climate strategy for 2030, which will give people across the city the chance to give their views on how we can reduce our climate emissions. Across Scotland, people and communities must be involved in the development of plans that lead to action in areas such as low-carbon heat networks and the creation of new green jobs, alongside action to tackle fuel poverty. Such joined-up thinking of the kind that is promoted by the UN's sustainable development goals is what we need.

I want to pick up on the issue of heat networks. Scottish Renewables has identified 46 heat networks across Scotland's seven cities. Following the Parliament's passing of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill just a few weeks ago, those networks could help us to make much-needed progress towards our heat decarbonisation targets.

Section 15 of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020, created by my amendment, gives the Scottish Government the capacity to incentivise investment to enable communities, councils and co-operatives to develop new heat networks that are currently unaffordable due to high rates. That is the kind of practical action and progress that we need.

The cabinet secretary—I welcome him and his team to their new jobs—said that we can create 24,000 jobs from action on climate change, but the truth is that we need urgent action for that to happen, and it will require strong leadership from the Scottish Government. We cannot afford to have the problems that we have seen at BiFab

and other companies across the country. As Gillian Martin said in an incredibly powerful speech, having a just transition will require support for climate action and jobs in Scotland now.

The Scottish Government needs to work much harder with the renewables industry to make sure that we get a green recovery such that communities that are impacted by the energy transition are supported to retain their prosperity. Communities across the country need local apprenticeships and training and co-operative renewable energy schemes.

Scottish Renewables said last week that the renewable energy industry is already supporting more than 22,000 jobs and significant output of more than £5 billion a year in Scotland, but we can see from the statistics that there is a lot of scope for new investment in renewables jobs, as Monica Lennon said. The Government must take urgent action on that. I recommend the report that the STUC has produced, which takes us through what would change the outputs.

There are some key areas where the Scottish Government needs to act urgently. Mark Ruskell and others mentioned the need for another climate change plan update. We should not have to wait several years for that. We had cross-party agreement on the subject—from all parties—at the end of the previous session of Parliament, so I urge the new team in the Scottish Government to pick up the recommendations and get going on them.

We also need to look at the work of the just transition commission, which has closed, having produced a fantastic report in March. Could it be restarted so that businesses, trade unions, environmental groups and the Government can work together? The commission's report was excellent, but it needs to be followed up and acted on, and we need pressure on the Scottish Government, not just from the Parliament but from groups outside it.

Let us see more action on Scottish Government procurement so that we shift to a greener and fairer set of contracts. That would be a game changer.

I strongly agree with Maurice Golden's comment that it is time for a circular economy. Let us see the timetable for the circular economy bill and get going on it now. It is not just that we need to stop incinerating waste; we are still exporting waste to lower-income countries that have no choice but to accept our plastic waste, which is creating a climate crisis in other countries. We need to take responsibility across the parties in this Parliament, to move more quickly and to ensure that our councils are part of this work as well. It is not just a national issue; it is also a local one.

We need our councils to be able to act on locally owned bus companies, such as the one that we have in Lothian, in order to address the points that Monica Lennon made about the loss of bus services.

We have radical targets in Scotland, but if we pull together what all the speakers have said today, we can see that we need practical action on the ground, with strong leadership and investment to deliver transformational change, and it has to happen now. Let us work together and ensure that members in the next session of Parliament do not need to have a lovely debate like this one because we will have made progress—and let us do that now.

17:13

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to close this extremely important debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives.

I congratulate those who made their first speeches today. Mercedes Villalba made an impassioned speech and I look forward to hearing more from her over the next five years. We also heard a really excellent first speech from my colleague Sharon Dowey. I am delighted that she took the opportunity to raise the on-going issue of the Tarbolton Moss landfill site and that she has joined those of us who continually put pressure on the Scottish Government to recognise the south-west and invest in our infrastructure.

The view that we need to address the effects of climate change and take action to move towards a more sustainable future is one that we all share. Scotland's aim to reach net zero by 2045 is certainly ambitious, and it is world leading. Plenty of speakers in the debate used that language. The aim is laudable, and the SNP is never slow to commend itself for it. However, as Liam Kerr pointed out, announcing the aim to achieve such an ambitious target is one thing and delivering it is quite another.

That brings me to an excellent speech by Maurice Golden, that guru of the circular economy. He reminded us that setting targets is not enough and that the Scottish Government has continually missed its targets, year on year. Members could do a lot worse than to listen to some of Maurice Golden's expertise. If we are to succeed in achieving net zero, we cannot allow every debate on the issue to become a competition in political and policy radicalism.

Reaching net zero will mean change for us all, but to deliver that change we must bring society with us, not impose change on it. The cabinet secretary agrees with me, I think, on that point. Moving Scotland towards a greener and cleaner future should not be seen by anyone as an

exercise in martyrdom. Smaller, imperfect steps that we can all take together will do more to get us to net zero than grandiose impractical gestures that many of the public come to resent or reject.

Liam Kerr spoke at length on the need for a just transition from oil and gas. Calls to eliminate oil and gas jobs and create new green jobs are all well and good, but a majority of the people in that work will not find themselves suddenly in green jobs. Gillian Martin made that point well in her speech, but I say to her that, in looking at the potential for jobs in that sector, we must surely look at the fact that Scotland imports much of that infrastructure and technology instead of utilising our own people.

That leads me to education and skills. Whether we are eliminating fossil fuel combustion heating systems or phasing out petrol and diesel, we will still need qualified heating engineers and mechanics. Are we doing enough to ensure that our young people are being trained on both today's and tomorrow's technology? Furthermore, what opportunities are there for people already working in those fields to update their skills? We want old technologies to become obsolete, not the people whose jobs rely on them.

Transport is an area in which particular conflicts seem to arise. Saying no to new roads is certainly headline grabbing, but it misses the point that it is not roads that impact climate change so much as the fuel sources of the vehicles that use them. We are already committed to moving away from petrol and diesel towards electric vehicles, be they powered by batteries or hydrogen cell fuel.

In South Scotland, we have trunk roads such as the A77, A75 and A76, all of which need substantial improvement to support the economy, reduce congestion and improve safety. They could have a positive impact on the environment. Why are we not investing in those roads with an eye to the future by installing infrastructure for fast charging points and hydrogen fuel stations and making cycle routes part of the development? The reality is that personal private transport cannot, in all circumstances, credibly be replaced by any form of public transport, particularly in rural areas.

We must encourage the aviation industry to decarbonise, but at the same time we must avoid denying people the opportunity to travel, work and explore the world. The industry is already looking at hybrid aviation engines and that is where we need to be—it is about the fastest change versus the most sustainable for the long term. The objective is not just to reach net zero, but to reach it in a way that is environmentally sustainable and economically viable, as well as just. The process of change must be as sustainable as the outcome and many of the changes that we need to make are not so much about changing our daily lives

and routines as about changing the tools and technology that we use.

It would not be a speech from me if I did not bring the discussion around to health. The health of people and the planet are inextricably linked. In many cases, efforts to make one healthier will benefit the other, whether by encouraging a more balanced and healthy diet using locally processed and procured food or by providing cycle lanes for active travel, greater access to green spaces and warm, well-insulated homes.

There is often a suspicion that the proposals from some members around climate change are made as much, if not more, for their ability to drive a particular political agenda as for their environmental impact. Business and the private sector are not the enemy. Many companies that were historically associated with fossil fuel production are leading the way in finding alternative fuel sources. The Greens might prefer the nuclear option of restricting our ability to work and travel and private enterprise's ability to innovate, but the Scottish Conservatives prefer to work with businesses to support them in reducing their carbon footprint, stressing the long-term economic benefits of those green measures.

Mark Ruskell: If that is the case, why did the member's party take away the market support for the onshore wind industry?

Brian Whittle: A bigger question is why so much of the wind farm industry is imported into this country. Why are we not doing it on our own? BiFab was supposed to do that. Ferguson Marine was supposed to get involved in the development of the technology. We import the technology; why are we not developing our infrastructure and workforce so that we can deliver it?

Economic growth and private investment have driven technological innovations that have helped to make Scotland greener and cleaner. As we look to the future, we need the same kind of private sector-driven innovation and invention to deliver the technology that will help us to reach net zero. We need more collaboration, so that we enable and encourage the private sector to invest in innovation for the long term.

Big announcements, grand targets and ambitious goals have their place, but they are irrelevant without a credible, achievable plan for delivery, and all too often the Scottish National Party's approach to any challenge that faces Scotland—be it climate change, education, the economy or health—is to make announcements that give the impression of action, without solving the problem. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: The member cannot take an intervention; he is closing.

Brian Whittle: We will push for sensible, practical and pragmatic policies that protect Scotland's environment and move us towards net zero. We recognise that the only credible approach to delivering on those aims is to put in place policies that benefit our economy and move people's living standards on.

17:21

The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): As a new member of Parliament, it has been great for me to hear the tributes that have been paid to former members who would, I know, have made massive contributions to this debate. As Sharon Dowey did, I pay tribute to John Scott; as Monica Lennon did, I pay tribute to Claudia Beamish; and, as Fiona Hyslop did, I pay tribute to Roseanna Cunningham, whose contribution in the Parliament to climate progress was enormous, as was her contribution to my experience in this building.

I thank members across the Parliament for their speeches this afternoon, and I congratulate Sharon Dowey and Mercedes Villalba on having made their first speeches.

Before I forget, I must say to Fiona Hyslop that I would love to join her in Linlithgow and to learn from her vast knowledge as I take on the new role that I have been given.

Today's speeches have shown the determination across Parliament to address the twin crises of climate change and ecological decline and to capture the opportunities that the transition to net zero presents. There has also been important recognition that we are unlikely to achieve any of that without fundamental and transformational whole-systems change and without working together—as Sarah Boyack and others said eloquently.

When the First Minister declared a climate emergency and when Parliament voted to enshrine in legislation the world's most ambitious targets, all underpinned by a just transition commitment, we showed that we understood the risk of inaction. As the cabinet secretary and other members have made clear, substantial progress has been made, but we must now go further and faster than ever.

It is incumbent on all of us to rise to the challenges that face Scotland and the world, because Scotland is watching. Young people, who have, as Clare Adamson pointed out, driven the cause of climate action, are watching. With that in mind, and as the youngest member of Scotland's Government—I think—I ask all members to consider, in all the work that we do in the years to come, the future that we want to leave for the generations to come.

Together, we can tackle climate change, restore our natural environment and support a green economic recovery, and we can do all that in a way that promotes greater resilience, especially for climate-vulnerable communities. That green recovery is always accompanied by our commitment to a just transition and includes our energy sector, as it includes all the parts of our economy that will be impacted.

Liam Kerr: In a written question, I asked the cabinet secretary when the Scottish Government plans to publish a revised energy strategy. He reiterated his commitment to doing that but could not give me a timeline. Is the minister able to assist?

Màiri McAllan: Yes, I think so. The Scottish Government will publish an updated draft strategy next spring.

In his speech, Liam Kerr sought comments on rail decarbonisation. Scotland's commitment is to decarbonise the rail network by 2035—the only such target in the UK.

On electric vehicles, Scotland has one of the most developed charging networks in the UK, as the cabinet secretary pointed out. On Alex Rowley's concerns about affordability, we are the only nation of the UK with a loan scheme that facilitates purchase of second-hand EVs.

Gillian Martin's well-made point about transmission charges was absolutely right—they are anticompetitive and unfair. They are the UK Government's responsibility, and we have been calling on it for years to make a different—

Maurice Golden: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Màiri McAllan: I will.

Maurice Golden: As the minister will be aware, TNUOS—transmission network use of system—charging works by balancing costs between generators and consumers. If the SNP is looking to subsidise multinational energy-generation companies, that will mean consumers will pay more. Given the SNP's failure to eradicate fuel poverty as it promised to do, how will increasing consumer bills help?

Màiri McAllan: We are not looking for any special treatment; we are looking for fairness. That is what this Government is calling for.

I reiterate our commitment to introducing a bill on the circular economy, although that commitment had to be paused because of Covid. In the meantime, we are taking action outside primary legislation. That includes our pioneering deposit return scheme and our banning of harmful plastics, including beads and buds, which have been mentioned. We are also consulting on other

harmful plastics, including plates and packaging. I just hope that the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 will not hold us back in making the environmental progress that we are determined to make. Maurice Golden should reflect on that.

I reassure Sarah Boyack that we are entirely committed to the just transition commission. In our manifesto, we pledged to implement its recommendations in full, and we will maintain the commission to advise us throughout this parliamentary session.

I mentioned that young people have been central to the climate movement. Like Monica Lennon, I have huge admiration for the Teach the Future group. The young people in it are so inspiring and their knowledge is sometimes quite astounding. However, we cannot allow this burden to fall to Teach the Future. They need more than our admiration—they need action. The group met the Deputy First Minister in September last year and is now engaging with the Scottish Government and education agencies to explore how we might strengthen learning for sustainability and how we might further embed climate education—although I have to point out that Scotland's curriculum is not prescribed.

It is not only for Scotland's future generations that we need to act; we need also to demonstrate leadership for young people throughout the world. Vulnerable communities at home and overseas are often the first to be affected by climate change and can suffer most, despite having done little or nothing to cause the problems. That is why, in the year of COP26, we are committed to doubling our world-first climate justice fund to facilitate that much-needed global action.

We are also developing the Glasgow dialogue, in which stakeholders from the global south, as well as Scottish and international organisations, will share experiences and pathways to a just transition, to adaptation and to resilience. That goes to the heart of our theme, for COP 26, of people, through which we are determined to elevate the voices of those who are too infrequently heard, including women, young people and people from the global south.

We are committed to publishing, ahead of COP26, Scotland's contribution to the Paris agreement: an indicative nationally determined contribution—NDC—that will highlight our actions towards our world-leading ambition. That ambition is set out in our climate change plan update. I hear Mark Ruskell's call to move quickly on a new plan, and I share his desire for progress, but I am sure that he will agree that progress must be considered and meaningful.

We need to work together on that, just as we did on the update, through the sustainable renewal

advisory group, on which representatives from every part of the chamber sat for many weeks. We went through all the sectors in the climate change plan update in great detail. The inclusivity of that group shows clearly the shared responsibility of which Fiona Hyslop spoke. Scotland's Climate Assembly is another key example of that.

Another thing that has come through today is, on one hand, the magnitude of the challenge that we face and, on the other, the scale of the opportunity that can be unlocked. Our journey to net zero can deliver for our planet, but it must also deliver for our people. Good green jobs, better air quality, and warmer energy-efficient homes are just some examples of ways that we can—

Maurice Golden: Will the minister take an intervention?

Màiri McAllan: No—I am sorry, but I must make progress.

We will build our economy based on wellbeing and sustainability for people and planet. Our young persons guarantee is a key example of that, and is something that I am very passionate about. We are building on that, and we will also work with schools and employers, through our youth employment strategy and the developing the young workforce initiative, to help to ensure a legacy for COP26. That will include identifying climate heroes from industry to support school leaders and young people.

Presiding Officer, I have no idea how long I have been talking, because I cannot see the clock, so I will close.

I opened my remarks by looking back and paying tribute to former members and thinking of all that we have already achieved on Scotland's journey. I want to close by looking forward and, as the youngest member of Scotland's Government, by speaking directly to young people throughout Scotland who might be watching today. I ask them all to take heart from the progress that we have made, to take note of the commitments that they have heard from across the chamber today, and to take time in the years ahead to hold all of us in Government and Parliament to account for the contributions that we make now that can help to deliver a fairer and more sustainable future for them and for generations to come.

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of motion S6M-00295, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. I call George Adam to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 15 June 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by First Ministers Statement: COVID-19 Update
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women's Health
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 16 June 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Social Justice, Housing & Local Government; Constitution, External Affairs & Culture
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Mitigating, Tackling and Responding to the Skills Impact of Brexit
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 17 June 2021

12.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Justice
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Tackling Drug Related Deaths
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 22 June 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Coronavirus Extension and Expiry (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 23 June 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Finance and Economy; Education and Skills
followed by Stage 2 Debate: Coronavirus Extension and Expiry (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 24 June 2021

12.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Coronavirus Extension and Expiry (Scotland) Bill
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 21 June, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

The Presiding Officer: Stephen Kerr would like to speak to the motion.

17:30

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Today's business motion includes provisions for the week commencing Monday 21 June, in which time—and not a lot of time—is set aside to consider the proposed coronavirus (extension and expiry) (Scotland) bill. The first notice that we received of the Government's intention to introduce the bill to Parliament was yesterday, and we were given no details of the contents of the bill other than its name. The bill itself has not yet been published. According to the Deputy First Minister's

statement this afternoon, the bill seeks to extend the immense powers that are contained in the two Scottish Covid acts by six months from October 2021, with a further six-month extension option.

We do not accept the timetabling for the bill that the Government proposes. There is no need for it to be rushed through Parliament in a matter of a few hours. The nature of the pandemic could change significantly over the summer. The measures should be dealt with in September, when we will have a much clearer view of what is required.

The Government, of course, needs to be able to act in the interests of public health and safety, but no parliamentarian would want to see any Government have such unprecedented powers for a moment longer than is necessary. There is no good argument for rushing through this power grab in the space of three days, months ahead of its use, without proper parliamentary scrutiny. That is why we oppose the business motion.

The Presiding Officer: I have a request to speak from Neil Bibby.

17:32

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour will not oppose the business motion tonight, but we still have some concerns. At present, we do not know the full contents of the coronavirus (expiry and extension) (Scotland) bill, and we do not know how many amendments will be lodged at stage 2. As we know from past experience, and given the importance of the legislation, that could be a substantial number of amendments, and we will certainly lodge some in areas such as non-evictions. Sufficient time to consider amendments carefully will be required and we are not in a position to know how much time will be needed and whether it could be done in one day.

Rather than consider the entire bill in the final week in June or the first week in September, we could hold stages 1 and 2 in the last week in June and deal with stage 3 in the first week of September. That would deal with the concerns about timescales and gaining royal assent, and it would also allow us to take account of any changes to circumstances that happen over the summer.

Presiding Officer, you and other members will be aware that there are other opportunities to amend business for the week beginning 21 June, so I reiterate that we will support the motion tonight, but we will seek to raise these issues at the bureau next week. I hope that the Government and all other parties will consider our reasonable suggestions.

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

17:34

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I will try to address everyone's point of view while, at the same time, trying to be brief, because I have no doubt that everyone is waiting with anticipation for the large number of Scottish statutory instruments that I have to speak to later.

At yesterday's bureau, we had a discussion about proposed future business. The details that we agreed then were that the Scottish Government would introduce the coronavirus (extension and expiry) (Scotland) bill on 18 June and take the bill through its stages from 22 June to 24 June to maximise the time for scrutiny. That is a change from previous emergency bills, which were all done on one day. Stage 1 would be on Tuesday 22 June, stage 2 would be on Wednesday 23 June and stage 3 would be on Thursday 24 June. I would be quite happy to extend the business days, should that be needed, as longer business days prior to recess are not that unusual.

I cannot agree with Mr Kerr's proposal on behalf of the Conservatives, and I do not believe that he addresses the challenges that we currently face. Mr Kerr's inexperience in the matters of how this place works is perhaps showing, as it will obviously not be a couple of hours of debate over a day—that is sheer hyperbole and not the reality of the situation.

I appreciate Neil Bibby's contribution and the helpful tone in which he put forward the Labour Party's position, but I feel that his solution could unintentionally cause further problems.

At the bureau, Patrick Harvie, on behalf of the Greens, broadly agreed with the Scottish Government's proposal while making his own points on timings.

We face a number of challenges. If we take into account the time needed for royal assent, if the bill is not introduced and passed by the end of June, we run the very serious risk of provisions expiring on 30 September and temporary measures that are enabling public authorities to continue to operate in the pandemic falling away. If we do not pass the bill before the summer recess, citizens and public authorities will have significantly less time to respond to the changes before they come into effect at the end of September.

The bill does not introduce any new provisions; it merely removes those that are no longer necessary and extends expiry dates to March 2022, to ensure that public bodies can continue to

operate while public health measures remain in place.

I hope that everyone feels that I have listened to their points of view, and I hope that we agree to what was proposed at the bureau yesterday.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S6M-00295, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business motion, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:36

Meeting suspended.

17:41

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S6M-00295, be agreed to. Are we agreed? Oh—of course we are not, which is why members should cast their votes now.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)

Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-00295, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, is: For 87, Against 32, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is approval of motions S6M-00298 to S6M-00307, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to speak to and move those motions.

17:44

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I hope that everyone is sitting comfortably. Then I'll begin.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No 8) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/179) make further amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to ensure that, if an unaccompanied child travels to Scotland, the child's passenger locator form, if it has not already been submitted, will be provided by the person with responsibility for the child in Scotland as soon as reasonably practicable following the child's arrival in Scotland; to require that the person with responsibility in Scotland for a child who was unaccompanied on the journey to Scotland must update the child's passenger information if it becomes inaccurate during the isolation period; to add an offence of contravening the requirement to update the child's information; to extend the requirement for persons who have not undertaken a day 2 test or a day 8 test to self-isolate to other persons sharing the premises, where the person who has failed to take tests is a child; so that a child arriving in Scotland from outside the common travel area or from elsewhere within the common travel area where the child has within the preceding 10 days departed from or transited through a non-exempt country or territory is required to isolate in specified premises and not in managed accommodation if unaccompanied by an adult or if the accompanying adult ceases to accompany them prior to travel to the specified premises, and all persons within the specified premises where the child isolates are required to isolate; and so that persons returning to boarding schools in Scotland from non-exempt countries can isolate at that boarding school premises. The regulations came into force on 27 March 2021.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 19) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/180) amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to revoke the requirement to stay at home in a level 4 area from Friday 2 April 2021; to state that a person who lives in a level 4 area must not leave

or remain away from that area; to provide an exception for a gathering outdoors in a level 4 area that is for the purpose of organised exercise for persons under 18 years of age, an exception that previously applied only to persons under 12 years of age; to expand the list of retailers that are allowed to open in level 4 areas, providing that hairdressing and barber services may be provided where those services are provided exclusively by appointment, and extend the circumstances in which retail services may be provided by way of a click-and-collect service; to widen the definition of “relevant sporting body” and “senior representative” and make a number of consequential amendments in order to provide that an additional group of elite athletes are able to train and compete; to adjust the face-covering requirements to make clear that face coverings are required in polling stations or premises where votes are opened and counted, unless the person concerned has a reasonable excuse; and to remove the requirement for visitor information to be collected if a hospitality venue is being used as a polling station. The regulations came into force on 2 April.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/181) make further amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to make clearer the scope of the testing requirements in the principal regulations 5C to 5K; to clarify the application of the requirement to self-isolate in specified premises where individuals are not required to enter managed isolation due to their holding a sectoral exemption; to add Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and the Philippines to the list of acute-risk countries and territories in schedule A2; and to revoke the prohibition on the arrival of aircraft travelling directly from the United Arab Emirates within the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel, Prohibition on Travel from the United Arab Emirates) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021. The regulations came into force on 9 April.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 20) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/186) amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to adjust the limit on outdoor gatherings, both in public places and private gardens; to relax the limit from a maximum of four people from two households to a maximum of six people from six households, and to state that those under 12 continue to be excluded from those limits; and to provide that a person who lives in a level 3 or 4 area may leave that area and enter another level 3

or 4 area of Scotland in order to undertake outdoor recreation or informal exercise. The regulations came into force on 16 April 2021.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No 9) Regulations 2021 make further amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 so that a person travelling to Scotland for the purpose of transporting material containing human cells or blood for use in the provision of healthcare by a healthcare provider will be exempt from the requirements to possess a managed self-isolation package and to stay in managed accommodation when arriving in Scotland from outside the common travel area if they have in the previous 10 days departed from, or transited through, an acute-risk country or territory; India is added to the list of acute-risk countries and territories in schedule A2; a person must provide the name of the country which issued their passport or travel document, not the name of the issuing authority; and

“Curling—World Mixed Doubles Championship”

is added to part 1 of schedule 3A. The regulations came into force on 22 April.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 21) Regulations 2021 amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to implement the new local protection levels table that was published on 13 April 2021, which moves all parts of Scotland that are currently in level 4 down to level 3. The regulations came into force on 26 April.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 22) Regulations 2021 amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to adjust the restrictions on casinos, allowing them to open in level 2 and applying a curfew in levels 1 and 2. They also make some further adjustments in order to remove redundant references and to align rules for teen socialising in level 2 with those for adults. The regulations came into force on 5 May.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No 10) Regulations 2021 make further amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 by adding the Maldives, Nepal and Turkey to the list of acute-risk countries and territories in schedule A2. The regulations came into force on 12 May.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2021 provide further amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Regulations 2020. They extend regulations 5D to 5J to people arriving in Scotland from exempt countries and territories, requiring that they take a day 2 test only, and add seasonal agricultural workers to the list of persons to whom regulations 5D to 5J apply; they require that all persons who enter Scotland from a country or territory that is not either an exempt or an acute-risk country or territory, and who have not in the preceding 10 days departed from or transited through an acute-risk country or territory, to stay in specified premises; they require that travellers who enter Scotland under a United Kingdom refugee resettlement scheme, unaccompanied children or children who are attending boarding school stay in specified premises if they have entered Scotland from a country or territory that is an acute-risk country or territory; they apply the requirements to possess a managed self-isolation package and to stay in managed accommodation only to travellers who arrive in Scotland from acute-risk countries or territories or who have travelled through an acute-risk country or territory in the previous 10 days; they add Australia, Brunei, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Israel and Jerusalem, New Zealand, Portugal and Singapore to the list of exempt countries and territories, and add the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands to the list of exempt United Kingdom overseas territories, in schedule A1; and they update the passenger notices in schedule 2 so that those reflect the latest requirements on travellers in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Public Health Information for Passengers Travelling to Scotland) Regulations 2020.

We are near the end now, Presiding Officer.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 23) Regulations 2021 amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to adjust the levels allocation across Scotland as a result of the most recent data; to make a minor adjustment to the restrictions on hotels and other accommodation to remove references that are no longer required; to adjust the existing provisions on power of entry to ensure that they reflect the new position that allows socialising in private dwellings in greater numbers and with more households than was previously possible; to adjust the requirements placed on those responsible for businesses, services and places of worship so that they do not

have to ensure that physical distancing is maintained between those under the age of 12 and any other individual; to permit snooker and pool halls and bowling alleys to reopen in level 2 and allow increased in-home socialising in level 2 areas; to future proof the travel restrictions in place for levels 3 and 4 by reintroducing a five-mile limit for outdoor exercise and recreation; and to adjust the restrictions relating to capacity limits on stadia and live events and for public processions in some levels. The regulations came into force on 17 May.

I appreciate the work of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, and I look forward to it taking up its role again.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 9) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/191) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/181) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 20) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/186) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 19) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/180) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 8) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/179) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 23) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/209) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/208) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 10) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/204) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 22) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/202) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 21) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/193) be approved.

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

Decision Time

17:56

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-00278.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I tried to vote yes, but the thing—whatever the thing is—had frozen.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Grahame. We will ensure that your vote is recorded.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The—*[Inaudible.]*—did not work for me. I would have voted yes.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)

Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)

Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-00278.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, is: For 113, Against 7, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-00278.1, in the name of Monica Lennon, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-00278.3, in the name of Mark Ruskell, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-00278.4, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is now closed.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My vote thing froze. I would have abstained.

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

For

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse)

(SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-00278.4, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, is: For 10, Against 89, Abstentions 21.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is now closed.

Maggie Chapman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am sorry that everything has frozen. On this final vote, I would have abstained, and, if I can correct the record, my previous vote should have been a yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Chapman. We will record your current vote. We cannot change the vote that has already occurred, but your comment has been recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

Abstentions

Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-00278, in the name of Michael Matheson, on addressing the climate emergency, as amended, is: For 113, Against 1, Abstentions 6.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that addressing the twin climate and biodiversity crises remains a critical priority; recognises that the Scottish Government will continue to deliver action to support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a just transition to net zero and a climate-resilient Scotland; agrees that this must be a shared and national endeavour by all sectors of the economy and society as a whole; commits to working together, as Scotland prepares to welcome the world to Glasgow for COP26 and beyond, to restore nature and become a net zero nation; recognises the importance of Scotland's energy sector in delivering the transition; welcomes the UK Government's North Sea Transition Deal; calls on the Scottish Government to work collaboratively and constructively with the sector to support businesses through the transition; agrees that progressing a Circular Economy Bill must be an urgent priority; commends children and young people in Scotland who have raised awareness about these twin crises and campaigned positively for the shift to net zero; supports their calls for the embedment of climate justice education throughout the curriculum as part of learners' entitlement to Learning for Sustainability; notes the 166 recommendations made by four parliament committees to improve the Climate Change Plan, including necessary changes to land use, transport, energy and housing policy; recognises the need for urgent and transformational change in these sectors to deliver on Scotland's climate commitments, and calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a revised Climate Change Plan early in the current parliamentary session, demonstrating a credible pathway to achieving the 2030 target.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to put a single question on the 10 motions on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, unless any member objects.

The final question is, that motions S6M-00298 to S6M-00307, in the name of George Adam, on approval of SSIs, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 9) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/191) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/181) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 20) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/186) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 19) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/180) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 8) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/179) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 23) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/209) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/208) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 10) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/204) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 22) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/202) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 21) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/193) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. There will be a short pause before we move to members' business.

Social Justice and Fairness Commission Report

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The final item of business is a members' debate on motion S6M-00164, in the name of Neil Gray, on the Social Justice and Fairness Commission report. The debate will be concluded without any questions being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the publication of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission report, *A route map to a fair and independent Scotland*; considers the report advances the debate about how to make Scotland a fairer nation as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, both under the devolved powers available to the Parliament and in looking towards an independent Scotland, and notes the calls for people in the Airdrie and Shotts constituency and across Scotland to engage with the issues raised constructively.

18:09

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I thank colleagues from across the Parliament, particularly those from Opposition parties, who supported my motion to allow this short debate on the report of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission to take place.

I was honoured to be asked by the First Minister to lead the commission alongside Shona Robison. Creating a fairer Scotland, tackling poverty and giving people the security to live their lives well is, I am sure, why so many colleagues here are in politics, and it is especially close to my heart. I am not only keen but fiercely adamant that impoverishment and destitution cannot and will not any longer be a part of any child's or family's experience of growing up in Scotland.

I am grateful to my commission colleagues, who brought experience, expertise and exceptional talent, to Julie Hepburn and her secretariat team, and to all those across Scotland who fed into our work, from academics to expert charities, and from stakeholders with lived experience to trade unions and political campaigners. The list of people who gave input is as vast as the task in hand. However, the wealth of knowledge and understanding of that greatness only adds to the creative and ambitious programme to ensure a fairer and more prosperous Scotland for all the reasons that are set out in the report.

We did the bulk of our work during the pandemic, so the impact that it has had on all our lives has informed much of the report. Clearly, the priority that we all face right now is getting through the health effects of the pandemic. Thereafter, and hopefully before long, the nation will have a decision to make about whom we want to set the

priorities of our economic recovery. Where do we want the decisions about how we recover to be taken?

It will not be good enough just to plot a path back to where we were at the end of 2019: we must do better. I have no doubt that there is a desire for that here in Scotland, but for us to achieve it will require radical change.

Our report is not just about the policies that could make Scotland a fairer independent nation; it is also about how we could make decisions better. It focuses on democratic renewal, involving people more in policy making, expanding the use of citizens assemblies and participatory budgeting, and more community ownership and wealth building. We already see the benefits of policy co-production in the way that Social Security Scotland was built. We get better policy making when it is not just done to people but done by those who need and use the service the most.

The second element that will help us to ensure that we do policy making better is agreeing a set of values that will be the compass guiding us. A written constitution would obviously help that, as would agreeing the principles of how we create a wellbeing economy. That work is already under way, with the First Minister taking an international lead as part of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance.

Finally, the report focuses on the policies that could create a wellbeing economy, and the commission sets out a series of ideas that would help to drive down poverty, provide security to our citizens and make the economy work for our people, rather than the other way round.

Our report is deliberately not a traditional costed election manifesto; it creates a vision for what Scotland could look like three or four parliamentary sessions after Scotland becomes independent. It is about the work that will need to be done if we want to achieve a good society through building consensus and state building. One party created the national health service, but its success is now based on cross-party consensus that it is a cherished asset.

Many of the areas that we suggest should be looked at to build a fairer Scotland require radical reform that cannot be achieved overnight. A land value tax would require time to implement and phase in. It would take time to pilot a universal basic income and then assess whether that or a minimum income guarantee would be the best route to take to drive down poverty and drive up wellbeing.

Of course, we do not require the powers of independence to achieve all that we have suggested in the report. That is why I was pleased to see much of our report feature in the Scottish National Party's ambitious manifesto for May's

election—doubling the Scottish child payment, community wealth building and a minimum income guarantee.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I want to pick up on the point about a land value tax. I should declare that I own and farm 500 acres. Last year, mixed farm incomes were £8,100, on average, which is hardly enough to survive on. How would farmers cover the land value tax that the report proposes if their income was only £8,100?

Neil Gray: The creation of a land value tax and how it would be implemented would be open for discussion and consultation with key stakeholders, such as Edward Mountain and fellow landowners, to ensure that it was fair and equitable.

As we heard yesterday from Shona Robison, the Scottish Government is already starting work on how a minimum income guarantee could work under the current devolved settlement. It will obviously be a huge challenge as we have hybrid social security and tax systems that are partially devolved, and we in Scotland still rely on decisions of the United Kingdom Government being the right ones for us.

Such a guarantee is about more than social security: it is about combining wages, social security and services to ensure that we have what we need as citizens and do not fall below a certain level. That is achievable, but there are clear challenges caused by the fiscal framework and the interaction with detrimental decisions made by Westminster. For example, the looming cut that will end the £20 per week uplift to universal credit will wipe away the benefit brought to many families by the Scottish child payment. That proves to me that we need independence so that we can direct our resources to our agreed priorities and so that we are not hamstrung or held back by the austerity economics and austerity of ambition of successive UK Governments.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): From our previous encounters in the Westminster Parliament, I know and admire how passionate Neil Gray is about these matters. Does he accept that this Parliament has the means to address the uplift to universal credit, if a majority here feel that the issue should be addressed? Is it not correct to say that we have the means to top up reserved benefits?

Neil Gray: The Scottish Government is already taking action with targeted support to address that. What is at stake is that a hybrid system of social security, such as we have in Scotland, is being undermined by decisions taken at Westminster. The £20 per week Scottish child payment, which we are looking forward to, could be completely undermined after the removal by the UK

Government of the £20 uplift to universal credit. It is beholden on Stephen Kerr to direct his efforts to persuading his colleagues in London to ensure that that does not happen later this year.

We need an immigration system that works for Scotland and for those who choose to make this country their home, instead of unlawfully housing our fellow human beings in squalor or ripping them from their community in dawn raids. We should have a social security system that provides a real safety net and does not dehumanise people in assessments or impoverish them to the point at which food banks are a de facto extension of the Department for Work and Pensions. We can and must do better.

This short debate will not cover all aspects of this substantial report. There is much in there about drug reform, land reform, housing, immigration and more. It not only provides a blueprint for how we set the priorities to create a fairer Scotland but gives policy ideas to achieve a good, compassionate and wellbeing society.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please bring your remarks to a close.

Neil Gray: I hope that the report and this evening's debate will start a healthy and positive debate on what we can achieve and will take us towards that goal.

If we accept that poverty levels are dictated by the policies of the Scottish and UK Governments, I hope that we can unite around a central goal. We should be creating a fairer Scotland that eradicates poverty. Our debate should be about how we get there. I look forward to hearing ideas from all sides.

18:17

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I congratulate Neil Gray on securing this important debate and I welcome him to the Scottish Parliament. I place on record that I was a member of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission. I apologise for the fact that I must leave before the end of the debate.

It was a privilege to become a member of the commission. Some of our discussions challenged orthodoxy and the tinkering at the edges that can be the easy thing to do. Thinking about the type of Scotland that we should all want should bring us together as a Parliament, but I know that that will not happen. The report offers a conversation starter towards consensus about the kind of Scotland that we want to build with independence and about how best to get there.

The commission believes that independence will let Scotland build on the foundations that have

been laid under devolution by the Scottish Government. The report states:

"We contend that eradicating poverty in Scotland is the single most important ambition that the government of an independent Scotland could seek to achieve."

Professor Philip Alston, the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, has said:

"Devolved administrations have tried to mitigate the worst impacts of austerity, despite experiencing significant reductions in block grant funding and constitutional limits on their ability to raise revenue."

He went on to say that

"mitigation comes at a price, and is not sustainable."

That comment answers the question that Stephen Kerr put to Neil Gray a few moments ago.

Mitigating UK Government welfare reform and Tory welfare policies prevents the Parliament and the Scottish Government investing to make society better for everyone.

In government, the SNP has already introduced a range of progressive policies such as the baby box, as well as game-changing poverty-reduction measures such as the Scottish child payment and best start grants. However, there is still more to do.

I commend Sharon Dowey for her earlier comments on John Scott, who was certainly well thought of and well regarded across the chamber. In her first speech in the Parliament, she said that she got involved in politics to make a difference. So did I and every other member of the Parliament. However, being ambitious for Scotland and helping to lift people out of poverty will not happen with the glass ceiling of devolution and with one hand tied behind our backs; it will happen when we have the full powers of independence. *[Interruption.]* I would normally take an intervention, but I have to continue. I am sorry.

Brexit and the pandemic have certainly had major impacts on the lives of us all, and they will shape our country and communities for decades to come. It will take decades to pay off the pandemic debt. However, the UK faced the same situation after world war two, and that should not limit our ambition for our people and our country.

My constituency has some of the most challenging statistics in Scotland. Those statistics are people, and I want my constituents to have a better future.

The debate about a just transition that members heard this afternoon ties in with the social justice report. If we want a socially just and fairer Scotland and our communities to be more resilient, people should read the report, consider

and discuss it, and use it to engender more debate about the type of Scotland that we all want.

The status quo is finishing. A fair, independent Scotland is the prize that is coming, and it will be won.

18:22

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I say to Stuart McMillan that I am very ambitious for Scotland within the United Kingdom.

I congratulate Neil Gray on securing the debate, which is among the first members' business debates in this session.

The report is unoriginal and uncosted, and that slips it into the territory of snake oil sales. It is a utopian fairy tale that has been drawn up by the SNP to distract the people of Scotland from its failures in government. It has been designed by the SNP to allow it to avoid accountability and to stoke up a grievance agenda. The Parliament already has the powers to address the most pressing issues that Scotland faces today. It is the SNP's dismal record in government that should be subject to debate, scrutiny and accountability.

The executive summary of the report states:

"The democratic renewal that independence offers is an opportunity to re-imagine our approach to local democracy. There is a strong argument for radical reform of local government, guided by the principle of empowering communities across Scotland to take the decisions that affect them."

The SNP does not need independence to empower communities across Scotland; it needs to give them proper funding and to respect the decisions that are made by local councils. Between 2013-14 and 2018-19, the SNP Government cut local government spending in Scotland by 7.5 per cent.

The SNP also takes the attitude that it knows better than local councillors. It overturned more than a third of planning decisions that were made in Scotland's councils in the previous parliamentary session. If that is not a power grab, I do not know what a power grab is.

The report states:

"Those struggling with addiction need to be heard and empowered to be at the centre of their own treatment and recovery."

The Scottish Government already has the powers to allow those with addictions to be heard and empowered. However, on the SNP's watch, Scotland has had a record number of drug deaths for six consecutive years. The SNP likes to complain that legislation is to blame for that, but there are three and a half times more drug deaths in Scotland than there are in England and Wales, which have the same legislation. The report

correctly calls for co-operation. Perhaps, in the spirit of co-operation, the Scottish Government can reach out to the UK and Welsh Governments to learn what they are doing to help those who suffer from addiction.

Co-operation between Scotland's two Governments would also promote immigration to Scotland. With an increasingly elderly population, it is vital that Scotland is seen to be open and welcome. Sadly, the rhetoric that is associated with the nationalist movement makes Scotland feel like a hostile environment for many of our English friends. Banners saying things such as "England get out of Scotland"—

The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson): Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Kerr: Yes, of course.

Ben Macpherson: I would just like to relate to Mr Kerr that his statement is incorrect. Net migration from the rest of the UK to Scotland is positive, and it has been for many years.

Stephen Kerr: I accept the facts, but it does not help when the nationalist movement creates a hostile environment, using banners saying things such as "England get out of Scotland" or when senior parliamentarians at Westminster—

Stuart McMillan: Will the member give way?

Stephen Kerr: I will just finish my point. It does not help when senior parliamentarians at Westminster endorse tweets that tell English tourists to eff off and go home. The First Minister and her Government should be calling out and condemning that kind of activity.

Stuart McMillan: As an English Scot, I certainly agree with Mr Kerr about some of the terrible things that have been said, and I am quite sure that English Scots who support the yes campaign would agree. However, I have to highlight that some of the individuals whom Mr Kerr has just spoken about are not members of the SNP.

Stephen Kerr: I did not actually say that they are members of the SNP, but I would point out that Ian Blackford is definitely a member of the SNP—he is the SNP group leader at Westminster.

For social justice and fairness to emerge in Scotland, we do not need a change in the constitution; we need the Scottish Government to change how it exercises its powers. Rather than seek grievance, it should seek to create equality of opportunity for all Scots. Rather than have people's lives shaped by their postcode, the SNP should seek a levelling-up agenda that leaves no one behind. The SNP should focus on bringing us together, because Scotland is more powerful when we work together. Doing all of that and more

would be working in the national interest, but I fear that the SNP will continue to work in the nationalist interest.

18:27

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in my first members' business debate of the new session, and I am exceptionally pleased to speak on such an important subject. I am just sorry that I did not hear Stephen Kerr's speech in advance, because I could have used all my time to rebut the nonsense that we have just heard.

I congratulate my new colleague Neil Gray on his excellent opening speech and on bringing the debate to the chamber. I also thank him for his exceptional work as a member of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission.

In order to get somewhere, everyone needs a route map for their journey. The commission's report shows how the people of Scotland can live in a fairer and more equal society—one that values wellbeing, eradicates poverty and ensures that no one is left behind. I certainly want that for my grandchildren, and this is the map that we need to get us there. The report highlights many key elements that are needed to improve life for everyone. We know that society is unequal—it seems as though it always has been—but this is our chance to change it, albeit with limited powers until we are a normal independent country.

Yesterday afternoon in the chamber, we heard harrowing stories about people who are living in poverty and the struggles that they face every day. This is Scotland in 2021, and that should not be happening. We heard, among others, the Tories—including Stephen Kerr—who are responsible for most of the poverty that has been created in Scotland, say that we should use the powers that we already have. However, as Neil Gray said, much of that is in our manifesto. The SNP Government has introduced the baby box and other game-changing poverty reduction measures such as the Scottish child payment and the best start grant, among many others.

With independence, we could do so much more. We would not have to mitigate harmful Tory welfare policies. We could reverse Tory welfare policies such as the abhorrent two-child limit, the vile rape clause and the cruel five-week wait for universal credit. We could have a welcoming and inclusive immigration policy and renewed employment rights under a fair work agenda, and we could get rid of unpaid work trials, zero-hours contracts, and fire-and-rehire legislation.

Warm, affordable housing is a basic human right that is sadly non-existent for too many people. That situation must—and could—be addressed

with radical new thinking about the social rented sector. A bold drug policy based on harm reduction and recovery is now happening, and a conversation about decriminalisation is long overdue. Under the UK Government, our pensions are the lowest in Europe; with independence, we could lower the age of qualification and pay a fair rate. That is the least that the older citizens of Scotland should expect.

The commission also proposes establishing pilots of two key models of social security: universal basic income and the minimum income guarantee. Those could be the springboard to winning the battle against poverty.

Stephen Kerr: That is all well and good, but, when setting out a vision for the future that the member believes can be achieved only in an independent Scotland, she must also tell people how that will be paid for. That might not be a very popular thing to say in tonight's debate, but we have to be able to pay for such things. How will all those aggrandisements—more pensions, more benefits, more everything—be paid for?

Rona Mackay: That was a bit of a facile comment. All those initiatives will be costed. We will produce a white paper, as we did in 2014. We do not ask people to take a leap of faith on things that are uncosted.

Stephen Kerr: They are uncosted.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please do not intervene from a sedentary position, Mr Kerr.

Rona Mackay: There is much more in the Social Justice and Fairness Commission's report—far too much to highlight in four minutes. I thank everyone—not just the elected politicians, but the many innovative members—who worked on producing the report. The report is the start of a life-changing, nation-changing conversation that puts human rights at the heart of every decision, and it provides a map that I would be happy to follow. I applaud its vision for a Scotland that I want to live in and in which future generations can flourish.

18:32

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate secured by Mr Gray. I am happy to discuss issues of social justice wherever and whenever we can. We owe it to the people of Scotland to have such discussions as frequently as we can, and we owe them honesty about the difficult choices that we have to make.

I had not read the report prior to the debate being announced, but I have read it since and have found it an interesting document. I have the utmost respect for Dr Eilidh Whiteford, in

particular. I was privileged to work for her at Oxfam for a number of years. I know that she has an extraordinary commitment to the poorest of the world and has served people in many countries on issues of poverty.

I was interested in a particular quote:

“policies must be grounded in consensus across our society, and able to weather changes in government and economic downturns.”

That talks to some of the hard work of politics, which is building a consensus of the whole population and seeking unanimity—or, at the very least, permission—from people to make progress. I have to say that I see little evidence of that in the division that we see daily between the yin-yang opposition of those who are yes and those who are ultra no. We saw that in the most recent election, which had a divisive campaign fought between two extremes that thrive on each other. That approach will not deliver what is required for social justice. A country that is divided 50:50 will not have the consensus to build any kind of vision for the future. That is the challenge that faces the SNP and the nationalists if they think that they can achieve an independent Scotland.

The issue of political leadership comes to the fore. Your party has not been an ally of those of us who have, for our entire lives, argued for progressive taxation. It is quite clear that, for the past two general elections, you have specifically committed to opposing Labour’s progressive taxation reforms.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please address your comments through the chair.

Michael Marra: Sorry, Presiding Officer. I will get used to it at some point.

Mr Gray talked about Labour’s creation of the NHS, which was achieved by facing down vested interests. Through negotiation and persuasion, the case was made for the NHS. I want to talk about the difficulty of that in relation to tax and, in particular, SNP taxation policy. How we pay for the many great aspirations that are set out in the report is a salient point.

I will go through the history of SNP taxation policy. In the SNP’s first term in office, we had the council tax freeze, which was entirely regressive and targeted. The impact was cuts in services for local people—often the poorest, the disabled and those who required services. We continue to see the multibillion-pound impact of that. In the SNP’s second term, we had the Laffer curve economics advocated by John Swinney in the run-up to the independence referendum. That was a completely ridiculous policy that claimed that lower taxes would result in higher growth. In its third term, we had Andrew Wilson’s growth commission, which

was austerity on steroids. At the most recent election, the SNP went back to council tax freezes.

The issue is about how we pay for the kind of policies that are being proposed and how we build some form of consensus on that.

Neil Gray: I appreciate Michael Marra’s approach to the debate, which, up until the last couple of paragraphs, had been constructive. I think that we have common cause in a number of areas that are covered in the report, and I look forward to working with him and other colleagues in taking it forward and finding consensus. Does he accept that a number of recommendations in the report, such as those on land value tax and other streamlining and progressive elements, that would move us towards a fairer taxation system require the full powers of taxation, which we do not currently hold?

Michael Marra: I certainly do not agree that there are no versions of land value tax that could be implemented now without further powers.

That brings me on to the point of the many things that are in the report that could be delivered now. Council tax reform has been promised for 14 years and has been completely undelivered, and LVT provides an opportunity in that regard. There is probably a majority in the Parliament for a version of that policy, so the Government should bring forward proposals. It should also do so on land reform, local government reform and the creation of new, enhanced benefits. We were told in 2014 that it was necessary to have independence to deliver transformative childcare but, two months after a no vote, that policy was put in place.

The report is another list of things that cannot be done. Frankly, the main contradiction in it relates to the growth commission report that was produced by Andrew Wilson and his colleagues, which is the evil twin of the document that we are considering today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please bring your remarks to a close.

Michael Marra: I come back to the central issue that if, on the one hand, we have a report that says that we have to do less and we will have less money—austerity on steroids—and, on the other hand, we have a report that says that we have to spend much more, that poses the question about how any of it can be achieved. I fear that the report will go the same way as the poverty czar and many other warm-word promises and that it will not deliver what the people of Scotland desperately need.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I see that Paul Sweeney has pressed his request-to-speak button. If you are seeking to make a speech, Mr

Sweeney, it will have to be very short, because you were not on the list, and I have had to fit you in.

I call Emma Roddick, to be followed by Mr Sweeney.

18:37

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Before I start, I declare that I worked on the paper that we are debating.

What I really love about the paper is that it is not a complaint or a whinge about a lack of money, and it is not an attack on anybody; it sets out a positive vision. It gives a list of possibilities and explores not only what we could do as an independent Scotland with the full levers of power, but what we can do now.

The first proposal in the housing section is a recognition of the need to build not only more homes, but the right homes that are energy efficient, accessible and have a varied number of rooms. That comes alongside a proposal to modernise the existing housing stock, which is welcome, as it would tackle the large emissions of CO₂ equivalent from buildings as well as tackling fuel poverty, which is an all-too-familiar concept for residents of the Highlands and Islands.

The paper also suggests that an expanded social housing sector can raise standards in the private sector. Although we must support the building of affordable homes, particularly in rural areas through things such as the SNP Government's rural housing fund, we cannot make policy that relies on landlords' good will. We need regulation alongside house building. Expanding the social sector might be a great way to bring down demand and therefore prices, but I do not buy that that will mean that the landlords who have neglected their properties and ignored the pleas of their tenants to fix issues will suddenly feel the need to raise standards.

That is why I welcome the second proposal, which focuses on moving away from seeing homes as a means of asset appreciation towards seeing them as a place to live. The right to buy did not just eat up our housing stock; it twisted the idea of what a house should be. People purchased council houses for a few thousand pounds. Their value has rocketed and many have since been sold to absentee landlords for 20 times the price at which they were sold off. Properties that were intended for affordable rent are now owned by landlords, who charge residents hundreds of pounds more in rent per month than their next-door neighbours are charged, which is neither just nor fair.

That is why it is so welcome that the paper proposes offering first refusal on former right-to-buy properties to the local authority at market rate. We must stop seeing residential properties only as investment opportunities and assets from which the rich can expect guaranteed returns, but in which the less wealthy can expect only to be ripped off.

We cannot justify dozens of homes lying empty for all but two months in the summer while people wait for a home for years in temporary accommodation or have to move out of their local area just for the chance to find an affordable property. We cannot justify absentee landlords buying multiple homes in Skye and elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands at extortionate rates, sight unseen, because they know that the price will keep going up; and we cannot justify celebrating that house prices continue to rise well out of reach of the most optimistic aspirations of our young people.

The paper's recommendations are a great start in righting those wrongs. If the paper can set the tone for this session of the Parliament, then we are in for a great one. Let us continue to dream big about how to create a Scotland with social justice and fairness at its heart.

18:40

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for your indulgence in including me in the debate.

I will offer a couple of observations based on my experience of being on universal credit until last month. I pay tribute to Neil Gray's work on the issue; we discussed its importance in our previous lives in the House of Commons. Frankly, I do not care how we do it, we need to get the money into people's pockets by whatever means and with whatever innovation necessary to do it. That is what this Parliament is about.

As my colleague Michael Marra said, Labour is keen to work constructively in that endeavour. A good example is the opportunity to look at universal credit, which is already woefully insufficient and makes the cost of being poor far harder for people. That destroys potential and means that people's ability to function as citizens is denied, which is a bigger cost to the community in terms of healthcare, housing arrears and all sorts of other knock-on effects that are hugely disastrous for local communities.

My calculations are that roughly 110,000 people are on universal credit in Scotland. To scale up that payment with a £20 per week uplift means that it would cost £114 million to deal with the matter in Scotland—to exercise sovereignty over it, if you like. It would be useful for the Parliament

to consider that right away. The figure pales into insignificance when compared with the costs of, for example, the overspend on the CalMac Ferries or the Rangers Football Club malicious prosecution compensation of £100 million. Let us look at ways in which we can fix the problem now.

Neil Gray: I appreciate Paul Sweeney's experience of the matter in recent years, and I welcome him to his place. Does he accept that on top of the issues around the £20 per week uplift that Stephen Kerr and I debated, there are structural issues in relation to universal credit that the Scottish Government cannot address? The Trussell Trust says that the five-week wait is the number 1 issue that is driving food bank use, which is an issue that has to be resolved at Westminster.

Paul Sweeney: I thank Mr Gray for his point. He is correct, but that is why we need to build constructive dialogue. Antagonistic rhetoric has often been a comfort for many people, but let us consider what technical opportunities there are to constructively engage on the issue.

The member makes a good point about the five week wait. It certainly was not a pleasant experience for me. I did not use the advance, because I had sufficient savings to deal with that period myself, but I realised that I was not able to find out what I would be paid until a week before the payment was made. People are living in limbo and do not know what they are going to get. I did not even realise until earlier this year that I was also eligible for new-style jobseekers allowance. No one is practically advising people on what they are entitled to. I also had to apply for a council tax reduction, which is a separate bureaucratic procedure, and pursue other ways of income maximisation. Those are things that we could deal with better in Scotland by having an approach of applying once and getting everything that you are entitled to. Let us try and figure out how we can do that; our civil servants are capable of figuring that out.

Dealing with Department for Work and Pensions employees on the front line, I found them to be hard-working and kind people who are trying to be constructive, given the circumstances. They are Scottish civil servants; they just happen to work for a master that it is not particularly constructive or helpful. There are ways in which we can deal with that and help to advance the cause in Scotland. I would like us to realistically explore how we could enhance universal credit in Scotland and deliver an output that would be highly effective for our citizens. There is a way to do that and I would like to work constructively with other parties to deliver it. With a ready, willing and capable approach from the Parliament, we can deliver something constructive for Scots.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Ben Macpherson to wind up the debate.

18:44

The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson): For me, as for so many others, including Neil Gray and most of the other speakers in the debate, achieving greater social justice is one of the main drivers of my political activism and commitment. We can and must create a fairer society. Therefore, I thank Neil Gray for securing today's debate on the Social Justice and Fairness Commission's report and the issues that it covers, and all those across the chamber who have contributed to the debate.

I welcome Stephen Kerr to the Scottish Parliament. Although he has been provocative in much of what he has said in Parliament so far, I believe that he has been acting in good faith, but I encourage him to acknowledge that the election has passed and that we are now in a different era. If he is serious about being constructive, I urge him to consider the nature of his arguments and the background to his remarks. When I intervened on him, I made the point about the migration statistics. Also, on planning law, it is important to acknowledge that the reporter is independent.

On several occasions in the chamber, Mr Kerr has talked about the need for the Scottish Government to reach out to the UK Government. I have had several ministerial posts and, unfortunately, the engagement with the UK Government has never been meaningful, so if he can improve that in relation to the matters that the Social Justice and Fairness Commission's report deals with and more generally, I encourage him to do that.

I warmly welcome Michael Marra and Paul Sweeney to the Scottish Parliament. They made important points about taxation in the context of the issues that the report raises, but in recent years, when it comes to achieving social justice, we have had no serious budget proposals from the Labour Party, and I hope that their entering Parliament will mean that that position will change.

Paul Sweeney made thoughtful and powerful points on universal credit, but as Stuart McMillan rightly emphasised, we cannot be a Parliament of mitigation. We already spend £60 million a year on mitigating the effects of the bedroom tax. What I have never really understood about Labour's position is why it would not want to bring the powers here so that we can do things differently and comprehensively. That is relevant in relation to progressive taxation. Although we control a number of aspects of income tax policy, we have no control over dividend income tax, so we do not have complete control over all the relevant areas.

Michael Marra: It is one thing to talk about making more use of progressive taxation, but would it not be a good starting point for the SNP Government not to put in place further regressive taxes, as it has done over the past 14 years?

Ben Macpherson: I do not accept that. With the powers that we have had, we have sought to provide a stimulus and to have a fair taxation system. Of course, when it comes to income tax, we have the fairest arrangement in the whole of the UK. *[Interruption.]* We have the fairest income tax system in the whole of the UK, in that those on the lowest incomes pay the least tax.

I also pay tribute to Emma Roddick for her work on the commission and for the points that she made about housing. I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, Shona Robison, will be glad to have engagement with her on those points and others.

It is clear that, overall, the political will exists in the Parliament to bring about social justice. It is simply that we do not have all the powers that we need, and that is what the report rightly highlights. Nonetheless, we all seem to want to create a Scotland where everyone can have the best start in life and lead the best life that they can, even if some of us disagree on the best way to get there.

Recovery from the pandemic is our overriding focus right now, but how we recover matters. It is true that we need to use our current powers well and wisely, but we also need a clear route map that looks beyond our current powers to the kind of country that Scotland could and should be. That is what the commission's report provides. It offers a substantive analysis of what is possible under the current powers of devolution, and what will be possible with the full powers of independence.

Time will not allow me to cover everything that I would like to in my summing up, so, as other members have done, I will focus my remarks on a few significant aspects of the report, the first of which is social security. The Scottish Government shares the ambition that is set out in the report for a social security system that provides income security for people who need it.

We are committed to the principles of dignity, fairness and respect, drawing on people's lived experience as we continue to build a system that is focused on individuals' needs. We have established experience panels to help us design our social security system, and their input has been fundamental to building a better system, directly informing changes to service delivery.

Throughout the pandemic, Scotland's social security system has continued to ensure that people are paid the money on which they rely, while maintaining our focus on the safe and secure delivery of the devolved benefits.

With powers over 15 per cent of social security spending in Scotland, we are already delivering 10 benefits, seven of which are brand new and unique in the UK. However, efforts to tackle poverty in Scotland must include efforts to change Westminster's damaging welfare policies. Covid-19 has highlighted, once again, the shortcomings of the UK approach, including the five-week wait for first payments of universal credit, which Neil Gray emphasised, the two-child limit and the benefit cap, all of which needlessly and unjustly continue to push families deeper into poverty.

As the social security minister, I will continue to call on the UK Government to make changes to ensure that people can rely on the safety net that they have paid into and to match our ambitions to tackle child poverty. However, because the Scottish Government's calls, and those of organisations, have gone unheeded, we need to have the powers over social security in order to create a fairer system in Scotland. Indeed, we need all the powers to deliver social policy as cohesively as possible.

As I have said, that equally applies to taxation policy, too. It also applies to employment law. Therefore, until we secure independence, or powers over employment law, we will use the powers that we have to prioritise fairness, taking our first steps towards a minimum income guarantee with the establishment of a steering group informed by lived experience and expertise.

I could say much about other issues that are in the report, including community empowerment, land reform, immigration and drugs laws. The report highlights a range of challenges for the Parliament and our country as we begin to recover from the pandemic and move forward together.

The overriding question for us all is this: how do we deliver a fairer Scotland—a wellbeing society that values and cares for everyone who lives here? Also, how do we make life better for everyone, create greater social justice and ensure that no one is left behind? What constitutional arrangement would enable us to deliver that vision as effectively and quickly as possible?

This Government firmly believes that having all the powers of independence is the best way to achieve that vision, which is why considerations about the constitution are directly related to considerations around social justice. The report that we have debated today demonstrates that relationship and I look forward to many more debates in this parliamentary session on how—together—we can build a fairer society in Scotland.

Meeting closed at 18:53.

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