



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Tuesday 31 August 2021

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 31 August 2021*

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

## Time for Reflection

### **The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

Good afternoon. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask members to take care to observe the measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use only the aisles and walkways to access your seats and when moving around the chamber.

The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Morven Lyon, who is a trustee of the Humanist Society Scotland.

### **Morven Lyon (Humanist Society Scotland):**

Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, welcome back and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My wee girl started primary 1 two weeks ago. On her first morning, she packed her new school bag, put on her shiny new shoes and, as a family, we walked over to the school gates full of happiness and hope. I reflected afterwards how lucky and privileged I am that my family and I call Scotland our home—a place where my daughter's right to an education is protected and unassailable. I did not do anything special to earn our rights. I was born here and won the unjust human lottery of life.

I do not need to tell you how different my daughter's educational outlook and basic human rights would be if she had been born in Afghanistan, from where there are so many recent reports of human rights violations and discrimination. It is clear that many people are suffering. I am a humanist and view those violations as a dire threat to many of the fundamental values of the humanist movement—freedom of thought, speech, and choice; the human rights of women, children and LGBTI+ people; and the very fundamentals of knowledge, rationality and human empathy. I would therefore like to reflect today on our global responsibility to offer a hand of support and friendship to those who did not win the human lottery.

Scotland is often held up as a great example of a welcoming, fair and inclusive nation. We pride ourselves on our open arms and we like to think that no matter where a person was born, they will get a friendly and warm welcome if they decide to make Scotland their home. The collective concern

of neighbours to those who were affected by the dawn raids in the south side of Glasgow filled me with hope.

However, it would be naive of me to leave you with such a one-sided view. There are still many corners and communities in Scotland where lives are negatively affected by discrimination and a closed-minded attitude to those who were not lucky enough to be born here. We must not get complacent about the perception of Scotland as a tolerant and welcoming nation. We need actively to champion and live that label. Let the 70th anniversary year of the 1951 Refugee Convention remind us that we all deserve to live a life of dignity, and that the right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right.

## Business Motion

14:04

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-00963, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out revisions to this week's business.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for—

(a) Tuesday 31 August 2021—

delete

*followed by* First Minister's Statement: Programme for Government 2021-22

and insert

*followed by* First Minister's Statement: Agreement with the Scottish Green Party

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Appointment of Junior Ministers

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: First 100 Days – Delivering for the People of Scotland

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

6.00 pm Decision Time

(b) Wednesday 1 September 2021—

delete

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Programme for Government 2021-22

and insert

*followed by* First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Supporting Success in Food and Drink in Scotland

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

6.00 pm Decision Time

(c) Thursday 2 September 2021—

delete

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: National Care Service

and insert

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Supporting the people of Afghanistan.—  
[George Adam]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Topical Question Time

14:05

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is topical questions. In order to get in as many people as possible, short and succinct questions and answers are always welcome.

### Classroom-based Learning (Covid-19)

1. **Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has made of the joint statement by the World Health Organization and UNICEF on the need to prioritise in-person classroom-based learning as efforts to manage the Covid-19 pandemic continue. (S6T-00112)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** I welcome the statement from the WHO and UNICEF that educating children safely must be the "primary objective". That is what the Scottish Government has done throughout the pandemic. We have prioritised in-person learning and taken all possible actions to ensure that measures across wider society support our commitment to keeping schools low-risk, open and welcoming. To support that ambition, and to minimise the impact of educational disruption, we have invested more than £450 million over 2020-21 and 2021-22 in additional teachers and support staff, in digital devices and connectivity, in support for the workforce and in enhanced cleaning regimes and ventilation systems.

**Oliver Mundell:** I know that that commitment will be welcomed by many parents and young people, but it cannot be conditional, as we move forward. Ensuring that our children and young people can attend school in person must be our top priority. Does the cabinet secretary understand that when the Scottish Government talks about the need for caution and the possibility of a reverse gear there is real fear that that might further impact on our schools? No matter what happens with other restrictions, will the cabinet secretary today rule out a wholesale return to blended learning, which so disproportionately impacts those who need our education system most?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** We are in the early days of the new academic year and we are monitoring the situation in schools closely. I say to Oliver Mundell and to others that the best way to protect education is for all of us to follow the wider societal guidance that we have. The Government has, from the start of the pandemic, attempted to prioritise in-school face-to-face education. We have taken the decision to move away from that

only when no other option has been available. We are not at that stage now.

There are many things that we can all do to protect ourselves, our communities and our children and young people to ensure that they have face-to-face education. That is why we have taken a cautious approach to reopening schools, and are keeping many mitigation measures in place, although that was controversial for some Conservative members, in particular. We have taken a cautious approach for the reason that Oliver Mundell is asking about: the need to protect the face-to-face education to which children in Scotland have a right.

**Oliver Mundell:** Many parents and young people would have liked to hear the cabinet secretary go a little further, but I accept the sentiment and the support for in-person learning.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF also talk about ensuring that the right mitigations are in place. Vaccination is surely the strongest tool that we have. We would not be where we are without the vaccine roll-out, which was guided by the expert advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and others.

I appreciate that there are many complicated questions and trade-offs. Will the cabinet secretary update Parliament on roll-out of the vaccination programme, with regard to young people and the possibility of booster vaccinations for school staff?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I reiterate that we are not yet looking at a national approach to blended learning—we are not there. The Government is saying that we must ensure that every sector of society and every person does everything that they can to protect ourselves, our communities and the education of our children and young people. That is what the Government is looking at. We encourage people, not only in education but across society, to do that.

Oliver Mundell mentioned vaccinations. I once again commend the many young people who have come forward directly for vaccination—in particular, the 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds. We are approaching 50 per cent of them having been vaccinated, at this point. That exceptional proactive statement that our young people have made shows once again that they are taking Covid very seriously. I commend them for that.

We will, of course, look at further recommendations and advice from the JCVI as they come out. We absolutely stand ready to move very quickly if it makes any further recommendations, whether on booster vaccinations or vaccinations for the over-12s.

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Can the minister provide an urgent update on what

tangible action has been taken over the summer to improve ventilation in classrooms? Will she include teachers and support staff in the Covid booster vaccine programme when the guidance is, as I believe it will be, finalised this week?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** On ventilation, Michael Marra will be aware that we are providing an additional £10 million to ensure that schools and childcare settings have access to CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring. A large number of local authorities have already done a lot of work on the matter over the previous academic year, which was in large part due to the recovery funding that the Scottish Government provided to them, which I mentioned in my original answer. We are now working with all local authorities to make sure that they complete assessments of their schools and early learning and childcare settings by the October half-term. There is on-going work on the matter day by day to ensure that we have that information available.

As I said in my answers to Oliver Mundell, we are looking very carefully at anything that comes from the JCVI, such as guidance about booster vaccinations and any advice that is produced on occupational groupings. That is not a step that was taken for the original vaccination programme, but we will always look to see what can be done and will listen to the clinical advice that we receive, as a Government, on those issues.

**Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** What discussions has the Scottish Government had with the Ministry of Defence regarding the potential use of vacant armed forces houses in Scotland for refugees from Afghanistan?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I think that that relates to the next topical question rather than being a question for me, Presiding Officer. I hope so.

**The Presiding Officer:** Yes. I think that there has been a little misunderstanding. However, we look forward to hearing from Ms Brown shortly.

### Support for Refugees (Afghanistan)

2. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the preparation and planning being undertaken to support people fleeing Afghanistan who may be resettled in Scotland. (S6T-00106)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** I thank the member for Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn for raising this timely and important question. The Scottish Government is clear that Scotland must play a full role in supporting people fleeing Afghanistan and we continue to push the United Kingdom Government to accept more people.

We are working with partners including the UK Government, local government, the third sector and community organisations to ensure a warm welcome for people arriving in Scotland from Afghanistan. Scottish local authorities are already welcoming people arriving under the Afghan relocations and assistance policy for locally employed staff and supporting them to settle in their new homes and communities. We are pressing the UK Government for more details of the new Afghan citizens resettlement programme so that the detailed planning for their arrival can take place.

**Bob Doris:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. In Scotland and the UK, we have a moral responsibility to do all that we can to support those who are fleeing Afghanistan and who may settle here. I thank the cabinet secretary for putting on the record the role that Scotland's local authorities already play in resettling refugees. However, I ask for details of how many of Scotland's councils have committed to supporting resettlement of Afghan families to date and the numbers and types of properties that have been or will be identified for Afghan families, because there is undoubtedly going to be great need.

**Angus Robertson:** We need a great deal more detail from the UK Government about the new Afghan citizens resettlement programme in order to fully answer that question and, in conjunction with local authorities, to plan our full response.

Scotland is committed to playing our part in welcoming and supporting people who are fleeing Afghanistan. That is why today, together with Scottish Government colleagues, I met members of the Scots Afghan community, non-governmental organisations, the Scottish Refugee Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Last Friday, the First Minister and I met with the UK Government, from which we are seeking those answers in order to ensure that we can provide maximum possible support for Afghans who need refuge in this country.

**Bob Doris:** I welcome that further update. It would be good if the cabinet secretary could confirm how many local authorities have confirmed their willingness to be part of that resettlement programme.

He mentioned the UK Government. What discussions have there been between the UK and Scottish Governments to ensure appropriate financial commitments for supporting vulnerable families who are settling in Scotland, be that financial support to local authorities or to wider support services including support networks such as Glasgow Afghan United, wider integration networks and, of course, the Scottish Refugee Council, all of which have a crucial role in

welcoming and supporting vulnerable Afghan families?

**Angus Robertson:** Bob Doris makes an important point. There are many reasons for connections between Afghan refugee seekers and the Afghan community in Scotland and organisations. We are probably all aware of non-governmental organisations that have worked on the ground in Afghanistan with the support and help of people who now seek refuge in our country. We will all be aware of military units based in Scotland that have been supported for years by Afghan translators and fixers. Many Afghans have studied in Scotland. All those people have connections to communities in this country. In addition to the key financial issues that Bob Doris has raised, I have been pressing the UK Government to ensure, through the clearing system that is being operated by the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence, that people who have community relations in Scotland can find a safe haven here, because they are incredibly welcome.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** I welcome the fact that the minister has met many of Afghanistan's communities directly. However, does he agree that our obligation to the people of Afghanistan cannot be met properly without supporting our local government to provide resettlement programmes, and voluntary organisations on the ground? How many Afghan refugees does the Scottish Government hope to support? Will he assure me that he is making representations to the UK Government about the various different categories of Afghan asylum seeker, including those who might arrive by boat, having escaped, who would be disqualified automatically under the current rules but who need humanitarian protection and routes to safety?

**Angus Robertson:** Pauline McNeill raises an important point, and she might have added to her list the literally hundreds, if not thousands, of Afghans who have been refused asylum in the UK thus far and who still face, technically, the threat of deportation back to Afghanistan. Surely that situation cannot stand, given the circumstances. I hope that parties across the Parliament agree that people who find themselves in that situation should, in addition to those who have been successfully transported to the UK, be able to remain here and to have their refugee status accepted. I hope that there can be cross-party co-ordination to ensure that Scotland can speak with one voice on those questions.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the last time that we were called on to stand in support of refugees to this country—from Syria—every single one of Scotland's 32 local authorities played its part, and Scotland resettled more than 3,300 refugees. That was 16 per cent of the total number

who were received by the UK under the Syrian resettlement scheme.

A lot of questions still need to be answered about the financial aspects of how we can manage the situation and of how local authorities can be supported. We are asking the UK Government for answers to those questions. We will continue to pose them. However, I hope that, with good will on all sides, we can help to accommodate as many people as possible. They deserve our support.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Siobhian Brown.

**Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will try again.

What discussions has the Scottish Government had with the Ministry of Defence on the potential use of vacant armed forces housing in Scotland for refugees from Afghanistan?

**Angus Robertson:** I thank my colleague for the advance notice of her question.

It is important that we look at every single opportunity for accommodation to be provided to people arriving on these shores. Siobhian Brown made a very good point—the MOD is a large landowner and has a significant amount of accommodation throughout the UK. I will be happy to raise that point with the Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, with whom I have been in touch about other issues in relation to helping and supporting Afghans who have had a particular connection to Scottish military units.

## Scottish Government Agreement with Scottish Green Party

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on an agreement with the Scottish Green Party. The First Minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:20

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I am pleased to confirm to Parliament details of the wide-ranging co-operation agreement that has been reached between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party and endorsed overwhelmingly by our respective party memberships.

In nature, scope and intent, the agreement is genuinely ground breaking in Scottish and United Kingdom politics. It represents a new and, I hope, better way of doing politics. Although the agreement is the product of much negotiation and some compromise, it is also a leap of faith for both parties, but it is one that we are taking willingly and for the common good.

The challenge and discipline of working together, and of not allowing the issues on which we disagree to obscure those on which we do agree, will undoubtedly take us out of our comfort zones. Although the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens are joining together in Government, they are and will remain distinct entities with different identities and points of view. The agreement is, however, founded on shared convictions and common principles. Above all, it is based on our recognition that the times that we are living through render a business-as-usual approach simply not good enough. Scotland, like most of the rest of the world, faces significant challenges and many opportunities in the years ahead, and many of those are deeply interrelated.

We must tackle the latest surge in Covid cases while leading and supporting the country's economic and social recovery from the pandemic; we must ensure that the recovery is green and sustainable; and we must address with urgency and determination the climate and nature crises that threaten the planet and the security of this and future generations.

We must, unfortunately, address and mitigate the consequences of Brexit, which are becoming more serious by the week, as labour scarcity and interrupted supply chains lead to shortages on supermarket shelves and elsewhere. Such shortages should be unthinkable in a country such as the UK, and we should make no mistake that

they are a direct and shameful result of the Brexit disaster.

We must defend our Parliament against the UK Government power grabs that are undermining the very principles on which it is founded and, as we do so, recognise that the best way of protecting Parliament from Westminster and equipping it with the full powers that it needs to build a fairer, more prosperous country is to make it independent of Westminster—[*Interruption.*] That is why fulfilling our democratic mandate to let the Scottish people choose our own future is a key strand of the agreement.

Those are the inescapable challenges that confront us, and how we respond to them will shape Scotland now and for the decades ahead. In the face of the magnitude of those challenges—and we all bear a share of the responsibility for this—our politics can too often seem small, polarised, divided and focused on self-interest rather than the national interest—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps I am seeing evidence of that today.

If we are to meet the moment, we must all try to do politics differently. In this agreement, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Greens are accepting our responsibility to do that. Genuine disagreement, honestly and respectfully debated, and resolved through the ballot box, is the essence of democracy. However, we also have a duty to reach beyond our disagreements and, in the interests of progress, maximise the consensus between us. That is essential if we are to find the solutions that are needed to solve the big problems confronting Scotland and the world.

In my view and experience, instead of division and acrimony, people want to see much more co-operation and collaboration from their politicians. That spirit of co-operation and consensus building is very much in keeping with the founding principles of our Scottish Parliament. Arguably, it has never been more important for us all to live up to those principles, and that is the motivation for reaching this agreement. It is not a full coalition—our parties will retain distinct voices and independent identities—but it sets out processes of co-operation and consultation that will establish a firm foundation for the delivery of our shared and transformative policy objectives and the Scottish Government's wider legislative and policy programme.

As part of that, for the first time in UK politics, the agreement will see Greens enter national Government as ministers, working in a spirit of common endeavour, mutual challenge and collective responsibility to deliver for the people we serve. To that end, I look forward to seeking Parliament's approval later this afternoon for the appointment of Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie as Scottish ministers.

Such an agreement would not be seen to be in any way remarkable or unusual in other parts of Europe, but it represents an important landmark for politics across the UK. Most important of all, the agreement provides a strong foundation for bold and decisive action throughout the parliamentary session. After all, as with any arrangement of this kind, its ultimate test is not about how well the signatories get along but about what we deliver.

There is—rightly—a strong environmental theme to our shared policy agreement. We recognise the urgency of the climate and nature crises and the challenges inherent in tackling them. We also appreciate that, with the right approach and a commitment to climate justice, the transition to net zero will create economic opportunities and improve the wellbeing of us all. We are determined to seize and realise those opportunities.

During the current session of Parliament, we will do more to decarbonise our transport network and support active travel. We will dedicate at least 10 per cent of the Scottish Government's overall travel budget to active travel—cycling, walking and wheeling. We will significantly increase investment in public transport. We will work to cut the sector's emissions and make public transport accessible and affordable, with a commitment to free bus travel for young people, for example. We will bring ScotRail into public ownership.

All those measures will help us to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030, which is vital if we are to meet our climate targets and improve the environment in communities and neighbourhoods the length and breadth of our country. We will support the essential transformation in how we heat our homes and buildings. This parliamentary session will see investment of at least £1.8 billion in energy efficiency and renewable heating.

We will do more to protect our natural environment. We will designate a new national park, plant more trees, including more native species, and protect more of our seas.

We will work across the economy to support a just transition to net zero, with just transition plans for all sectors and regions, and a new green industrial strategy with investment in skills at its heart.

As part of that, we will support and accelerate the necessary and inevitable transition from fossil fuels to renewable and low-carbon energy sources. Under the agreement, we will deliver a package of stronger support for marine renewables and offshore wind, and significantly increase our onshore wind capacity. We will establish a 10-year £500 million just transition fund

for the north-east and Moray, to ensure that the jobs and communities that depend on our oil and gas sector are not left behind and that we instead use the sector's considerable infrastructure, skills and expertise to help to drive and speed up the development of cleaner alternatives.

Our agreement will also help to make Scotland fairer. It will tackle child poverty and deliver stronger rights for tenants, including an effective rent control system, so that housing in the rented sector is more affordable and more secure, especially for families and young people. We will make the investment in the current parliamentary session to support the delivery of 110,000 new affordable homes between now and 2032.

We will reform our public services, including through the establishment of a national care service, which will perhaps be the biggest public sector reform that Parliament will ever have undertaken. There will also be improvements in mental health and work to improve education and close the poverty-related attainment gap.

Finally, as I indicated earlier, the agreement confirms our intention to give people in Scotland the choice of independence. The mandate for that is undeniable: between us, the SNP and the Greens won 72 of the 129 seats in Parliament, and each one of us was elected on a clear commitment to holding an independence referendum. However, just as the mandate is undeniable, the reason for a referendum is just as important. As we emerge from the pandemic, the kind of country and society that Scotland is and will become, and the decisions that will shape our society, our economy and our place in the world, must be determined, democratically, here in Scotland, and not imposed upon us against our will by the Government at Westminster.

The agreement that we have reached offers a clear vision of the sort of country Scotland can become: a greener, fairer and—yes—-independent nation. It also recognises and puts into practice an approach to politics that sees parties try to work together for the common good. I firmly believe that that is what most people in Scotland want to see. I hope that, as we move now to implement it, the agreement will demonstrate that, when we step out of our comfort zones and embrace co-operation, we enhance our ability to deliver the ideas and practical policies that can meet the scale of the challenges that we face.

Of course, the agreement is novel in terms of UK politics, but across Europe and in many countries around the world, arrangements like this are commonplace and based firmly on the idea that co-operation, rather than confrontation, will lead to better outcomes for people across our country. The Scottish Parliament has undoubtedly secured some significant achievements in the past

two decades, and all parties can and should take credit for that fact. However, especially in recent years, there have also been times when our politics has been toxic and polarised—that is not unique to Scotland—and, because of that, we have sometimes seemed to be collectively incapable of properly living up to the expectations of those we serve. Just as we can, and should, all take some credit for our successes, we must all bear some responsibility for our shortcomings. I believe that we all have an obligation to make positive change. The agreement represents a renewed commitment from the Scottish Government to do so.

While the agreement is, at the political level, an agreement between the SNP and the Greens, I sincerely hope that, over time, it can and will encourage greater co-operation between all parties in the Scottish Parliament. There are issues on which we disagree profoundly and passionately, including, and perhaps especially, the constitution. I suspect that that is unlikely to change, although perhaps we should all make an effort to disagree more civilly even on those fundamental issues. However, as we recover from the pandemic and address the climate emergency, there are many other issues where I believe that acres of common ground can be found if we are willing to find them, while still acknowledging and respecting our disagreements.

Despite all the risks that are inherent in any decision of two parties to co-operate more closely, and with a full appreciation of the compromise and the ups and downs that such an agreement will entail, the SNP and the Greens are choosing to work together because we believe that, in a time of great challenge, a better, more collaborative politics is needed so that a better Scotland can be built, and we are resolving to spend the next five years working together to build it. As we do so, I make an open and sincere offer also to work with others across the chamber whenever and wherever possible. I hope that that offer will be accepted.

The agreement is a milestone in Parliament's progress. It sets out how the SNP and the Scottish Greens will work together as the Scottish Government. It demonstrates our commitment to a new and better way of doing politics and it provides the strong platform that is needed to deliver the transformative policies that will build a greener, fairer country and make people's lives across Scotland better. For all those reasons, I enthusiastically commend it to the chamber.

**The Presiding Officer:** The First Minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 40 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who

wish to ask a question could press their request-to-speak buttons now.

**Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Finally, the SNP-Green deal has done something for the environment, because Nicola Sturgeon has just spent the past 15 minutes recycling the exact same speech that she gave last week. She used the exact same speech to try to convince everybody that this coalition is not actually a coalition. I know that Nicola Sturgeon lectures us all about how she speaks with a higher level of intelligence than everyone else, but trying to claim that the deal is not a coalition is quite simply a joke, even by SNP standards. It is a nationalist coalition with one overriding goal: to separate Scotland from the United Kingdom. Yet again, a divisive referendum has come first, as it always does with this Government.

It is a simple fact that Nicola Sturgeon made this nationalist deal her priority over a programme for government, which should have been announced today, as it normally is at the start of a session. She made the deal a priority over a flimsy national health service recovery plan, which was more of a public relations pamphlet.

Once again, the SNP has got its priorities all wrong. It has turned its back on jobs, our economy, the oil and gas industry and car drivers. It is not a deal for hard-working Scotland. The coalition will hammer everyone who works hard, runs a business or owns a vehicle. It is not a deal that works for Scotland—it is one that works for Nicola Sturgeon. She failed to get a majority, and the deal is a consequence of that. The deal is one that nobody—not even the Greens—wanted. In Lorna Slater’s own words, spoken before a promotion was dangled in front of her, an SNP-Green deal would be a “terrible idea”.

The First Minister’s Green colleagues say that there has been a “significant change of direction” in her approach to oil and gas, so I ask the First Minister this: how many of Scotland’s 100,000 oil and gas jobs will be put at risk by that change of direction?

Given that she is appointing ministers who do not believe in economic growth, will Nicola Sturgeon now admit that her financial case for Scottish independence is based on harming Scottish businesses and cutting Scottish jobs?

**The First Minister:** It seems that rising to the challenge of doing politics better, or even vaguely competently, is, for the moment, beyond Douglas Ross. Hopefully, as the parliamentary session progresses, that will change.

In his barely coherent set of questions, Douglas Ross really misses the point. We face big challenges—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order, please, colleagues.

**The First Minister:** It is incumbent on us all not to disregard our disagreements, but to work beyond them to find the areas on which we can agree, and to work together for the good of those whom we represent. That is how we on the SNP benches will proceed in this session. In response, other parties in the chamber have a choice: they can join us and respect our disagreements but try to work together, or they can push themselves more and more to the margins of Scottish politics and simply hurl insults from the sidelines.

Before I come on to the two questions that Douglas Ross posed, I will say that, given the scale of the challenges that we face and the responsibilities that we all bear, Douglas Ross’s rhetoric is not only deeply inappropriate but deeply ironic. Right now, across this country, there are shortages of food on our supermarket shelves. In England, at least at the moment, the health service is being told to ration blood tests due to a shortage of test tubes, and children are being told that there might be shortages leading to a lack of toys at Christmas—all because of Mr Ross’s party’s obsession with Brexit. Is it not about time that he took some responsibility and recognised the importance of coming together to try to address those challenges?

Turning to oil and gas, I recognise that we must meet the climate emergency and I take that responsibility extremely seriously. That means making a rapid enough transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy in order to meet that challenge. I do not want to see jobs in the North Sea lost, which is why at the heart of the agreement is a just transition deal of £500 million specifically for the north-east. That is so that we can harness the skills, infrastructure and expertise of that sector and use it to drive the development of the alternatives.

Here is a suggestion: in the spirit of consensus and co-operation, perhaps the UK Government might agree to match the Scottish Government’s commitment to a transition deal for the north-east and Moray. Let us hear some substance in place of Mr Ross’s rhetoric.

Finally, on the question of independence, Mr Ross and I fundamentally disagree on the future of Scotland. My vision of the future of Scotland is of a prosperous, fair and green country. I believe in democracy and in the right of the Scottish people to decide their own future. That is the prospectus that I put to the Scottish people in May and, as I said, between us, the SNP and the Greens won 72 of the 129 seats. Democracy demands that the Scottish people get the right to decide. Only a politician who fears the outcome of such a choice

would seek to block the right of the Scottish people to make it.

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** This coalition agreement—for that is what it is—simply formalises the agreement of the previous parliamentary session, when Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP hammered our public services with cuts and the Greens simply nodded them through. If we cut through the spin and the now-typical boasts about historic moments, we can see that it is not a new Government or a clean start, but a deal that is more about the constitution than the climate.

I am all for common ground being found and co-operation on issues that parties agree on. However, the deal is not about delivering greater accountability and transparency in the Parliament, but about the opposite: it is about greater control for Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP rather than co-operation.

The Greens cannot pretend to be in Government and Opposition at the same time. At this time of acute economic, public health and climate crisis, Scotland needs a Government that is focused on bringing our country together and addressing the urgent issues at hand. Unemployment, child poverty, drug deaths, clearing the NHS backlog and the climate emergency are the urgent issues that our country faces.

Does the First Minister understand that bringing our country together means more than just working with people who agree with her on the constitution? Does she understand that our national recovery must truly be our collective national mission? It must be more than just warm words—it must be ambitious action, too.

Finally, will the First Minister confirm which ministers will be losing their jobs for the appointment of two new ministers?

**The First Minister:** I spent an election campaign hearing Anas Sarwar talk about the responsibility on us all to focus on what we agree on rather than the things that we disagree on, and we have heard more of that today. I agreed with him and commended him during the election campaign for striking that tone. The problem is that, so far, there has been nothing from Anas Sarwar to suggest that that has any substance and is anything more than rhetoric.

All the challenges that he has alluded to today are exactly the challenges that the agreement sets out concrete actions, investments, plans and policies to address—not in rhetoric, but in substance. The SNP and the Greens have agreed to do that notwithstanding the disagreements between us. Both parties have been prepared to compromise, cede some control and come together in order to do better for the country.

In the days after the election, as Anas Sarwar knows, I invited Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater in to talk about how we could co-operate. I also invited Anas Sarwar in to talk about how the SNP and Labour might co-operate. The difference is that the Scottish Greens took that seriously—they went away, thought about it and came back to try to work towards an agreement.

I say to Anas Sarwar that it is not too late to be part of that consensus. There is a strategic choice for the Opposition parties in the face of the agreement. I am fairly certain which choice the Conservatives will make, but which choice Labour will make is perhaps more of an open question. I suspect that it will define much of Anas Sarwar's leadership of his party, because the choice is whether to come with us to try to find common ground while respecting our disagreements, and to work together to meet the challenges that we face, or to move more and more to the margins of politics along with the Conservatives.

I again make an open invitation to Anas Sarwar to work with us, co-operate and be part of that consensus building, because I agree that that is what the country needs. However, it takes courage and boldness to do that, and a willingness to do it in substance and not just in empty rhetoric.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** The co-operation agreement includes a £500 million just transition fund for the north-east and Moray. Will the First Minister provide further detail on how the fund will support people who are seeking to move from the oil and gas sector to green jobs?

**The First Minister:** The £500 million just transition deal is vital not only for making the transition from oil and gas to renewables but for doing so in a fair and just way. We will set out in the period ahead the detail of how the fund will operate and the objectives that it will support. We will work with partners, communities and other stakeholders to take it forward. It is intended to accelerate the transition of the region and support the role of Aberdeen and the wider north-east as a centre of excellence for the development of new technologies and the transition to a net zero economy. The scope, timing and design of the fund will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and set out to Parliament as soon as possible.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I want to press for clarity on oil and gas. Patrick Harvie has bragged that the Greens have changed significantly the First Minister's position on the future of our oil and gas sector and the tens of thousands of jobs that it supports, and Lorna Slater has stated that she wants to shut the industry down within the next four years. Does the

Government support new oil and gas exploration and production, or Lorna Slater's closure plans?

**The First Minister:** The agreement sets out exactly what we agree on and, as far as my view on new exploration is concerned, I set that out in a letter to the Prime Minister. Just as it is the case that new licences for exploration have to be assessed against the climate emergency, so too should existing licences be, before production goes ahead. We face an inescapable climate emergency and we have to recognise that it is no longer consistent with tackling that climate emergency simply to assume that we can go on and on with unlimited extraction of fossil fuels.

However, we must support a fair and just transition, and the oil and gas sector recognises that. The responsibility on Government is to make sure that we provide the support and investment to do that. Parties such as the Conservatives will no doubt go on burying their heads in the sand in the face of the climate emergency, but we will not do that. We will provide the leadership to make sure that Scotland meets its targets on climate change and the transition to net zero by 2045 and that we take the jobs, expertise, skills and infrastructure that have been built up over decades in the oil and gas sector and use them to drive the alternatives that we need.

I hope that other parties will be part of that, because we all have an inescapable duty to meet the climate emergency head on.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** I acknowledge the Scottish Government's commitment to prioritising the Covid recovery, but, as the First Minister said in her statement, it is right that the people of Scotland have a say on what that recovery looks like in the long term. Will the First Minister outline how the agreement between the SNP and the Greens strengthens the democratic mandate for an independence referendum and ensures that, as we rebuild from the Covid pandemic, we also build the fairer and greener Scotland that we all want?

**The First Minister:** I have a duty as First Minister to continue to lead the country through the on-going Covid crisis, and I will make a statement in Parliament tomorrow on the latest Covid situation and the steps that we need to continue to take collectively to tackle the increase in transmission.

As we come out of the acute crisis and recover our economy, our society and our whole way of life, we have big choices to make about the kind of country that we are recovering to. We are not alone in that regard; countries across the world are asking themselves those questions. I believe that the answers to those questions should be shaped and decided in Scotland by our

democratically elected Government and Parliament, and not imposed on us by a Westminster Government that, as we see so powerfully with Brexit, is intent on taking us in a direction that the majority do not want to go in.

The question is not whether we, in the Parliament, all agree on the question of independence. It is clear that we do not, and that is perfectly legitimate in a democracy. The question is whether we are all prepared to agree on the basic principle of democracy that election mandates should be honoured and questions about the future of our country should be taken not by politicians but by the people of our country. The arithmetic in the Parliament is clear: there is a mandate for an independence referendum. That should be honoured, and I am determined that it will be honoured and that the people of Scotland will decide the future of this country.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** In February 2021, the Greens supported Scottish Labour's demand for a minimum of £15 an hour for social care workers in the budget. Less than two weeks later—having clearly been nobbled by the SNP—the Greens abstained on the same demand. That appeared in the Greens' manifesto but not in the SNP manifesto. Try as I might, I can find no reference to it in the SNP-Green agreement. When will social care workers get £15 an hour—or have the Greens sold out?

Will the Greens be bound by collective responsibility in relation to planning applications, such as that submitted by Flamingo Land at Loch Lomond?

**The First Minister:** Jackie Baillie has been in the Parliament since its inception and she is very well aware of the constraints on ministers when it comes to planning applications. I am quite surprised that she asked a question of that nature when she knows how ill founded it is.

On the other question, I say to Jackie Baillie that any member in the chamber will be able to find lots of examples of where the Greens and the SNP do not agree and have not agreed in the past. However, what we have done—this is the whole point of what we are doing—is come together to focus on where we agree but also, crucially, to work together to find ways of achieving the things that we agree on.

On the question of pay for social care workers, yes we want to achieve that. To their great credit, the Greens have decided to come into government to be part of working out, through our budgets and our decision making, how we can deliver that, rather than simply standing on the sidelines shouting for something to happen with no consideration at all of how to make it happen. It is the difference between achieving nothing in

opposition and achieving lots by having the guts to go into government and take the decisions required.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** This is thin gruel for the Green Party. The SNP Government has barely had to budge. Take education, for example. In the previous parliamentary session, the Greens worked with us to reform education. However, every single education policy in the agreement document was existing Government policy before the negotiations began. The Greens have not moved the dial at all. In fact, the deal takes us backwards on education.

In 2018, all Opposition parties voted to halt the national testing of primary 1 pupils. There was a parliamentary majority that was backed by teachers and parents to that end. The SNP Government chose to roundly ignore that. The First Minister told us that testing would not lead to league tables, but there are now league tables in the national press. Will national testing of four and five-year-olds finally be abolished, or have the Greens surrendered the parliamentary majority that existed in support of that abolition, as well?

**The First Minister:** I have to say that it is a bit rich for the leader of a parliamentary group—I congratulate Alex Cole-Hamilton on his election as leader—that no longer qualifies as a parliamentary group because it lost ground in the election to criticise a party that increased its presence in the Parliament and is intent on trying to achieve change for the people whom it represents. Over all the years in which I have been in government, the Greens have, through co-operation and constructive opposition, achieved more than the Liberal Democrats have, and they will achieve even more in government.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Excuse me, members; I am sorry. There are a lot of conversations going on. I understand that we are all very pleased to be back in the chamber, but we can catch up later. Members should focus on the business, please, and ensure that we can hear those who are speaking at any point in time.

**The First Minister:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am absolutely delighted to be back in the chamber. I am enjoying it very much indeed so far.

I am sure that the Greens will achieve a great deal in government through collaboration and co-operation and by being constructive in getting things done.

I say again to the Opposition parties that the offer is there for all of us to try to come together to find the areas on which we can agree. The question is who is prepared to do that and who is not. The Greens, to their credit, are prepared to do that. It remains to be seen whether anybody else is willing to work in that constructive way.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** The agreement between the Green Party and the Scottish Government is welcome, particularly at a time when others in the chamber seem to be shying away from working collaboratively to address with urgency the impacts of the climate emergency. Will the First Minister expand on how the agreement will bolster the Government's work to achieve our ambitious net zero targets?

**The First Minister:** At a very basic level, the agreement will make sure that those of us who have been in government for a long time accept and embrace fresh challenge, because we need fresh thinking, bolder ideas and action to meet the climate emergency. There is no escaping that. We must make sure that we accelerate the transition. As we do so, we must ensure that we are harnessing and realising the massive economic benefits that are there to be won, but which we have not always been as good as we should have been at harnessing in the past.

Through the agreement, which focuses on specific areas—how we change the way in which we heat our homes, how we decarbonise our public transport system and how we protect our natural environment—we can see how we can take forward those responsibilities. However, the very nature of the co-operation agreement is to demand compromise from all of us and to demand consensus building. I hope and believe that we will challenge each other to go further and faster. I believe that that is what is needed and, indeed, wanted by a majority of people across the country.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** At the recent election, the Scottish Greens said that we need to move away from traditional economic policies and abandon the endless focus on economic growth. Business, virtually every economic policy body in Scotland and the banking sector are all adamant that economic growth is vital to our recovery from the pandemic. Indeed, that seems to be the view that the Finance and Public Administration Committee expressed at this morning's meeting. Whose side is the First Minister on when it comes to economic growth?

**The First Minister:** I believe in economic growth that is sustainable. The Greens and the SNP have a difference of opinion, which is set out openly in the agreement, about the role of gross domestic product as a metric for that. I believe that GDP is an appropriate metric, but not the only one on which we should rely. I believe that we should widen our measurements of economic success—I have believed that for a long time, which is why this Government is one of the founding Governments of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. A growing number of Governments across the world are now involved in the alliance and are

saying that the health, happiness and wellbeing of a population should also matter in our judgments of economic success and that the measure of success should not simply be GDP.

At the heart of our agreement is an agreement to develop the metrics of how we measure our success as an economy and society. I think that more and more people in Scotland, and more and more people and Governments across the world, are recognising that. It does not surprise me, but it disappoints me, that the Conservatives continue to sit outside that. I hope that we will see that change during this parliamentary session.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** The agreement between the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Government is historic. It is a new model of politics that responds to the code red for humanity on the climate, while building a fair recovery from Covid. The agreement has a bold and far-reaching programme, which will accelerate a just transition, double the size of the wind industry that was previously butchered by the Tory party at Westminster, invest £1.8 billion in energy efficiency and renewable heat, and invest £500 million in a just transition fund for the north-east. Does the First Minister agree that the programme will help Scotland to grasp the economic opportunities of the just transition by creating new fair jobs while tackling the climate emergency?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I do. That is one of the biggest challenges that we face. Notwithstanding the impressions to the contrary from some members today, I hope that there is unanimous agreement in the chamber that tackling the climate emergency with urgency and determination is not seen to be an option. I genuinely hope that we all agree on the need to do that.

One of the big questions is how we do that. Do we achieve it in a way that is just and fair, and which seizes and realises the massive economic opportunities? Being candid, I note that, although we have had exchanges about that in the chamber on many occasions in the past, we have not been as successful at it as we should have been. Subject to parliamentary approval later, Lorna Slater will have a key role to play in driving a new green industrial strategy so that we meet our obligations on reducing emissions, and do so in a way that creates new jobs and industries for the future. There is a big challenge in relation to climate change, but there is a massive opportunity as well, and the agreement will help us to seize that. For that reason, I think that all of us and people right across the country should be genuinely enthused, inspired and excited by it.

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** It has been more than a decade since national park designation for the isle of Harris had

to be abandoned, despite more than 70 per cent of residents backing the move in a plebiscite that had a turnout that was higher than 70 per cent. There was limited support from the local authority, however, which contributed to the bid being rejected. The shared policy programme commits to at least one new national park being designated by the end of this parliamentary session. Can the First Minister say more about the process by which a new national park will be chosen?

**The First Minister:** The process will follow the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, which includes a detailed process of consultation of communities, local authorities and other stakeholders. The criteria for designation include the area being

“of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage”

and having

“a distinctive character and a coherent identity”.

In the agreement, we make it clear that we believe that national parks should be designated only in response to local community demand. We therefore encourage community stakeholders and local government to come forward now with proposals.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I will just quote from the coalition agreement. It states:

“The current plan is to fully dual the A96 route between Inverness and Aberdeen.”

It goes on to talk about having a “transparent, evidence-based review” to

“include a climate compatibility assessment.”

Can the First Minister say whether or not the A96 will be fully dualled?

**The First Minister:** Graham Simpson should probably quote more fully from the agreement, but I will do that, and I will focus on what it agrees in terms of enhancements to the A96, which includes dualling from Inverness to Nairn; bypasses in Nairn, Keith, Elgin and Inverurie; road safety improvements between, for example, Fochabers and Huntly, and Inverurie and Aberdeen; the development of an A96 electric highway; and, of course, enhanced public transport improvements in north-east Scotland.

There are a range of improvements, including looking at a rail link between Dyce and Ellon and further north to Peterhead and Fraserburgh, and reviewing the A96 corridor, with a view to implementing bus priority measures.

Yes, the agreement does say that the current plan is for full dualling; however, as with any major road development, environmental assessments

and impact assessments have to be carried out, because, in this period of having to address the climate emergency, no politician with any credibility would suggest that we do not assess all our policies against the climate imperative. We therefore set out clearly our priorities and the process that we will take to make sure that people across the north-east have the transport links that they need in order for the economy to thrive.

**Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** For the majority of members in this duly elected chamber the most important step that we can take to empower the Parliament and the people of Scotland and be able to make the changes that we need to be an independent country. With Westminster's continuing refusal to recognise the clear democratic mandate that was delivered by the people of this country when we were elected to the Parliament in May, where does the First Minister think the coalition agreement leaves us constitutionally? What options are available as we seek to provide the people of Scotland with the ability to determine our own future?

**The First Minister:** There is a basic question of democracy here. We have disagreements in the chamber about what future Scotland should choose. There is nothing wrong with that, because it is the essence of democracy. I believe fervently, and have done for all my adult life, that Scotland should become an independent country like the 200 independent countries across the world, so that we can work in partnership with other countries, but also have the ability to determine and shape our own future. People are entitled to disagree and say that Scotland is better remaining within the Westminster union, but the people who should decide that question are not us, as politicians: it is the population of Scotland who should decide that question. [*Interruption.*]

Conservative members say that that happened in 2014 but, since then, Scotland has been ripped out of the European Union against our will. People across Scotland are struggling to get basic food supplies in supermarkets because of the Tory-imposed Brexit.

The Scottish Government fought the election on a commitment to give the people of Scotland a choice in a referendum and the Government won with historic vote shares and many other record-breaking results along the way. Let us have the rigorous debate about Scotland's future, but let us accept the central tenet of democracy that it is the people of Scotland—and only the people of Scotland—who should decide.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** On the day that the deal was announced, ScotRail unveiled a consultation on timetable changes that would cut 300 rail services. The SNP Minister for Transport

seems to accept the cuts; one wonders whether the Green ministers do, too. Given what the First Minister said about investing in public transport and tackling the climate emergency, will she stop the cuts to rail services? If not, how can the Government justify record ministerial salaries and more ministerial cars and bicycles when cutting rail services for everybody else?

**The First Minister:** The commitments in the agreement are about investing in our rail services, bringing them back into public ownership—nationalising ScotRail—and ensuring that people in every part of our country can rely on services, that fares are affordable for travel and that we cut emissions in our rail network.

Will there be difficult decisions to make along the way? Of course there will, but there is a determination to come together to take the decisions so that our transport network is capable and fit for the purpose of transporting people across the country for work and leisure, and so that it meets our imperative on the climate emergency.

I welcome input and engagement from members across the Parliament. The question is whether Labour members are prepared to work on that basis. I hope that they take up the invitation.

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I very much welcome the agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party. This is a fundamental moment in the continued progression of devolution that will lead us to the normal status of independence. What benefits will the agreement bring to local authorities across Scotland?

**The First Minister:** The agreement has many positive elements for local government and democracy, such as work to increase voter registration and participation, particularly among underrepresented groups, and the commitment to undertake an independent review of the Scottish welfare fund, which is important to many families and individuals across the country.

The shared programme contains a variety of policies on which we will work collaboratively with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, such as commitments on community wealth building, planning, active travel, work on education reform and the establishment of a national care service. All those policies will have an impact on local authorities, so engagement and joint work on them will be important.

We will seek a strategic discussion with COSLA's leadership on the agreement and the upcoming programme for government. We work collaboratively with COSLA, and the agreement will enhance the measures whereby we help local

authorities to deliver their services for people across the country.

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** There is concern that the agreement ignores rural communities. I was delighted when the First Minister visited my constituency during the election campaign and shared my pledge to reopen Insh community hospital. She went further and said:

“We are prepared as a government, if re-elected, to make the funding available to the health board, not just to reopen it but to do work to give it a long term, sustainable future.”

I wrote to the First Minister about that more than two weeks ago but have yet to receive a reply. Will she confirm to the Insh community that her commitment is not in jeopardy from her Green agreement? Will she set out the timescale for delivering her promise?

**The First Minister:** I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Insh during the election campaign and I stand by the commitments that we made on Insh community hospital. When I set out the programme for government at this time next week, we will set out our ambitions for capital investment across the health service estate, as we take the decisions to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

I am sure that our Green colleagues will be as enthusiastic about developing community health facilities as well as elective treatment centres and more specialist services over the period that is ahead. I look forward to saying more about all those things in the programme for government statement next week.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** There is a pressing need for action on climate change, and a growing number of Scots believe that independence will unlock the powers necessary to ensure a just transition to a greener society. How will the co-operation deal further our collective fight, promote sustainable economic change and advance Scotland’s journey towards independence?

**The First Minister:** Within the devolved context, the agreement contains a number of commitments that will help deliver a just transition to net zero, some of which I have already touched on, such as the transition deal for the north-east and Moray; the national strategy for economic transformation, which is vital in terms of building the economy that we need for the future; the green industrial strategy; and just transition plans for industries, sectors and regions across the country, to help our supply chains create high-quality jobs.

Within the agreement—within our devolved powers—the plans are ambitious and wide reaching. However, it is a fact that, if we are to reach our full potential and build that greener,

fairer Scotland, the full range of powers over tax and social security are necessary. Therefore, ensuring that the mandate to give people a choice on independence during this parliamentary session is honoured is a key part of ensuring that we meet the challenges that lie ahead.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** The additional two ministers and two special advisers will cost Scotland’s taxpayers £1 million. In its 2007 manifesto, the SNP promised the Scottish people

“a smaller, better focused ministerial team”.

So, is the First Minister proud to be leading the largest and most bloated Government in the history of devolution?

**The First Minister:** What I can say with absolute certainty is that every Scottish Government minister is fully occupied and working hard every day to deliver on the commitments and policies of this Government.

I believe that Scotland is overgoverned and that there is some—to use Stephen Kerr’s word—bloating in the governance of Scotland. Some people call that the Scotland Office, but perhaps Stephen Kerr has some other name for it.

Let us have more streamlined government. Let us abolish the Scotland Office through Scotland becoming independent. While we are at it, perhaps the House of Lords could be dispensed with as well, so that all of the politicians that we have working for us are fully occupied doing real jobs and delivering day in and day out for the Scottish people.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the agreement between the SNP and the Scottish Green Party. Can the First Minister give an assurance that, in addition to green transport projects such as the potential for the rail links from Dumfries to Stranraer and Stranraer to Cairnryan, the co-operation agreement will not prevent improvements and upgrades to the A75 and A77, which have long been lobbied for, particularly with regard to safety aspects of the roads, when the strategic transport projects review 2 is finally published?

**The First Minister:** We have already published the south-west Scotland transport study, which emphasised the importance of a connected, safe, resilient and high-quality strategic transport network for people travelling in the region. Of course, the recommendations for targeted road improvements to the A75 and A77 are now subject to more detailed appraisal as part of the STPR2 process, and that is the overall process through which we have agreed to direct future transport infrastructure investment.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Scottish Labour has been calling for an immediate moratorium on new incinerators, alongside a policy review. The Scottish Greens website has a quote from Mark Ruskell warning that Scotland is “sleepwalking into an incineration nightmare.”

I sincerely hope that that did not harm his ministerial chances.

In the spirit of working collaboratively with all parties and listening to our communities that are under threat right now, will the First Minister work with Scottish Labour to introduce an urgent moratorium on new large-scale incinerators? Further, in case I missed the First Minister getting off the fence, can she clarify whether the SNP-Green Government that she leads now supports the stop Cambo campaign? Yes or no?

**The First Minister:** On the first question, as I am sure Monica Lennon knows, we have committed to a process of review to consider the role of incineration in how we deal with waste. I understand that the process of the review will be set out imminently in the next couple of weeks and I am sure that Monica Lennon will have an input into it.

The difference between being in government and being in opposition is that, in government, we have to deal with issues in detail. There are big questions over whether we should continue with new exploration in the North Sea, which would include the Cambo development. That is why there should be a process. Licences are granted, but there should be a process before production approval is given—a process of checking proposals against the climate emergency. That is the right way to go, because we cannot carry on with business as usual in terms of energy, any more than it is business as usual right across our society. I am prepared to challenge my long-held views to ensure that we do the right thing, and I encourage everybody to do likewise.

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** There is a lot to look forward to in the new agreement, particularly in terms of addressing the climate emergency that we all face and in securing a more sustainable future for Scotland. However, it is understandable that many people outwith the central belt and city centres are eagerly waiting to hear how a greater focus on active travel and public transport can benefit them. As a region that is currently widely dependent on car travel, can the Highlands and Islands expect improvements in rail infrastructure, perhaps including doubling the Highland main line and the Inverness to Aberdeen line and improvements to the far north and west Highland lines, as a result of the deal?

**The First Minister:** That is a fair question, and the answer to it has to be yes. We have to develop

public transport and active travel options across the Highlands and Islands, not only as much as in the rest of the country but more so, given the geographic challenges and the overreliance—for understandable reasons—on car use.

As members will be aware, rail improvements are being considered as part of the STPR2 process. The rail decarbonisation action plan, which was published last year, is aligned to that. For example, the action plan commits to developing potential options to serve the west Highland line by hydrogen or battery trains, as well as considering the partial or full electrification of the Highland main line. Those are longer-term projects that will contribute to our commitment to decarbonise passenger services by 2035.

At the core of the question is the inescapable fact that, if we are to meet the targets around reducing reliance on car use for all of the country and some parts of the country in particular, it will depend on developing the alternatives. There is a seriousness of intent to do that around the Highlands and Islands.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the First Minister’s statement on the agreement with the Scottish Green Party. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place across the chamber and the Holyrood campus. Please take care to observe the measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use the aisles and walkways only to access your seat and when moving around the chamber.

## Junior Ministers

### **The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-00987, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the appointment of junior Scottish ministers. I invite the First Minister to move the motion; I will then invite each party to make a short contribution.

15:18

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** It gives me great pleasure to rise to move and support the motion in my name that proposes

“that Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater be appointed as junior Scottish Ministers.”

My statement earlier set out the reasons for and the detail of the co-operation agreement that has been struck between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Greens. The appointments will deliver a key element of that agreement. By approving the appointments, the Parliament will make history, not just in Scottish politics but across the United Kingdom as a whole. It will be the first time that Green politicians have entered national government in any part of these islands.

Our co-operation agreement commits us to a raft of commitments that are necessary to steer Scotland through the challenges that we face. Those commitments include action to support tenants and tackle poverty, plans to reform public services, investments to accelerate our transition to net zero and create green jobs, and so much more besides. The ministers appointed from the ranks of the Greens will share the responsibility and the great privilege of delivering on this bold, ambitious programme.

Patrick Harvie will take on the role of Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights. Patrick has of course been an MSP representing the Glasgow region since 2003. During his time in politics, Patrick has served as convener of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, and I believe that he is the longest-serving party leader in the Scottish Parliament. He is also a passionate and effective campaigner for the causes that he believes in. I worked closely with Patrick during the 2014 referendum campaign, and that experience makes me genuinely enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with him again, this time in the Scottish Government. His wide-ranging brief, which includes active travel, energy efficiency and tenants' rights, gives Patrick the task of leading and implementing, together with his ministerial colleagues, some of the most significant transformations that we must make to tackle the climate emergency.

Lorna Slater will become the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. Among her responsibilities, Lorna will be tasked with driving a green industrial strategy, helping people to acquire the skills that they need to benefit from the transition to net zero, creating a more circular economy and working to protect our natural environment.

Lorna was born and brought up in Canada. After earning a master's degree in engineering, she moved to Scotland in 2000. Since then, she has worked as an engineer and then as a project manager in the renewables sector, which included working on the world's biggest tidal turbine. As such, although she may be relatively new to Parliament, Lorna brings formidable professional experience. As well as having worked in one of the key industries powering our greener future, she has project management experience that will stand her in good stead in ministerial office.

I have complete confidence that both new ministers will make excellent contributions to the Scottish Government. Patrick, Lorna, the rest of the Scottish ministerial team and I are ready to get on with delivering our ambitious commitments and building a fairer, greener Scotland. I therefore formally, and with great pleasure, ask Parliament to support the appointments of Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater be appointed as junior Scottish Ministers.

15:21

### **Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

When this deal was announced, it confirmed that the Greens had finally given up any pretence of being an Opposition party. They have propped up the Scottish National Party for years, backing John Swinney whenever he failed miserably, rubber stamping budget deals in exchange for a car park tax and achieving not much else. Just as we warned at the time, those who vote Green really get SNP yellow.

Instead of fronting this up for what it is—a coalition—the Greens wanted to have their cake and eat it. They were still trying to pretend that they were in opposition while they were in government. When Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater accepted ministerial positions, they wanted to keep asking that same Government questions at First Minister's question time. They wanted to have opposition debate time so that they could do the Government's bidding for it. That is why I am pleased that, like those of us on this side of the chamber, the Presiding Officer saw through that and has ruled accordingly.

That was all an effort by the Greens to rig the Scottish Parliament by pretending that the coalition was something else, even though their own constitution defines it as exactly that. This will be a coalition of chaos. That is why Scottish Conservatives will vote against the Green members becoming ministers.

The Greens are a serious threat to Scotland's economic recovery. At First Minister's question time just after the election, we said that the SNP had to reset its relationship with the business community. The First Minister is on her phone. I do not know whether she is calling business leaders; I do not know whether she speaks to business much at all at the moment. I can assure her that this is not the reset that businesses in Scotland wanted: it is the exact opposite.

The SNP has brought extremists into Government in the middle of an economic crisis. *[Interruption.]* SNP members do not want to hear it, but the Greens are extreme—they have made that clear themselves. Patrick Harvie said:

"Successive UK and Scottish Governments have shared an ideological belief in the pursuit of endless economic growth."

Lorna Slater has rallied against "endless economic growth". The Greens attacked that in their manifesto.

For once, I hand it to the Greens. They have nailed it. My party has pursued endless economic growth and we continue to do so unashamedly. We have pursued more jobs and more businesses. I cannot quite believe it: the Greens have rumbled us. We want hard-working people to have more money in their pockets. I do not understand why Nicola Sturgeon and her Government do not want that. We pursue endless economic growth because it provides extra funding for our schools, hospitals and public services.

Let us look at what the Greens really mean when they criticise "endless economic growth". They want our economy to go backwards. That means businesses shutting down and people being out of work. At the heart of her Government, Nicola Sturgeon has introduced an anti-jobs, anti-business ideology with people who hold the most extreme economic views of any Scottish Government minister since devolution. *[Interruption.]* If SNP members think that that is a laughing matter, shame on them.

Lorna Slater wants Scotland to have  
"a totally different tax structure",

and we know from recent SNP-Green budget deals that that means tax rises. She warned the oil and gas industry, which supports 100,000 jobs, to "transition or die". She has said:

"it isn't possible to run out of money."

In the middle of an economic crisis, Nicola Sturgeon has made her an economic minister.

Those are not just slips of the tongue. The Green manifesto had proposals to stop people selling their homes unless they could pay for costly refurbishments, to stop petrol and diesel car sales in just a few years and to stop building all new roads. Any SNP member who listens to the First Minister trying to dodge questions about the future of the A75, the A77, the A9 or the A96 will be burying their heads in their hands.

Those are not serious proposals in the Green manifesto; they are a joke. Now, however, thanks to Nicola Sturgeon, they are Government policies. She can try to distance herself from those outrageous positions, but she has brought them into her Government. She said earlier that this coalition is a leap of faith, but these appointments are reckless in the extreme. The Scottish Conservatives strongly oppose them and we will not vote for them today.

15:26

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I welcome Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater to their new roles, but I fear that they will quickly realise that the SNP's rhetoric does not match reality. I think that they will quickly realise that the divider-in-chief can only act as the great unifier for so long, and that they will come to realise that, to Nicola Sturgeon, co-operation means rolling over and doing what you are told.

On ideas for Government, we wanted the Government to pay care workers £15 an hour, but it said no. We wanted it to double the Scottish child payment, but it said no. When we asked the SNP to be more ambitious with the job creation scheme, we did not mean finding jobs for its pals in Parliament. That was not quite the green shoots of recovery that the people of Scotland were looking for. Frankly, this is not a new development or a new period in the governance of our great country. This is merely the final confirmation of the same coalition of cuts between the SNP and the Greens that has hammered Scotland's public services for years.

While I appreciate Patrick Harvie's and Lorna Slater's success in achieving for themselves some of the longest job titles in 21st century politics, serious questions need to be asked about why the roles could not be performed under the previous ministerial structure. They should be replacing existing ministers, not adding to the ministerial pay bill. The elevation of Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie to ministers comes with a substantial price tag for the Scottish taxpayer. There are now eight more ministers in Government than there were

when Labour left office, and the ministerial wage bill is set to exceed £1 million a year for the first time since devolution, with more than £2 million a year set to be spent on maintaining the Government and the ranks of special advisers that it employs, not to mention all those hundreds of press officers. There are now perhaps more press officers in Scotland than journalists.

The people of Scotland could be forgiven for feeling that their Government is out of touch and is short-changing them. They are ignored by the Government as local libraries, swimming pools and museums across Scotland close their doors due to cuts that were signed off by this very Government. No more can Patrick Harvie vote in this Parliament for cuts to local budgets and then stand outside the very libraries that his cuts helped to implement and protest against them.

We are now just a couple of months away from the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26—when the eyes of the world will be on Glasgow, but already some of the most prominent climate activists have expressed their pessimism about what the summit will achieve and have cast doubt on the Scottish Government's pretensions to be a leader in the fight against the climate crisis. I want COP26 to be a turning point for Scotland and the rest of the world. Future generations need it to be. [*Interruption.*]

The First Minister is shouting from the sidelines. I do not think that two Green MSPs will be quite the great change that the global community is looking for. That is why I want us to come out of COP26 with a truly historic Glasgow agreement—the moment the world turned its warm words into meaningful action to confront the climate crisis. That means not only the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments but, frankly, global Governments turning their words into action so that we can confront the climate emergency. We keep being told that we have less than 10 years to confront it. Let us make that our national mission and priority.

However, when the leaders of the world descend on Glasgow—a city that is represented by me, Nicola Sturgeon and Patrick Harvie—they will be entering a city that is in the grip of a dangerous and spiralling waste crisis, in which cleansing workers are shamefully compared with the far right by an out-of-touch city leader. The First Minister is right—that is ridiculous. Instead, I want them to see a country that is focused on the urgent issues at hand, not fighting over the constitution. It is shameful, and the First Minister should address that directly with the leader of Glasgow City Council.

Today's appointments are more about how the Government and Nicola Sturgeon look than about what they will deliver for the people of Scotland.

After 15 years, the people of Scotland deserve better.

15:31

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** When Robin Harper became Scotland's and the UK's first elected Green parliamentarian, in 1999, he reflected on how, at the turn of the last century, the politics of change was represented by the colour red and that the colour of the 21st century must be green. This afternoon, we will take our first place in Government—the first Greens anywhere in the UK to do so. We sometimes overuse the word “historic” in politics, but this moment is genuinely historic. A new party, a new movement and a new politics is entering Government. That has happened fewer than half a dozen times in the past century.

To the best of my knowledge, Patrick Harvie will be the first minister for tenants who was himself evicted by an unscrupulous landlord. In fact, I think that he is the first minister to have “tenants” in their job title. He will be responsible for delivering the most ambitious tenants' rights agenda anywhere in these islands for decades.

Patrick has been integral in the development of the Scottish Green Party into a party that is capable of taking this step today—from having been taken along to Ecology Party meetings as a kid by his mum, Rose, and joining as an adult a Scottish Green Party that had about 300 members, to the rainbow Parliament of 2003, the long decade of being just one of two Green MSPs, and the remarkable progress that we have made in more recent years.

Just days after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its “code red for humanity”, the need for radical transformation of our economic and social systems could not be clearer. I know that Patrick will take that fierce sense of urgency with him into Government and apply it across all his portfolio responsibilities.

Having known him for as long as I have, I feel that I owe Patrick's new Government colleagues a word of warning: if they did not know much about obscure 1970s science fiction before now, they should be ready for that to change. I am not talking just about “Dr Who”, although they should probably swot up on that. A growing Netflix watch list is the least that they will need to prepare.

However, Lorna Slater's new colleagues will, sooner or later, end up on the trapeze. It is hard to think of someone more qualified than Lorna to take on the role of minister for green skills and industrial strategy. She is a renewables engineer who was, until just a few weeks ago, a key member of the team who delivered the world's most powerful tidal turbine, here in Scotland.

Lorna Slater brings real industry experience and expertise into Government. She knows exactly what is required in order to deliver a just transition, because that is exactly what she was doing until she was elected to this place.

I know personally just how committed Lorna is to getting the job done. For years, we have worked together to develop our party, including as conveners of its operations committee, which is one of those truly sought-after positions in which—as you know, Presiding Officer—a person gets all the blame but none of the credit. Our recent electoral success—and particularly in the election of a Green group in which the majority of members are women—is in no small part down to Lorna’s incredible project management skills, her patience and her stubborn determination.

I should say briefly that it is quite extraordinary to see the Tories coming to the chamber today to accuse others of extremism. Douglas Ross has now had more than a week to apologise for his use of a homophobic dog whistle in response to our announcement of the co-operation agreement. Yet again, today, he has failed to do so. However, the real hypocrisy is in the accusation that he levelled at the First Minister. Only two members of the Parliament have ever allowed an extremist, homophobic and misogynistic party to hold sway over a Government and they are sitting on the Conservative front bench. Douglas Ross and Stephen Kerr were enthusiastic supporters of their party’s cosy relationship with the Democratic Unionist Party. Those of us who are committed to working together in the interests of people and planet will take no lessons from the extremist enablers on the Tory benches.

This is a moment 48 years in the making for the Greens. We take this step because of the steps taken before us by Robin Harper, Rose Harvie and so many others. I am so very excited to see what Patrick Harvie, Lorna Slater and their colleagues across the Government achieve together over the coming years. I know that they will serve the people of Scotland with passion and integrity, and I will be proud to vote for Patrick’s and Lorna’s appointment today.

15:35

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I will start by expressing some dismay. The First Minister regaled the chamber with talk of a new kind of politics, then went on to wholly ignore my question about national testing and embarked on an infantile attack on my party. All hail the new politics—same as the old politics.

As a Liberal Democrat, I will always look for and appreciate consensus in our politics. As such, I congratulate these two parties for having found

such common ground—as, indeed, I congratulate Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater on their elevation. However, I cannot support either the deal that they have arrived at or their appointment as Green ministers, because my party does not share that ground.

The First Minister has attempted to emulate the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, who brought Greens into Government in early 2020. She has sought to mirror that coalition with the appointment of the co-leaders of the Scottish Greens to ministerial office. However, that is a pale imitation of the deal hatched on the other side of the world, and it is thin gruel for a Green Party that has, until now, characterised itself as radical.

The New Zealand deal was forged under the imperative of the climate crisis. Significantly, it was signed practically amidst the very smoke of the bush fires that had devastated their Australian neighbours. Ardern wanted to demonstrate to the world that her Government was taking the global threat seriously. As such, the climate emergency formed the centrepiece of that deal. Although that imperative exists for Scottish ministers in equal measure, there is no such centrepiece to this deal.

It will be almost inexplicable to the majority of Green voters—who, according to a poll from April, support Scotland’s retained place in the United Kingdom—that the central mission of this deal is a second independence referendum. This partnership exists first and foremost to ask Westminster for another referendum and then to use its likely refusal to drive yet more grievance at the expense of all other public policy. It is not a deal with the climate in mind. After years of missed emissions targets, one would think that the Scottish Green Party might have driven a harder bargain, but it has not.

Ardern’s power-sharing agreement went beyond climate and looked to social justice as well. Where her partnership stretched for new and radical frontiers in social policy, the Scottish deal does not. The New Zealand coalition immediately embarked on a brave new policy of testing pills at festivals to keep drug users safe, yet the nationalist coalition agreement agreed here today is entirely silent on Scotland’s drug deaths catastrophe. Far from being radical or extreme, there is very little to this deal at all.

I have already mentioned national testing. However, on issues such as wider education reform, the abolition of the council tax, the decarbonisation of our homes—matters on which you would expect Green MSPs to want to have a say from the back benches—there is very little substance. The Greens will not seek to trouble the SNP or subject it to effective scrutiny. There is even a clause in the agreement that demands that the Greens offer “no surprises” to their partners. I

can almost hear the groans across the chamber because, from here on in, when it comes to contributions from Green back benchers, we will be subjected to choreographed softball questions and speeches scripted by Government special advisers. There is no question but that the Green Party has surrendered entirely its Opposition status for the life of this session. Nicola Sturgeon must be rubbing her hands at having got such a cheap deal.

When I think of the Greens in Scotland, I remember the party of Robin Harper—a movement focused on reform and dedicated to challenging the old order of things. Robin never swapped environmentalism for nationalism, because he supported Scotland's place in the United Kingdom. I really do not know what has happened to that radical zeal or that internationalist focus. By putting nationalism ahead of the climate emergency, Patrick Harvie and co have revealed their true colours. Those colours look far more like the acid yellow of the party of government than the proud emerald of the global green movement. That is why the Liberal Democrats will oppose the motion.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that motion S6M-00987, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the appointment of junior Scottish ministers, 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.

15:40

*Meeting suspended.*

15:47

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the vote on motion S6M-00987.

The vote is now closed.

#### **For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### **Against**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-00987 is: For 69, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater be appointed as junior Scottish Ministers.

## Scottish Government Priorities

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-00978, in the name of John Swinney, on the first 100 days—delivering for the people of Scotland. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible.

15:52

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):** On 26 May, the First Minister made a statement to Parliament outlining our ambitious programme to drive the nation’s recovery from the Covid crisis. Central to that programme would be the delivery of the commitments that we set out in our first steps plan during the election campaign.

In the 100 days since the First Minister was elected by Parliament, we have applied a clear focus to delivering 81 priorities in the programme that would materially improve the health, safety, security and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. That period ended on 25 August, and I confirm that the Government delivered 80 of those 81 commitments. That is a significant achievement and one that clearly demonstrates that the Government is committed to delivering on its promises to the people of Scotland.

Successful completion of those commitments required a co-ordinated, collective approach across Government and with our partners. I welcome the progress that has been achieved, and I thank all those involved in the delivery of those commitments.

Those targeted interventions will deliver positive change for the people, families and communities who need it most, and for our economy, public services and environment. They touch on every ministerial portfolio, will have an impact on communities the length and breadth of Scotland and will have a lasting benefit for years to come.

Our most immediate priority has been to lead Scotland safely through the pandemic and to steer a careful course back to the closest that we can achieve to normality by reopening communities in a safe and responsible fashion. That has been possible only because of the success of our vaccination programme.

Every adult in Scotland has now been offered their first dose of a Covid vaccine, and we expect everyone who is eligible to be offered their second dose by 12 September. Drop-in or open-access clinics are now offered in all mainland health boards for those aged 16 and over. In total, 91 per cent of adults have received their first dose and 83 per cent have received their second. That includes 92 per cent of healthcare staff and 94 per cent of individuals who are shielding due to clinical vulnerability.

Although enormous progress has been made, Covid remains a significant threat to our people, and the sharp rise in cases in the last two weeks is a cause for a high degree of concern. Ministers are carefully assessing the case numbers and the relationship with hospitalisation levels. The First Minister will update Parliament on those considerations in her statement tomorrow.

Last week, the Government took the necessary steps towards learning lessons and improving understanding and preparedness for future pandemics when we published a set of draft aims and principles for an independent public inquiry into the handling of Covid-19 in Scotland. That will form the basis of a process to listen to the views of those affected—especially the bereaved—on what they wish to see from an inquiry. We have already started engaging with bereaved families, who we want to put at the heart of the inquiry and its approach. We will ensure that the inquiry has the necessary scope to consider the breadth of impact of the pandemic on the population across what we would habitually refer to as the four harms—Covid harm, non-Covid health harm, social harm and economic harm—to ensure that the inquiry is able to explore the full range of the actions of the Government and our partners and to subject those and the decision-making processes involved to full and open scrutiny.

Our continuing move back towards normality would not be possible without a strong and sustainable health and care sector. Throughout the pandemic, our national health service and care services have worked tirelessly to deal with the increased strain of Covid on top of the other ongoing health and care needs of the population.

In our 100 days programme, we recognised the selflessness of NHS and care staff by delivering on our commitment to implement the most generous pay rise anywhere in the United Kingdom for NHS Scotland agenda for change staff. That average pay increase of 4 per cent benefits around 154,000 employees.

We also took steps to grow our health and care services to meet future challenges. Last week, the First Minister launched the NHS recovery plan to meet our ambition of increasing in-patient, day case and out-patient activity by 10 per cent. The

plan is backed by over £1 billion of additional investment to support the delivery of improvements throughout the five years of the parliamentary session. Among other things, it will increase primary care investment by 25 per cent and restore face-to-face consultations in general practitioner surgeries. It will reduce accident and emergency attendances by 15 to 20 per cent and will increase out-patient capacity by 10 per cent compared to pre-Covid levels.

As part of the 100 days commitments, we also launched a consultation earlier this month to seek the views of the public on a national care system. We have heard a great deal about the problems that people face in the current system and now we want to engage the public and all interested parties to build a better approach that meets the needs of the public throughout the country.

However, health and care services are only one aspect of how the 100 days commitments materially improve the lives of the Scottish people. We also took steps to further invest in our communities, our homes, our families and the connections that help us to thrive. For instance, we have begun development of a new five-year plan focused on tackling loneliness and social isolation head on. We saw those issues being experienced during the Covid pandemic—that was illustrated to us clearly and powerfully. We have backed the plan with £10 million over five years. We recognise that that will be the first step in tackling the intensification of the issue as a result of the pandemic. On 29 July we announced almost £1 million in funding to organisations tackling isolation and loneliness over this summer and into early 2022.

We are also working to better connect communities across Scotland. One of the specific measures in the 100 days commitments was the building of 14 new mobile phone masts in remote, rural and island areas. Eight of those have already been activated for 4G service, and the remaining six will be activated by November.

We are taking further significant steps to eliminate poverty and inequality in Scotland by beginning work to design and deliver a minimum income guarantee. That radical policy will help everyone to receive an income sufficient to live a dignified, healthy and financially secure life.

That is only a sample of how we are ensuring our collective future prosperity. Through the 100 days commitments, we invested in jobs and our economy to mitigate the harmful impacts of Westminster's Brexit and help Scotland recover from the pandemic.

We know that those issues have been particularly hard on local businesses, tourism and hospitality. That is why, among other things, we

allocated up to £62 million in direct financial support to taxi drivers and operators and £25 million to tourism, including holiday vouchers for unpaid carers and low-income families. We also launched the Scotland Loves Local campaign with a loyalty card scheme and a new £10 million fund to help revitalise high streets that were hit by the pandemic.

In addition to that immediate support, we are taking steps toward a long-term sustainable economic future. Our vision for Scotland is to create a wellbeing economy—a society that thrives across economic, social and environmental dimensions and delivers sustainable and inclusive growth for Scotland's people and places.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** It is not, in fact, 100 days or whatever—it is 5,234 days since the Scottish National Party came into government, and one of the stains on the record of the past 14 years is the record drug deaths. Will the Government commit to backing the Scottish Conservatives' proposals for a right to recovery bill that will tackle the drug deaths crisis in Scotland?

**John Swinney:** I point out to Stephen Kerr that the Government has been elected on four occasions by the public in Scotland over the time period that he refers to. In relation to the issue of drug deaths, the Minister for Drugs Policy, Angela Constance, has made it very clear, and the First Minister made it clear in her statement, that the Government will consider all constructive suggestions, wherever they come from in Parliament. That does not guarantee that what is suggested will happen, because there will be many issues to wrestle with, but the Government will give serious consideration to the points that are raised in the proposed legislation that Mr Kerr refers to, because we are absolutely determined to put the necessary focus on the issue of drug deaths and on addressing that crisis, which I know that Angela Constance is doing.

As part of the wider approach to the 100 days commitments, particularly in relation to economic policy, we established an advisory council to shape our 10-year national strategy for economic transformation, which will be published later in the autumn. The strategy will set out the steps that we will take to deliver a green economic recovery and support new good green jobs, businesses and industries in the future.

If we are to secure that long-term sustainable future for our economy and communities, we cannot fail to address climate change and its impacts. We have worked with partners to ensure that the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—summit in Glasgow in November will be safe and, we hope, successful in relation to tackling climate change. To demonstrate Scotland's commitment to tackling

climate change, we have published our indicative nationally determined contribution based on our world-leading 2030 target to reduce emissions of all major greenhouse gases by at least 75 per cent. We have delivered on our commitment to establish the green jobs workforce academy to ensure that we can match the skills with the job opportunities that will drive our transition to net zero.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** The Scottish Government has not delivered on its pledge to set out its strategic investment assessment of the Scottish supply chain for offshore wind. Why not, and when will it do so?

**John Swinney:** The Government has fulfilled all its commitments in the 100 days programme, but there will, of course, be other things in the Government's manifesto that we are determined to take forward. We will do that as part of the measures that we are taking, for example, on transport decarbonisation with the bus decarbonisation task force, the steps to remove fossil fuels from public transport, where we are making £50 million available in 2021 to help drive a green recovery, and the successful completion of the extensive woodland creation programme, which includes 12,000 hectares of woodland planting. Those are just some of the measures that we have taken in relation to tackling climate change.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We have a bit of time, Deputy First Minister.

**John Swinney:** I will.

**Jackie Baillie:** Included in the 100 days programme was the establishment of the cross-party Covid recovery group, on which I and other members across the chamber serve. On 28 June, I replied to the cabinet secretary's private office email of the same date to ask when the next meeting of that group would be held, and I never received a response. It appears that ministers took time off during the recess while Covid rampaged through our communities. Why was the meeting not held?

**John Swinney:** We met extensively before the summer recess, and I think that we are meeting later this week, if my diary is correct. We will therefore continue the discussions that Jackie Baillie helpfully contributes to at all times, of course. I welcome her contribution in that process.

Within the 100 days commitments, we took steps to ensure that children and young people in Scotland will have the best start in life and that families will be supported to recover from the difficult period that all families have faced. We

provided £20 million for a summer offer of activities for those children and young people most affected by Covid to reconnect, have fun and learn, and we introduced free school lunches for primary 4 children as the first step to delivering free school breakfasts and lunches for all primary school pupils. I am grateful to local authority leaders for their agreement to the approach that we have taken, which has meant that, at the start of the school year, primary 4 children have been able to benefit from that support. We have also made available funding to local authorities to increase teacher numbers by 1,000 and classroom assistants by 500 as part of our commitment to 3,500 additional teachers and 500 more pupil support assistants over the parliamentary session.

Since the start of term, on 18 August, we have supported all local authorities to offer 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare to all eligible children. Perhaps that is the most significant contribution that we could make to enhancing the nurture and support of our youngest citizens at the most critical time in their lives.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** On supporting young people, I was very gratified to see in the NHS recovery plan an ambitious commitment by the Government to clear down child and adolescent mental health waiting times by 2023. Can the Deputy First Minister confirm to Parliament that that will not just involve parking young people on medication or offering them inferior online interventions and that they will each get access to talking therapy if they need it?

**John Swinney:** On the first part of Mr Cole-Hamilton's intervention, my strong view is that it would not be satisfactory for the type of options that he suggested to be made available in all circumstances, because it is clear that that would not be appropriate. For the same reason, the latter part of Mr Cole-Hamilton's question is a difficult point for me to commit to, because clinical judgment will be applied in that respect. However, I accept and recognise it as vital that any young person who is in need of specific mental health assistance is able to receive that. That is the commitment that the Government is making in relation to the NHS recovery plan that has been published.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** Will the Deputy First Minister take an intervention?

**John Swinney:** I will, but I suspect that I am beginning to stretch the Presiding Officer's patience.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** This is probably the last intervention.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** The Deputy First Minister mentioned the things that have been done for young people during the 100 days. One thing

that the Government has not done is double the Scottish child payment. We know that, if children are in poverty, it is very difficult for them to learn. All the things that the Deputy First Minister has described will therefore be at risk if the child poverty gap is not addressed. Will the Government commit to immediately doubling the Scottish child payment in the programme for government, and will it look at the fact that 125,000 children have missed out on the bridging payment that it has paid to children and young people while there is a huge delay in rolling that out to six to 16-year-olds?

**John Swinney:** The Government is committed to the earliest possible progress on the doubling of the child payment. The most immediate threat to the income of families is the removal of the universal credit supplementary payment, which the United Kingdom Government is about to embark on. I take this opportunity on my feet in the Parliament to commit myself to do everything that I can—my colleague Shona Robison is doing everything that she can—to try to ensure that the United Kingdom Government does not take that retrograde step. That is an immediate choice that is in front of United Kingdom Government ministers just now and which will directly do harm.

The Scottish Government has taken steps to put in place the bridging payments. We will make as early progress as we possibly can, and we would be happy to discuss that with the Labour Party.

However, as part of our dialogue and discussions with our colleagues from the Green Party, who are soon to be confirmed as ministers in the Scottish Government as a result of the Bute house agreement, we will certainly be focusing on those challenges. I look forward to ensuring that we build on our 100 days programme, working in partnership with our Green Party colleagues to progress the agreement, which will influence much of our programme for government and much of the remainder of this parliamentary session.

The Government is focused on ensuring that we continue the delivery that we have achieved in the first 100 days and to deliver on the expectations of the people of Scotland. We have set out an ambitious agenda. We have delivered on it in the first 100 days and we intend to keep delivering on it for the remainder of this parliamentary session.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the delivery of 80 key actions within the first 100 days of the new administration that will have a positive impact on the people of Scotland by leading the COVID-19 recovery, supporting NHS and care services, tackling the climate crisis, backing economic recovery and creating jobs, supporting communities and helping children and families, and recognises these actions as the foundation of improved outcomes for Scotland's people that will continue to be delivered through the forthcoming Programme for Government, the COVID-19

recovery programme and the shared policy programme agreed between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party.

16:10

**Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

I thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer, and the Presiding Officer, for your understanding about my not being able to remain for the whole of the debate.

Members have witnessed their fair share of poor speeches in the chamber, but the Deputy First Minister's speech will rank highly. How can any self-respecting politician be on their feet for more than quarter of an hour and say how great their Government is and not realise what it has done over the past 100 days and how it has let down the people of Scotland?

John Swinney made a fool of himself when he introduced the term "vertical drinking" during the summer. However, I think that he has now come up with a new meaning for the word "delivery". During the past 100 days, the Government has not delivered—it has failed time and time again. I will come on to explain just some of the reasons for that.

For the moment, I want to discuss the topic of this SNP Government-led debate. The Government gets to choose the topic that will be debated for hours at a time. It could have chosen any subject that it wanted to. It could have chosen to speak about the NHS treatment backlog. It could have chosen to discuss how we get a strong economic recovery following Covid-19. It could have chosen to discuss the future of education. It could have chosen to discuss pretty much any issue of importance to the people of Scotland. Instead, the Government chose to pat itself on the back and say how great it has been during the past 100 days.

The Government is completely bereft of ideas on how to sort out the mess that it has made of this country. It would rather pretend that everything is great and hope that, if it says that often enough, people will believe it. However, everything is far from great.

Let us look at the areas that John Swinney did not mention. Apart from an intervention from the Conservatives, we got a couple of lines about Scotland's drug deaths crisis. However, it was during the 100 days since the SNP was elected as the Government that the appalling drug deaths figures for last year were released. Yet again, there was an increase in the lives cut short and families left devastated.

Scotland remains the drug deaths capital of Europe but the Deputy First Minister had nothing to say about it. The situation is so bad that there

are three deaths a day as a result of drug misuse. While John Swinney and his Government are celebrating how they have delivered during the past 100 days—and, indeed, since they were re-elected 117 days ago—more than 350 families have lost a loved one. The Deputy First Minister celebrates his Government. Those families grieve a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, a friend or a loved one. It is shameful that we got nothing from him about that crisis.

The Scottish Conservatives have plans. As Stephen Kerr said, we have published our plans for a right to recovery. We will push those forward at every opportunity, to make sure that help is there for those who need it.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Douglas Ross:** Of course I will.

**Emma Harper:** I wonder whether the proposed right to recovery bill will seek the devolution of drug policies, so that we can have the powers that we really need in this country if we are to do more to tackle the issue.

**Douglas Ross:** I thought that Emma Harper came from a medical background. Surely she should know that we currently have the exact same powers over drug misuse in Scotland as every other part of the United Kingdom has, but our drug deaths are more than three times higher.

The member asked about the Scottish Conservative proposals. Our proposals are backed by seven recovery groups. Instead of sniping from the sidelines, perhaps Emma Harper will join us to deal with the problem that the SNP has overseen for the past 14 years.

I was speaking about health because, during the first 100 days, we have had a recovery plan for the NHS that failed to mention long Covid, that was a rehash of the previous announcements and that is so underwhelming that it gives neither patients nor staff the confidence that the Scottish Government understands the massive challenges facing the NHS here in Scotland in the months and years ahead.

Maybe the reason that we have not seen much progress is that the health secretary was busy rolling out a Covid vaccination status app. No, he was not doing that either, was he? People in Scotland have suffered because the SNP Scottish Government wanted to do it differently. It could not work with the United Kingdom Government, like other devolved Administrations; it had to set up its own system. It is now delayed and costing taxpayers extra money, with holidaymakers finding themselves unable to access venues abroad and vital oil and gas workers struggling to get into

Norway. What a mess, what a farce and, of course, all completely avoidable.

Let us move from health to transport—again, an area not covered by the Deputy First Minister—and the continuing crisis with Scotland’s ferries. Local people and tourists are forced to rely on ancient vessels that break down regularly. The transport minister has not been seen on a ferry since his appointment, but maybe he is too busy painting on windows to get ready for another launch event for Nicola Sturgeon to turn up to. It does not seem to matter whether the ferries actually work; the SNP just paints over the cracks and hopes no one notices.

What about education? Our young people continue to be let down by the Scottish Government. During the past 100 days, this year’s exam results showed that the attainment gap between our richest and poorest pupils, which John Swinney’s Government was supposed to be eliminating, has increased again. In addition, who could forget the First Minister having complete confidence in the Scottish Qualifications Authority at First Minister’s question time one lunchtime, before her Government announced, a few hours later, that the body would be scrapped?

As we heard earlier, Scotland’s economic recovery is at risk with new Green ministers, but it seems that the SNP was already determined to hold us back. My colleague Donald Cameron recently revealed that the SNP scheme to build affordable homes in rural areas has spent half its budget in the past five years. We have a housing crisis in rural Scotland and the SNP has again failed to deliver. From the response to a question from my colleague Miles Briggs, we know that 275 Scottish families have been living in temporary accommodation for at least three years. The Scottish Government response was to say, “These are concerning statistics.” It is far, far worse than that, and they are not statistics but families who are looking for support but who have been parked by the Government for years.

The new justice secretary is not here. Maybe he is reading his brief, because he has not fared well either. He struggled to get to grips with his new portfolio and incorrectly announced that the Inverness prison would be delayed for up to two years, only to be bailed out a few days later by his officials who confirmed that that was not the case. However, sadly, there has been no reprieve for people trying to get through to Police Scotland on 101 recently. More than 40 per cent of calls to 101 in June were abandoned. That is right. During one month—right in the middle of when John Swinney expects us all to believe that his Government was delivering for Scotland—more than 70,000 calls to 101 could not get through.

The SNP wanted today’s debate to be an exercise in self-congratulation. However, I have managed to use the time available to me only to scratch at the surface of the failures that the SNP has presided over since the election. The list of those can and should go on, and I am sure that other speakers in the debate will use the opportunity.

The fact is that, no matter how much this Government wishes to make the aftermath of the election a new beginning, it cannot escape its old failings and the new ones that it is creating. As we heard earlier, this is not day 100 or 117 since the election: this is day 5,234 since the SNP came to power. The SNP has already had 14 years in Government, but its record in the past decade is no better than its record since the election in May, and no supine parliamentary debate or coalition deal can change that.

Although I look forward to debating the SNP-Greens’ belated programme for government next week, I already know what is going to be the centrepiece. It is not going to be a plan to help children catch up from a year of disrupted schooling, it is not going to be a plan to support employers and businesses to deliver our economic recovery, and even with the SNP’s new coalition partners, it is not going to be a plan to give our nation the leadership it needs to meet our climate targets. It will be about a second independence referendum.

Even in the aftermath of a global pandemic, when families still face huge uncertainty over their future, when workers still do not know whether their jobs are secure, and when many public services have not returned to normal, the Scottish National Party cannot let its obsession go. It has no answer to the challenges of the day that Scotland faces.

This remains the same tired and stale Government, regardless of whether we are debating 100 days or 5,000 days. That is why the Scottish Conservatives, as the largest Opposition party, are getting on with the job of building Scotland’s real alternative. The more the SNP presides over failures, the more it lets down our country. The Conservatives cannot and will not stand back and allow that to happen.

I move amendment S6M-00978.3, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the failure of the Scottish Government to publish its Programme for Government in the week after recess, the first time that this has happened, outside of a pandemic, since 2014; further notes that this is not a new administration, but the same government that has been in power since 2007; notes the many failings of the Scottish Government since the election; believes that the Scottish Government’s agreement with the Scottish Green Party will be a disaster for Scotland’s economy, and calls on the Scottish Government to prioritise the recovery from the

COVID-19 pandemic, not another independence referendum.”

16:20

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** Because I might forget later, I note that I have an amendment to move, too. It is important to reflect on where we are with our country coming through the pandemic; I will come in a moment to the 100 days—or, rather, the 117 days—since the election. Let us not forget that thousands of our fellow citizens have lost their lives. Almost every family across our country has grieved the loss of a relative or other loved one. Every child has been touched by lost education and by challenges with their mental health and wellbeing.

Tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of our fellow citizens are waiting—I was going to say “patiently”, but they are probably waiting impatiently—for healthcare. There are huge backlogs in cancer diagnosis, cancer treatment and mental health support, particularly in child and adolescent mental health services. The backlogs were huge pre-pandemic and have all been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Tens of thousands of people are worried about whether they will have a job to go back to. We face a looming unemployment crisis coming through the pandemic. Every business across the country has fears and anxieties about what the recovery will truly mean for it as we head into the latest phase of the pandemic.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Tens of thousands of our fellow citizens have not had access to justice during the pandemic. There are huge backlogs of cases and large numbers of people have been on remand for an extended period, many of whom might ultimately be found innocent of what they are accused of.

All that pressure has been on our key workers, whether they be teachers, care workers, NHS staff, council workers, cleansing workers, retail workers or food delivery workers. All of that is a huge challenge, and layered on top of our national crisis with those issues from the global pandemic is the global climate emergency.

This is a huge moment for our country. It does not require more of the same and just rhetoric; it requires more than cheap soundbites and platitudes from the Government and the new coalition partners. It requires meaningful and deep action and bigger ideas than those that the Government presented in the previous parliamentary session. To be frank, a bigger idea than that of independence is needed. We need big ideas to deliver for people across our country.

The Deputy First Minister’s motion is filled with triumphant praise, but it will surprise no one who

has followed the Government’s conduct in office to learn that things are not quite as they seem on paper. The truth is that, far from the 100 days being a period in which the SNP has transformed Scotland and started the important work of our national recovery, it has instead been a missed opportunity.

The challenges that we face in recovering from the pandemic are profound. Rather than rising to the challenge, the SNP’s “First Steps” document has been mostly a tick-box exercise. I have no doubt that ministers will be pleased with themselves and will pat themselves on the back for their achievements, but the document does not contain the big actions of a Government that is taking the big decisions that are necessary to tackle Scotland’s recovery. This is an unambitious list from a tired Government that has been in power for 14 years and has run out of big ideas.

The truth is that, while ministers should have been focused on our safe exit from lockdown and on kick-starting Scotland’s recovery, they have instead spent the summer on formalising their coalition of cuts with the Greens. When given a chance to step up and demonstrate a commitment to the national recovery that we all said during the election campaign would be a priority, the SNP predictably doubled down on its obsessions and on dodging parliamentary scrutiny. Scotland needs a Government that is focused on results and positive changes, not more of what we have seen over the past five years—indeed, the past 14 years.

No one wants a celebration of the appointment of a Government’s own ministers to be one of the most tick-box exercises possible, as a short-term solution to its problems. No one wants a self-congratulatory Government; they want big ideas. That is why Scottish Labour has called for an ambitious jobs guarantee scheme that would ensure that no young person who has experienced the economic scarring of the pandemic is left behind or left unemployed.

Instead of that, we have the SNP wanting to celebrate the appointment of a minister responsible for youth employment who is overseeing a young person’s guarantee that has no targets or meaningful measure of success and which will not actually give the guarantee that it claims to on paper—almost like that legal guarantee of treatment that results in the law being broken rather than people being given the treatment that they need.

There are 30,000 unemployed young Scots and 18,000 still on furlough. What they need from Government is ambition and delivery, not rhetoric and promises of something in the future.

We call for an NHS recovery plan to tackle the clinical backlog, support our front-line heroes and deliver a catch-up in our cancer services. Instead of promised fast-track cancer diagnosis centres being delivered, they have been late, and the health secretary has spent most of the summer either absent or denying that there is a crisis. For the third week in a row, we have the worst A and E waiting times since those statistics were first produced, in 2005, and the recovery plan, when it emerged, was barely a pamphlet. It displayed low ambition and was criticised by staff. Again, it was more about public relations and slick rhetoric than actually delivering for people on the ground.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** Anas Sarwar is absolutely right about the lack of ambition on acute care. Does he recognise the work that members such as Jackie Baillie, Sandesh Gulhane and myself have done on the issue of long Covid? As many as 100,000 Scots face that devastating condition without the support that is available to sufferers in other parts of the United Kingdom.

**Anas Sarwar:** I congratulate all the members whom Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned by name—if I do not congratulate Jackie Baillie, I will pay a heavy price later. The issue is serious and important. Long Covid has impacted many of our fellow citizens. The pandemic has not gone away. People are still getting Covid and are still being hospitalised. Sadly, people are still dying from Covid and getting long Covid. What is needed is direct action.

Today we heard lots of warm words from the First Minister about how she wants to be the great unifier, how she wants to have co-operation and how she wants to take on board other people's ideas. I have heard people from across the Parliament talk about dedicated long Covid clinics since Parliament reconvened after the election, and we have still not had that backed up by delivery.

We can have warm words about co-operation, but co-operation has to be more than just saying, "Roll over and agree with what we want." It has to mean genuinely listening to other people's concerns. On the issue of long Covid, I wholeheartedly agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton.

**Emma Harper:** Does the member agree that the respiratory care action plan that is being implemented right now by the Scottish Government includes long Covid?

**Anas Sarwar:** I welcome the respiratory care action plan, but long Covid treatment is about more than just respiratory care. Further, action plans, consultations and working groups are fantastic at bringing people together and airing ideas but, to be honest, at some point, the Government has to get past strategy documents

and action groups and start delivering action. I think that it was Willie Rennie who said that, if a job was created for every working group that the Scottish Government announced, we would have full employment. He was right about that. It is time to turn away from those working groups and talking shops and deliver for people across the country.

There is still time to take the urgent action that we need to tackle this crisis. Let us deliver a genuine jobs guarantee for young people and the long-term unemployed. Let us double the Scottish child payment immediately to confront child poverty. Let us remobilise the NHS to confront Scotland's biggest killer—cancer—and back up the NHS with CAMHS support and long Covid clinics. Let us take urgent action to ensure that we do not have a repeat of the SQA exams fiasco year after year, and let us ensure that we are investing in our young people.

Let us not pretend that this is day 1 of a new SNP Government. It is day 5,233 and, after all that time, the people of Scotland need a Government that truly wants to bring us together, not pull us apart. They want a Government that will not only talk but deliver through action. Scotland needs this Government to do better.

I move amendment S6M-00978.2, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"considers that the actions set out in the document, First Steps, lack ambition; notes the failure to implement a meaningful youth jobs guarantee, despite 18,000 young people in Scotland still on furlough, and the inadequacy of the Scottish Government's NHS Recovery Plan to deal with the pressures that health services are currently facing; acknowledges that COVID-19 cases have risen to the highest levels on record, and believes that failure to bring the virus back under control will undermine Scotland's recovery from the pandemic."

16:29

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I welcome Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie to their posts. Despite my earlier remarks and the opposition of my party, I recognise that today is a big day for them, and I wish them success in their new roles.

One hundred days is a long time in politics. However, it is even longer for someone who is suffering from suicidal thoughts but has not yet been seen by a psychiatrist, or for a drug user who has reached out for help and been told that it will be 10 days before they will receive an assessment phone call. It is longer for someone who is still waiting for a laptop to access online learning, for people who live in rural areas amid unmet promises on increased connectivity, or for those who have been waiting for ferries that have been allowed to rust in Scotland's shipyards.

There have been discussions about the exact date when the Government's 100 days fell, but, given the gravity of the situations that our constituents face, I will not waste precious time bickering about that. It is a false flag that has helpfully diverted attention from the Government's record.

Last week, the Scottish Government published its much hyped and much called-for "NHS Recovery Plan". We have heard that it is a rather thin document. Given the pressure that our health service is under, my team and I were anticipating a weighty tome full of evidence-based policies, new strategies and clarity for under-pressure staff on when they might expect some relief. Instead, we got 26 pages of repackaged and reheated promises. With accident and emergency departments more stretched than they have ever been before, and with 200,000 operations lost or deferred due to the pandemic, patients and staff deserved more than wafer-thin guarantees and recycled commitments. What they got was a vague and poorly thought out avoidance strategy. The plan's answer to the crisis that the NHS faces appears to be to suppress demand and shift patients online.

I cannot decide whether the general practitioner recruitment target is for 2026 or 2028; it cannot be both, but the recovery plan suggests that it is. GPs are being asked to do more with less—with the same increase in capacity that was planned in 2017, which was pre-pandemic, so it does not add up.

During the election, the SNP promised a plan that would deliver 10 per cent more capacity. Based on the plan that was published last week, the only thing that the SNP looks set to deliver is yet more disappointment. Despite modelling that suggests that up to 100,000 people in Scotland could suffer from long Covid, the NHS recovery plan does not mention it—not even once. That is a disgrace.

Last week, I attended the long Covid cafe that is run by Long Covid Scotland. It was truly devastating to see people who should be in the prime of their lives laid low by the crushing condition. It was an eye-opener. It is not unduly unfair to say that they would be better off in England, where they would at least have access to long Covid clinics, which Anas Sarwar rightly points out have been talked about in the chamber since the Parliament reconvened after the election. Long Covid is perhaps the biggest disabling event since the first world war, yet many people who are suffering from the condition cannot even verify that they have it, because they were not tested for Covid in the early days—the first wave—of the pandemic. As such, they are left in limbo, without access to support or long-term sick

pay. They are suffering awful symptoms such as air hunger, chronic fatigue and gastrointestinal issues, and they are not getting the support that they need.

As I said earlier, I am working closely with Jackie Baillie and Sandesh Gulhane to establish a cross-party group on long Covid. We are doing that because we recognise how important it will become to the work of the chamber. Professor Jason Leitch has said that the number of new Covid cases could be as high as 14,000 a day this week, yet test and protect is still understaffed and struggling. Positive cases will certainly slip through the cracks and more people will become infected and come down with long Covid as a result. I find it astonishing that the Government still refuses to properly engage with the threat that the condition poses to our communities. That complacency will be devastating—not least, to long Covid sufferers and those around them, especially women and young people.

Letting down young people has become symptomatic of the SNP Government. The 100-days pledge that we are debating today is no different. The one ray of hope that I would accept is in the bold commitment to clearing waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health services by 2023. I wish the Government well in that. That is needed so much: we cannot continue to have children waiting for two years for first-line treatment.

Children and young people in our schools need more support than ever. After a year of disruption, with soaring class sizes and staff shortages being a part of everyday life in most schools, there is a dire need for focus. It does not have to be that way. Permanent funding structures would give local authorities the confidence that they need to invest properly in their workforce. No teacher should be left without a job, but pressures on employment and a dearth of jobs mean that qualified teachers are being driven out of the profession. That is a workforce planning disaster. Giving laptops to every child in Scotland is not much use if there are no teachers in post to help them to learn how to use them.

Given the sheer scale of the disappointment that is felt after 14 years of SNP Government, such a self-congratulatory debate is infuriating. Six minutes is nowhere near enough time to explore the areas in which the Government has been found wanting. There has been a 10 per cent increase in the past year in cases of open homelessness. A and E departments have seen the worst waiting time figures since records began. Our planet is on the brink of irreparable damage. Alcohol-related deaths are 17 per cent higher than they were two years ago.

The Scottish Government could have used this afternoon to call for a debate on any one of those issues, and it could have invited colleagues from across the chamber to work constructively to address them. Instead, the cabinet secretary has lodged a motion that calls on Parliament to give the Government a pat on the back for all its successes. The plan, and its delivery, are not good enough.

I move amendment S6M-00978.1, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“believes that events in the first 100 days of the new administration show that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting the NHS, reaching for the best education, valuing carers and those whom they care for, supporting businesses, protecting human rights and tackling the climate emergency must command the full focus of the Parliament; further believes that plans for the recovery of the NHS must include further details of how it will relieve the unsustainable pressure on staff and services experienced during the first 100 days, how the Scottish Government will meet the waiting times targets that were already being missed pre-pandemic and immediately establish a new coordinated and comprehensive action plan for long COVID; calls on the Scottish Government to increase the capacity of Test and Protect, in light of recent reports of fresh delays in contact tracing and the decision to scale back tracing activities, risking the spread of the virus, and commends the campaigning of teachers, which has helped secure new funding for permanent contracts, while urging the Scottish Government to reverse the casualisation of the profession and introduce a new teacher job guarantee because pupils need to get the full benefit of their talents.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to the open debate. We have used all the latitude that we had earlier: any interventions must be accommodated within members’ time allocation.

16:36

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** I congratulate Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater on being given their new positions.

I am pleased to speak in the debate. I welcome the bold steps that the Scottish Government has taken since the election. In 100 days, the SNP has delivered 80 priorities that were set out by the First Minister in May, thereby demonstrating a commitment to taking the action that is required to make lasting generational change that will improve the lives of people across Scotland and in my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency.

The most urgent priority is recovery from the pandemic. I welcome the ambitious and transformative measures that the SNP Government has delivered thus far. Those are only the beginning; there is far more that we can and will do to build a fairer and more sustainable country, as we continue to drive Scotland’s recovery from Covid-19.

It will surprise no one in the chamber to hear that I believe that the full powers of independence should enable us to go even further, which is why it is essential that the people of Scotland have a choice about our future, once the Covid crisis has passed.

The independence referendum will come, but I will focus on what the Government has achieved for the people of Scotland during its first 100 days, which is in sharp contrast with what the Tory Westminster Government has delivered. It would take up my entire speech and more to list every achievement that has been delivered, so I will focus on some that I know will have a positive impact on my constituents.

First, there has been an average 4 per cent pay rise for NHS workers, including full back pay. That was on top of the £500 payment that was made to all health and social care staff earlier this year. In challenging economic times, the Scottish Government is making a point of ensuring that front-line NHS staff are recognised for their service and dedication.

Other commitments that have been delivered are the commitment to increase school clothing grants to at least £120 per primary school pupil and £150 per secondary school pupil and the commitment to abolish core curriculum charges for all pupils.

The SNP also provided a further £100 payment to families to coincide with the start of the summer holidays. That was in addition to the £100 that was paid at Easter and is part of the £520 support commitment that has been made to low-income families. We know that Covid has affected many people’s finances. That support will help many families in my constituency by putting more money in their pockets.

Pupils and families will also benefit from the abolition of fees for music and arts tuition in schools. As someone who plays a musical instrument, I recognise the positive impact that those subjects can have on a child’s development and enjoyment.

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** I do not disagree with Stuart McMillan’s analysis, but does he accept that it was as a result of cuts by his Government that those charges became commonplace across Scotland?

**Stuart McMillan:** I disagree with Mr Mundell. He will probably not be surprised to hear that. If he looks at the financing that has come from consecutive Westminster Governments to the Scottish Parliament, he will understand—if he actually looks at the facts—that there has been a real-terms cut to Scotland’s budget.

Looking beyond the first 100 days, the Scottish Government has committed to doubling the Scottish child payment to £20 a week during the current session of Parliament. Figures from the Scottish Fiscal Commission indicate that around 2,500 children and families in Inverclyde could benefit from that payment, which has been labelled a game changer by child-poverty charities. With a combination of support including the Scottish child payment, the best start grant and best start foods, eligible low-income families with one child could receive up to £5,200 by the time their child turns six.

However, while the Scottish Government gives with one hand, the Tory UK Government takes away with the other. The removal of the £20 universal credit uplift will be devastating for many households across Scotland. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned that millions of households face an income loss of £1,040 a year. By extending the uplift, the UK Government could boost the incomes of 1.5 million people, including 300,000 children.

The UK Government rightly says that it wants to support people back into work as we emerge from the crisis, but research indicates that working families make up the majority of those who will be affected. Earlier, Douglas Ross moaned about the SNP-Green co-operation agreement, with nonsensical rhetoric about it adversely affecting hard-working families. However, if Mr Ross focused on one job, rather than on his multiple jobs, he might realise that working families make up the majority of the people who will be affected. *[Interruption.]*

I say to Mr Kerr that it is clear that multimillionaire Tory MP Rishi Sunak's decision will create more in-work poverty, including for hard-working families, and will plunge more people into crisis. Rishi Sunak's reputation will be forever damaged by his driving more people into poverty and desperation. That is in complete contrast with the actions of this Scottish Government, which is determined to reduce poverty and to make our society fairer, greener and more equal.

**Oliver Mundell:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in his last minute.

**Stuart McMillan:** The list of things that we have done in the first 100 days goes on and on, but I will touch on just a few of them. We have opened three fast-track cancer diagnostic centres, secured a £10,000 bursary for Scottish student paramedics, invested £70 million in youth employment through our young persons guarantee, delivered £10 million to restore nature and improve biodiversity, increased funding for

local heat and energy efficiency projects, and many other things.

We have seen the Scottish Government start the current session of Parliament with great speed and co-operation, instead of the absolute chaos that we see from the Tories at Westminster.

16:42

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** The first 100 days of a new parliamentary session, if not a new Government, is an opportunity to hit the political reset button—an opportunity to do things differently and take the country forward. Never has that task been more important than following the 18 months that the country has just lived through. However, to say that the first 100 days of this new session have been a wasted opportunity is an understatement. I cannot sum it up better than by referring to the lacklustre speech that we heard from John Swinney.

Far from the Scottish Government setting out an ambitious programme to take us forward, all that we see is the same old, tired thinking and obsession with the arguments of the past. Worse still, it does not even seem to have been possible to repackage that and cobble it together into a programme for government in time for the Parliament returning after the recess. What could be more depressing than the realisation that the priority for the Scottish Government's Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery over the summer was not the wider interests of the people of Scotland, but the narrow political interests of the SNP?

Whatever happened to Nicola Sturgeon's big, bold offer to work across the chamber? Like so many of the SNP's promises, the answer is nothing because, rather than building a broad coalition and taking the whole country forward together, the SNP has focused on bringing on board a band of extremists to bolster its case for independence. If the case for breaking up our country in the midst of a global health pandemic already seemed dangerous enough, surely putting into Government people who want to shrink our economy, destroy jobs and condemn those who live in rural communities to being punished for their hard work growing our food and penalised for driving a car where no public transport exists hardly provides any confidence.

I will offer a little advice: that certainly does not move people from no to yes. After all, we should not pretend that the Greens are there in order to champion the environment. No—it is all about their extreme left-wing pet projects and their shared ambition to bring about the end of the United Kingdom as we know it. Today is, indeed, historic, but for all the wrong reasons.

Many will argue that this is the first time that a party has gone into Government in order to make a country smaller and poorer and to reverse the life chances of its citizens. Those who are less charitable might argue that that is what the SNP has been trying to do for the past 14 years. However, we have seen nothing yet. Against the backdrop of that coalition of chaos, the so-called achievements of the first 100 days look even more feeble—merely a placeholder to fill the vacuum while the deal was hammered out.

On education alone, it takes some doing for a Government to pat itself on the back for increasing teacher numbers when it has spent years arguing that its cuts to teacher numbers have had no impact on classroom learning. It is equally absurd to claim that having discussions about the distribution of laptops and iPads is the same thing as delivering them into the hands of the children and young people who need them. That is made even more ridiculous by the fact that some local authorities, such as Scottish Borders Council, and some individual schools managed to do that some time ago, when it made a critical difference.

As I asked after the election, during the 100 days education debate, where are the serious plans for catching up, after an average of 16 weeks of lost learning? Surely our young people deserved a little more than they got. Where are the big, bold ideas to restore standards in our education system? Where is the humility when it comes to admitting that the SNP has got it wrong? Where is the big vision? Why are we so heavily dependent on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's conclusions, when a number of Scottish educationalists and teachers have been sounding the alarm bells for years?

The answer is simple. This is a tired Government that has run out of ideas of its own. It is responsible for so many problems in Scotland—not because it happens to be in office today, but because its policy choices over the past 14 years have created them. The best that it can now do, after falling short on that all-important and expected electoral majority, is to draft in some new passengers for the Government limos. I suspect that, in the absence of any serious ideas from the SNP, we will find that Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater are in the driving seat when it comes to dictating Government policy. That is bad news for my constituents and, for that matter, the whole country.

What a way for a Government to end its first 100 days in office. To put it another way, imagine getting to 5,234 days in office and this being the best that it gets.

16:48

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** It is good to be back at Holyrood, making a start on the job that all members were elected to do: to push Scotland forward in building a better future for us all. To my mind, at least, that is long overdue. The Parliament needs to use its time and powers much more decisively and effectively. To do so is our duty not only to those who have elected us, but to the generations who fought to bring power here in the first place.

During the summer, I have been out regularly to speak to constituents. The most common question that I am asked—after “Why are you at the door?”—is a simple one: “What does the Scottish Parliament actually do?” I will be honest: in the first months of my time as an MSP, I have found myself asking the same question. The answer is, in short, “Not enough.”

It is a great disappointment that the Government's plan and delivery for the first 100 days of government is, as usual, more than underwhelming. Although positive advances that are to be welcomed include an inquiry into the Covid crisis and £1 billion for the NHS, it is far from the radical template for a new country that the manifestos of the two governing parties suggested back in May. In reality, most of the plan is just recycled announcements that were already known.

The long-awaited NHS recovery plan unfortunately contains nothing of note for social care, which is at a catastrophic tipping point. It lacks a meaningful youth job guarantee, and we are still left with little to no detail at all on what is to be done to help people in rented accommodation in Scotland. I understand that that is part of a great many things that we will hear about later in the year—a promise that the public has gotten used to under this Government.

Reform of the rented sector is one of the key public concerns of our age. We often hear positive rhetoric about Scotland's supposedly progressive approach to housing, but that does not stand up to even the most cursory bit of scrutiny. Although I am sure that many will welcome input from the Greens, it will need to be more than just another voice in the room. We are years behind on these reforms, and if we do not act now, with the added economic costs of Covid, it may be too late to get many renters' lives back on track.

The saddest fact is that we all know that a great deal of the public do not pay much attention to what goes on in this building precisely because so much is consigned to reports, future plans or one-off payments, with no or little long-term purpose behind them. Perhaps this session will be different and my words of warning will sound hollow. I truly

hope that that will be the case. However, if we have another five years of governance in Scotland in which decisions such as doubling the Scottish child payment or saying no to the Cambo oil field are not made, we will be back here again in 2026.

I warn that a greener Scotland should mean not simply having Greens in Government, but actively pursuing radical and transformative change. As noted by the world-renowned climate activist Greta Thunberg today, Scotland under this Government has done little to suggest that it is a world leader on climate change. With COP26 approaching, we could well become caught out in front of the world's gaze.

Scottish Labour has said that we need to use the opportunity of COP26 to show leadership in tackling the climate emergency and deliver a just transition, with thousands of new green jobs across Scotland. Under this Government, the number of jobs directly in the low-carbon economy is at the lowest level since 2014, and the SNP's new green jobs workforce academy amounts to little more than a new jobs portal. That is not good enough. Before they publish another plan to keep the press happy, my message to the SNP and the Greens during this important week is simple: you cannot stand up for Scotland by lying down.

16:52

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate on the many remarkable achievements that this Government has already made, such a short time into office. The scale of those 100 days achievements is testament to our desire to repay the public for the faith that they put in us in May this year. I whole-heartedly welcome the co-operation agreement between the SNP and the Green Party, which will do a lot to build a fairer and more equal country.

Many of our achievements have already been talked about at length, including the well-deserved 4 per cent pay rise for our hard-working and heroic NHS staff—which was the largest increase anywhere in the UK—and the development of a national care service, the details of which I look forward to scrutinising in this Parliament to make sure that it can be as good a service as possible.

I was also really pleased to hear about the women's health plan to tackle the inherent inequalities that we all know about. That announcement perhaps stood out for me more this year than it would have done before. As some members may be aware, over the summer recess, I became a dad for the third time—to a baby girl. I thought that it would be right to mention it in the chamber at this point, like I did when I became a dad the last time, so this is a shout out to baby

Morna MacGregor, as it is my first speech since her birth. [*Applause.*]

Although I have always known about those inequalities—as all of us in this chamber do—after the past few weeks, I perhaps now understand more keenly the challenges that she will face growing up, which her brothers and male peers will not face. I suppose that there is a wee bit about the knowing it and the understanding of it. It is my job, and all our jobs, to make sure that it is not the case that those inequalities continue, which is why I really welcome this policy development and others like it.

I want to focus on policies that are aimed at supporting children, young people and families—and achievements in that regard—which some members have mentioned. An issue that stands out is our making further strides to reduce the attainment gap, for example through pupil equity funding and the challenge authorities programme. [*Interruption.*] I will not take an intervention now; I want to make progress, but I might come back to the member. In my constituency, Coatbridge and Chryston, there are areas of significant poverty and deprivation. I stood for election so that I could vote for policies that will directly tackle those issues, and I am glad that measures such as the ones that I mentioned do just that.

A related issue is the expansion of free school meals to children in primary 4, which is a positive step—although I say to the Government that I support universal provision of free school meals, for all pupils in Scotland. I hope that the expansion to P4 puts us on a path towards such an approach. [*Interruption.*] I will not take an intervention just now.

I welcome the increase in the school uniforms grant. I note that in the draft agreement there is a pledge to produce statutory guidance for schools on school uniforms. Perhaps, when he sums up the debate, the Deputy First Minister will update us on where discussions have got to in that regard, because I am very interested in the issue.

The roll-out of 1,140 hours of childcare is a massive step forward, and the delivery of the policy in spite of the pandemic is an achievement. It will help many families. On a slightly different note, on Friday, Clare Haughey, the Minister for Children and Young People, will visit Auchinairn Afterschool Care & Forest School, in my constituency. I will be unable to join her but I thank her for the invitation. She will get a warm welcome from the people of Coatbridge and Chryston and she will be impressed by the forest school.

I want to mention a couple of related policies that have particular significance in my constituency. Play park refurbishment is a simple but fantastic policy. During the election period, I

noticed that the issue engaged many people. My team and I are working on a survey of constituents to find out which parks in Coatbridge and Chryston they want to prioritise. We are asking about accessibility, too, because disabled access is an issue in a lot of parks.

The £20 million investment in summer activities has been a game changer for many people in our communities. Let me give a wee example. I came across the benefits of that policy at the weekend, by accident. I had booked my two older children and their cousins into the free planetarium event at Summerlee museum in Coatbridge, and when we got there one of the staff members who was setting up the event told me that it had come about because of the Government funding. It was a fantastic event: the kids learned about space and got to hold meteorites—my wee boys have been talking about it ever since. I know that similar events were held throughout Lanarkshire. It was great to experience, in an unplanned way, how the policy is working—I was not at the event as a local MSP—and I thank the Government.

I will not be able to take an intervention, so I apologise to the member who wanted me to give way.

I support the motion. The pledges on which we have already delivered are remarkable, but the biggest issue that we face is still our response to Covid-19. I have to say that I am becoming increasingly anxious about the rise in cases in recent weeks—it is getting to a stage at which I know quite a large number of individuals who have contracted Covid. The Government has responded well in rolling out the vaccine, prioritising schools and reopening gradually, and it will continue to have my support for whatever steps it thinks are appropriate as we try to curtail the virus and move out of this very difficult time in our history.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr MacGregor, and I wish you and Mrs MacGregor all the best as you enter the “Outnumbered” years.

16:59

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** I, too, take the opportunity to welcome Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater to their new jobs. I am sure that they will have every success in them.

I welcome the debate on the first 100 days of this session of Parliament. While Covid cases continue to soar and our NHS is placed under increasing pressure, it makes sense to reflect on what has been achieved in the first 100 days and how much further we have to go before the pandemic is behind us and our health service can fully recover.

Although the Covid crisis is by no means over, it is never too early to begin learning lessons from the pandemic. I am therefore pleased that the Scottish Government has taken steps to establish a public inquiry. The Covid crisis has left thousands of people with long-term health effects and many have tragically died. We have witnessed this terrible virus devastate care homes, put our loved ones in hospital and change the way in which we live our lives. The Government's handling of the pandemic must be thoroughly scrutinised so that we can establish how Scotland could have better prepared and ensure that we are in a better position to handle future pandemics.

It has been almost 18 months since the first Covid case in Scotland, and, during that time, healthcare staff have gone above and beyond to protect us from the virus while continuing to deliver emergency and routine care. Staff are exhausted and demoralised, and, as we make plans to help our NHS recover, we must avoid placing extra pressure on them. The NHS recovery plan must be accompanied by clear messaging from the Scottish Government. Ministers need to be honest with the public about what level of service the NHS can provide while it recovers and about how long the public will be expected to wait for routine treatment. It cannot be left up to already overburdened staff to deliver that message.

Just last week, a GP wrote to me about the negativity that practice staff had faced when explaining to patients that they could not access general practice in the way that they used to, saying that staff had often been in tears. The GP said that comments in the media when the plan was published about GPs opening up for face-to-face appointments were unhelpful. General practice has always been and remains open. Throughout the pandemic, GPs have held face-to-face appointments when clinically necessary. Due to rising patient demand, GPs are having to triage patients so that the most urgent cases are seen first. The reality is that that will continue for some time. We need to see leadership from the Government on that issue, and a public information campaign that clearly sets out how people can expect to access health services in the wake of Covid.

In order for our NHS to recover, recruitment and retention must be prioritised; attractive pay and conditions will be key to that. We know that some clinicians and trade unions have expressed disappointment at the proposed pay increases for NHS staff. The chair of the British Medical Association Scotland, Dr Lewis Morrison, has said that the 3 per cent pay uplift fails to address years of pay erosion and does virtually nothing to address low morale.

As we work to help our NHS to recover, another major focus of this Parliament will be social care reform. The Scottish Government's consultation on a national care service has now been published, giving people the chance to have a say on how the service should be shaped. This is an historic moment, when we have the chance to transform the way in which people access social care, to improve choice and autonomy, to deliver greater recognition of unpaid carers and to design an ethical commissioning process, to name a few. That will be some of the most important work that we will undertake in this session of Parliament, and I look forward to working with colleagues across the chamber to ensure that we have a truly human rights-based, person-centred service.

There is also much work to be done to improve our existing public services in the wake of Covid. Rail strikes are growing across Scotland—swift resolution is needed, because we risk serious disruption at COP26, when hundreds and thousands of people will be travelling to Glasgow. Abellio has a duty to its staff and passengers to resolve the situation. It is a problem of the operator's own making and one that it has an obligation to fix. Scottish Greens are strongly supportive of moves to bring ScotRail entirely into public hands. Discussion of what a people's railway will look like when the franchise is taken over by the state needs to start now, and that should include consideration of how we achieve timetables that work and reduce journey times rather than increasing them.

This is the year of COP26, and this Parliament's response to climate change is rightly under increased scrutiny. The citizens assembly on climate change has produced groundbreaking recommendations and given the people's consent to transformative change. We must rise to that challenge. In response to last session's climate change plan update, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee set out a series of recommendations. It is vital that we see a meaningful response to those in the run-up to COP26. While reflecting on the past 100 days, it is worth stating that the next 100 days will also be crucial. Our ambitions and decisions in the run-up to COP26 can make a significant difference for generations to come.

17:04

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Despite the best efforts of the SNP spin machine and the wording of the Government motion, we do not have a new Administration with bold new policies and a fresh ministerial team to take Scotland forward. Talk of delivering for the people of Scotland in the first 100 days is ridiculous when we look at the serial failure to deliver in the

previous 5,000 days during which this Government has been in power.

The Government's motion talks about creating jobs and delivering a green recovery. The same Government promised to deliver 130,000 jobs in the renewables sector, but the reality is that, today, 20,000 jobs—15 per cent of that target—have been delivered.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dean Lockhart:** Let me make a bit of progress first, Mr Ruskell.

The same Government said that Scotland would become a world leader in low-carbon and renewables manufacturing—the Saudi Arabia of renewable energy. However, today, Scotland has a negative balance of trade in the renewables sector. We import £230 million more in renewables equipment than we export. That is not delivering sustainable recovery for Scotland—it is a monumental failure to deliver on Scotland's natural resources and the massive opportunities that are available in the sector. [*Interruption.*]

I am sorry—I will not take an intervention now, as I want to make a bit of progress.

In 2017, the SNP promised to deliver a publicly owned energy company that would address fuel poverty, reduce energy prices and help to meet climate change targets. Four years later, after spending £500,000 of taxpayers' money on feasibility studies, there is no energy company. A policy that was announced by the First Minister to great fanfare was quietly dropped over recess.

The Scottish National Investment Bank, which was first approved by the Parliament three years ago, was supposed to deliver transformational change to Scotland's economy and meet the objectives of net zero, with a promised initial budget of £500 million. Three years later, less than 20 per cent of that money has been invested.

Before the pandemic struck, the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee published a report covering the first 12 years of the SNP Government, which concluded that the Scottish Government had failed to meet every single one of its own economic targets. During the pandemic, we all saw the repeated failure of ministers to deliver the support that was desperately needed to save small firms across Scotland, leaving it to the UK Government to save 800,000 jobs and more than 150,000 small firms in Scotland.

There is absolutely no reason to believe that this Government's inability to deliver economic recovery will change. We saw that during recess, with the usual announcement of pointless new quangos and advisory groups. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy

announced a new council for economic transformation, presumably because most of the previous Council of Economic Advisers quit following criticism of the Government for not understanding how business or the economy work. We all know that the Greens do not believe in economic growth, and in that respect they have found the perfect coalition partner in the SNP.

**Mark Ruskell:** I thank Dean Lockhart for giving way. If he backs economic growth, will he back the target in the Green agreement to double onshore wind capacity in Scotland?

**Dean Lockhart:** I will back any policy that promotes sustainable economic growth. The point that I have been making is that that has not been achieved after 14 years of SNP Government, and the coalition with the Greens will make it even less likely to happen.

It is not only in economic terms that Scotland has suffered under the SNP. As other members have highlighted during the debate, the attainment gap has increased, NHS waiting times are at record levels, environmental and climate change targets have been missed, and drug deaths are at a record high. We also have a ferry network that is beyond breaking point—the situation is getting worse and is nothing short of a national scandal. We have two ferries that are still under construction that are now five years overdue and £100 million over budget. We have a ferry network that relies on vessels that are operating years beyond their lifespan, with constant breakdowns causing disruption. If the Government cannot get the construction of two ferries right, how can we expect it to deliver on the complexities of climate change or Covid recovery?

The SNP likes to blame Westminster whenever things go wrong, but I make it clear that all the policy failures to which I have just referred have been 100 per cent within the devolved powers of the SNP Government.

Let me conclude by coming back to the Government's motion on the first 100 days. It is clear from listening to ministers' speeches today that the only real action that the Government has taken in the first 100 days is to enter into a coalition of chaos with the Green Party. That coalition highlights the SNP's true priority for the parliamentary session—once again, it will prioritise constitutional division at the expense of Covid recovery, the health service, education, drug deaths and jobs.

It is not a new Administration—far from it. It is a Government with a long track record of failure to deliver. The addition of the Greens to the Administration will only make matters worse.

I support the amendment in Douglas Ross's name.

17:10

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** The actions that the Scottish Government has taken since its re-election in May have made substantial inroads in delivering the manifesto commitments that we put to the Scottish people at the start of the year. They are tangible actions that prove that the SNP does what it says it will. That is important because it repays voter trust, which is something that responsible Governments do. Ultimately, it will improve the lives and opportunities of millions of Scots, including those of us who live and work in the north-east.

The energy sector in the north-east is vital to the nation, and what happens in that sphere is particularly crucial for the people of my constituency of Aberdeenshire East. Many parts of Scotland rely on oil and gas for jobs, but in the north-east it is an overwhelming percentage of our workforce, so we must have a just transition to a sustainable energy sector in our area. I am delighted by the creation of the post of Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work. My friend and north-east colleague Richard Lochhead is a superb choice for the role. I look forward to working with him to support the existing skilled workforce of the north-east and the next generation of workers who will build sustainable careers in our part of Scotland.

We have just voted in Lorna Slater—a woman with a great deal of relevant expertise—as minister with responsibility for skills in that area. As I campaigned for re-election, a particular concern of many of the people I spoke to was the issue of the pathways to reskilling and upskilling for the existing oil and gas workforce. I look forward to welcoming Ms Slater to my area in due course so that she can hear at first hand what the current barriers are. They need to be removed and we have no time to waste.

I welcome, too, the additional financial support that has so far been provided by the Government to help businesses and innovators. *[Interruption.]*

I will take an intervention.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** From whom? Two bids were made.

**Gillian Martin:** From Mr Kerr.

**Liam Kerr:** I will be suitably brief. I support much of what the member has just said about the oil and gas industry. Does she share my concern at Lorna Slater's comments about shutting down the industry within the next four years?

**Gillian Martin:** I am not one for cherry picking things out of context and levelling them at people. It has been done to me in the past and I do not like it when it is done to others. Something else that I do not like—and I am not accusing Mr Kerr of

this—is the fact that there has been a bit more of an attack on the female new minister today. I am getting a distinct whiff of misogyny—not from Mr Kerr, whom I respect, but from some of his colleagues.

I will get back to my speech. I am very pleased about the £16.5 million support for the Net Zero Technology Centre in Aberdeen, the £20 million fund to upskill and retrain people for new careers and the £25 million fund to help businesses to enhance their digital capacity—[*Interruption.*] No, I have already taken an intervention.

We have a highly skilled and innovative workforce, and initiatives such as those—[*Interruption.*]

Presiding Officer, the noises off are really annoying. I wish to continue.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member has made it clear that she is not taking any further interventions.

**Gillian Martin:** I hear too often about oil and gas workers paying through the nose for retraining and still not getting through the door when they apply for renewables jobs. Over the summer, I launched a survey on that issue and received comprehensive testimonies from 559 workers. I am currently collating the responses and will deliver a report to all relevant Government ministers within the next month. I will be pleased to add Ms Slater to that email recipient list.

As someone who represents towns such as Inverurie, Mintlaw, Turriff and Ellon, I am very pleased about the £10 million Scotland loves local fund to help transform towns and neighbourhoods. I am always gratified to see a focus on the rural economy of Scotland, and a recognition of the role that our farmers and land managers perform, and must continue to perform as we move towards net zero and a sustainable economy. Our agriculture sector is vital, and was hit by Covid-19 just as badly as other sectors, while also having to navigate through the chaotic Brexit that Boris Johnson's Tories steered us into.

I must mention the Scottish Government's £715,000 pig producers hardship fund, which opened yesterday. After the closure of the abattoir in Brechin following a Covid-19 outbreak in March, I was contacted by the north-east NFU Scotland for help. I pay tribute to former cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing, who not only listened to me but committed to that support almost immediately. His successor, Mairi Gougeon, opened the fund this week, and I know that it is hugely welcomed by pig farmers in my area, many of whom were struggling financially due the implications of the outbreak. I look forward to working with my good friend Ms Gougeon, who understands the challenges of the rural economy.

Our young people have been affected particularly harshly by the implications of Covid-19, and many of the actions taken by the Scottish Government in the first 100 days will have a positive impact on young people, such as the investment of £70 million in the young persons guarantee, funding colleges to deliver 5,000 more industry-focused short courses, the provision of free bus travel for all under-22s, the removal of dental charges for all those under 26 and the increase in funding for affordable homes. Those will all make a big difference to young people who are starting out in life. I am sure that families will welcome the provision of free healthy school lunches for more than 90,000 pupils. I am also delighted that Aberdeenshire has one of the pilot projects to offer free bicycles to children who cannot afford one.

There is so much more to mention, but interventions have used up a lot of my time, so I will end now. The depth and breadth of the work that has been carried out so far is an illustration of the seriousness and responsibility with which the Scottish Government is navigating our country through one of the most challenging periods in our country's history.

17:16

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** We have already started to see in the debate the truth about the first 100 days of this Government. The commitments that were contained in the SNP's first steps document were not those of a new Administration ready to tackle Scotland's recovery but those of a tired Government that has run out of ideas. Many of the key actions in the 100 days plan are either recycled announcements or feeble promises that prioritise rhetoric over the substance of delivery for the people of Scotland.

It is worth reminding members that the first 100 days of the current Scottish Government ended nearly 14 years ago. Positioning the Government as something new and bold would be comical if the reality were not so serious in our health service, schools and communities across Scotland.

Just as the Government is recycling its first 100 days rhetoric, it is also recycling policies, pledges and promises. I note the congratulatory tone of the Government motion, but what have those 100 days really been marked by? Health services are struggling to cope with pressures on A and E and ambulance services. Covid cases are rising, vaccinations are stalling and people are now struggling to access testing. Teachers, pupils and parents are worried about the return to school and the lack of action over the holidays to improve ventilation. Councils are once again facing cuts in the midst of hugely unprecedented times when

services and hard-working staff are stretched to breaking point.

Is it not the case that the priority during those 100 days has been formalising the new coalition with the Greens, which formalises what councils have known over the past five years—that budgets will continue to be cut and services, communities and jobs will suffer as a result. I want to focus my remarks on local government in particular, and I declare an interest, Presiding Officer, as a serving councillor. I have seen at first hand how the cuts passed down from the SNP Government and voted through by the Greens have gutted our councils and forced councillors and hard-working staff to make decisions that we never wanted to make.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Is the member arguing that we should have given less to the NHS and more to local government?

**Paul O’Kane:** I am arguing that local government funding has consistently been cut by the Scottish Government and that the added pressures that have been placed on local government have created a perfect storm. The fact of the matter is that people in councils are having to make decisions that are unthinkable—I refer to the example of libraries in the member’s city of Glasgow. The fact is that there are choices to be made. Not nearly enough has been done to ensure that councils have the money they need to deliver the services that are so relied on.

I am sure that SNP members will be keen to stress—they already have—that local government has been supported in the first 100 days through eye-catching policies such as those on the refurbishment of every play park in Scotland and free bikes for children who cannot afford them. However, what is the reality of the delivery of those policies? There is not nearly enough funding, and local government is making it clear that it needs flexibility and no further cuts to environment budgets just to keep play parks safe and open.

With only £60 million promised, it is clear that that is not nearly enough money to fulfil the pledge. It is plain to me that the Government is disconnected from what is happening on the ground in councils. What was the reality of the pledge on free bikes for children in Scotland who need them? A pilot, when councils are struggling to find funding to support physical activity programmes in schools and communities.

At the heart of local government is its workers. After all the work that they have put in to support our communities throughout the pandemic, they should be treated with decency. The Government should therefore have started the session with a promise to properly fund local workers with a fair

pay rise and £15 an hour for care workers. We have already heard that the Scottish Greens used to support that and pledged to it in the election.

The truth of the matter is that the Government has tripled austerity for councils between 2013-14 and 2021-22, and we have seen non-ring-fenced local government revenue funding cut by £937.3 million in real terms. It is disingenuous of SNP members to claim credit for funding music tuition, core curriculum charges in education, increased school uniform grants and refurbishing play parks, as their cuts have caused those needs in the first place.

As we promised at the election, Scottish Labour will focus on providing real alternatives that address our national recovery, protect the NHS and properly fund local government to ensure that all our communities have the support that they need to come through this difficult period and recover fully. Beyond yet another self-promoted historic 100 days and another historic deal with the Scottish Greens, Labour members will focus on speaking up for our communities, which are being badly let down by the Government.

I support Anas Sarwar’s amendment.

17:22

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** Please accept my apologies for my lack of understanding of protocols at the beginning of this debate, Presiding Officer.

As Scotland and the wider world continue to tackle Covid-19 and the many varied challenges that it presents, I welcome the fact that the Scottish Government has started this parliamentary session on the front foot and is focused on the delivery of its manifesto commitments. In only 100 days, the Government has already taken significant strides to improve the lives of people throughout Scotland. My fellow members have already mentioned several of those.

The SNP made a clear commitment that, if it was re-elected, the people of Scotland would have chosen a First Minister and a Cabinet that would prioritise their safety in moving towards the relaxation of restrictions and recovery. The success of our vaccination programme, which has been administered by the incredible NHS, was critical to that. The success of the vaccination programme has taken hard work and determination. First doses for all over-18s who attended their scheduled appointments by mid-July have been completed, we are well on track to offer second doses to all adults by mid-September, and 16 and 17-year-olds have begun to be vaccinated. That puts Scotland significantly ahead of the majority of other world nations.

With many of our everyday activities restored, it has been an incredibly emotional time for constituents everywhere, and for constituents in Glasgow Kelvin in particular. They—notably the service users of the Annexe healthy living centre in Partick—have reached out to share their thanks. That community resource rallied round during lockdowns, and it has been heartwarming to see that its programme of activities is back up and running, with classes every week.

The move beyond level 0 has been hard earned, and the sacrifices that everyone has made over the past year and a half can never be overstated. However, the increasing case numbers should make us all pause for thought. That is why I continue to be grateful to the Government for being measured and ensuring that public health remains central to its decision making during an on-going and complex challenge.

Of the many achievements so far, it will come as no surprise that I welcome the announcement of the additional support that is being offered to children and families. The additional £50 million that has been targeted to fund the recruitment of new teachers and pupil support assistants has been warmly welcomed across the teaching profession in its efforts to support—*[Interruption.]* No, I will not give way. The profession welcomes the funding for its efforts to support the education recovery. That honours yet another Government commitment.

In addition, the £65.5 million of annual funding that has been permanently allocated to councils from 2022-23 will help remove barriers to councils employing additional staff on permanent contracts and meet the local needs of children and young people.

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** The member mentioned funding. Does she agree with the coalition partner's stance that Scotland needs a totally different tax structure?

**Kaukab Stewart:** At this moment, I am taking the opportunity to talk about the funding in teaching and education, and I will continue in that vein. The funding has gone a considerable way to reassuring those teachers in Glasgow Kelvin who have corresponded with me, who were quite rightly concerned about their employment status, which they wanted to make permanent.

It is welcome news to hear the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announce that the Scottish Government and local authority leaders have agreed to increase the national school clothing grant to a minimum of £120 per eligible primary school pupil and £150 per eligible secondary school pupil. That will be supported by almost £12 million of additional funding to local

authorities, which will go a significant way to removing an often hidden but substantial burden to families. The Government's efforts on clothing grants, along with the expansion of the provision of good-quality free school meals should be warmly welcomed by all in the chamber.

As the MSP for Glasgow Kelvin, I was delighted to receive confirmation from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care that hospital parking charges are finally set to end permanently in Scotland. At long last, the remaining sites will come into public hands, which will help to phase out the legacy of the private finance initiative in hospital car parks across the country.

Lastly, I will take a moment to celebrate our creative industries in Glasgow Kelvin, particularly the musicians who call the constituency that I represent their home and place of work. The Government's recently launched touring fund for live music will make a marked difference to the lives of many in Kelvin. Musicians, bands, artists and venues will be able to apply to the fund to bring new and additional concerts to venues and festivals in Scotland next year. As musicians are one of the groups hit hardest by the pandemic due to the nature of live performance, I am sure that they will support further efforts from the Government in that area.

Having tried to take interventions, I see that my time is up. This first 100 days has reiterated to me, as a new MSP, what the Parliament can achieve. It has also left me excited for our nation at the scope that the Parliament could have with full powers, once we achieve our independence. One thing for certain is that—this has been evident throughout the pandemic—the Government has never taken its eye off the day job. I warmly welcome the Government's motion.

17:29

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I will start where Kaukab Stewart left off. She mentioned that the Government's record in the first 100 days of office shows the Parliament working well. I fundamentally disagree with that assessment.

The concept of the first 100 days is an American import, dating back to 1932 and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election to the presidency in the teeth of the great depression. FDR set out to make quick and significant changes in economic and social policy. On taking office, he summoned the United States Congress back for an emergency session of three months, during which he passed no fewer than 76 new laws, most of which were aimed at easing the effects of the depression. By any measure, the SNP should be ashamed to seek comparison on such a level.

First and foremost, the measure of a civilised society should be in the care and protection that it offers its people. However, in the 14 years that the SNP has held office, warning lights have been blinking across the dashboard of public policy in this country: on the climate change emergency, the waits for child and adolescent mental health services and the threadbare state of our police force; the list goes on and on. However, where FDR passed 76 acts of Congress in his first 100 days, this Scottish National Party Administration in its first 100 days passed just one act, which was on the further extension of emergency powers that it has since expressed interest in keeping in perpetuity. It says a lot about the legislative priorities of this Administration that the only act to have been sent to the Queen is one on a law that again seeks to extend the reach of the Administration's centralising grasp.

I want to start my role as the leader of my party by seeking consensus where I can find it, but in this debate I really struggle. I am grateful to the Deputy First Minister for the assurances, in his opening remarks, on loneliness and isolation. I have several times used the quote from the French novelist Honoré de Balzac that

"Solitude is fine but you need someone to tell that solitude is fine."

That is an important reflection on the human condition. Isolation was a problem in Scotland before any of us had heard of either Wuhan in China or the coronavirus. Many vulnerable citizens would go days without any human contact and spend Christmas alone. I know many people, who saw more of those whom they care about when they were bubbled with people who were either on furlough or had more time to give them during lockdown, who are now dreading the full return to normality and work because of the loneliness that will come through the severance of those ties. I am glad that the Government is taking that matter seriously.

I am grateful for the assurances on child mental health, but talk is cheap. That is a massive issue, because we have thousands of children waiting more than a year for first-line assessment who, in some cases, then join a secondary queue if the issue is autism or another neurodiverse condition. There must be real, targeted interventions, rather than parking people on medication or referring them to the internet.

I echo Douglas Ross's words on the drug deaths emergency. A number of us attended a moving event this afternoon with Peter Krykant to mark international overdose day. The theme that came out of that was not a party political one but the fact that it is a particularly Scottish problem. It is not a deficiency of the Scottish devolution settlement or a factor of UK Government policy. If

it were, things would be as bad in Gloucester as they are in Glasgow, but they are not. The problem is nearly four times as bad in Scotland as it is in any other part of these islands. Scotland needs radical solutions for the problem, but that is only because things have got so bad. It also needs a new Government to deliver the solutions, because the SNP has shown itself wholly unequal to the task.

Anas Sarwar raised the important issue of remand, which has been a problem not only throughout, but before Covid. The delays in remand are perverting the course of justice in this country, with those facing charges pleading guilty to crimes that they did not commit because they know that they will get a shorter sentence by doing so. I am also grateful to Anas Sarwar for his words on long Covid.

Stuart McMillan started well, but then connected to the unavoidable umbilical cord that links every SNP back bencher's speech to the mothership. There is a muscle memory to Government back-bench speeches: independence is still the land in which

"death shall have no dominion."

However, I do not think that even they believe what they are saying any more.

**Stuart McMillan:** I am sure that Mr Cole Hamilton will admit that I touched on independence at the beginning of my speech but that the vast majority of my speech was about the achievement of the Scottish Government over the past 100 days.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I am grateful for that intervention, but there has been a paucity of achievement by the Scottish Government over the past 100 days, because of its overwhelming focus on the constitution, which is not doing my constituents any good and is not doing your constituents any good, Presiding Officer. It is probably time to just dispense with the rhetoric. We know that you guys want independence: just go and shut up about it.

Oliver Mundell made an important point about the delivery of laptops to children after the fact, and he was right to point out the SNP's absence of humility in that regard. Getting things people things that they need, in good time, is an aspect of good government, but that has not been delivered. Carol Mochan touched on that in her passionate call for reform in the rented sector.

I congratulate Fulton MacGregor on his new child and Paul O'Kane on his big life event in the summer—he got married. It is always good to recognise such things.

Gillian Mackay, Gillian Martin and Kaukab Stewart made proficient speeches, but they all

missed the underlying point that the Government's attention is elsewhere.

Presiding Officer, I know that my speaking time is up, but I will go back to where I started. In his first 100 days, FDR recalled Congress in the grip of a national crisis and passed 76 laws to effect immediate change. This country needs immediate change, but we have been found wanting under the Scottish Government.

17:35

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I will leave aside the obvious confusion of a Government that has been in power for 14 years having a document that is entitled "First Steps" when it is clear that these are not the first steps, never mind the first 100 days, for the SNP. I will also leave aside the debate about when the 100 days started, as ministers were in charge throughout the election period.

Given those facts, the promises for the 100 days lack ambition and have glaring omissions. I will focus on the substance of what is before us and the context in which it lands. Given that we are still in the middle of a pandemic—cases have been at their highest-ever levels in the past week and the pressure on our NHS is reaching crisis proportions—the NHS recovery plan fell short of expectations and of what is needed.

Covid-positive case numbers have been rising and, following the return to schools, they are at the highest recorded levels. On Saturday, more than 7,500 cases were recorded. The numbers who are in hospital are increasing, too—the figures are more than 50 per cent higher than they were a mere week ago. Test and protect is struggling to cope. Polymerase chain reaction testing kits ran out for days on end in Helensburgh because of a surge in cases, and I know that people from Greenock were being sent today to Helensburgh or Irvine because no more appointments were available locally.

The vaccination rate has slowed—200,000 people are due their second dose but have not received it yet. Contact tracing can deal with only the highest-risk cases; the service has all but stopped identifying close contacts because it is overwhelmed.

It is particularly disappointing that second doses are overdue, given that we know how important vaccination is in protecting people from Covid. I urge quick action from the Scottish Government on that. Scottish Labour has repeatedly called for drop-in clinics and mobile vaccination clinics and has suggested creative ways of encouraging young people to take up vaccinations, but the Scottish Government has been slow to act. There

is no joined-up substantial action on long Covid, as many members across the chamber have said.

I will look at the pressure on the NHS. I very much agree with Gillian Mackay's comment about GPs. They and their staff have worked tirelessly to support colleagues in secondary care. GPs need to return to doing work in primary care, but to suggest that they have not been working is entirely wrong, and I regret that the Scottish Government has given that impression.

Waiting times in A and E are at their longest for six years. Despite the best efforts of staff, who deserve our praise and thanks, more than 1,000 people have waited more than eight hours to be seen, and hundreds more have waited more than 12 hours, and yet fewer people are attending A and E than before the pandemic. Clinicians are seeing more complex cases that failed to be diagnosed during the pandemic, which require hospitalisation. Many health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde now, have cancelled elective surgery. Such is the crisis that they face that they are escalating code black measures almost daily.

The Scottish Ambulance Service is under huge strain, too. Waiting times are soaring as the service cannot keep pace with demand. Seriously ill people have waited for hours and hours before an ambulance has arrived. In my constituency, one man died in an ambulance after waiting four and a half hours for it to arrive; it had never left his driveway. That is not the fault of staff; it is down to a lack of resources from the Scottish Government.

Turnaround times at A and E are far too long, and that stops ambulances being available for their next call. Anyone who takes a quick trip to the A and E at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital will see ambulances queued right around the block, waiting to drop off patients. This is all before the winter flu season starts piling even more pressure on the NHS. There was not much in the recovery plan that addressed those immediate pressures.

Measures to improve workforce planning are welcome, but we had at least three workforce plans in the previous parliamentary session, and not much has changed—in fact, things have got worse. Today, we see from Scottish Government figures that more than 600,000 Scots are on NHS waiting lists, some for diagnostics, others for treatment. Yes, having a recovery plan is better than not having one at all, but I remind the chamber that, in December 2020, Jeane Freeman announced a remobilisation plan for the NHS, which we welcomed. She set up a remobilisation working group to deliver on the actions that were outlined and it met every month. Then along comes Humza Yousaf, as the new Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. Meetings

were cancelled and the group has met only once since. That does not really suggest that the issue is a priority for the cabinet secretary or the SNP Government. No wonder the First Minister reportedly had to send the plan back, with publication being delayed for a fortnight.

I am running out of time, so I will touch on one glaring omission in the 100 days plan: social care. Where is the remobilisation plan for social care? Where is the restarting of respite care, the restoration of care packages and the support for carers? Where is the rewarding of care workers with a wage rise to £15 an hour? Scottish Labour was proud to campaign for that at the time of the budget, but the SNP and the Greens voted it down. Where are all the services to support and enhance the dignity of our older people and those with disabilities?

The 100 days plan is a mixed bag. Things are missing and other elements are seriously underwhelming, but there are elements to welcome, such as the Covid public inquiry. However, in all this, it is implementation that counts and the impact that it has on the people of Scotland. On that count, the SNP will be judged. So far, I have to say that the people of Scotland deserve much better than this.

17:42

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I start by congratulating Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie on their appointment as Scottish ministers. Although we may have the odd political disagreement from time to time, I nevertheless acknowledge that it is a great honour to be appointed as one of the Queen's ministers. I congratulate them on that appointment and wish them well in it, and I hope that they will advise her well in their new roles.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I always get on well with public sector workers.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please do not speak from a sedentary position, Mr Harvie.

**Murdo Fraser:** Of course, the appointment of those two ministers means that we have the biggest and most expensive Government ever in the history of devolution, so I hope that it is worth all the money that is being devoted to it.

Alex Cole-Hamilton gave us a history lesson with regard to the concept of Governments' first 100 days in power. There is nothing scientific or magical about a 100-day period; it is a measure that politicians set themselves to judge progress. However, given that the SNP Government itself made a number of claims about what it would achieve in the first 100 days, it is only reasonable for the Opposition to test what was said against

what was actually delivered and, against that test, the SNP Government has been found to be wanting, as we have heard throughout the debate.

This week, we should have been debating the programme for government. We do that every year in the first week back after the summer recess. However, that debate has been delayed for a week, meaning that we, and the rest of the country, are still waiting to hear what the Government's priorities are for the coming year in terms of its legislative programme and other initiatives. The unrelenting focus on Covid recovery that we have been promised by the First Minister was somewhat lacking in the speeches that she made earlier this afternoon.

Despite all the spin that we have heard from those on the SNP benches this afternoon, the document that the SNP Government published setting out its plans for the first 100 days of this session made promises that the Government has failed to deliver. It has failed to remove unnecessary elements of coronavirus legislation that it promised to remove—for example, it retains the ability to release prisoners early. It promised to vaccinate all adults, but has failed to do so. It has failed to deliver fair results for pupils, given the issues that we have seen with this year's SQA awards. Further, it has failed in its promise not to push for another independence referendum, as we know that that is the centrepiece of its agreement with the Scottish Greens.

Earlier in the debate, Douglas Ross set out a list of the Government's policy failures: the worst set of drugs deaths figures in Europe; an education attainment gap that is wider now than in any year since 2017; and huge and growing waiting lists in the NHS for operations, vital treatments and, shamefully, mental health. People are still waiting to see a GP face to face and, as Anas Sarwar and Alex Cole-Hamilton reminded us, there is a lack of support for people who are crippled by long Covid.

In the justice system, there are tens of thousands of unanswered 101 calls to the police, community sentences are not completed or followed up on, and there is an enormous backlog in the courts system, with justice delayed for too many victims of crime. That is the record of the SNP Government after 100 days.

One thing that the SNP has achieved is the deal with the Scottish Green Party, but it is causing a great deal of concern across Scotland. It is causing concern in the business community, as we now have at the heart of government, for the first time in Scotland, people who not only do not believe in economic growth but are actively hostile to it. It is a party whose co-leader supports the nonsense that is modern monetary theory, which says that it is not possible to run out of money—I am sure that Kate Forbes is very interested in that

theory. It is a party whose policies would cause devastation to people whose jobs depend on the oil and gas sector, particularly in the north-east of Scotland—the Scottish Green Party pursues a slash-and-burn approach to that industry.

Concerns have been raised by representatives of the farming and fishing communities and rural industries about the impact that Green policies would have on them. They have expressed their dismay at extremists being brought into government, as Oliver Mundell reminded us.

Questions have been raised in the Highlands and in the north-east about what the Greens in government will mean for vital road-safety projects such as the dualling of the A9 and the A96. Despite the best efforts of Graham Simpson, we received no clarity from the First Minister on that question earlier. The Greens claim that they have secured a shift away from road building. A whole host of other local road projects that are absolutely necessary to save lives, prevent accidents, reduce congestion and pollution, and assist economic growth could now be at risk thanks to the Greens being in government.

In my home area of Perth and Kinross, one good example of that is the cross-Tay link road project, which is not just essential to unlock the economic potential of east Perthshire but vital to reduce congestion and air pollution—already at dangerous levels—in Perth city centre. The project depends on financial assistance from the Scottish Government, and we know that the Greens are actively hostile to it. We read Mark Ruskell's press releases on the subject—he is never done condemning it. Will that vital project be sacrificed on the altar of the SNP-Green deal or will it be allowed to proceed? There are many similar questions to which we await the answers. We need to know whether many other vital road improvement projects across the country will go ahead.

Against that backdrop, it is little wonder that so many members on the SNP benches in this Parliament are concerned about the direction in which the deal is taking them and Scotland. We know what the deal is all about. It is about trying to bring forward another unwanted independence referendum. According to the draft shared policy programme that was published on 20 August, it is the intention of the SNP and Greens to bring forward the referendum within the first half of the five-year parliamentary session. At a time when we should be focusing on Covid recovery—and at a time when the First Minister promised that that would be her unrelenting focus—the Scottish Government is making its real priority the breaking up of the United Kingdom within the next two years.

Instead of the promotion of division, we could have had a consensus here. We could have had an agreement on what Scotland needs to do to rebuild our economy, to create jobs to replace those that have been lost, to restore our public services such as health and education and to start investing in our vital transport infrastructure. Those should have been the priorities of the first 100 days in government, but, instead, the Scottish Government has gone down the route of jumping into bed with a party that wants to take Scotland backwards and not forwards. It is a Government that Scotland did not vote for.

I said earlier that Alex Cole-Hamilton had given us a history lesson. Perhaps the most famous 100 days in history were in 1815, after Napoleon Bonaparte arrived in Paris following his escape from exile on Elba. Within 100 days, he had been defeated by the forces of Britain and Prussia at the battle of Waterloo and sent back into exile. The First Minister will hope that she has more success than Bonaparte did, but in doing a deal with the extremist, anti-business, anti-growth Greens she is sowing the seeds of her own Government's destruction.

17:50

**John Swinney:** There has been an interesting point at the heart of this debate, and Douglas Ross and Murdo Fraser have been on opposite sides of it. I will reflect on a number of comments that Douglas Ross made. He is not present; I do not know the reason why.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can explain. He has given notice to the chair.

**John Swinney:** I understand that he has given notice. In accordance with parliamentary protocol, I would not normally refer to a member if they were not here, but I feel that I must do so because he opened the debate. I want my intentions to be clear in his absence.

Douglas Ross and Murdo Fraser were on opposite sides in the debate. Douglas Ross led the charge in saying that the debate should not be happening; Murdo Fraser led the charge in saying that it was an opportunity to scrutinise the Government. In the opening debate of a new year of Parliament, the Conservatives are facing in opposite directions. According to Murdo Fraser, the debate is an opportunity to scrutinise the Government; according to his leader, it is a debate that should not be happening.

**Oliver Mundell:** Does the Deputy First Minister not think that his point is a bit rich on a day when he has gone into government with a group of politicians who do not believe in economic growth?

**John Swinney:** I do not find that comment at all relevant. It is clear that Patrick Harvie, Lorna Slater and I will never agree on certain issues, but we have agreed to co-operate in the spirit of the new politics. There has been a lot of discussion of the new politics today. Douglas Ross, Oliver Mundell and Murdo Fraser will not get anywhere on the subject of the new politics with the language that they have used to describe fellow members of Parliament today. Their language has been fundamentally disrespectful.

That is also relevant to the question whether the debate has been about 100 days or 5,234 days. Stephen Kerr marshalled the argument that we have had 5,234 days. That has obviously been part of the Tory script: they have all used it—Dean Lockhart, Murdo Fraser, Oliver Mundell and Douglas Ross all churned it out. The inconvenient fact that they miss is that this Government has been elected to serve the people on four occasions during that time.

The language, style, rhetoric and argument that have been piled upon us by the Conservatives today have been the same bile that they put out in 2011, 2016 and 2021, but they are over there in opposition and we are over here in government for the fourth time.

I gently advise the Conservatives that their approach to the debate gets them nowhere. They piled out this argument in 2021. It was to be the end of this Government. They threw absolutely everything at us in the run-up to the 2021 election but gained not one seat in this Parliament. We gained a seat and came back with 64 members and our colleagues in the Green Party gained three seats in Parliament. My advice to Oliver Mundell, before I accept his next intervention, is to point out that the vile strategy that he and his party have pursued has got them absolutely nowhere and they must think again.*[Interruption.]*

**Oliver Mundell:** I thank the Deputy First Minister for giving way. I am pleased that SNP members think that shouting and clapping are a substitute for ideas to take our country forward. After everything that the SNP has thrown at its campaign for independence and its divisive attempts to break up our United Kingdom by stealth, does he not reflect on the fact that there was no majority in Scotland for an SNP Government that wanted to hold a second independence referendum?

**John Swinney:** I remind Oliver Mundell that the Conservatives lost the election and that they lost the 2019 general election in Scotland when they told us that indyref2 was on the ballot paper. Jackson Carlaw—a man consigned to the back benches—led a campaign in 2019 telling us that indyref2 was on the ballot paper and that everyone had to come out and vote to stop it. What

happened? The SNP hammered the Tories once again. The Tories lost half their seats. I would simply say to the Conservatives, “The strategy is not working.”

**Stephen Kerr:** Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

**John Swinney:** Oh, I cannot resist. *[Laughter.]*

**Stephen Kerr:** Perhaps we can calm the Deputy First Minister down and return him to the subject of this debate. I tried to intervene on Kaukab Stewart—someone whom I have personal respect for—to ask her a question that I will now put to the Deputy First Minister in the hope that he might address the substance of policy and delivery. During the summer, it was disclosed in a parliamentary answer to me that one in eight teachers in Scotland is on a temporary contract. That is shameful. Will this Government take steps that underpin the commitment to fund those places through local authorities so that they can give those teachers permanent contracts?

**John Swinney:** If Mr Kerr had been paying attention, he would have found that we had reached a financial agreement with local authorities over the summer to do exactly that, as well as extending the teaching profession. If he did his homework before he came to Parliament, it would be nice.

A lot has been said in the debate about the agreement that we have reached with the Scottish Green Party. I will make no apology for an agreement that focuses on taking the necessary action on tackling climate change, delivering economic recovery in the aftermath of Covid and tackling endemic child poverty, which will be made worse if universal credit cuts are delivered by the Tory Government at Westminster, or an agreement that gives the people of this country the right to decide on their constitutional future when they chose their members of Parliament to enable that. Seventy-one members were elected to this Parliament who are committed to an independence referendum, and I believe that the people of Scotland should have the right to have that referendum.

**Tess White:** Does the cabinet secretary agree with his new coalition partners’ stance that the oil and gas sector must “transition or die”?

**John Swinney:** I think that everybody in the Parliament believes in a just transition in the oil and gas sector. We all recognise that there has to be a move away from hydrocarbons. That is the way that we have to tackle climate change. The difference between this Government, of which my colleagues are members, and the Conservatives is that the Conservatives were prepared to throw people on a scrap heap of industrial decline in the 1980s and this Government will not do that.

The final thing that I want to mention is that Douglas Ross made a big thing of the fact that the debate had to focus on the reality of the day. I have tried to do that with my comments—in my earlier speech and this one—about Covid recovery, about some of the challenges that we face and about the accomplishments that the Government has delivered. However, in his entire speech to Parliament earlier today, Douglas Ross made not a single mention of the havoc that has been created and inflicted on our society by Brexit. Farmers in my constituency are unable to harvest their product or take it to market because there is not the capacity in the supply chain to handle it. Fish producers cannot take their product to market because of the ludicrous—

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

**John Swinney:** I will give way to Mr Carson.

**Finlay Carson:** I thank the Deputy First Minister for taking my intervention. Does he agree with his new ministers that we should have a cut in the production of red meat in Scotland, which would result in offshoring our carbon to countries that have a considerably higher carbon footprint than we have in Scotland?

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Deputy First Minister, please wind up.

**John Swinney:** I will, Presiding Officer.

Our partnership agreement is committed to a buoyant future for Scottish agriculture. That is being challenged by the lunacy of Brexit that is forced upon us by the Conservative Party. There has been no word of apology or explanation for the chaos that is now inflicted on the people of this country, who cannot get the access to basic foodstuffs that Michael Gove promised that we would have after Brexit. Maybe a little too much time in the nightclubs of Scotland and not enough in the day job is what has gone wrong with Michael Gove.

The Government has undertaken a significant programme of work to achieve the commitments that we made in our first 100 days document. We will continue to pursue that approach for the remainder of the parliamentary session in a spirit of partnership with our colleagues in the Green Party. If the Opposition wishes to engage in that process, it will be welcome to do so, but I suggest to the Conservatives in particular that the tone of their contribution has to change significantly before anyone will take them seriously.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on the first 100 days—delivering for the people of Scotland.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

18:01

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I call George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-00994, on substitutions to committee membership, and S6M-00995, on committee membership.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that—

Collette Stevenson be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Evelyn Tweed be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee

That the Parliament agrees that—

Willie Rennie be appointed to replace Beatrice Wishart as a member of the Education, Children and Young People Committee

Beatrice Wishart be appointed to replace Liam McArthur as a member of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee.—[*George Adam*]

**The Presiding Officer:** The questions on those motions will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

18:02

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-00978.3, in the name of Douglas Ross, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00978, in the name of John Swinney, entitled "First 100 days—Delivering for the People of Scotland", be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

18:02

*Meeting suspended.*

18:08

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the vote on amendment S6M-00978.3.

### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 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)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

### 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)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 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)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 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)

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-00978.3 is: For 50, Against 73, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-00978.2, in the name of Anas Sarwar, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00978, in the name of John Swinney, entitled “First 100 Days—Delivering for the People of Scotland”, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-00978.2 is: For 55, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-00978.1, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S6M-00978, in the name of John Swinney, entitled “First 100 Days—Delivering for the People of Scotland”, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)

Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-00978.1 is: For 55, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-00978, in the name of John Swinney, entitled “First 100 Days—Delivering for the People of Scotland”, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)

Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-00978 is: For 67, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament welcomes the delivery of 80 key actions within the first 100 days of the new administration that will have a positive impact on the people of Scotland by leading the COVID-19 recovery, supporting NHS and care services, tackling the climate crisis, backing economic recovery and creating jobs, supporting communities and helping children and families, and recognises these actions as the foundation of improved outcomes for Scotland’s people that will continue to be delivered through the forthcoming Programme for Government, the COVID-19 recovery programme and the shared policy programme agreed between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to ask a single question on the two Parliamentary Bureau motions, unless any member objects.

The question is, that motions S6M-00994, on substitutions to committee membership, and S6M-00995, on committee membership, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that—

Collette Stevenson be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport

Committee

Evelyn Tweed be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Willie Rennie be appointed to replace Beatrice Wishart as a member of the Education, Children and Young People Committee

Beatrice Wishart be appointed to replace Liam McArthur as a member of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

## Great Borders River Clean

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-00131, in the name of Rachael Hamilton, on the success of the great Borders river clean. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I call Rachael Hamilton, who is way up in the gods. You have around seven minutes.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises the success of the Great Borders River Clean, which returned on 15-16 May 2021; congratulates the 460 volunteers who took part and collected over 3,000kg of rubbish from the River Tweed, including shopping trolleys, mattresses, signposts and a sun dial; thanks GreenTweed Eco for organising the event; recognises the strength and spirit of Borders' towns and communities, who pulled together to tackle a common cause, and notes the importance of volunteer work ahead of Volunteers Week 2021, which takes place from 1 to 7 June.

18:21

**Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I thank members for attending my debate on the first day back after the recess. It is good to see you all again—haggard or revitalised, we return.

Old tyres, baby wipes, bottles, bicycles, a plastic picnic chair and baler twine are just a few items that my family and I picked up along the River Tweed on the great Borders river clean. It is a tremendous initiative in its own right but, undoubtedly, it is also a blatant excuse for us to debate the importance of our wonderful Scottish rivers and address the biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, species extinction, extreme flooding and the fight to reverse the decline in wild salmon stocks, which is pertinent to my constituency.

In my motion, I was delighted to mention the annual volunteers week, which showcases the best of giving back to the communities where we live. Where would we be without people who give up their time? The volunteers week campaign started in 1984, which means that 2021 is the 37th year of formally saying "Thank you" to volunteers.

I turn to the main event, which all members have been waiting for. The great Borders river clean is a wonderful project that organises regular, large-scale river clean-ups throughout the Scottish Borders. Residents from towns and villages across my constituency and along the rivers and streams across the Borders take part in the river clean, which is predominantly of the area surrounding the River Tweed. All the rubbish that is collected is transported to the local waste transfer station and recycled.

I put on record my special and heartfelt thanks to Tom Rawson of St Mary's school in Melrose, which is in Christine Grahame's constituency. I am glad to see that she has joined the debate this evening, and I thank her for that.

Tom Rawson founded GreenTweed Eco, which organises the fantastic river clean project. His organisation aims to link environmental groups and charities with young people and schools across Scotland, and through the development of large-scale wildlife conservation and education projects, to encourage engagement between Scotland's children and the natural world around us. As we hand over our planet to the younger generation, it is vital that they have the awareness and understanding of caring for our environment.

I must also mention Tom's school, St Mary's, which was the first primary school in Scotland successfully to eliminate single-use plastics. Furthermore, Melrose itself is making really good progress in reducing plastic consumption by becoming one of Scotland's first towns to be accredited as a plastic-free community by the marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewage.

I now want to set out why the river clean is so important and what it means for river pollution. We are aware of the damage that plastic pollution causes to river flora and fauna, and a widespread Greenpeace survey of 13 United Kingdom rivers found that they all contained plastic pollution. In the first nationwide exercise of its kind, scientists found microplastics in 28 of the 30 locations tested. Moreover, we cannot forget that around 80 per cent of marine microplastics come from freshwater run-off, which means that they persist in rivers for a certain period before they are flushed into the ocean.

It is important that we have cleaner rivers for the sake of the wildlife that have made them their home. As a lot of the problem is man made, it is up to us to do something about it. Over the years, the success of Scottish fishing has taken a real knock, and the decline in salmon stocks, which I have previously mentioned in the chamber, is affecting rivers across Scotland. The dire consequences that many areas are now facing can be attributed partly to pollution. According to Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland, the problem begins upstream in our rivers, where a shocking 50 per cent of aquatic insects now contain microplastics. We can acknowledge that there is no single cause for the decline in salmon stocks, but the fact is that plastic pollution and human activity have made a major contribution to that decline.

Members might be interested to learn that the United Nations has designated the 10 or so years from now to 2030 as the decade of ecosystem

restoration. Riverbank ecosystems are part of our life support system, and I want the Scottish Government to provide more support for riparian woodland. I cannot see from up here, but I think that the minister Màiri McAllan is in the chamber, and I want her to take on board some of these asks. For example, we want shaded tributaries with cool pools where salmon can thrive that will allow us to begin to tackle falling salmon stocks. Indeed, that policy is supported by Scottish Woodlands.

As I am—believe it or not—the riparian woodland champion, I want to highlight some other actions that would be beneficial. First, the Scottish Government should incentivise the uptake of well-planned riparian woodland creation through, for example, the forestry grant schemes that are being rolled out just now. Such schemes could be extended to include riparian woodland species. Creating nature network corridors would be another fantastic way of meeting riparian habitat aspirations in all local authority areas right across Scotland, and the regional land use partnerships could also be used to deliver riparian networks at scale across the country.

However, the most important thing that the Scottish Government could do is give farmers clarity about its future farm policy. With support, land managers, who are keen to be part of the climate change solution, could improve the riparian zones of rivers and their tributaries, including the bricks and all the other bits that make up the banks of those rivers.

As we leave here tonight—perhaps stopping for a wild swim along the way, as Jackson Carlaw told me he would be doing—we should reflect on the possibility of positive change. We must not sit back and allow pollution to damage our rivers. Every one of us must act now, and I encourage members to get involved in this activity. Picking up rubbish is actually very satisfying, especially if it involves dragging big tyres across a wide field, and it is good for kids, their families and everyone else. This is for our constituencies and our country. By getting involved in a river or beach clean, we can feel proud of and give back to our communities. In fact, it is essential that we get together with these groups to tackle the blight of litter and pollution. We all need to be more like Tom Rawson.

Although such clean-ups form only a small part of the wider work of tackling climate change and reducing the impact that humans have on our planet, they are nonetheless vital and really bring communities together to make our rivers safer for wildlife. I again thank all the volunteers—Tom Rawson and everyone else who has been involved in the great Borders river clean.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much, Ms Hamilton. I think that Mr Carlaw almost had a coronary at the prospect of wild swimming. *[Laughter.]*

18:30

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I congratulate Rachael Hamilton on securing it. She has highlighted the fact that so much good work is being done.

I also congratulate GreenTweed Eco on bringing together this year's great Borders river clean, which took place from 15 to 16 May and was supported by the Fallago environment fund. As part of that important work, 460 volunteers took the time to clean up the River Tweed. I congratulate the Tweed Forum on the important role that it plays in helping to educate people on the River Tweed's importance for biodiversity and the role that it plays in tackling the climate emergency.

The work of the volunteers led to more than 3,000kg of rubbish being removed from the Tweed, which is remarkable, considering that most of the heavy items, such as car tyres and scrap metal, are still under several feet of water. The amount of waste recorded was a real testament to the determination of all involved to remove as much rubbish as possible from the river banks. Rachael Hamilton mentioned some of the interesting finds, which included major car parts, an intact fishing rod and a broken kayak, as well as the usual detritus of our modern lives, such as bottles, plastic toys, clothing and hundreds of thousands of wet wipes. The river clean demonstrates what communities can achieve when they come together in a good cause, and I again congratulate everyone involved.

A lot of work is also being done by hard-working volunteers across Dumfries and Galloway in the west of my South Scotland region to clean our rivers and coasts. One example is the work of the Galloway Fisheries Trust, which is working to ensure that we have clean riparian habitats and management. Riparian management can bring important benefits to the surrounding catchment. Watercourses can be damaged by overgrazing livestock, overshadowing bankside trees or the presence of alien plant species. The Galloway Fisheries Trust has completed various improvement works, including the installation of bankside fencing, the organising of controlled grazing agreements and extensive spraying of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and skunk cabbage, as well as the removal of riparian coniferous forestry and the planting of deciduous trees in the riverbank zone. All that work has led to a reduced acidity level in Galloway rivers, such as

the River Bladnoch near Wigtown, the Water of Dee near Castle Douglas and the Old Mill Burn near Newbie, which is close to Annan.

In addition to the important work of the Galloway Fisheries Trust, the Solway Firth Partnership has been working extremely hard to tackle marine litter by organising beach and water cleans by volunteers throughout the region. Marine litter is human-created waste that has been deliberately discarded, accidentally lost or transported by winds and rivers to the sea and the beaches. As well as being unsightly, marine litter can be dangerous, causing harm to public health and injury to our marine and coastal wildlife, our birds and other sea life.

The D&G Eco Warriors group is worth a mention. It has been working to address coastal littering. I was pleased to join its members in 2019, and I hope to do so again. We found a few nurdles on the beach near Kirkcudbright.

The Solway Firth Partnership and D&G Eco Warriors are particularly concerned about the impact of fly-tipped waste, which I have previously highlighted. I ask the minister to tell us in her closing speech what action the Scottish Government is taking to assist local authorities with education on fly-tipping and enforcement action against those who commit fly-tipping offences, especially when such offences are committed in coastal areas, where they can present a real threat.

The River Tweed is described by our own Alasdair Allan in his book "Tweed rins tae the Ocean". I am sure that the Borders river clean has helped greatly to maintain its appeal for walkers and visitors to enjoy. I remind everybody that all the money raised by Alasdair Allan's book will go to charity.

18:35

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I thank my colleague Rachael Hamilton for securing this first, and important, members' business debate after the recess. Waste, and primarily plastic, has become a serious problem for the environment, especially in our rivers, seas and oceans. We need only to go for a short stroll along most Scottish beaches to discover just how serious the issue has become.

Fortunately, in my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, a growing army of volunteers, consisting of primary school pupils, young people and even the not-so-young, are all equally determined to tackle not only the menace of plastic but general rubbish left strewn in the sand and around our rivers.

Three years ago, three youngsters—Lottie, Fiona and Lucy—formed the Dumfries and Galloway Eco Warriors, and what a shining example that group has become. Within a matter of months it attracted 750 members, and that figure has doubled in recent times. Through organised beach cleans along the Solway coast, they have shifted tons of plastic and rubbish ranging from golf clubs to car wheels that have been left behind. Although their activities have been somewhat curtailed because of the pandemic, these eco-warriors are ready to go into battle once more to clean up the beautiful beaches and coves scattered along the Solway coastline and beyond. Their slogan, "Together we can make a difference", probably says it all, and I would urge other members of the public to join in and show their support.

Another local clean-up organisation—this one in Wigtownshire: Oceans Need Us South West Scotland—has staged similar clean-up exercises around the harbour in Stranraer. That shows just how much people care and want to take pride in their community.

Interestingly, a number of plastic collection prototype projects are starting to be developed, which could help us to reduce litter problems in rivers and seas. The Solway Firth Partnership is looking to tackle the issue in a holistic way in the south-west corner of Scotland. Together with Marine Scotland and others, the partnership aspires not only to provide clean coasts but to prevent plastic and litter coming downstream into the estuary, so it is important that it gets support, resources and help to achieve that goal.

Given that tackling climate change and improving and protecting the environment is not a short-term challenge, I call on the Government to ensure that funding packages reflect the need for long-term solutions.

There are various projects afloat, including one that is being trialled in Holland, appropriately named "Catchy", which might be successful in improving our water quality. Comprising two floating booms, a floating frame and a collection cage, the Allseas project is working on wind and current movement. It can be floated either at the quayside or even in the middle of a harbour to collect floating litter.

Thankfully, new technologies and solutions are being developed, but we cannot and should not rely on technology to do the dirty work for us. We need a culture change, and we need to make littering and fly-tipping as socially unacceptable as drink-driving or smoking in public places. We should encourage people to do the right thing. I welcome my colleague Murdo Fraser's plans to introduce a fly-tipping bill.

However, we need to take personal responsibility and take our litter home; we should not rely on others to clear up our mess after us. Perhaps further roll-out and funding for countryside rangers can help to educate people. Until then, we must seriously thank all our eco-warriors for all their sterling work in the past and in the future.

18:38

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Rachael Hamilton for lodging her motion. The debate gives Parliament the opportunity to pay tribute to all those who give up their time to organise and volunteer for river-bank litter picks such as the great Borders river clean—and “great” is certainly a fitting description. The inaugural clean-up, in October 2019, attracted 304 rubbish collectors, who, between them, bagged an incredible 1.85 tonnes of rubbish. That grew to over 450 volunteers collecting more than 2 tonnes during the second clean-up on a chilly February-March weekend last year. Despite the huge challenges and restrictions that all our local communities have faced in recent months, it was good to see the clean-up return in May this year, when an amazing 460 volunteers collected 3 tonnes of rubbish from the Tweed.

I echo the thanks that we have already heard for the work of Tom Rawson and the award-winning GreenTweed Eco, with support from the Fallago environment fund. They have made the clean-ups possible and have ensured that borderers can enjoy far cleaner river banks as a result.

The great Borders river clean is about more than just ensuring that our river banks are that bit more litter free; it is also about having pride in our towns and villages in the Borders and across the south of Scotland. Also, given that six tonnes of rubbish were removed over just three events, the clean-up raises awareness of the scale of the problem of the—primarily plastic—pollution that plagues far too many riversides in our communities.

We have all seen appalling images of beaches in Bali that are covered in rubbish, and birds in the Atlantic feeding plastic to their chicks, but the damage that plastic pollution causes is happening in the rivers—and the burns that run into them—right here on our doorsteps.

We are the cause of that pollution and it is our problem to solve. That means that we need tough action on people who leave litter in our countryside, which I am sad to say is a problem that appears to be on the rise. It means properly enforcing action to reduce the level of waste that is washed into waterways from nearby agricultural land whenever we are hit by heavy rainfall.

It also means that we must tackle the level of sewage that is legally spilled into rivers, which has risen by 40 per cent over the past five years. Scottish Water’s figures show that the equivalent of 47,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools’-worth of waste has been discharged into our rivers and seas since 2016. The legal practice of releasing into our seas and rivers storm water and sewage overflows that would normally go into water treatment centres but cannot, because of the centres’ capacity, is on the increase. It seems that the practice is no longer happening in emergencies but is all too often routine. We are talking about raw sewage being legally poured into our waterways. The waste includes everything from plastic toothpicks to wet wipes—the very things that we all see when we carry out litter picks on our riversides and beaches.

There are many high-profile incidences of sewage being released, not least just north of the Borders, on the Esk in Midlothian, where local residents are rightly concerned about the level of pollution, partly as a result of discharge of overflows from the sewage system. I get that the action is taken to stop sewage backing up into homes, businesses, streets and open spaces, particularly at times of heavy rain—and, of course, we must get the message across better that people should not dispose of items such as wipes in the sewage system in the first place. However, we need to look again at the level of investment in the system’s capacity, because it is clear that it is increasingly failing to cope.

Ultimately, the problem is another wake-up call about climate change: it is an effect of the increase in rainfall and the more intense storms that we are facing. Unless we tackle the climate crisis and the levels of surface water that we will have to manage, the scale of flooding and pollution that we have to contend with and the amount of litter that we have to clean from our beaches and rivers will grow and grow.

Communities in the Borders are stepping up to the mark when it comes to cleaning up their environment. In the important months ahead, we, as policy makers, need to match their commitment in taking action to protect our precious environment for them and all our communities. In the meantime, I thank each and every one of the volunteers who gives up their time to put the “great” into the great Borders river clean.

18:42

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I congratulate Rachael Hamilton, who represents a neighbouring constituency to the one that I represent, on securing this debate.

My constituency—Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale—encompasses the western side of the Borders, from the Eildon hills to the foothills of the Pentlands, so I am very familiar with the route of the river Tweed and its significance to the life and economy of the Borders over the centuries. It was undoubtedly a major route for early humans, it saw the great water wheels that drove the textile industry, and to this day it continues to be a great salmon river—all 97 miles of it.

The debate is not all about the Tweed, however. The river has many, diverse tributaries—watercourses that feed it, from where it rises, humbly, high up in Tweedsmuir, and along its path through to England and Berwick and the sea, via Peebles, Innerleithen, Galashiels and Melrose. The waterways that feed into it, such as Eddleston Water, Turfford Burn, at Earlston, Leithen Water, at Innerleithen, and Gala Water—obviously at Gala—to name but a few, are equally important in the cleaning process.

I cannot speak on the issue without first recognising, as other members have, the pivotal role of Tom Rawson, a teacher at St Mary's School in Melrose and an indefatigable environmental activist. He has engaged riverside communities along the Tweed and its waterways in the clean-up, which is synchronised so that, on particular days, communities across the Borders are involved in their local clean-up, taking ownership of their waterway.

As others have said, more than 450 Borderers turned out to clean up the mess of the minority—a minority who are ignorant and uncaring about the damage to the environment, to wildlife and to the health of the river that they are fortunate enough to have navigating past their community. Twenty-two bags of litter were collected at the Turfford Burn at Earlston one Saturday. The clean-up at Eddleston is another example of one that extends to ensuring that natural debris is cleared. The Eddleston Water project has planted vegetation along the river's path and has diverted it to make the water snake more in order to slow its path, which helps to reduce the prospect of flooding downstream, especially in Tweedgreen and Peebles, which has been all too common. As we know—it hardly needs to be said—flood prevention starts upstream.

Those who despoil our waterways, whether it is through plastic, debris or pesticides, should be held to account and prosecuted. They should be reported to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency or the council's environmental department. No one should desist from reporting such people. It can be done discreetly.

I applaud the majority and, of course, the volunteers, including the biggest volunteer of all,

Tom Rawson—the good guys. I thank them for protecting the Tweed and her varied waterways. We mortals are merely passing through, as generations of our predecessors have done before us. We are custodians of our environment. We should leave our rivers, including the River Tweed, and our waterways in a better condition than we found them—cleaner and clearer.

18:46

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** I extend my congratulations to you, Presiding Officer, which I have not managed to do for some while.

It is a great pleasure to follow the speech of Christine Grahame, who was right to thank all the volunteers and to say that we should hold to account individuals who recklessly tip and dump in the rivers. If they did not do that, our volunteers would not need to do so much work.

I congratulate Rachael Hamilton on securing this members' business debate. It is a great pleasure to come together in the chamber to thank people who do not seek publicity or even thanks, but who seek the enjoyment of being together and doing good for their communities. The great Borders river clean is a fine example of that. It is funded by the Fallago environment fund, which was set up to enhance the quality of life of local communities and visitors to the Borders through investment in the protection, enhancement and appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Scottish Borders environment. It is a great credit to EDF Renewables and the Roxburghe Estates that they required those aims to be encompassed in the thoughts behind the funding that they provide.

That brings me to the great Borders river clean. If we look slightly more widely, River Cleanup, which is a worldwide group of river warriors, estimates that 8 billion kilograms of waste end up in our seas and oceans, having been transported down our rivers—the arteries of our society. Two thousand of those 8 billion kilograms were removed by the 453 great Borders volunteers who gave up their time. To give some idea of that volume, I note that it takes approximately 50 small plastic disposable bottles to make up a kilogram. We should think about the large articles that were dragged across farmers' fields and the bags that were collected to go to landfill. We should also think how much easier it would have been for individuals to put the items in the bin themselves rather than expecting others to gather them together, but there we are.

Between May and June last year, 750 teams around the world worked on cleaning up their rivers because they recognised the importance of

their rivers to the community, to communication, to wildlife and to the future that they want for their children. Those arteries make their way to the sea. That leads me to mention Surfers Against Sewage, which I have mentioned in other places, and the phenomenal work that it does in cleaning up beaches. It organises not only clean-ups, but surveys. On 11 August, the surfers produced a brand audit report that highlights, after 1 million miles of beach clean, exactly where the rubbish comes from. It identifies the “dirty dozen”—the 12 companies around the world that are responsible for almost three quarters of all the plastic and packaging pollution that ends up going into the sea and then, twice in 24 hours with the tides, gets washed back ashore.

In the south of Scotland, we have 13 beaches that have been recognised with the Scotland’s beach award. Those communities have looked after their beaches to meet the criteria of access, facilities, safety, local environmental quality, community and heritage. I take a moment to remind people that they can attend their local beach between 17 and 26 September for the beach clean-up in Scotland. I urge them to do so and I know that volunteers will be there.

Time is short, but I want to mention an idea that I hope the minister will consider promoting—I know that it is not within her gift. Organised by Scottish Borders Council, the People’s Project in Dumfries and Galloway and East Lothian Countryside Volunteers, it is a library of litter collection equipment—plastic bags, gloves and litter pickers—that enables our volunteers to go out and do their best.

The Destiny Project in Prestonpans spent last weekend clearing up fly tipping by visitors who decided to set up camp in one of our fields. Off their own backs—again, not because of publicity, but because it was the right thing to do—they went and collected that rubbish.

In conclusion, I echo the many members who have rightly said thank you to the volunteers, because they are taking care of their communities in a way that is special and individual to them. It is about time that we all thought about what happens if we just drop that plastic bottle.

18:51

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** I, too, thank all the volunteers in the Borders who participated in the great Borders river clean this year and in previous years. I also congratulate Rachael Hamilton on securing a members’ business debate on the issue. It is important that actions from local communities are spoken about and acknowledged in the Scottish Parliament.

More than 400 people from a number of villages across the Scottish Borders have worked together, demonstrating not only the strength of spirit of towns and villages pulling together on a common cause, but also where we need to act to look after the natural environment that we rely on and must take responsibility for.

As members have said, communities in many parts of the south of Scotland are rightly concerned about the environment, littering and fly tipping. Many communities are taking excellent direct action through events such as the river clean, litter picks and the beach clear-ups that Martin Whitfield mentioned. Cleaning our green spaces, rivers and fields undoubtedly has many advantages, from the aesthetic—tourists are attracted to the beautiful towns and villages across the Borders and beyond—to the environmental and educational benefits. It is important to teach people from an early age to respect their environment and understand the damage that is caused by plastics and the overconsumption of goods, which previous generations have undoubtedly succumbed to.

As it aimed to do, the great Borders river clean has brought into sharp focus the scale of the problem that we face. In one weekend, 3,000kg of rubbish was pulled from a Borders river. What a throwaway society we live in. The organisers hope that that shocking figure will raise awareness of the effects of the problem and help to change behaviours and reduce the amount of litter that enters the natural environment. That is very much needed.

Young people across the planet are telling us to act now and are instructing us to take the issue seriously. As a Parliament, we must accept our responsibilities. We must do more and take on responsibility for ensuring that there is legislation and funding to prevent the causes of such environmental problems. We must be serious about having a zero-waste Scotland. We need to use the evidence that we have to move on education, with local authorities responding to the reasons that have been identified, be they socioeconomic problems, barriers to people accessing services or a lack of education to change behaviour.

I end by noting just how important the subject is. I hope that we will return to it in the chamber many times in order to demonstrate that we take it very seriously, as that will be the best thank you that we can offer the volunteers. I once again commend the great Borders river clean and thank all the volunteers.

18:55

**The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan):** I congratulate Rachael Hamilton on securing the debate. I thank everyone who has stayed for it, and I welcome their views.

On the theme of thank yous, I begin my response on behalf of the Scottish Government by once again offering our sincere thanks to two groups of people. First, I thank Scotland's incredible waste and resources key workers, who have, during an anxious and difficult time, worked tirelessly to keep our systems operating. While those of us who were able to work from home did so, they went out and kept our environment clean. I thank them—and all of Scotland's key workers—for that.

Secondly, I extend the Government's thanks to our communities of volunteers, who also rallied to meet the enormous challenges of the pandemic, keeping communities together as we had to stay apart. I thank everyone who dedicated themselves to causes such as keeping our natural environment enjoyable for all. Volunteer week always shines a spotlight on the efforts of volunteers, including those in the great Borders river clean. There are countless groups across the country who faithfully clean up our beautiful countryside. I was really pleased to join a litter pick in Rigside in my Clydesdale constituency last week, and I thank those volunteers, too. Such groups work tirelessly for our people and our planet.

Despite those thanks, it is clear that clearing up our waterways should not fall to volunteers. Many points have been made in tonight's debate and I would love to pick up on them all. In my closing remarks, I want to address an area where I think progress needs to be made, which concerns the Scottish Government's plans for tackling litter and fly tipping. Emma Harper asked me to outline those. Before I do that, however, I will pick up on a couple of the points that were made in the debate.

Rachael Hamilton mentioned riparian tree planting and other forms of support. Over the summer, I had the privilege of visiting a natural tree regeneration project in the Cairngorms, and I saw at first hand how the river began to adapt to the natural regeneration of woodland around it and how life returned. It was a wonderful thing to see.

Rachael Hamilton also mentioned future farming policy. I was very pleased that my colleague Mairi Gougeon, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, announced the future of farming implementation board as part of the Government's first 100 days commitments. It will drive forward the future of farming policy. I know at first hand just how ready Scotland's farmers are to

contribute to supporting biodiversity and tackling climate change while continuing to produce sustainable, healthy food.

Colin Smyth rightly picked up on sewage outflows, and I agree with much of what he said. There are two points to stress. First, as he set out, they are a vital mechanism for ensuring that sewage does not back up into homes and businesses when there is adverse weather. Secondly, as he also pointed out, adverse weather is recurring. It is important that we all accept that, as the impact of climate change begins to be felt, we will have to become more accustomed to extreme weather conditions. I agree with his point that, just as we must all adapt to climate change, so, too, must the Scottish Government. I have asked my officials to work with Scottish Water and SEPA, which are already investing heavily in the area, to ensure that we are keeping up to date with the climate emergency and its implications.

Martin Whitfield mentioned the litter-picking library, and I like the idea. A little girl in my life, when asked at the beginning of the summer holidays what she was going to be doing, told me that she had ordered a litter-picking kit from South Lanarkshire Council. I thought, "Gosh! How times have changed." Young people are so alive to these issues, and I like that.

Fly-tipping and littering are illegal and dangerous. Fly-tipping is unnecessary and there is no excuse for it anywhere in Scotland. Our environment is blighted by it and valuable resources that could form part of our circular economy if recycled are instead wasted. Taxpayers and landowners bear the brunt of the clean-up. I am acutely aware that fly-tipping is not just something that has happened as a result of the pandemic—it was a problem before that. However, there is no doubt that the pandemic created new challenges and, as people have spent more time in their homes and their communities, they have noticed the problem more.

A lot of hard work went into helping our waste and resources industry to minimise disruption during lockdowns, and I again praise the workers who kept everything flowing, as it were. There is evidence that the incidence of fly-tipping and littering has decreased as waste services, like everything else in life, have begun to creep back to something more like normality. Despite that, however, the Government is preparing to renew our commitment to tackling the problem with a new approach and accelerated action to address it.

The current policy and political landscape are very different from when our national litter strategy was published. We now face the climate emergency, we are out of the European Union against our wishes and we are navigating a global

pandemic. Therefore, ahead of the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—in Glasgow this year, we have been working on developing a new litter and fly tipping strategy, which will recognise that those are different issues and that they both require prominence and a tailored approach.

The Scottish Government has committed to publishing that refreshed and updated strategy in early 2022. Later this year, I will publish a consultation to outline the key actions in the new strategy, which will include looking at where legislation might need to be renewed or updated. The consultation will be developed in close collaboration with our key stakeholders including the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Zero Waste Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful and, of course, local authorities, which are responsible for and best placed to make decisions on waste prioritisation.

**Martin Whitfield:** I welcome the fact that there is new thinking and, indeed, rethinking regarding tipping. Does the policy recognise that there is a fundamental separation in those who fly-tip? There are commercial businesses that, in essence, fly-tip for profit for themselves and there are individuals who fly-tip for want of access or some other, may I say, lame excuse, such as not being able to take things to the tip. Will the policy reflect the differences in those who fly-tip?

**Màiri McAllan:** I am grateful to the member for making that important point. I am determined to ensure that that nuance is part of the consultation because, to address the issue, we have to understand its causes.

As someone who lives in a rural location and has personal experience of and frustrations about littering and fly-tipping around my home, I am determined that the consultation exercise will reflect lived experience.

**Christine Grahame:** Among the stakeholders that the minister mentioned, she did not mention the police. I know from my many years here that the police and SEPA worked together when commercial operators were undercutting the prices of reasonable and conventional environmental disposal people and were dumping poisonous waste wherever they liked. Would it be possible to include the police in the list of stakeholders?

**Màiri McAllan:** I absolutely agree with Christine Grahame. Littering and fly-tipping are criminal offences, so the police should absolutely be involved in the development of the policy.

I am conscious that I am running short of time, Presiding Officer. I stress that we recognise and celebrate the value of kindness, which is inherent in volunteering, and we want to ensure that everyone who wants to volunteer can do so.

However, I trust that I have made it clear that the Government is determined to tackle the causes of littering, fly-tipping and environmental damage and to focus on prevention, so that it does not fall to our volunteers to deal with the consequences. In doing that, we can clean up our beautiful natural environments, we can deliver a truly circular economy with all the economic benefits that come with that and, together, we can build a just and fair transition to net zero.

*Meeting closed at 19:03.*

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