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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 22 September 2021

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

Portfolio Question Time

Covid-19 Recovery and Parliamentary Business

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon, colleagues. I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place. Face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

Questions 3, 4 and 7 have been grouped and I will take any supplementary questions after they have all been answered. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary, they should press their request-to-speak button or enter the letter R in the chat function during the relevant question. In order to get in as many members as possible, I urge that we have short and succinct questions, and answers to match.

Covid-19 Recovery (Ayrshire)

1. **Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its policies and actions across Government will support Ayrshire's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00167)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The Scottish Government is working to ensure that Ayrshire recovers and prospers as it emerges from the pandemic. The Ayrshire growth deal will see the Scottish Government invest £103 million over 10 years across Ayrshire by funding projects such as the great harbour and the Ayrshire manufacturing investment corridor. We are supporting the development of Ayrshire's regional economic partnership, which will set out a strategic vision for the region. Ayrshire will also benefit from national policies that are included in our 10-year national strategy for economic transformation, our fair work first approach and our infrastructure investment plan.

Kenneth Gibson: The Scottish Government is establishing a £500 million transition fund for the north-east of Scotland. With the closure of Hunterston B in January and the loss of some 570 jobs over the next three years, will the cabinet secretary consider a transition fund for north Ayrshire, as part of its Covid-19 recovery, in order

to help with the transition from nuclear power to renewables?

John Swinney: I recognise the significance of the issue and the importance that is attached to it by Mr Gibson. The Hunterston B site is important for north Ayrshire and the wider community. With the forthcoming decommissioning of the site, we want to ensure that valuable skills are not in any way lost to Ayrshire or the Scottish economy. That is why the Ayrshire growth deal contains a skills fund that will support skills interventions across the region. Also included in the deal is a project, which is sited at Hunterston, to specifically address energy decarbonisation and support offshore renewable energy development.

The Ayrshire regional economic partnership is leading work on long-term strategic economic development, and the Government will support it in that on-going work.

Covid-19 Recovery (Measurement of Progress)

2. **Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what actions it is taking to measure the progress of its Covid-19 recovery policies. (S6O-00168)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): We will continue to take a range of actions to measure the progress of our Covid-19 policies. That will include regular measurements around furlough levels, employment statistics and business resilience, and tracking Scotland's broader wellbeing through the national performance framework. I will shortly publish the Covid recovery strategy and, with partners, we will develop a monitoring framework alongside that to ensure that we are making progress.

Katy Clark: At the recent Scottish elections, all political parties spoke about a jobs-led recovery. What action is the Scottish Government taking across all departments to support the creation of jobs? In which sectors will those jobs be created? What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that support is in place for people who may lose their jobs in the coming months as furlough comes to an end?

John Swinney: Those are important questions and I welcome Katy Clark's thoughts and contributions in that respect. The Government is undertaking a number of employment-based interventions. For example, the transition training fund is designed to address exactly the circumstances that Katy Clark has put to me in supporting individuals to move from one sector to another.

In relation to sectoral activity, the situation will vary around the country. For example, Mr Gibson's question about the north-east of Scotland

raised the issue of oil and gas transition. I assure Katy Clark that at the heart of the Government's employment strategy is a focus on the communities that have been hardest hit by Covid and are at the greatest risk of disruption due to the end of the furlough scheme. Our interventions will be focused on supporting individuals to sustain employment in such circumstances.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Citizens Advice Scotland research shows that, across Scotland, 1.4 million people have run out of money before pay day in the past year, and CAS warns that the end of furlough and the cut to universal credit risk further financial insecurity. What assessment has the Deputy First Minister made of the impact that that will have on Scotland's recovery from Covid-19?

John Swinney: I recently had a very helpful discussion with Citizens Advice Scotland in which it explained its wider assessment of the impact of financial hardship on our society and the dangers of changes such as the reduction of universal credit. If the universal credit cut takes place, it is estimated that it will push 60,000 Scots into poverty and hundreds of thousands of others into hardship.

I have just come from a discussion with my ministerial colleagues about the measures that the Scottish Government is taking to address child poverty and ensure that we have in place effective support so that our objectives are achieved and we protect individuals as far as we can from the negative effects of a reduction in universal credit, which would inflict hardship on many citizens in our country.

Vaccination Certification Scheme (Monitoring and Review)

3. **Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will monitor and review the Covid-19 vaccine certification scheme. (S6O-00169)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): As with other Covid measures, we are under a legal duty to review the necessity of the regulations every three weeks. We have a duty to review the necessity and proportionality of the recommendations, and policy decisions at the review points will be informed by a range of evidence from the four harms perspective, with which Parliament will be familiar.

The review will measure the certification programme outcomes against the policy objectives of increasing vaccination uptake and reducing the prevalence of Covid-19 and the pressures on the national health service. A key factor in the review will be to ensure that the policy impact remains

proportionate for the business sector and society at large. The certification regulations are due to expire on 28 February 2022, but we do not want to have the scheme in place for any longer than is necessary. Therefore, if evidence and clinical advice indicate that certification is no longer required, we will remove it.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: We have just over a week before the scheme is supposed to come into place. The Night Time Industries Association is launching legal action against the plans, which it says are not proportionate and are "likely to be unlawful." UKHospitality Scotland has said that business confidence has been "shattered". Yesterday, Liz Cameron of Scottish Chambers of Commerce said that businesses are expected

"to bear the burden of implementation costs, without any financial support whatsoever",

of a scheme that

"is not workable in the timelines being proposed."

Does the cabinet secretary think that all those bodies are wrong?

John Swinney: I quite clearly accept that there is a difference of opinion between the Government and those bodies. However, I invite them and the Conservative Party to think about what the alternative is. The alternative is that many of the sectors would have to close because of the levels of infection in society. We do not want that, so we are trying to take proportionate action to prevent that situation from prevailing. That is the type of proportionate action that the Welsh Government is taking, and it is the type of proportionate action that the United Kingdom Government is prepared to take should it judge that to be necessary.

We are engaged in dialogue with the sectors and we have set out the basis on which the scheme will operate. Further details will be set out in due course and it will be implemented, as the First Minister confirmed yesterday, at 5 am on 1 October.

Vaccination Certification (Status)

4. **Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what arrangements are in place for people to question their Covid-19 vaccine certification status if they believe their records are incorrect. (S6O-00170)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Any suspected errors in a person's vaccination record should be reported to the Covid-19 vaccination status helpline on 0808 196 8565. The helpline can resolve issues only in relation to vaccinations administered in Scotland. We are aware that some health boards are experiencing increased requests to update vaccination records.

People can do that via the helpline. People who received their vaccine from a general practitioner can still register online to receive their vaccination record if it is required for international travel.

Clare Adamson: I thank the cabinet secretary for his helpful answer. I note the First Minister's answer to similar questions after her statement on Covid yesterday. Can the cabinet secretary give an indication of when other anomalies in the system will be addressed? They include the position of people working in the oil industry in the middle east who have returned having had their first vaccine outwith Scotland, and other examples were raised following yesterday's Covid statement.

John Swinney: We are acting to address any particular issues that individuals face on a systemic basis. A number of the points in relation to the common travel area have been resolved already, and we will work as expeditiously as we can to ensure that all the potential scenarios that may emerge can be properly and fairly addressed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that I will take supplementaries on the grouped questions after question 7.

Vaccination Certification Scheme (Exemptions)

7. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the anticipated criteria for exemption from the Covid-19 vaccine certification scheme. (S6O-00173)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): We have identified the following three criteria for exemptions: being under 18 years of age, being a participant in a vaccine trial and being unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons. We are working on the medical conditions that would most closely be linked with a patient being unable to be immunised. We expect that the number of people in such a position is very small. All clinical trial participants have already received from the principal investigator a letter that can be used as proof of their trial status.

Fulton MacGregor: The cabinet secretary mentioned this issue in his response to Clare Adamson a minute ago. Can he elaborate on the proposed guidelines for how people who have been fully vaccinated abroad can obtain a vaccination certificate, or clearance to attend events in Scotland at which a certificate is required?

With regard to exemptions that are based on health grounds, does the cabinet secretary anticipate the need for a doctor's note or other medical note, or will the relevant individuals be, in

some instances, able to self-report that they have an exemption?

John Swinney: We are developing an approval process for medical exemptions. We will publish the detail of how that will work before its implementation, along with the necessary guidance. If any issues arise out of that guidance, I encourage people to contact the national helpline on the number that I gave earlier.

In relation to the scenario in which people have been vaccinated in other countries, the scheme will recognise people who have been vaccinated with a vaccine that has been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Before the scheme goes live, we will put in place an interim process to enable residents of Scotland who have had a dose outside Scotland to have their vaccination record updated. Visitors from the rest of the United Kingdom and the wider common travel area will be able to use their existing Covid status apps with QR codes, and paper-based certificates, to gain entry to relevant venues in Scotland.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will follow up on Fulton Macgregor's question. Visitors from other parts of the United Kingdom who do not have apps, but only paper proof of vaccination, will be travelling to events and football matches in Scotland. Will guidance be issued to venues and football clubs on what appropriate certification is needed for people in that category, given that it varies among different parts of the United Kingdom?

John Swinney: Guidance will be made available. We will also continue to discuss with football authorities what information would be relevant for them to have to guide the decisions that they will have to make in implementing the certification scheme.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary provide any information on discussions on those—in particular, younger people—who have not yet been able to receive a second dose of the vaccine due to their having been recently infected with Covid? How will that affect their ability to access events and venues that are covered by the certification scheme, given the likelihood that they, too, will have developed antibodies?

John Swinney: I suspect that the number of cases in such scenarios will be relatively limited. I encourage individuals, should they be unable to be vaccinated for the reason that Emma Roddick outlined, to raise such circumstances with the national helpline.

We are, obviously, trying to ensure that we have in place a proportionate intervention that ensures that we strengthen safety, that we minimise the

risk of transmission in certain venues and that we boost the level of vaccine uptake, into the bargain. Those are the objectives that we are trying to achieve. We encourage individuals to secure the necessary vaccination certification to enable us to achieve the policy objectives of that intervention.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am, as are my constituents, delighted that QR codes are in place. However, one constituent of mine who travelled to France on 5 September found that, unfortunately, the QR code did not work, so she did not have access to cafes, restaurants or museums. As the cabinet secretary can imagine, that put a damper on things. Have there been reports of similar problems, and how will the Scottish Government iron out such glitches in the system quickly?

John Swinney: If Jackie Baillie wishes to share with me the details of that case, I will, of course, have it investigated.

There will, inevitably, be technical challenges in the roll-out of any scheme of this nature. Obviously, we try to minimise them. Where we identify particular problems, we work to address them as quickly as possible.

As I said, if Jackie Baillie furnishes me with the details of that case, I will address it and respond to her and her constituent directly. I am sorry that her constituent was unable to access facilities, as a consequence.

Covid-19 Recovery (Mid Scotland and Fife)

5. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how its policies and actions across government will support Mid Scotland and Fife to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00171)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): We are actively supporting economic recovery in Mid Scotland and Fife, as we are across the whole of Scotland. That includes more than £150 million to support local businesses and additional funding of more than £170 million for the area's four local authorities.

We have committed more than £495 million across the three city region deals in mid-Scotland, which will help to drive a sustainable recovery from the pandemic in the long term. That includes £25 million for the industrial innovation programme in Fife, which will support growth of cutting-edge businesses that can deliver good and fair jobs for local people.

Claire Baker: Although young people were least likely to become ill during the pandemic, there has been a huge impact on their education, their mental health and their work. Many young

people in my region are anxious about the long-term impacts of the pandemic; we must ensure that those impacts do not translate into further inequalities. With regard to the programmes that the cabinet secretary mentioned and the policies for recovery, how is the Government making sure that the generational impact of Covid is being addressed?

John Swinney: Claire Baker raises a fair point. The economic interventions that the Government is taking forward are designed, in part, to create long-term sustainable economic and employment opportunities for people. By their nature, that involves ensuring that the interests of young people are very much at the heart of the design of the interventions.

We will make sure that all the interventions that I talked about in my original answer will have relationships with higher and further education institutions—with which Claire Baker will be familiar—in the Mid Scotland and Fife region. All the institutions will have particular roles and responsibilities in ensuring that the needs of young people are adequately and fully represented.

I am confident that the challenges that young people have faced in the past 18 months through Covid can be properly and fully addressed by ensuring that we have in place an approach to skills, education and investment that meets their needs, ensures that they are able to access opportunities for the future, and are in no way disadvantaged by their difficult experiences during the course of the pandemic.

Covid-19 Recovery (Hospitality)

6. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the Covid recovery secretary has had with ministerial colleagues regarding action to support the hospitality sector to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00172)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): I recognise the value of the hospitality and tourism sectors and I acknowledge their importance in the recovery. I have regular dialogue with my colleagues, as part of Cabinet discussions. Those will be on-going as we prepare for the 2022-23 budget. We will continue to ensure that the budget prioritises recovery, and we are aware that hospitality has been particularly hard-hit.

Over the past year, the Government has worked closely with sectoral organisations including the Scottish Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality and the Scottish hospitality group on the recovery, and support for the tourism and hospitality sectors has

been designed to address the issues that they have drawn to our attention.

Colin Beattie: What support is being provided to the retail and hospitality sectors, which are increasingly facing non-compliance with the requirement to wear face coverings and physical distancing?

John Swinney: Over the past few weeks, as the Government has worked to address the high levels of infection that we have been experiencing, we have been engaged in a series of discussions with a range of business sectors, including retail, hospitality and tourism, to encourage them to apply baseline measures, such as the wearing of face coverings, in order to provide maximum resistance to circulation of the virus. In those discussions, I have had to applaud the willingness of the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors to work with us. The recent reduction in the number of cases—although the number is still high, it is lower than it was—is, in part, a consequence of the response to our appeals for their support.

In addition, the Government is communicating, through a great deal of public messaging, to ensure that individuals are aware of the necessity of wearing face coverings and of the advantages and protections that come from it. We will continue to share those messages with a wider audience to ensure that the baseline measures effectively resist circulation of the virus.

Covid-19 Recovery (Cross-government Co-ordination)

8. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on cross-government co-ordination of Covid-19 recovery policies. (S6O-00174)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The impact of Covid requires us to ensure that we have, across our public services, a coherent approach to the necessity of Covid-19 recovery. Dean Lockhart will be aware that the justice recovery plan was published in March and that the national health service recovery plan was published on 25 August. A number of ministerial groups have been established to ensure co-ordination and collaboration across the Scottish Government and to ensure that we take a collective view on the priorities for recovery.

I will shortly publish the Covid recovery strategy, which will set out how, collectively, we will ensure that actions at national and local levels are prioritised, co-ordinated and targeted most effectively to meet the needs of people who have been disproportionately disadvantaged by Covid-19. The work follows a number of months of open

discussions involving Scotland's public, private and third sectors, to allow them to shape the sort of recovery that Scotland requires.

Dean Lockhart: Some concern has been expressed about the transparency of Scottish Government spending on Covid-19 recovery. Last week, a report from the Auditor General for Scotland warned that it is becoming

"increasingly hard to define what is, and what isn't, Covid-19 spending."

What steps will the cabinet secretary take to increase the transparency of Covid-19 spending?

John Swinney: The Government publishes a vast amount of information on its public expenditure, including regular public reporting on very small items of public expenditure, so I do not think that there is a shortage of information about public expenditure.

I agree with Audit Scotland that it is challenging to distinguish between expenditure that is exclusively on Covid-19 recovery and wider public expenditure, given the fact that Covid-19 has had a cumulative effect on the Government's priorities. Mr Lockhart's question is predicated on the need for cross-Government co-ordination of Covid recovery policies, which suggests that there is a cross-Government impact from Covid. We will continue to be as open and transparent as we can be about public expenditure, but we have, as the starting point of any analysis, to accept that Covid has affected all areas of public expenditure and policy. As a consequence, it is likely that public expenditure will be similarly influenced.

Net Zero, Energy and Transport

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if they wish to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button, or indicate so in the chat function by entering the letter R, during the relevant question.

Strategic Transport Projects Review (Scottish Borders)

1. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the aspects of the strategic transport projects review regarding the Scottish Borders. (S6O-00175)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The Borders transport corridors study emphasised the importance of a connected, safe, resilient and high-quality strategic transport network for the Scottish Borders. The study's recommendations are now being appraised within STPR2. The appraisal involves consideration of a range of

criteria to determine the socioeconomic benefits and overall value for money, and takes into account factors such as affordability, deliverability, risk and uncertainty. That consideration is important, given the pressures on current and future public finances. The review is due to conclude later this year with the publication of recommendations and a statutory consultation period.

Rachael Hamilton: The announcements on STPR2 in February and the recent programme for government made no mention of the introduction of a feasibility study to extend the Borders railway, yet Kate Forbes said in the Scottish Affairs Select Committee that the Scottish Government is

“certainly committed to pursuing the process which will hopefully deliver the extension”

and that the deal of which the Scottish Government is a signatory

“includes a commitment to progress that work”.

When will the feasibility study begin, who is undertaking it and how will the £10 million Borderlands inclusive growth deal funding be spent?

Michael Matheson: The member is aware that part of the Borderlands growth deal is our commitment of £5 million towards the feasibility study. However, the study will be carried out after STPR2 has been completed, as that will identify the rationale and justification for whether an extension of the Borders railway line should be taken forward in the first place. The feasibility study should follow the review, which is exactly what we propose and what continues to be the case.

Climate Change (Young People)

2. Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to young people in the run-up to the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—to ensure that their views on climate change are listened to. (S6O-00176)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): Last week, we announced £300,000 of support for the 16th conference of youth—COY16—which is the UN’s official youth event for COP26. For the first time, five young people from Scotland will join participants from around the world and will help to shape the conference’s statement. We also support the Young Scot-led Scottish youth climate programme, which enables Scottish children and young people to host a climate youth summit ahead of COP26 to design the legacy that they want from the conference and to act as local champions across the country.

Michelle Thomson: We all know that our young people will live the longest with the decisions that we make today. Given that and the fact that the climate youth conference that the cabinet secretary mentioned will be the platform in which young people can be heard on the issues, can the cabinet secretary outline how ideas and suggestions that are proposed at said conference will be introduced to COP26? Based on the conference, how will Scottish outcomes be measured?

Michael Matheson: It is extremely important that the voice of children and young people be fully integrated into the approach that COP26 takes in considering how to tackle climate change in Glasgow, which is why we have committed to funding the youth summit. The summit will allow young people to come together to set out a statement, which will then be submitted directly to COP26 for the consideration of international leaders.

It is critical that young people’s voices are at the heart of considerations around COP26. The funding of the UN’s youth conference is a specific example of the proactive action that the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that children and young people’s voices are heard. Our younger generation will have to deal with the consequences of our decisions at COP26 and in the future, and it is essential that they have an input into designing the outcome of COP26.

Tree Planting Targets

3. Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making in meeting its target of planting 30 million trees by the end of 2021, and whether it achieved the 22 million target last year. (S6O-00177)

The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): The Scottish Government’s woodland creation target for 2021-22 is to plant 13,500 hectares, which equates to approximately 27 million trees. Between April 2020 and March 2021, we created 10,660 hectares of new woodland, which is approximately 22 million trees.

Meghan Gallacher: The SNP-Green coalition deal was struck after the decision to honour the Green manifesto pledge to double the number of wind farms in Scotland by 2030. Statistics released by Forestry and Land Scotland in February last year showed that, since 2000, 13.9 million trees have been axed to make way for 21 wind farm projects. That not only disturbs the natural habitats of many endangered animals but could impact climate change targets. How many mature trees will be lost because of that manifesto pledge?

Màiri McAllan: That is a detailed and technical question so, if the member agrees, I will take it away and send her a written note in answer.

I just point out to the member that the Scottish Parliament voted for the world's most ambitious climate targets and that we have an obligation to meet them. One reason why Scotland can be so ambitious is because of our natural environment's scope to sequester carbon and support biodiversity. The question of land use and its change in the next five to 10 years will be pertinent, and I hope that we can all work together on it.

Railway Journey Times (South Scotland)

4. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve journey times on the Dumfries to Glasgow and Stranraer to Ayr railway services, to help reduce emissions from the use of other modes of transport. (S6O-00178)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Seventy-five per cent of all passenger services are undertaken by zero-emission trains, with the remainder to be decarbonised by 2035. That could give us journey-time savings through the use of more efficient and cleaner trains across the south west of Scotland. Options to replace the class 156 diesels that run on the Dumfries and Galloway and Stranraer to Ayr routes are being considered. The options include self-powered fleets with battery or hydrogen fuel cells.

Emma Harper: There are only four trains per day on the single-track Stranraer line, and it takes two hours and 20 minutes to get to Glasgow, compared to just two hours by car. On the Dumfries line, it takes one hour and 59 minutes to get to Glasgow by train but only an hour and a half by car. Given the climate emergency and the need to reduce the number of car journeys, is there potential for increasing the frequency of the trains on those lines? Can the minister outline when the lines, which are currently diesel, will be decarbonised, which will improve journey times?

Graeme Dey: The proposed May 2022 timetable seeks to improve services in the south-west of Scotland by increasing the number of services and capacity compared to the present-day timetable. It is proposed that there will be an additional six Ayr to Stranraer services compared to the current timetable, and services from Glasgow to Dumfries and beyond will increase by five. Overall, there will be an additional 1,000 seats every day across the south-west service group to encourage modal shift. A study is under way to examine potential line speed improvements and the use of faster rolling stock that might become available as a consequence of changes

elsewhere on the network. That will be subject to the usual affordability constraints.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am pleased that Emma Harper has asked the Government about its commitment to improving journey times and reducing emissions, because the proposals that are on the table appear to be for slashing rail services in the south of Scotland. The Government has the power to halt such cuts. Is the minister not aware that those are double standards, that they make a total mockery of his commitment to climate change, and that they are just another attack on rural areas? Will he confirm that the rail service will increase in the next few years?

Graeme Dey: In his haste to jump up and ask a supplementary question, Finlay Carson was clearly not listening to my first answer, so I will repeat what I said. It is proposed that there will be an additional six Ayr to Stranraer services compared to the current timetable, and that services from Glasgow to Dumfries and beyond will increase by five. There will be an additional 1,000 seats every day across the south-west service group to encourage modal shift. Having listened to that, I am sure that Mr Carson will welcome the news.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 was not lodged.

Programme for Government Commitments (Net Zero Nation)

6. **Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the commitments in the programme for government will help secure a net zero nation. (S6O-00180)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The programme for government will deliver lasting action to end Scotland's contributions to climate change, restoring our nature and enhancing our climate resilience in a just and fair way. Specifically, the measures for a green transport revolution and how we heat our homes will accelerate action to reduce significant emissions. Concurrently, our comprehensive cross-Government response to the just transition commission sets out our ambitious agenda and first steps on delivering a just transition for Scotland, including a skills guarantee for workers in carbon-intensive sectors and the development of an energy just transition plan.

Fiona Hyslop: It is clear that the retrofitting of housing and businesses will be key in meeting our net zero targets. What plans for the coming year does the Government have to embark on that massive challenge? Can the cabinet secretary provide an assurance that an independent advice

service will be easily accessible to home owners and small businesses?

Michael Matheson: We are taking a number of steps in that area, some of which we touched on in yesterday's net zero nation debate. Those steps include the investment over the course of the next five years of some £1.8 billion to support and accelerate the deployment of heat and energy efficiency measures in homes and buildings across the country. Alongside that, given the nature and the scale of the transition, we are establishing a national public energy agency to help to educate the public on the changes that are required and to bring new co-ordination and leadership to harness the potential of the programme of decarbonisation that will be necessary across domestic and non-domestic premises over the next 20 years.

I can also assure Fiona Hyslop that households and small businesses will continue to have access to comprehensive, bespoke and independent advice via Home Energy Scotland and the energy efficiency business support service to support the transition.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The programme for government commits to securing between 8GW and 12GW of installed onshore wind by 2030 to help with the achievement of net zero targets. Between 2013 and 2020, Scottish National Party ministers directly ruled in favour of 62 onshore wind farms, despite receiving 21,500 representations. Will the SNP review the planning system for onshore wind farms to ensure that councils are properly resourced to deal with such applications and that the SNP respects the wishes of local people?

Michael Matheson: I am sure that Liam Kerr will recognise that there is always a balance to be struck between the competing interests of the need to take forward measures to tackle climate change and the needs of local communities. That balance always needs to be struck in any planning process.

I imagine that Liam Kerr is aware that we are presently reviewing our national planning framework. That review will take into account some of the issues to do with planning that have been raised over recent years and how the planning framework can remain compatible with achieving net zero. I assure him that we will always seek to balance such considerations appropriately, while making sure that we meet the statutory targets that all parties in the Parliament supported in order for us to become a net zero country by 2045.

Circular Economy

7. Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it will support Scotland's move to a more circular economy. (S6O-00181)

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): The programme for government outlines our commitment to introduce a circular economy bill this parliamentary session. That bill will put in place legislative measures to support and encourage reduction of consumption, reuse, repair and recycling in order to reduce waste. There are significant economic opportunities in building a circular economy, including job creation and steps towards a wellbeing economy, as well as a reduction in litter on our beaches and streets.

We continue to support businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling, reuse and repair through Zero Waste Scotland, and, in March, we launched a £70 million fund for local authorities to use to improve their recycling systems.

We are working on introducing extended producer responsibility schemes, including our deposit return scheme for single-use drinks containers and major reforms to existing United Kingdom-wide packaging schemes, to reduce waste and litter and increase recycling.

Maurice Golden: This is an easy question: can the minister confirm that the deposit return scheme will be fully operational and launched, as promised, on 1 July 2022—yes or no?

Lorna Slater: We recognise the significant impact that Covid-19 and the UK's exit from the European Union have had on the drinks industry and other sectors with responsibility for delivering Scotland's deposit return scheme. We remain fully committed to implementing the UK's first ever deposit return scheme. We want to ensure that we have a go-live date that is both ambitious and deliverable. [*Interruption.*] The industry has made a positive start on delivery, including the establishment of a scheme administrator, Circularity Scotland, but Covid-19 and the EU exit have had a significant impact on the businesses that would make the scheme a success.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me. Could you resume your seat for a second, minister?

I really do not want all this sedentary harping—please listen to the minister's answer.

Lorna Slater: In light of those challenges and in line with our commitment to continue monitoring the impact of the pandemic, we commissioned an independent review of the impact of Covid-19 on the go-live date of the scheme. We have also been considering wider feedback from

stakeholders such as small businesses. We will update Parliament and businesses shortly. Our ambitious deposit return scheme will play an important part in helping to cut emissions, increase recycling rates, reduce littering and build a more circular economy in Scotland.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Does the minister agree that there should be a moratorium on new large-scale incinerators? Will she commend the Dovesdale action group in South Lanarkshire for its commitment to reducing waste and building a circular economy?

Lorna Slater: I commend anyone who is working to reduce waste and build a circular economy. We are all here to work together to do that. I am glad to see support on that matter from across the chamber.

We will update Parliament on our plans for the review of incineration before the end of September. I know that a number of stakeholders have raised the need to have a short review period, and we are considering that carefully.

Responsibility for dealing with planning applications and local planning matters rests, in the first instance, with the relevant planning authority. As a matter of law, all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Monica Lennon will appreciate that the Scottish ministers are not able to offer comment or judgment on specific live cases.

Energy Transition Zone (Aberdeen)

8. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am a member of Aberdeen City Council.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it remains supportive of Opportunity North East's ambition of establishing an energy transition zone adjacent to the new Aberdeen south harbour. (S6O-00182)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The Scottish Government remains supportive of Opportunity North East's ambitions for establishing an energy transition zone and has committed £26 million of funding to support its development. Site selection for the energy transition zone is primarily a matter for local partners and the planning authority—in this case, Aberdeen City Council.

Douglas Lumsden: It is clear that, when it comes to energy transition and net zero, the Scottish National Party is the junior partner in this coalition of chaos. Support for the oil and gas business has gone, support for dualling the A96

has gone and there is no firm support for the energy transition zone plans. With this coalition, we see that the tail is certainly wagging the dog. When will the cabinet secretary stand up to the Greens and protect jobs in the north-east?

Michael Matheson: Let us deal with the facts rather than the empty rhetoric from Douglas Lumsden. We have put £26 million into the energy transition zone in the north-east of Scotland to support the skills base that will be critical to supporting the transition to zero carbon emission technology. That commitment is driving forward changes within industry and I know that it is welcomed by those in the north-east who are committed to the transition. Alongside that, £500 million will be invested in the north-east and Moray in the years ahead to support the transition.

I hope that Douglas Lumsden will find in his heart the ability to welcome that half a billion pounds and that he will be big enough to stand up to his partners in London and tell them to match the ambition of the Scottish Government by providing £500 million—as we are doing, demonstrating this Government's commitment to the north-east of Scotland and a just transition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. Before we move to the next item of business, which is follow-on business, I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and the fact that face coverings should be worn when members are moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

Diversion from Prosecution

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Dorothy Bain, the Lord Advocate, on diversion from prosecution. The Lord Advocate will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:44

The Lord Advocate (Dorothy Bain QC): On 17 June 2021, the Scottish Parliament agreed a motion on tackling drug-related deaths. In relation to myself, as the new Lord Advocate, the Scottish Parliament indicated, first, that it would support a review of guidance on recorded police warnings and, secondly, that a statement on the principles and practicalities of diversion would be beneficial.

This is my first opportunity to address the Scottish Parliament as the Lord Advocate, and I welcome the chance to do so on such a significant and important issue. I recognise the extent of the public health emergency that we face in Scotland and the ability of prosecutors to help.

It might be useful if I set some context. In Scotland, prosecutors act as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system and, subject to some limited exceptions, it is the duty of the police to report a case to the prosecutor when they believe that there is sufficient evidence that an offence has been committed. It is then for the prosecutor to decide what prosecutorial action—if any—is in the public interest.

One of those limited exceptions to reporting to the prosecutor is the recorded police warning scheme, which provides officers with a speedy, effective and proportionate means of dealing with low-level offending. Officers may choose to deal with low-level offences by issuing a recorded police warning. As the Lord Advocate, I issue guidelines to the police in relation to the operation of the scheme, including which offences may be considered for a recorded police warning. The guidelines are set by me, acting independently of any other person. They extend beyond drug possession offences and are therefore properly confidential. However, I can confirm that the guidelines previously permitted the police to issue recorded police warnings for possession of class B and C drugs.

At the time of the debate on 17 June, the guidelines were already under review. The review examined drug possession-only case outcomes. I have considered the review, and I have decided that an extension of the recorded police warning guidelines to include possession offences for class A drugs is appropriate. Police officers may therefore choose to issue a recorded police

warning for simple possession offences for all classes of drugs.

In confirming the extension, I wish to make four things clear. First, the scheme extends to possession offences only; it does not extend to drug supply offences. Robust prosecutorial action will continue to be taken in relation to the supply of controlled drugs. Secondly, recorded police warnings do not represent decriminalisation of an offence; they represent a proportionate criminal justice response to a level of offending and are an enforcement of the law. Thirdly, neither offering nor accepting a recorded police warning is mandatory. Police officers retain the ability to report appropriate cases to the procurator fiscal, and accused persons retain the right to reject the offer of a warning. Finally, neither offering a recorded police warning nor reporting a case to the procurator fiscal prevents an officer from referring a vulnerable person to support services.

On that final point, prosecutors, working with fellow members of the drug deaths task force, have played an important role in the development of a pilot scheme to support such referrals. The scheme launched in Inverness at the beginning of July 2021 and is led by Medics Against Violence. The purpose of the scheme is to refer individuals to a mentor for the provision of support at the first point of contact with police. Such support is available whether or not an individual is subsequently reported for a criminal offence.

I now turn to the principles and practicalities of diversion. I am aware that the term “diversion” is used in many different contexts, so I will describe the long-standing Scottish system of diversion from prosecution. When any case is reported to the procurator fiscal and there is sufficient evidence, prosecutors will apply the principles that are set out in the published Scottish prosecution code. Prosecutors will exercise their professional judgment and will identify what prosecutorial action—if any—is in the public interest. In identifying the appropriate outcome in the public interest, prosecutors take into account a range of factors including the nature of the offending, the circumstances of the accused and, when relevant, the impact on any victim. The range of options that are available to prosecutors includes formal warnings, financial penalties, diversion and prosecution. There is no one-size-fits-all response; each case will be considered on its own facts and circumstances.

Diversion is an alternative to prosecution. It is a process by which prosecutors are able to refer a case to social work or another identified agency as a means of addressing the underlying causes of offending, when that is deemed the most appropriate course of action. In 2019, the then Lord Advocate reviewed prosecution policy and

directed that diversion should be considered for all individuals who are reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service when an identifiable need has contributed to the offending that can best be met through a diversion scheme. Prosecutors will consider all the circumstances and will determine an appropriate outcome in the public interest.

When the prosecutor is satisfied that the public interest would be best served by an offer of diversion, they refer the individual to social work or another agreed agency, which then assesses whether the person is suitable for diversion and reports the assessment to the prosecutor. It may be that a person is assessed as being unsuitable for diversion—for example, when they have declined support or require no intervention. In those cases, prosecutors will then decide what alternative action—if any—is required.

When a person is assessed as being suitable, prosecutors refer the individual for diversion. Any decision to prosecute the person is normally deferred until completion of a diversion programme of support. Any diversion programme should be tailored to the needs of the individual and should provide an opportunity to meet the underlying causes of their offending and, ultimately, prevent reoffending. At the conclusion of the diversion programme, the results are reported to the prosecutor. When the programme has been successfully completed, the prosecutor will routinely decide that no further action is required, and that is the end of the matter.

Following the 2019 review of prosecution policy by the then Lord Advocate, the number of diversions offered for single-charge possession cases increased significantly, from 57 in 2017-18 to 1,000 in 2020-21. The increase in the past year alone represents a doubling of offers of diversion, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Not every individual who uses drugs will be suitable for or require diversion. Some accused persons will face simply a warning or a fine, which might be an appropriate and proportionate response. Approximately two thirds of people who are reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service when the only offence reported is possession of drugs are dealt with by alternatives to prosecution, and the vast majority of those people are offered a financial penalty.

Any alternative to prosecution—a warning, fine or diversion—is an offer only, and an accused person always has the right to reject such an offer.

There will be cases in which prosecution is the appropriate response in the public interest. When an accused person is subsequently found guilty, the courts have a range of sentencing disposals

that are appropriate to the individual accused and offence.

The range of options that are available to police, prosecutors and courts reflects the fact that, in Scotland, there is no one-size-fits-all response to an individual being found in possession of a controlled substance or to an individual being dependent on drugs. The most appropriate response—the smartest response—in any drugs case must be tailored to the facts and circumstances of both the alleged offence and the offender. Scotland's police and prosecutors are using the powers available to them to uphold the law and to help to tackle the drug deaths emergency.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Thank you, Lord Advocate. The Lord Advocate will now take questions on issues relating to her statement, for which I intend to allow 20 minutes. I call Jamie Greene.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I warmly welcome the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor General to the Government benches today. I thank them for advance sight of the statement and I apologise for the tardy arrival of Conservative members.

The statement came through a little bit late, which is reflective of the fact that the Government gave no indication of the nature and content of today's statement, despite its being a relatively major policy shift. I believe that Parliament rightly needs to scrutinise the gravity of a decision such as the one that has been made today. I believe that it should be the subject of a full debate, not the question-and-answer session that we have.

Scotland's drug deaths crisis is our national shame, but surely the way to tackle it is by improving access to treatment and rehabilitation, not by diluting how seriously we treat possession of deadly class A drugs such as heroin, crystal meth and crack cocaine, which are the scourges of our streets and our society.

The answer to our drug deaths crisis is treatment, not de facto decriminalisation by the back door, as is the case today. Sadly, nothing that has been said in today's statement will stop drug deaths or guarantee access to the needed treatment that our proposed right to recovery bill will call for.

There is a fine balance between possession of drugs and drug dealing. How are police officers expected to enforce the new guidance? What consultation did the Government have with Police Scotland before the announcement of the decision today? Will Parliament get a say on any of this, with a full and proper debate on the matter and a full and proper vote on a decision of such importance and magnitude?

The Lord Advocate: The causes of drug-related deaths in Scotland are complex, and the reasons why people take drugs are complicated. No one measure will reverse the appalling levels of drug-related deaths that Mr Greene so rightly referred to.

However, the criminal justice system has a role to play in reducing the harms that are caused by drugs to our communities, both in terms of disrupting the activities of drug dealers and in ensuring that, where appropriate, help is offered to vulnerable individuals. There is a significant distinction to be made between those who are involved in the supply of drugs and who are the drug dealers who destroy communities, and the vulnerable individuals who are addicted to drugs for a variety of reasons, many of which relate to real difficulties in their background, significant problems in their childhood and vulnerabilities that are not of their own making. There is therefore a significant distinction to be made between what I am talking about today, which is possession of drugs, and supply. It is an important distinction. My point is that it is important that the criminal justice system respond appropriately to individuals who are caught in possession of drugs.

As I pointed out in my statement, diversion represents an opportunity to engage with potentially vulnerable individuals in a productive way that attempts to address the causes of their offending and to prevent reoffending. Diversion is a criminal justice response; it is not a replacement for community treatment and support. Recorded police warnings are a criminal justice response and not “de facto decriminalisation”.

The success of diversion is dependent on a number of factors. They include the quality of the information that is provided to prosecutors regarding the individual’s background and potential vulnerability; engagement by the individual; and availability of effective diversion schemes. The establishment of Community Justice Scotland provides significant opportunities to enhance use of diversion across Scotland and to establish a consistent approach to the availability of diversion schemes that are tailored to people who are experiencing drugs or alcohol issues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Lord Advocate, I am going to have to ask you to give slightly briefer responses, as we have a lot of questions to get through.

The Lord Advocate: I will conclude there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Claire Baker.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the statement from the Lord Advocate and recognise her commitment to supporting a

proportionate and reasonable response to the drug deaths crisis in Scotland.

This weekend, the recovery walk Scotland 2021 takes place in Perth; last night I attended a civic reception to welcome to Perth those who are attending. I heard from people who are living through recovery, which underlined the need to make it as easy as possible to get treatment, and to ensure that people who are in need of support can approach services without fear of judgment or reprisal. The Lord Advocate’s announcement today will help towards that.

The Lord Advocate will be aware of the growing support for safe consumption rooms. I ask for clarity on whether anything in the statement will enable their establishment on a more formal footing. As she described, we know that it is not enough to do what is done now in isolation, and that diversion from prosecution needs to be backed with access to services on the ground and good links with police and services.

I notice from the notes that diversion as an outcome has doubled in the past year. What discussions has the Lord Advocate had with partners to ensure that there are enough resources to deliver on that? Can she confirm that Police Scotland is already familiar with the recorded police warning scheme and that her announcement relates to an extension of that scheme?

The Lord Advocate: I confirm that the police are familiar with the recorded police warning scheme, which has been in place in Scotland since 2016. The police are aware of the change in guidance that I have provided in relation to class A drugs, and of the extension that I have described in relation to recorded police warnings.

The extension of recorded police warnings is not linked to any proposal to establish drug consumption facilities. That is an entirely separate proposal to the recorded police warning scheme, which is designed as part of a proportionate criminal justice response to lower-level offending.

In relation to availability of suitable support following diversion, I understand that that is in place and has been significantly supported by Criminal Justice—

I will find the name of the organisation; I cannot quite remember it.

There has been significant involvement of the criminal justice system and there has been engagement through the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and prosecutors. The appropriate agencies that deliver the schemes will assist with rehabilitation of those who have been dependent on drugs. In those circumstances, I am confident that the step that I am taking today,

which relates to diverting, by virtue of the recorded police warning system, individuals from prosecution for possession offences, will assist in the process that is under way to bring to people who need them help and support to get off drugs and to become useful members of the community.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am conscious that we are eight and a half minutes into this item of business but have covered only two questions. We need questions and answers to be as succinct as possible. I recognise that that is not always possible, but we have covered a fair bit of ground with the statement already.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I welcome the Lord Advocate to the chamber. Will she clarify the criteria for whether a person is suitable for diversion?

The Lord Advocate: Prosecution policy on diversion is that it should be considered in all appropriate cases where there is an identifiable need that has contributed to offending. An accused person's need might be identified as a result of information that is provided by the police or criminal justice social work to prosecutors, or it might be evident from the circumstances of the offence. Dependency on drugs may be an identifiable need.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): Today's statement claims that those who reject a fiscal fine as an alternative to prosecution for drugs possession can be prosecuted, but in pre-pandemic 2018-19, only one in three of those who rejected a fine went on to be convicted. Does the new guidance mean that more people who are caught in possession of drugs will be let off the hook?

The Lord Advocate: I do not accept that. As I have indicated, the underpinning rationale for the statement today is to ensure that the criminal justice response to such cases is tailored to the needs of the individual, provides the opportunity to deal with the underlying causes of offending and, ultimately, prevents reoffending.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I, too, welcome the Lord Advocate to her role.

We have heard a lot previously about the positives of diversion schemes elsewhere, and we have talked about drug misuse being more a public health issue than it is a criminal justice issue. Is Scotland leading the way in establishing diversion from prosecution, by bringing in the individualised and tailored approach to possession of drugs that the Lord Advocate has announced today?

The Lord Advocate: Diversion from prosecution schemes have long existed in

Scotland. They are administered by procurators fiscal, under the direction of the Lord Advocate, rather than by the police.

However, the establishment of Community Justice Scotland—the name that I could not remember previously—has provided a significant opportunity to enhance use of diversion across Scotland and to establish a consistent approach to the availability of diversion schemes across the country and their use in appropriate cases, by prosecutors.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Further to Claire Baker's question, and on the ground that the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 does not preclude supervision of safe consumption, will the Lord Advocate give clarity to those who are supervising drug consumption rooms—and therefore saving lives—about whether they will be safe from prosecution?

The Lord Advocate: I indicated at the outset that recorded police warnings and the issues that I am dealing with today are very different and distinct from drug consumption rooms.

In 2017, the then Lord Advocate was asked by Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership to confirm—by way of guidelines, letters of comfort, protocols or a formal policy—that the health board, the council and its staff, partners and organisations, as well as service users of proposed drug consumption rooms, would not be prosecuted for a broad range of potential offences, including what are, in my view, some very serious offences. The then Lord Advocate considered that proposal carefully and concluded that the public interest objective in consumption facilities is about health rather than justice. However, in relation to what was asked of him, the then Lord Advocate concluded that it was not possible to grant the request.

The Lord Advocate can make decisions as to whether a criminal offence will be prosecuted, but the Lord Advocate cannot make an activity unlawful, nor is it open to the Lord Advocate to grant, in advance, immunity from prosecution. I agree with the then Lord Advocate's response to the specific proposal and request. Any future proposal would have to be considered on its specific merits. I would be prepared to consider any such future proposal, but it would have to be specific and underpinned by evidence, and it would require fresh consideration.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Can the Lord Advocate outline the considerations that led to the decision to expand the scope of the recorded police warnings scheme? We have heard about police forces in England that divert individuals for possession offences at the point of arrest. Can the Lord

Advocate outline why that process cannot be adopted in Scotland?

The Lord Advocate: The member asks about police forces in England that divert individuals from possession offences at the point of arrest. A limited number of police administered diversion schemes are in operation in England and Wales, but diversion in Scotland predates those schemes and, in Scotland, prosecutors administer the schemes, not the police. In Scotland, prosecutors act as the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system and, with limited exceptions, it is prosecutors rather than police officers who determine how a case should be dealt with. As I said, no one size fits all.

On whether we should offer diversion to everybody who is dependent on drugs or not offer diversion to everybody found in possession of drugs, I say again that one size does not fit all the circumstances. Not all persons who are found in possession of drugs are dependent on drugs and would be suitable for diversion. We need to look at the most appropriate response in a particular case and identify whether we can understand what has brought about the individual's offending and what we can do to prevent reoffending.

In considering diversion, we have looked at how such offences have been dealt with by the police and prosecutors and we have identified that, in the majority of cases, simple possession offences are dealt with through non-court disposals. It is that understanding of the way in which the prosecution of such offences is dealt with by the courts and, indeed, prosecutors' decision making that led to a review of the diversion policy and to my statement this afternoon.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am grateful to the Lord Advocate for coming to the chamber. It follows a Liberal Democrat request, made in June and backed by Parliament, for a statement on the matter and for such a change. The Government has insisted for years that diversion has been key to its approach, but we have just discovered that it happened only 57 times in 2017-18. That begs the question: why are we imprisoning the same number of people for possession as we imprisoned a decade ago? Thousands of children are affected by parental imprisonment and drug use. Both are adverse childhood experiences. What guidance is the Lord Advocate giving on connecting families to support when users encounter law enforcement?

The Lord Advocate: I have said that the role of the prosecution service in Scotland requires prosecutors to consider whether the system can assist in reducing the harms caused by drugs to communities, both by disrupting the supply of drugs and, where necessary, by delivering support to vulnerable people who are caught in possession

of all different classes of drugs. The fact that there has been an increase in diversion relates specifically to the review in 2019, which I mentioned in my statement, and the understanding of the powerful impact of childhood experiences, economic and social circumstances and poor educational circumstances on individuals who find themselves addicted to drugs, alcohol and other such things.

That there is an increase in diversion probably relates to the understanding of the real vulnerability of those who are often caught in possession of drugs. There is an appreciation of the need to engage with potentially vulnerable people to provide a productive way out of the difficulty that they have, to identify the cause of their offending and to assist to prevent reoffending.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have five more questions to get through and I intend to get through them, not least because we finished portfolio question time slightly early. I would appreciate more succinct responses, if at all possible, Lord Advocate.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Many addicts are indeed victims of things that have happened in their life. I distinguish those people clearly from those who supply drugs. I welcome diversion where it is appropriate and tailored to the individual. Does the Lord Advocate agree that diversion is certainly not a soft option, but that there is a chance that the addict can break their destructive habit, which is not something that prison can often achieve?

The Lord Advocate: Yes, I agree. Diversion is not a soft option. Diversion involves a commitment by an accused person to engage with social work services and a tailored programme of support. At the conclusion of the diversion programme, social workers provide prosecutors with a report on the accused person's level of engagement. Prosecutors reserve the right to take prosecutorial action in appropriate cases. However, in most cases, accused persons recognise the opportunity that diversion represents to help them and to tackle the causes of their harmful behaviour.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): In her statement, the Lord Advocate said that

"recorded police warnings do not represent decriminalisation of an offence."

However, Police Scotland guidance states that recorded police warnings seek to have

"a positive impact on individuals by not criminalising them".

Are those two statements not contradictory?

The Lord Advocate: I do not accept that the two statements are contradictory. The recorded police warning scheme represents a proportionate and timely criminal justice response for officers to use in appropriate circumstances, but it is still a criminal justice response.

The scheme involves the police identifying a sufficiency of evidence and indicating to an individual that the recorded police warning procedure is open to them. If the warning is accepted, it stays on the individual's record for two years and is available for the police to consider if the individual comes into contact with the criminal justice system again. The warning is also available to prosecutors to consider.

I simply reject the comment the scheme is de facto decriminalisation—for the reasons that I have explained, it is not.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I welcome the Lord Advocate to the chamber, and I welcome her statement. I am pleased to hear about the extension of the recorded police warning guidelines to possession offences for class A drugs as appropriate, meaning that possession of all classes of drugs is now covered by RPWs. That is an important step towards ensuring a public health approach to the drugs crisis that Scotland faces and towards the decriminalisation of possession of drugs.

In her statement, the Lord Advocate—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can I have a question, please, Ms Chapman?

Maggie Chapman: I am coming to it, Presiding Officer.

Last year, diversion was offered in 1,000 single-charge possession cases. Can the Lord Advocate tell us how many of those resulted in successful completion of the diversion programme, being the point at which prosecutors decided that no further action was required? More generally, what was the value of those diversions in terms of better outcomes for those accused, their families and their communities, and costs saved by the criminal justice system, thereby freeing up resources for other support systems?

The Lord Advocate: I thank Ms Chapman for her support of the review of the recorded police warnings system, which, like her, I recognise is tailored to the needs of each individual and provides an opportunity to address the underlying causes of offending.

Ms Chapman asked a number of questions about the 1,000 diversions in 2020-21, including in relation to the extent to which they were successful and the response by prosecutors. She also asked a number of other questions that I did not have time to note. I cannot answer those

specific questions today, but I am prepared to write to her with a response to each of her questions as quickly as I can. I am sorry that I cannot give the precise answers this afternoon, but I undertake to do so in writing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is perfectly acceptable, thank you.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): The Lord Advocate spoke earlier of providing mentoring at the first point of contact with the police. What evidence is available that mentoring reduces reoffending?

The Lord Advocate: On whether mentoring reduces reoffending, we would probably be able to understand the benefit of referral to a mentor by looking at the system that was launched in Inverness in July 2021. The purpose of the scheme is to refer individuals to a mentor to provide support at the first point of contact, and I suspect that the best way to identify the benefits of such mentoring is to look at the consequences of the scheme. To those who have considered such issues, there is good evidence to support the suggestion that immediate referral to someone who provides help, support and direction is far more beneficial than processing an individual through the criminal justice process.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Lord Advocate—I must ask you to conclude there.

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): I welcome what the Lord Advocate has said about criminal justice responses. In the past, the problem that the courts have often experienced when it comes to considering alternatives to custody is a lack of resource, so I am pleased that she is now satisfied—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question please, Ms Clark.

Katy Clark: —that the resources are in place.

What is the Lord Advocate's understanding of the financial implications of her statement, particularly in relation to putting in place appropriate support for the most vulnerable individuals?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. Please respond as briefly as possible, Lord Advocate.

The Lord Advocate: Yes, Presiding Officer.

In relation to the financial implications of my statement, the member must appreciate that, in my position as Lord Advocate and head of the prosecution service, I look to identify how the criminal justice process can support the needs of the very vulnerable people who often come into contact with the police in relation to these offences.

On the resources that I have, the work of prosecutors on that issue has been extensive and done well. The matter has been thoroughly investigated and the approach is supported by the evidence base, and that has allowed me to make my statement today.

I am not in a position to advise on the funding that is available to others, such as the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. We have had limited time available for the statement, but if the member has a particular question relating to that issue that she wishes me to answer, I can respond in writing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much indeed, Lord Advocate.

ScotRail

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01300, in the name of Neil Bibby, on ScotRail.

15:21

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Today, Scotland's joint rail unions launched their six months to save Scotland's railway campaign. The fact that they chose to launch it outside Bute house tells us everything that we need to know about how the Scottish Government is regarded by the workforce. That workforce literally kept Scotland moving through the pandemic. Every last one of them is a key worker who deserves not only our thanks but our respect and support.

Today, those workers were clear with me that industrial relations on Scotland's railways are at an all-time low. On behalf of Scottish Labour, I express our solidarity with those taking action for jobs, fairness at work, pay and conditions and the future of that vital public service.

Today is also world car-free day—a day when motorists are encouraged to leave the car at home. Nicola Sturgeon claims that she wants Scotland to be at the forefront of tackling climate change. The Scottish National Party has promised to reduce car use by 20 per cent. The 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26—will meet in Glasgow in fewer than 40 days and the SNP's stance on rail confirms that Greta Thunberg is right that Scotland is “not a world leader” on climate change.

The SNP is all talk and no walk, and so are the Greens. Just two days ago, Patrick Harvie tweeted three simple words: “Take. The. Train”. How on earth does the SNP-Green coalition expect people to leave the car and take the train when rail services are being cut and are in crisis?

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the member accept that some people are working from home and therefore the trains are very empty on some routes?

Neil Bibby: Of course we are in a pandemic, but we should be making it easier and not harder for people to travel by train. How does cutting train services make it more likely that people will use them? We should stop hiking up fares, provide more trains so that people can travel safely while social distancing, and stop the timetable cuts so that people can safely and conveniently travel and leave the car at home.

After years of prevarication and poor performance, the SNP finally decided to bring ScotRail back into public ownership not because it

believes in public ownership as a matter of principle, but because the deal that it did with Abellio was a flop from start to finish. It had to take back the keys.

The Labour Party believes in public ownership of the railways not as a pre-election stunt, but as a way to put the voices of passengers and workers at the heart of the railway. We believe in investing in a growing rail network, not a declining one.

It is time to set out a vision for the future of ScotRail, and it is time for leadership to make that vision real. We need a new people's ScotRail that is publicly owned and accountable, with representation from Scotland's passengers and the four joint trade unions on its board. We need a ScotRail that works for passengers, not profit, with affordable travel and improving services. We need a modern ScotRail that is expanding services, decarbonising and driving a modal shift away from Scotland's roads to Scotland's railways.

If the minister and his Green colleagues share that vision, they will commit to, first, restoring ScotRail services to pre-pandemic levels from May; secondly, intervening to resolve all current industrial disputes on our railways; and thirdly, withdrawing their feeble amendment and backing Labour's motion. That is the test for the SNP and the Greens today. Their amendment does not reject overall service reductions; it is a green light for railway cuts. Just as they sold out on a public energy company yesterday, they are set to sell out Scottish passengers today. Their weak amendment proves that the SNP was all talk when it comes to improving our railways and that its deal with the Greens is a sham.

On the day that the SNP and Greens announced their co-operation agreement, ScotRail unveiled proposals to cut 300 services per day. That is thousands every week, and tens of thousands every year. Some 26 million vehicle miles have been stripped from the rail network. Greener government is impossible with a declining network—children who are watching “Thomas & Friends” could tell you that.

The minister says that ScotRail's proposals mean 100 more services, but that is in comparison to a temporary timetable, and not the pre-pandemic timetable. It is disingenuous to compare the proposals to the current timetable and suggest that service levels are rising. It is time for the SNP to stop the spin, and time for the Greens to stop the cuts.

This summer, an internal ScotRail report by Professor Iain Docherty recommended a 10 per cent reduction to services. Rail unions issued a statement condemning the report, which they said

“seeks to exploit the Covid pandemic and its fallout to attack the jobs of railway workers and cut the services they provide to the public”.

I submitted a motion calling on the Scottish Government to reject the report, and it was signed by three Green MSPs. Nevertheless, ScotRail proposes a 12.5 per cent reduction in services, which exceeds Docherty's recommendations.

What does that mean in practice? There will be 34 fewer trains, in both directions, between Glasgow Queen Street and Edinburgh Waverley via Falkirk High, between Monday and Friday. That is a 27 per cent reduction in trains available between our two largest cities. Does anyone in the chamber think that that is acceptable?

That silence is very telling.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I did not shout up a moment ago, but we are wholly opposed to the cuts. As I will make clear later, my concern is that they will just stay when ScotRail is nationalised, and things will get worse and worse. Does he share that concern?

Neil Bibby: Yes, I share that concern. We believe in public ownership to make the railway better. We should have a growing rail network and a better rail network with public ownership, but it very much looks like we will have a declining one under the SNP-Green coalition.

The reductions also mean that there will be 25 fewer trains leaving Crosshill station, in the First Minister's constituency, heading to Glasgow Central station, which is a 33 per cent reduction. Six fewer trains will leave Arbroath, in the transport minister's constituency, on weekday services to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, which is a 12 per cent reduction. Is that really the level of services that ministers intend to build back to in 2022? In agreeing to the motion, Parliament can give its view and call for services to be built back to pre-pandemic levels from May 2022. We accept that the timetables can change, but the overall level of service must not be diminished.

Labour is also calling on the Scottish Government to resolve all current industrial disputes on the railways with settlements that are fair for the workforce. Industrial action during COP26 is likely and would be an international humiliation for the Scottish Government. Is it really willing to stand by and let that happen? That action is not instructed by London bosses, as five SNP MSPs have disgracefully claimed; it is mandated democratically by key workers in Scotland. To suggest otherwise is an anti-union smear against those workers, and the MSPs concerned should apologise.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers—RMT—is again in a prolonged dispute with ScotRail. The Transport

Salaried Staffs Association—TSSA—has warned ScotRail to expect action over understaffing. Unite the union's engineering members have voted overwhelmingly for strike action, too. All rail unions are calling for disputes to be resolved fairly, and they have been frustrated with the minister behaving like a Tory transport minister by appearing to rule out intervening unless workers accept efficiencies.

If the minister wants efficiencies and a resolution, he should reassess the excessive fees that his Government is paying Abellio for a six-day-a-week service instead of legitimising a tax on key workers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You need to wind up, Mr Bibby.

Neil Bibby: The vision for a better, green and publicly controlled ScotRail is one that many claim to share. However, the reality of industrial unrest and service cuts is not compatible with that vision. Therefore, I invite Parliament to support the motion and call for an end to industrial unrest on the railways, the restoration of services to pre-pandemic levels and a new vision for a publicly owned ScotRail that works for Scotland's passengers.

I move,

That the Parliament considers that decisions taken in the coming months will shape the future of Scotland's railways for years to come; believes there should be no overall reduction in ScotRail services, compared with pre-pandemic levels, when new timetables are introduced in 2022; calls on Scottish ministers to reject overall service reductions; supports Scotland's railway workers in their current industrial disputes with ScotRail; calls on Scottish ministers to intervene to help resolve these disputes with fair settlements for workers; notes that 22 September 2021 is World Car Free Day, a day to promote alternatives to car use; calls on Scottish ministers to commit to an affordable, clean, green, reliable and modern railway that is publicly owned and accountable, with representation for trade unions and passengers in governance of a new public sector operator, and believes that the Scottish Government should set out a vision for the future of Scotland's railways based on service improvement, fair work and the decarbonisation of passenger rail services to help meet Scotland's net zero ambitions.

15:30

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): I welcome the opportunity to debate the future of rail services in Scotland today—world car-free day—because no one can or should doubt this Government's commitment to improving Scotland's railways.

In 2008, ScotRail operated just under 2,200 services per week day, providing for 467,000 seats. By 2019, that had increased to just over 2,400 services per week day, providing 645,000 seats. Since 2009, the communities of Alloa,

Laurencekirk, Armadale, Blackridge, Caldercruix, Conon Bridge, Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange, Gorebridge, Stow, Galashiels, Tweedbank and Kintore have been reconnected to the rail network through reversal of the Beeching cuts. Further, in the next three years, Reston, East Linton, Dalcross, Cameron Bridge and Leven will follow. *[Interruption.]* I will not take an intervention. I want to make progress, as I have a lot to cover.

Some 441km of track have been electrified and 108 brand-new electric trains comprising 364 carriages have been introduced to the network. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, more than 75 per cent of passenger journeys on ScotRail were being made on net zero emission trains. We are walking the walk, but we know that there is more to do. *[Interruption.]* No, I will not give way. I have heard enough from that side of the chamber.

As we seek to rise to the challenge of climate change and transport's contribution to Scotland's emissions, we have big plans for this transportation mode, including full decarbonisation and it becoming a go-to for freight. That commitment and investment was apparent before 2020; it endured throughout the pandemic, with our continuing support for the industry; and I assure members that our commitment and investment will continue as we shape the future of Scotland's railway.

However, we face some immediate challenges, which are largely brought about by the pandemic. A £1.1 billion annual spend on rail before the pandemic has, by necessity, morphed into a spend of more than £1.5 billion. At the risk of mixing transport metaphors, we need to steady the ship and get ScotRail ready for not so much a build-back but a take-off. *[Interruption.]* No, I am sorry; I want to get through this.

Labour says that there should be no overall reduction in pre-pandemic ScotRail service levels. In effect, it is saying that what was suitable for 2019 should be suitable for 2022.

Neil Bibby: Will the member take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: No—the member had seven minutes to make his points, and I want to rebut some of them.

Does Labour not recognise that there have been substantial economic, societal and environmental changes since 2019, and that those changes are having and will have a material effect on the provision of railway services? There will be changes to working patterns, where we work and how we work, and we have yet to understand what that will mean for the future. Therefore, we need a level of service provision that meets the changing needs of passenger demand as Scotland comes out of the pandemic, but with flexibility for beyond.

I am well aware that ScotRail's consultation on its proposed timetable for 22 May has generated interest and concern in some quarters, but the review also proposes positive changes. ScotRail currently operates around 2,000 services per week day, providing 531,000 seats. That will grow. There are areas of the country where the services will be improved by the changes.

Neil Bibby: Where?

Graeme Dey: Mr Bibby asks where. I will tell him. There will be improvements on the route between Glasgow and Carlisle via Kilmarnock and Dumfries. Further, new services are being added between Dundee and Glasgow, which will bring services to Invergowrie and Gleneagles. I hope that that answers his question.

A review is not a permanent thing. We can review services again if travel patterns change again. However, surely, we must look to deliver services that meet people's needs with regard to when and where they want to travel and that free up capacity to provide more in that regard. Essentially, that is what the current review does.

We have to address the operational challenges on the railways efficiently—all the challenges. I recognise the crucial and positive role that our railway workers played in supporting key workers through the pandemic and in enabling key parts of the economy to function. Everyone who works on Scotland's railways deserves to be treated and paid fairly. However, it is a hard truth that there is simply no additional funding available to provide further support to the rail sector. Accordingly, if fair and reasonable pay increases are to be achieved, that has to be done through the realisation of operational efficiencies within the business.

Let me be clear, as I have been with the majority of unions that are engaging constructively in exploring the matter: efficiencies cut in more than one way. ScotRail's management needs to be open to better ways of working that reduce costs on its side. As the Minister for Transport, I will be pressing the Office of Rail and Road, as I did earlier today, to progress savings to Scotland's Railway's fixed costs in regard to its contractual arrangements with Network Rail, which make up 55 per cent of overall spend.

Where I find common ground with Mr Bibby is that we both believe that a public sector-controlled and integrated passenger railway is the model that will best deliver for Scotland. The period of stability that has been provided by our decision to deliver ScotRail services within the public sector allows us to assess the scale and pace of recovery from Covid-19 and to consider how we respond to the United Kingdom Government's white paper.

There is so much more that I want to say, but I am conscious of time. The pandemic's impacts

and the climate change challenge mean that we will have to do things differently to deliver differently. Taking ScotRail back into public sector control means that we can operate differently. Both must be seen by all concerned as an opportunity.

I move amendment S6M-01300.2, to leave out from "considers" to end and insert:

"welcomes the opportunity for decisions to be taken in the coming months that will shape the future of Scotland's railways; acknowledges the opportunity to create a national rail service that meets the country's needs and travel patterns by building back to pre-pandemic levels but also provides for expected future demand; thanks Scotland's railway workers and staff for their commitment to keeping services running during unprecedented circumstances; recognises the financial challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also believes that staff should be paid fairly and expects the employer to lead dialogue with trade unions to resolve current industrial disputes, with the aim of restoring rail services and re-establishing mutually acceptable industrial relations; welcomes that 22 September 2021 is World Car Free Day, a day to promote and undertake alternatives to car use; notes that Scottish ministers are committed to an affordable, clean, green, reliable and modern railway that is publicly owned and accountable, and founded on Fair Work First criteria, with representation for staff and passengers in the governance of a new public sector operator, and recognises that the Scottish Government will set out a vision for the future of Scotland's railways based on service improvement, fair work, the decarbonisation of passenger rail services and an increase in rail freight, to help meet Scotland's net zero ambitions."

15:36

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I find it extraordinary that a transport minister, speaking in a transport debate, did not take any interventions.

I thank Scottish Labour for bringing the debate to the chamber. It is being held against a backdrop of looming service cuts, on-going industrial action and a forthcoming change of ownership of our rail operator. Today, as we have heard, unions have been protesting outside the First Minister's official residence, calling on her to stop the service cuts. The RMT's Mick Lynch says:

"With COP26 just weeks away, it beggars belief that the Scottish Government is happy to preside over massive cuts to rail services, despite this being a sustainable and low carbon form of transport. This will do nothing to make Scotland a 'Net zero nation' and will just push more people into cars."

Mr Lynch is absolutely right about that, but he might want to reflect on the fact that strikes achieve the same thing. It is clear to me that, if the cuts go ahead, they will be here to stay and the direction of travel will not be good.

It is easy to be critical when anything goes wrong on the railways. We have all done it in relation to leaves on the line, the wrong kind of

snow, station skipping, fare increases, late trains, no trains, breakdowns and now strikes. There is a lot to criticise, and there always will be, because running railways is a fiendishly complicated business.

However, we have to be honest and say that, although privatisation of the railways led to some improvements and an increase in rail travel, it has not been the roaring success that many hoped that it would be. We should also be honest and say that nationalisation is not the cure-all that Labour and the SNP think that it will be.

The industrial action on Scotland's railways should serve as a warning to the Government: there could well be more where that comes from. Today's debate should be about a positive future for our railways; it should not be about industrial strife. That suits some people's narrative, but not mine. The minister should insist that parties get round the table and accept mediation. Perhaps he can address that point later.

We need to move away from the "private bad, public good" mindset and accept three things. First, we want trains to run on time. Secondly, we need simpler, cheaper fares and easier methods of getting tickets. Thirdly, we need more lines connecting more communities—that means not only reopening old lines but improving what is there. It is nonsense that the largely single-track lines that link Aberdeen, Inverness and the central belt are not electrified, and we need to improve the line beyond Inverness too.

Patrick Harvie tells people to "Take. The. Train", but that is just not an option for many people, even in the central belt. As members know, the United Kingdom Government is to create a new public body—Great British Railways—which will own the infrastructure, receive the fare revenue, run and plan the network, and set most fares and timetables. Network Rail will be absorbed into that new organisation.

Great British Railways will simplify the current confusing mass of tickets; standardise mobile and online ticketing; and end the need to queue for paper tickets. It will contract with private companies to operate trains to the timetable, on fares that it specifies, in a way that Transport for London uses. I like the TfL model—we should consider it in Scotland. We do not have to do so, however.

We know that the Scottish National Party wants to take Scotland's rail services into public ownership from next March, but we do not know any of the detail of what that will look like, or have any in-depth explanation of what its proposals—we do not know what those are—will deliver for the passenger. Our amendment calls on the

Government to come up with that explanation; the minister can perhaps do that later.

We want to see a green recovery, and public transport should be at the heart of it. That will need investment and commitment; what it does not need is dogma, and I fear that that is where we are headed.

I move amendment S6M-01300.1, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"notes the disruption that the RMT strikes have been having on passengers across the country and calls on the Scottish Government to work to deliver a resolution; further notes the Scottish Government's intention to nationalise the service in March 2022 and therefore calls for the details and costs of its plans to be published urgently; believes that any operating model must put delivering a reliable and affordable service for passengers at the heart of its aim; notes the work of the Williams Rail Review and calls upon the Scottish Government to consider its recommendations carefully; further calls for the Scottish Government to undertake a review of disused tracks and stations with a view to reopening those that would support local growth and connectivity, and notes that, for many people across Scotland, particularly in rural areas, car travel is a necessity not a choice."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can tell the chamber that we have no time, so interventions will have to be accommodated in the time allocation.

15:41

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): An anecdote is attributed to one of my predecessors as a representative of Shetland, Jo Grimond, who when asked to name his closest railway station, would say, "Bergen". I cannot say that I am not jealous of colleagues who are able to hop on the train and return to their constituencies after a day or a week here. Instead, I am more used to flight safety demonstrations and gate changes than staying behind the yellow line and platform announcements.

As the motion points out, today is world car-free day; it is a tricky task for people who live in an area that geographically challenges public transport, but we must do more to break the reliance on cars for short journeys and we should ensure that every part of Scotland has an excellent local transport system and good links to the rest of the country. We must also make public transport sustainable if we are to see any benefit for our planet.

In 2015, transport became Scotland's single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for more than a third of them. Progress has been made in other sectors, such as electricity, but transport has not budged. In 2018, 48.7 billion vehicle-kilometres were travelled by road—up 10 per cent in a decade. By 2037, Transport Scotland modelling forecasts a 25 per

cent increase in car trips and a 44 per cent increase in goods vehicle trips. If we cut rail timetables, we certainly have no chance of changing that situation, and we do not have a chance of meeting our climate change targets unless transport is rapidly decarbonised.

Meanwhile, delays and dissatisfaction have beset the current Abellio ScotRail setup. People are so frustrated that, for the first time in decades, the number of people who used rail pre-pandemic went down, and delay-repay compensation to passengers nearly doubled in the space of just two years. If our railways face cuts—including, potentially, to the workforce—we need a commitment to greater investment and fair treatment for workers. We support driving up improvements to services, and performance improvements can be made through stronger protections for passengers.

The next chapter for rail services needs to deliver more for passengers, and we need governance that will deliver those services from day one. For the future of rail, we would like to see a system that recognises post-pandemic patterns of travel, takes into account local input and is accountable to passengers. We would like to see more freight moved on to railways to reduce congestion and pollution, and a move away from fossil fuels on the network towards electric power, batteries and hydrogen. We embrace the opportunity to run railways better through taking the best of the UK Government's Williams review, such as simplified modern ticketing.

With passengers in mind, we can attract more people on to trains and out of their cars, all of which would help to accelerate action to tackle the climate emergency, and to meet the tougher target of a 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030, which was put into Scottish law after work by the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

We call on the Scottish ministers to commit to an affordable, clean, green, reliable, expanded and modern railway, with overall journeys maintained, that is accountable to passengers. Empty, polluting, ageing trains do not benefit anyone. Change is needed now for our rail service.

15:45

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate today, which is world car-free day. Like many of us, I am and have been a regular user of rail services for many years. Earlier this year, I welcomed the news that the Scottish Government was planning to bring ScotRail back into public hands, but unlike what Mr Simpson says, we need

the devolution of full rail powers to Scotland, not the UK.

I thank Scotland's railway workers and staff for their dedication in keeping services running during Covid.

In the context of today's discussion, we must recognise the financial impact that the pandemic has had on ScotRail. The update that we all received today showed that revenues are only at 50 per cent of their pre-pandemic level. That is the reality.

We must also acknowledge that the Scottish Government has invested record levels to improve connectivity and increase the number of trains across Scotland's rail network. As the transport minister said, in the past 10 years, the Scottish Government has invested £1 billion in 441 track kilometres of electrification and associated infrastructure improvements, directly benefiting more than 35 million passenger journeys each year.

In my constituency, East Linton station has just been granted planning permission and I met representatives from Network Rail this morning to discuss construction timelines. Investment is also being made in an additional platform at Dunbar.

Employment on the railway in Scotland is at its highest level ever under this Government, with more than 9,000 jobs and many others in the supply chain.

Covid-19 has changed how and where we live, work and travel. Companies and organisations are reviewing the way they work. Hybrid working will become the norm. A recent report from the World Economic Forum found that 49 per cent of workers surveyed would prefer home working after the pandemic, with another 30 per cent preferring a hybrid model, while two-thirds of companies are actively looking at home and hybrid working models.

ScotRail is seeking to develop a timetable that will better meet future travel patterns and significantly reduce the unsustainable burden on the public purse of running more trains than are needed. [*Interruption.*] No, I am sorry. I have only four minutes, so I do not have time.

Many communities across Scotland have been reconnected to the rail network, including Alloa, Caldercruix and the Borders railway communities. The Government has opened new stations on the Airdrie to Bathgate line, and reopened the Borders line.

The Scottish Government has also allocated a record £4.85 billion to maintain and enhance Scotland's railways in the current control period. That investment includes continuing electrification and decarbonisation throughout our rail services.

The consultation on the proposed new timetable provides an opportunity for ScotRail customers and businesses to help to shape a reliable and responsive timetable. That is a starting point, not the end. *[Interruption.]* No, I am sorry. I am conscious of the time.

It is time to recognise the challenges that we face on the railway and find a way to build back from the pandemic in a manner that delivers a more sustainable and efficient service that is ready to meet future demand. The Scottish Government and the Scottish ministers are committed to an affordable, clean, green, reliable and modern railway that is publicly owned and accountable, that is founded on fair work first criteria, and that will decarbonise our passenger rail services and meet Scotland's net zero ambitions. I support the Scottish Government amendment.

15:48

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, such is the strong concern that has been expressed by many of my constituents across Mid Scotland and Fife, but most especially by those who live in the Perth to Edinburgh M90 corridor, the area around Kirkcaldy and central Fife, and those near to Dunblane. Those people have been in touch because they are concerned about the proposed 2022 changes and what they would mean for them and their families.

There is no other way to describe what is contained in the proposals other than to say that they are cuts to rail services. In percentage terms, they would work out at a 12 per cent reduction across Scotland since the pre-pandemic year.

I also fully understand and sympathise with the passengers and rail workers who feel badly let down by the proposals because they will impact not just on the services but on jobs.

In its amendment, the Scottish Government implies that Professor Docherty's report is about not just

"building back to pre-pandemic levels"

but providing for "future demand". I want to examine that further. John Mason rightly pointed out that working patterns are changing, perhaps permanently, and that there will definitely be people who will choose to work at home who would previously have commuted to work in offices. However, that fall in demand must be set against the regional demographic changes and what we are told is a wider Scottish Government policy when it comes to the green agenda.

I will explain what I mean. The proposed removal of a direct link from Edinburgh to Perth has been a particular concern. The rerouting of

services from Perth to Edinburgh via Dunfermline will add 10 minutes to the journey time, when that journey time is already well over the time for comparable journeys in the rest of the UK and Europe. That is precisely why, for the past 20 years, we have been campaigning for the rail infrastructure between Edinburgh and Perth to be upgraded. We want to get more people on to greener transport by making trains much more competitive with roads.

Surely we must also pay attention to the extent of the population growth that is taking place around the western edge of Perth city and around the hinterland of Kinross and Milnathort, a large proportion of whose working population travels to Edinburgh and Glasgow. We should not forget, either, that Perth station is supposed to be the hub for Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness, which is exactly why bodies such as Transform Scotland have been presenting such a cogent case when it comes to infrastructure developments. Surely it is very important that ScotRail recognises all that when it timetables future services.

Such was my concern about those issues that I asked to meet ScotRail officials on 6 September. They told me, in effect, that they were going to push ahead with the changes because there was so little that they could do to make ScotRail services competitive against road, given the constraints of the current infrastructure. I understand that concern, but I am afraid that I do not accept that what they are proposing for 2022 will be the right answer.

There are concerns in other parts of Mid Scotland and Fife about the proposed ending of the direct link between Dunblane and Glasgow, which will necessitate a change at Stirling, and about the proposed changes to services in central Fife, which will involve more changes at Inverkeithing.

People are telling us clearly that they want trains to be accessible, to run on time and to be clean and efficient. They do not want slower trains, cancellations and train journeys that are less competitive with car journeys, nor do they want a service—as Graham Simpson pointed out—that is functioning against a backdrop of uneasy relationships with Government and with passengers.

Good-quality transport must be at the heart of economic policy making, and I suggest that we learn a lot from what is happening on the rail networks of some of our European neighbours, who know how to get train services right.

15:53

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Let me begin with the facts. Abellio ScotRail is fully funded by the Scottish Government—fact. Even before the introduction of the emergency measures agreement, the Scottish Government funded two thirds of Abellio ScotRail's revenue—fact. The Scottish Government has announced its intention to bring the ScotRail franchise into public ownership—fact. The Scottish Government now has complete control of the ScotRail franchise—fact.

So, I ask Scottish Green back benchers and front benchers, as well as the minister, why it is that the Scottish Government, having presided over the commissioning of the Docherty report—although no one is claiming responsibility for it—is now refusing to rule out implementing that report's recommendations, knowing that it will mean a radical cut in Scotland's rail services, a radical cut in the workforce and a radical cut in ticket offices. It is no wonder that Professor Docherty himself has said that his plans

"will require addressing 'difficult' cultural and political questions."

When I tackled the minister on the issue in a written parliamentary question last month, he replied that Transport Scotland was working to

"provide a platform"—

sic—

"to assess the scale and pace of recovery from Covid-19",

and he spoke of

"the changing priorities and requirements of rail passengers".—[*Written Answers*, 18 August 2021; S6W-01667.]

As usual, the minister did not answer the question that I asked—but, significantly, he did not deny that the Scottish Government was making its own assessment of the Docherty cuts. So, we make a simple and uncomplicated call on the Scottish Government to rule out cuts to rail services in Scotland.

At a time of climate crisis, we should be expanding our railways, not contracting them. In plain terms, I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport is not here, but he was a late convert to ending the rail privatisation experiment. To him, the minister and the Government, I say in all sincerity that railways in public ownership, run for passengers not profits, are part of the solution to the climate change crisis and not part of the problem.

The other question is this: with the Scottish Government in complete control of the ScotRail

franchise, why are the cabinet secretary and the transport minister presiding over Britain's longest-running industrial dispute? In addition to that, when anti-trade union laws demanded that the workforce rebalot, why was it that, at the very point that those hard-working senior conductors and ticket examiners—those key workers—were rebalotting, five SNP MSPs in Glasgow decided to issue a joint statement attacking their trade union and calling on the workers to collapse the strike or break the strike? Why did they not instead issue a joint statement calling on ScotRail and their own Government to address the pay injustice, end the pay freeze and settle the dispute?

Finally, do they not recall the words of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, who said in March 2021:

"I am clear that the pay freeze announced by the Chancellor ... fundamentally misjudges the value of front line workers."

The SNP, supported by the Greens in government, is fundamentally misjudging the value of those front-line workers. I call on the Government and the Parliament to get on the side of Scotland's railway workers and all their unions—to drop the planned cuts to rail services, drop the planned cuts to rail jobs, drop the planned cuts to terms and conditions and back the Labour motion at decision time.

15:57

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): As someone for whom world car free day is an everyday reality—I have spent more than 48 hours on trains in the past month—folk hamming up the grave disruption to their lives that would come from not using their car for a 20-minute journey on one day out of 365 really jars. I therefore thank my colleagues on the Labour benches for giving me this opportunity to make productive use of my irrational annoyance.

Being a Highlands and Islands representative, I understand that going car free is not only difficult for many of my constituents but impossible. If you live in Alness and work in a care home in Barbaraville, how do you get to your night shift when the last bus has long gone? I also accept that many could make the switch from car to public transport. However, they do not, because we are not giving them good reason to. When the journey from Thurso to Inverness is four hours on the train and two hours and twenty minutes in a car, why would you take the train?

The Friends of the Far North Line point out in their latest issue—and, it is fair to say, in all their issues—that most of the Highland main line remains single track, asking, "When will the sun shine on the Highland main line?" I have raised

the need to double that route twice in the chamber already. I expect that a number of my colleagues will be sick of hearing about it from me fairly soon and until it happens.

Given the massive carbon efficiency benefits and the fact that massive lorries carrying freight that could be transported by rail—not to mention the current issues around who drives those lorries—are the cause of many issues on the A9, it is great to see mention of moving more freight on to our railways in the Government amendment. However, you can go only so far with that while the Highland main line remains single track. If we are talking about the benefit to the climate, it surely makes sense to move freight off the roads and on to rail, where the journeys are the longest and therefore carbon emissions highest.

It is fantastic that we are talking so much about decarbonising public transport—about electrifying and exploring ways to hydrogen power trains on existing routes such as the west Highland line. However, having control of the franchise surely means that we have to go further than simply improving what is there. We also have to ensure that the services and timetables are working not only for those who currently use them but for those who can be convinced.

I find it bizarre that ScotRail is using current passenger numbers to justify service reductions. We cannot use passenger numbers as any kind of basis for decision making at a time when people have been actively told not to use the train. We should be looking to the future and using the opportunity of service changes to encourage more users, and I was glad to see that mentioned in the Scottish Government amendment.

I was as excited as a child at Christmas—or me at Christmas—when I heard the announcement that the Government was taking over ScotRail ownership, and I am even more excited now that there is a commitment to putting staff and passengers at the heart of governance. However, I share the disappointment that, in the wake of that, timetable changes show that we are still not using high-speed trains to service Inverness. It is the city with the longest intercity routes in the country, which surely should mean that it is top of the list for dunting trains that have been described by ScotRail and the Scottish Government as

“not suited for intercity travel”.

ScotRail being brought into public hands provides us with a massive opportunity to get things right, which is recognised in the Labour motion and the Scottish Government amendment. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the chamber, including Scottish Labour, to make sure that that happens.

16:01

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

In six months' time, ScotRail will enter public ownership and a new national rail service will be created—a development that will not only shape the future of our railways and the jobs involved but have a significant influence on our journey to net zero. Given the significance of the plans and the policy, we have heard remarkably little detail from the Scottish Government about what will be involved. Given their significance, the Scottish Government must resist the temptation to railroad these plans through Parliament—the pun is intended—with the help of the Greens. Whatever the plans involve, they must be subject to full parliamentary and committee scrutiny, widespread stakeholder and worker consultations, and a long-term strategic plan for Scotland's railways.

We have seen in the past what happens when this Government intervenes to bring assets into public ownership without consultation, long-term planning or proper scrutiny. When Ferguson Marine was nationalised two years ago, there was no prior consultation and no plan in place, despite warnings—including from members on these benches—that it would damage the yard's ability to win future work. We saw the same with the intervention in Burntisland Fabrications—again, there was no consultation and no long-term plan. We saw the same with Prestwick airport. We saw the SNP take the same flawed approach with the proposed publicly owned energy company: a policy announced without consultation, only for the Government to spend half a million pounds on consultancy fees, to then be told that the policy would not work.

That flawed approach has to change. There has to be a better way to plan for the future of Scotland's railways. If the Government needs help with its long-term planning for the railways, my colleague Graham Simpson set out in his opening remarks some clear objectives that we can all support: for the trains to run on time; for simpler, cheaper fares and easier methods of getting tickets; for more lines connecting more communities—we announced that as part of our manifesto—and for a railway network that works across Scotland, England and Wales.

The Government needs to tell us how its plans will help to deliver the transition to net zero. On that point, there are many recommendations in the Williams rail review that merit close consideration by the Scottish Government. I ask the minister not to let narrow political interests get in the way of following good policy elsewhere in the UK.

We do not just need that long-term plan for railways in Scotland. We also need to see an immediate resolution to the industrial dispute that has been going on for six months and causing

disruption across Scotland—a strike that, if unresolved in five weeks' time, could threaten to disrupt the COP26 climate change conference that is to be held in Glasgow. Scotland will host up to 20,000 delegates, with events being held in Glasgow, Edinburgh and other venues across Scotland, and rail connectivity will be critical to the success of the conference. Not being able to run trains during COP26 would be an embarrassment for a Government that claims to be world leading and for the whole of Scotland. That is why we are calling on the minister to get involved and work with ScotRail and the unions to resolve the dispute. It has gone on way too long.

Passengers and workers across Scotland deserve a Government that gives our railways more support, more financing and more attention. They are not getting that from this SNP Government. I support the amendment in Graham Simpson's name.

16:04

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Labour colleagues for bringing this debate. It is important that we thank the workers for their commitment to delivering rail services during the pandemic, and it is important that we push Abellio to get round the table with our unions and resolve the industrial dispute well ahead of COP26.

The motion references world car free day, which is a reminder of why we urgently need to transform our transport system. If we do not get the system right, the 70 per cent of people who have access to a car will simply drive more, while the people who do not have access to cars will be even further disadvantaged.

Rail must be at the heart of the Government's plan for a 20 per cent reduction in traffic. The transfer of ScotRail into public ownership next year must mark a relaunch of rail in Scotland and a genuine people's railway. We must have a service that is run in the public interest, with a direct role for passengers and workers in service planning and delivery, so that we reach out to communities who are currently not served by the rail network and to passengers who—let us be honest—could be served a lot better.

I am concerned that the focus of the Docherty report and the subsequent ScotRail timetable proposals is on service cuts and facility closures across Scotland's rail network, rather than on changes that can genuinely create room for expansion and improvement of services. In the report, it was claimed that the recommendations were due to changed passenger behaviour and the need for economic recovery from Covid but, as members said, it is still too early to say how rail

use will recover post-pandemic, given that many workplaces have, understandably, yet to invite workers fully back to the office.

ScotRail is currently consulting on its national proposed timetable and the consultation closes for responses on 1 October.

Neil Bibby: Will the member give way?

Mark Ruskell: I do not think that I have time in hand—or do I, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you a little time, if the member will be as brief as possible.

Mark Ruskell: Okay. I will give way.

Neil Bibby: What will be in the Scottish Greens' submission to the consultation? Do the Greens accept ScotRail's fit for the future proposals, which include cutting 300 services a day?

Mark Ruskell: No, and I will tell the member what I am doing to listen to the travelling public and channel their comments to the minister and to ScotRail. I have been active in encouraging constituents across my region to make their voices heard. More than 300 people have engaged with the consultation portal that I set up and have told ScotRail what they think of the cuts. ScotRail confirmed to me today that it will attend a town hall event next week, which I am organising online, to explain the timetable changes to people and hear directly from passengers across my region about how the changes will affect them. People have a voice and they are having their say on the issue.

How ScotRail deals with the responses to the consultation will be a big test. We expect full transparency about the concerns that are raised and the action that it will take to address them before it passes on final proposals to the minister for a decision.

I acknowledge that some change will be necessary. No one wants to see empty trains running, and the rail network must be used efficiently. There might be timetable changes that meet passenger demand better than the current timetable does.

However, the changes that we have seen so far are concerning. For example, the Kirkcaldy to Perth service will take up to 30 minutes longer, with no direct train between the two places and less frequent journeys. Journeys in Fife will require a change at Inverkeithing, which will increase journey times. Passengers in Strathearn might benefit from more regular services from Gleneagles, but for Perth residents the current problems with journey times will be compounded. If the message is that it will become harder to take the train between Perth and Scotland's other cities, that will be incredibly damaging to the

Government's target of securing a 20 per cent reduction in vehicle mileage.

I hope that the minister will listen to passengers—I am sure that he will do so—and to the workers. We look forward to the successful relaunch of a people's railway next year.

16:09

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I welcome the chance to take part in this debate.

There is no doubt that we face some challenging decisions around travel in general and rail travel in particular. On one hand, we want a world-class rail service, which carries passengers and freight everywhere they want to go. On the other, we need to think about the environment. Many of us were perhaps travelling too much before Covid and have now learned to travel less.

I travel each week by train from Glasgow, via Bathgate, to Edinburgh and have seen a remarkable reduction in the number of passengers getting off at Edinburgh Park station. Will those people ever return to previous work patterns? I do not think that anyone knows, to echo what Mark Ruskell just said.

The other side to all this, of course, is the financial aspect. As with all parts of the budget, we have to live within our means. I strongly support having the railways under public ownership—for that matter, I did not like seeing gas and electricity privatised—but they will still have to operate within a budget. Broadly speaking, if there is to be a pay increase above inflation, there will need to be a matching increase in fares above inflation, or, if fares are to be held down, wages will have to be held down too.

I have to say that, when rail was previously in public hands, the public did not always get a good deal—the awful British Rail sandwiches were a standing joke. This time round, the passengers and other users have to be at the centre. From that perspective, I agree with the point in the Conservative amendment that

“any operating model must put delivering a reliable and affordable service for passengers at the heart of its aim”.

I am not sure whether that is good English, but never mind.

As we move towards new ownership of the railways, we need to remember that the railways are not there to serve us as politicians and neither are they there to serve the RMT or the railways staff, much as we appreciate them, especially for the work that they did during the pandemic. The railways are there to serve the public, and both we as politicians and the staff who work on the railways are there to serve the public too. If fewer people are travelling by train because of home

working or nervousness about being in a busy public place or for any other reasons, the railway system will have less income than it did pre-Covid.

That shortfall will have to be made up in some way. For example, we could increase fares, increase the public subsidy by cutting the national health service budget or trim services to better match demand. I think that those are the three main options that we have. I hope that Labour, in particular, will seriously engage in that debate. It is easy to say that we want more services, increased pay and reduced fares, but, sadly, the numbers have to stack up.

Neil Bibby: I agree that public transport is a public service and that the state will have to support it, but if we are not willing to invest in public transport, there is no point in declaring a climate emergency. When declaring a climate emergency, we need to invest in public transport in order to get people using it, which requires greater public investment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Mason, I can give you back most of that time.

John Mason: Thank you. Of course we need to invest, but we can invest only the money that we have. Mr Bibby lives within a budget—I understand that he has a family—I have to live within my budget and we all have to live within our budgets. It is all very well saying that there should be all the things that we would like to see, but we can have that only if the money is there.

Moving on to some of the specific service proposals, I welcome the fact that the Glasgow north electric suburban line, which includes the Edinburgh to Helensburgh service, looks like staying broadly the same. On the Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk High service, it is a bit disappointing that the previous all-day 15-minute service will reduce to 30 minutes off peak. I understand the reason for that and the fact that, given what I have just argued, the money has to come from somewhere. However, given that that route is, in many ways, ScotRail's flagship route, given the investment in Queen Street station and given the electrification of the route and the excellent rolling stock, it is still disappointing. I hope that, if demand picks up, services can be increased.

I love getting the train from Inverness to Wick and travelling on similar rural routes. However, that is one of the most heavily subsidised lines, with the average fare being £7 and the subsidy £25 per passenger. I am not arguing against that, but I wonder whether Labour is seriously arguing that we should increase that subsidy above 75 per cent.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is not just because you are commenting on that part of the

railway line, but you will need to conclude now, Mr Mason.

John Mason: Right. I will just stop there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches.

16:14

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I have listened carefully to the debate. In a speech of only four minutes, I have a limited time to pick out the key issues. However, first, we can support the first part of the Labour motion on resisting the reduction in ScotRail services.

The second thing that the debate makes clear is the utter abdication of responsibility by the Scottish Government on the matter. That was evident in relation to the pay dispute long before today. In June, I asked the First Minister about the matter and she said that it was for the employer to resolve and that the matter rests with the operator and the unions. We have heard that position in today's debate from the minister and Mark Ruskell, and it is reflected in the Scottish Government amendment.

However, there are three reasons why that shameful abdication does not stack up. First, ScotRail has been operating under an emergency management agreement. Section 5.5(c) of appendix ii to schedule 1 of the supplemental agreement makes clear that Abellio can negotiate all it wants, but it cannot authorise anything without the consent of the Scottish ministers because, ultimately, that is where the funding will come from.

Just in case I was mistaken on that, I dug out the franchise agreement. Schedule 15.2, clause 2.1, which is on page 617, states that in the last 12 months of a franchise, Abellio shall not vary or promise to vary the terms or conditions of employment of employees without the prior consent of the Scottish ministers.

In any event, under employment law, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 state that

“any purported variation of the contract of employment”

that is or will be transferred is

“void if the sole principal reason for the variation is ... the transfer”.

Of course, there are caveats to that, but as the future transferee, one would have thought that the Scottish Government should be actively discussing with the transferor what it would expect to see post-transfer. I do not accept the Scottish Government's position of sitting on its hands and hoping that Abellio and the unions fight it out. That is not acceptable.

Graham Simpson's amendment calls for the Scottish Government to undertake a review of disused tracks and stations and reopen those that would support local growth and connectivity, and notes that for many people across Scotland, particularly in rural areas, car travel is a necessity not a choice. That point was made in a thoughtful contribution by Emma Roddick.

I heard Liz Smith talk about campaigning for rail infrastructure upgrades between Edinburgh and Perth for 20 years, and I raised the point yesterday that Fraserburgh and Peterhead are the furthest towns in the entire country from the rail network. Car travel in the north-east is a necessity, not a choice. Remedying that shocking lack of rail provision would support local growth and connectivity and have many other positive side effects, not least on the drive to net zero and the reduction of car kilometres that the Government wishes to see.

However, when I raise that issue with the minister he abdicates responsibility to the delayed strategic transport projects review 2, for which just yesterday the cabinet secretary failed to give me a precise date of publication. Perhaps in closing, the minister will state whether he supports the reopening of the Dyce to Ellon line as soon as possible and the prompt extension of that to Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

Graham Simpson raised the lack of electrification of the line between Haymarket and Aberdeen; I have asked many questions on that issue and on whether the north-east might see the £198 million that is left from the £200 million that was promised years ago as part of the Aberdeen city region deal. Who did the minister abdicate responsibility to this time? Network Rail.

Members have heard a shameful litany of instances in which there has been a complete failure of the Government to take responsibility. Dean Lockhart demanded that the minister get involved; the minister has the perfect opportunity right now to show some leadership and take responsibility—will he? We shall see.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I heard the reference to Fraserburgh but, as Ms Wishart made clear, other places have claims to being further away from the train network.

16:18

Graeme Dey: In closing for the Government, I will again make clear some key points. First, the Government has delivered more routes, more trains, more people travelling on those trains, more stations and greater frequency. Secondly, we should not forget the huge impact of the pandemic. The need to lock down the country and transport services for all but essential travel

purposes has had a long-lasting impact. That is why we announced on Monday a further extension of the emergency measures agreement to provide additional support for ScotRail. Our rail services are, sadly, in effect haemorrhaging cash and are running at much more substantive losses than previously. We have to get our railway back on to a surer financial footing while also planning for long-term service delivery.

Let me be clear: we are determined to do all that we can to restore passenger service levels to where they were pre-pandemic, but we face challenges in the short term.

The timetable proposals in many areas actually mean better and more frequent services, but I appreciate that that is cold comfort for areas that face fewer services than currently, at least in the short term. It is a consultation and a starting not an end point—

Neil Bibby: Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: Very briefly.

Neil Bibby: The Glasgow Queen Street to Edinburgh Waverley service, via Falkirk High, has been described as the flagship service between our two largest cities. People should not have to wait half an hour to get a train between our two largest cities. Surely, the minister can rule out those cuts—

Graeme Dey: As usual, dealing in facts is problematic for Mr Bibby. Let me throw another fact back at him: that service is the one service on our network that washes its face, and those seats are occupied only 26 per cent of the time. That exemplifies the challenge that we face over usage. Beatrice Wishart was absolutely right in what she said about the future not being about running empty trains; we have to get real about it.

To return to my point about the consultation, I encourage members, as Liz Smith and Mark Ruskell have done, to get involved in the process.

The Labour motion calls for full restoration of services to pre-Covid levels, regardless of affordability. What about the new services that are to be introduced from 22 May? Are they to be ditched or does Labour suggest that we keep them and add them back in on top of the old services? We cannot run the same carriages at the same time in different locations.

A number of members have, rightly, raised the issues about pay claims and industrial action. Graham Simpson and Mark Ruskell called for the parties to get around the table. I advise them and others that such engagement is and has been under way. The unions and management are currently looking at finding a way forward around pay claims; I know that because I have actively

encouraged them to do so and I have engaged with a number of the unions.

Graham Simpson: Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Very briefly, Mr Simpson.

Graham Simpson: On that point about getting around the table, can the minister explain further what that is? Is it mediation?

Graeme Dey: I need to be careful in what I say, because it is a matter between the unions and Abellio ScotRail, but I confirm that discussions are taking place.

The Government agrees that rail employees deserve to be treated and paid fairly. As Minister for Transport, I have challenged all the parties to identify efficiencies to free up the funding that is needed in order to deliver fair and reasonable pay settlements. I reiterate that those efficiencies need to come from all quarters, including from our strategic relationship with Network Rail. The SNP contends that a fully integrated, publicly controlled railway—not the present separation of track and train—would best serve the needs of staff, customers and the public purse.

However, alongside pressing the case for that, we will continue to engage with the Office of Rail and Road in order to seek a better deal. Does anyone really believe that paying £815 million per annum just for the maintenance of and access to Scotland's rail track represents value for money? If we are to reduce overheads, maintain and grow employment levels, increase services and further invest in the network, that issue has to be addressed.

Our vision for the future of Scotland's railways is based on service improvement, fair work and the decarbonisation of passenger rail services. To answer the question that was asked earlier, we will update Parliament on all that before the end of the year. However, for the avoidance of any doubt, I say now that we intend that staff and passenger representation will play a key role in shaping the future direction and governance of the new organisation.

We also have ambitions to facilitate a marked increase in rail freight, to help meet Scotland's net zero ambitions, as Beatrice Wishart and Emma Roddick called for. I note that the Labour motion fails to mention rail freight, and I assume that that is just an oversight, because our vision, which is shared by the trade unions, is that a competitive, sustainable rail freight sector will play an increasing role in Scotland's economic growth by providing a safer, greener and more efficient way of transporting products and materials.

Our long-term commitment to rail remains undiminished. We have some difficult and immediate challenges to overcome but, with a real world approach to addressing them, we can overcome them and get Scotland's railway truly fit for the future, so that it meets the needs of the public, is a fair work employer and plays a leading role in cutting transport emissions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Colin Smyth to wind up the debate.

16:24

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The decisions that we take in the coming months will shape the future of Scotland's railways, and by doing so they will shape our response to the climate crisis. As Beatrice Wishart said, transport is Scotland's

"largest source of greenhouse gas emissions",

responsible for

"more than a third of them"

with levels barely below what they were in 1990.

The past decade under the Government has been a missed opportunity to put rail at the heart of a fightback against climate change, yet in the year that the world's eyes will be on Scotland as we host COP26, when we all hope that agreement will be reached, here on our doorstep, that will herald the world's determination not to lose the climate emergency race, it beggars belief that the Scottish Government's swansong for its failed ScotRail franchise is to herald in the single biggest cut in rail services since devolution.

Let us be clear: it is a cut in services. It is 300 fewer services a day than there were before the pandemic—100,000 fewer per year. It is really astonishing that, when given the opportunity to rule out reducing the overall number of rail services below pre-pandemic levels, the minister tried to spin his way out by saying, "It's fine. The number of services will be more than they are in the middle of a pandemic" and that, as Emma Roddick said, at a time when we are telling people not to use the train.

Is that really what we mean by building back better? Is that the height of the SNP-Green coalition's ambition for our railways? When car travel has crept back to above pre-pandemic level, the SNP-Green coalition has thrown in the towel when it comes to getting back to pre-pandemic levels on our trains, never mind growing them. As Richard Leonard said:

"At a time of climate crisis, we should be expanding our railways, not contracting them."

The minister said that we need to match service patterns with uptake. Labour believes that we

need to use every power that we have to increase that uptake. We will not do that and get people back on our trains by taking those trains away. The minister even claimed that the proposed new timetable was good for passengers in my region. He highlighted the Nith valley line and said that it would benefit. Let me tell the minister what those cuts actually mean for my constituents in what, in my view and that of my constituents, is the real world, in a region where in many cases the pre-pandemic services were not good enough.

On the Nith valley line between Glasgow and Dumfries, the number of trains on a weekday will fall from 11 to just eight—a cut of 27 per cent, with a 20 per cent cut in return journeys. Direct services to Newcastle will be axed altogether. There are plans for a reduction from eight to just five trains in each direction between Girvan and Stranraer—a cut of more than 37 per cent. Between Ayr and Glasgow there will be a massive 16 fewer trains a day in each direction—a cut of more than 25 per cent.

The proposed timetable means that there will be just three trains a day between Carstairs and Edinburgh and compared with the pre-pandemic timetable the proposals reduce the services on the Borders railway, restricting half-hourly trains to peak times during the week. Of course we need to align the times of services to meet changes in travel patterns, but that does not mean we need to cut the overall number of services altogether. That is what Labour's motion talks about.

As Mark Ruskell and the minister said, we do not know yet what demand will be when we emerge from the pandemic. However, we do know that if you drive down frequency you are gonnae drive down passenger numbers even further. There has been no effort from the Scottish Government to make rail more attractive post-pandemic. Rail fares have rocketed by more than 50 per cent under the Government, with passengers facing another hike in ticket prices in the next few months. The cost of a season ticket from Tweedbank to Edinburgh will increase by £112 in January; from Ayr to Glasgow, it will rise by £100. Where is the proposed rail fare review from the SNP-Green coalition? Surely that is urgent. Surely we should have had that review before we have this new timetable.

When will we see more urgency when it comes to reopening stations? The minister talked earlier about the Nith valley line. He mentioned it in his speech today and also two weeks ago. Let me give an example of what he can do to get people back on the trains in those places. He can reopen stations in Eastriggs, Thornhill, Mauchline and Cumnock on that line. That will get people on to our trains. Let us show ambition by reopening those stations.

As Neil Bibby and Richard Leonard said, today the joint trade unions launched their campaign to stop the cuts—the six months to save Scotland's railway campaign. Labour stands with those workers. They are key workers who deserve our thanks for keeping Scotland moving during the pandemic, but they need more than just our thanks. They need and deserve fairness at work and decent pay and conditions.

It is not good enough that ScotRail workers have not had a pay deal for two years, including before the pandemic. It is also not good enough that the Scottish Government is quick to hand out millions of pounds in management fees to Serco and Abellio for a seven-day service that we are not getting, while at the same time it has effectively imposed a pay freeze on ordinary rail workers and the minister is, frankly, posted missing when it comes to resolving an industrial dispute that has dragged on for months.

Fortunately, the failed franchise will drag on for only another few months. The minister and John Mason said that they support public ownership of our railways; however, that was not the case when they opposed not one, but two motions that I brought to chamber in the past three years to end the ScotRail franchise and deliver what the Scottish Co-operative Party describes as “a people's railway”.

I welcome that the SNP has come on board to shunt to the sidings what it once claimed would be a world-leading franchise, which, as Neil Bibby said, has been

“a flop from start to finish”.

If the SNP is really committed to public ownership, why will it not bring the Serco Caledonian sleeper franchise under public control? I will do what the minister failed to do at the start of the debate—I will take an intervention from him if he wants to answer the question.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, you will not, because you are about to conclude, Mr Smyth.

Colin Smyth: Much to the relief of the minister, I am sure.

A fully publicly owned and run railway is Labour's vision for our railways. The vision starts to put passengers, not the profits of privatised companies, first. Our vision would put the railways at the heart of the fight against climate change, and not accelerate it by cutting services. It is a vision in which the workforce are the managers of change, not its casualties. By backing Labour's motion, we can start to deliver that vision today.

Scottish Ambulance Service

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01302, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on taking action on the national health service and ambulance crisis. I invite members who want to participate in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible, and those who are joining us online to put an R in the chat function.

16:31

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I say to people: do not get sick, do not need an ambulance and do not need accident and emergency services in Scottish National Party-run Scotland, because in each of those areas the Government is letting them down. National health service staff, including nurses, doctors, and paramedics, are all doing their very best, and they absolutely deserve our thanks. However, they need more than warm words—they need action, and the SNP is not listening to their real and genuine concerns.

For months, the cabinet secretary has done nothing. Ambulance delays were raised as an issue in the press in June, July and August. Where was the cabinet secretary all that time? He was posted missing, clearly hoping that the problems would go away by themselves. However, that is not new. Susan Donald from Aberdeenshire got in touch with me. Her father died on 1 January 2021, aged 81. He fell and broke his hip three days earlier. She called the general practitioner at 6 pm, then she called 111, and she was finally put through to the Ambulance Service call centre at 9 pm. Despite it being an emergency, the ambulance did not arrive until almost 1 am the following day—seven hours after he fell.

The problem is not recent; it was happening nine months ago. Ms Donald, quite rightly, raised issues about co-ordination and governance, but she wonders why performance data that is available to senior management in health boards, the Ambulance Service and the Scottish Government did not flag the problems months ago. Patients raised concerns, health professionals raised concerns, and Unite the union raised significant issues of concern, as did the GMB. A doctor described the service as “third world”. There were almost daily reports of problems. Where was the cabinet secretary? People had to die, and it had to be on the front pages of national newspapers, to shock the Government into action. That is shameful.

Ambulance delays are the worst on record, but the delays have an underlying cause. The problem is patient flow through A and E and admissions to

hospital. If we want to fix problems with the Ambulance Service, we need to fix the blockage at A and E and create more beds.

A and E waiting times are also the worst on record. The A and E waiting time target of four hours has not been met since it was introduced, in 2012—nine years ago. In the country's flagship hospital, the Queen Elizabeth—which is in the cabinet secretary's constituency, I believe—only 44 per cent of people were treated within that four-hour target time. Ambulances are queued round the block and the Red Cross has had to provide humanitarian aid to the paramedics and their patients because they are waiting so long. Unite has suggested that there should be a turnaround time of 30 minutes for an ambulance to transfer a patient to A and E. We agree. The cabinet secretary really must consider that seriously.

It is not just Glasgow that has a problem. Edinburgh has a problem, too, with only 52 per cent of people being seen within four hours. It is so bad at the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh that a doctor there described the hospital to me as a "war zone", with elderly patients having intimate examinations carried out on trolleys in corridors, without any privacy.

Delayed discharge is also up by almost 50 per cent, and, with a significant number of Covid patients in hospital, there are simply not enough beds. In addition, there is a growing crisis in social care, which means that care packages for people leaving hospital are just not available.

Virtually every health board has cancelled elective surgery, which means that hundreds more people have been added to the almost 100,000 patients who are waiting for operations. A consultant confirmed to me this morning that even cancer surgery has been cancelled at the Glasgow Royal infirmary. And all of that is before winter pressures have even started.

John Thomson of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine said that the NHS needed another 1,000 beds to cope with the crisis. Jamie McNamee, the Unite convener at the Scottish Ambulance Service, agrees. He went on to say that, if things are to improve, the plans must include field hospitals and other temporary admission units. However, that aspect was entirely missing from the health secretary's statement yesterday. I urge him to urgently consider the use of temporary wards and to please consider field hospitals. We need the extra capacity. We also need to ask staff who have recently retired from the service to come back to help out.

Dr Sue Robertson of the British Medical Association Scotland told the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee that, without any realistic plans to increase the workforce in the short term,

we face a "perfect storm." What urgent action is the Government taking to deal with the crisis in the short term?

I know that the Government wants to blame all the problems on the pandemic. I agree that the pandemic has been really challenging for the NHS and for social care, but that is, at best, a partial excuse. In this morning's *Daily Record*, a paramedic said:

"I am fed up reading and hearing in the news that the pandemic is causing the problems with delays. It's true that it's a contributing factor but this has been a disaster in the making for years."

He is absolutely right.

Since 2010, the SNP has cut 1,200 beds from the NHS—in fact, the Government started cutting beds in 2007, the moment that Nicola Sturgeon became health minister. From 2007 to 2010, the SNP failed to pass on the money for health that was given to it by the United Kingdom Government. That would have resulted in £1 billion more in spending today on the NHS. I remind members that Nicola Sturgeon was the health secretary for that entire period. Yes, it was Nicola Sturgeon, too, who cut the number of training places for nurses and doctors, despite being warned about the problems with staffing. This disaster has been in the making for the past 14 years.

The NHS in Scotland is entirely devolved—it is not the responsibility of Westminster—and it is run by the Scottish Government. There is no grievance to be manufactured; there is nowhere for the SNP to hide. This is a problem of its own making. It needs to listen to patients and staff, and it needs to sort out the issue now, before it gets worse over the winter.

I move,

That the Parliament thanks the Scottish Ambulance Service paramedics, technicians, call handlers and other frontline workers who are under significant stress as they cope with the current pressures on the health service; regrets the failure of the Scottish Government to address the underlying and systematic problems facing both the ambulance service and the wider health and social care service that predate the COVID-19 pandemic; welcomes the support of the British Army in helping alleviate the current pressures on NHS workers and patients; recommends that the Scottish Government adopt a 30-minute maximum turnaround time for ambulances from arrival at hospital, which will release paramedics to answer other calls, and protect staff welfare and wellbeing by reducing shift over-runs and guarding rest periods, and further calls on the Scottish Government to increase capacity in the health service ahead of winter by calling on recently retired staff to return temporarily and establishing temporary wards and field hospitals to ease the pressure on Accident and Emergency departments and manage the clinical backlog.

16:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Our national health service is under more pressure than it has ever been in its entire 73-year history—there is simply no denying that or getting away from it. The global pandemic is a crisis the like of which none of us have ever witnessed, and I suspect that none of us will ever witness such a crisis again in our lives. Of course, it took Ms Baillie about six minutes to even mention what has been the biggest shock to the NHS in its 73-year history.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): If the cabinet secretary is so confident that the crisis in our ambulances and our A and E departments is entirely down to the pandemic, will he commit to a Government-led review of all deaths pertaining to the ambulance crisis? Will he then publish that review so that the Parliament can see it?

Humza Yousaf: I will consider any good suggestion that comes from anywhere in this chamber, but I have never said that this is “entirely down to the pandemic”. In fact, yesterday, I said very clearly that, of course, there were challenges in our NHS and our Ambulance Service beforehand. However, it would be churlish and inaccurate not to recognise the severe shock of the pandemic on our NHS.

Also, it is not just about Covid patients. Covid patients are now taking up about 1,100 beds, but it is about the cumulative impact, as Dr Beckett explained well on “Good Morning Scotland” today. Patients with chronic conditions who have not been able to be seen in the past 18 months are now presenting with more complex issues and problems.

I will provide some context to the debate. Yesterday, the Scottish Ambulance Service received 2,226 emergency calls, of which 1,580 required a response from an ambulance. Over 19 per cent of those incidents were triaged as being immediately life threatening. Everyone at SAS is performing their duties under unprecedented pressure, and I thank them once again for their continued efforts. I have set out a number of proposals to support and improve staff wellbeing.

As many members will know, the SAS website includes published board papers, and performance statistics are included in those papers. However, I know that there are calls from across the Parliament for more information to be provided. Now seems to be an appropriate time to announce that the Scottish Ambulance Service will begin work on publishing performance data, by health board, on a more accessible part of its website. That information will be available soon,

and I will make sure that members are updated on it.

Today’s debate comes on the heels of yesterday’s announcement, and I want to set the record straight in relation to some of the amendments that have been lodged. Not a single penny will be cut from the Scottish Ambulance Service’s budget. In fact, we are increasing its budget by over 16 per cent in this year alone—a £44 million increase on last year.

I will focus on just two of the commitments that I made yesterday, in order to give an update to Parliament. I can now confirm that deployment of Army personnel to support the Scottish Ambulance Service will begin from Sunday, with training commencing from Friday, and it will, in fact, total 114 personnel for ambulance driver support. That increase was agreed yesterday afternoon by the Ministry of Defence, which makes the decision on final numbers to support operational deployment. The deployment will come in three tranches, the first of which will be 27 drivers and seven support staff. There will be further deployments on Monday and Wednesday, and all additional boots will be on the ground by the end of the month. I formally place on record my thanks to our armed forces, who, in typical fashion, have responded to our call with extreme urgency and pace.

Yesterday, I also announced an additional £20 million of funding for the Scottish Ambulance Service. I can confirm that that money will be spent on a number of areas, including supporting the armed forces involvement that I have just set out; supporting increased senior clinical decision making; facilitating additional community support, where appropriate, including from the Red Cross; and facilitating additional student capacity to support services.

All of that will be done when it is clinically safe to do so. This is where I want to address one or two of the points that Ms Baillie has raised. I will take suggestions from wherever in Parliament they come, and I do not dismiss entirely or out of hand the suggestion for a field hospital. However, it will be important, first of all, that options are clinically safe and, secondly, that we have the workforce to staff any such beds. That option has been—

Jackie Baillie: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Humza Yousaf: I am happy to.

Jackie Baillie: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary. The Government did, of course, create the NHS Louisa Jordan, so the staffing capacity must have been there for it.

Humza Yousaf: At the beginning of the pandemic, the NHS was not fully remobilised. In

fact, we had stopped everything except urgent care and cancer care, so there was a—*[Interruption.]*—No, not everything has stopped; that is an inaccurate suggestion from Ms Baillie from a sedentary position. We do not have that workforce. As she has rightly said, health boards are under pressure to take them out of core sites and put them into, for example, a temporary structure, but that would have an impact. I should say to Ms Baillie that I am not ruling it out; I am just saying that there would be implications, and it is perhaps not as simple as she suggests.

In terms of the wider system pressures, I have spoken a lot about the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

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

Humza Yousaf: I will be happy to take an intervention from Douglas Ross in my closing speech.

Given that I am in my last minute, I will return to the issue of the wider pressures on the NHS. Jackie Baillie is correct in saying, as her motion does, that it is not just the Ambulance Service that is facing an extreme challenge. We must take a whole-system approach, and we will do so. Our forthcoming winter plan will set out the measures that we and our partners will take to ensure that we can deliver high-quality, safe care in a sustainable way. It will look at increasing capacity, and we will do that through the urgent discussions that we are already having with social care providers and local authorities. I will consider how we can increase our capacity in relation to the workforce immediately, as best we possibly can. Further, as Jackie Baillie asked us to do in her opening speech, we will look at how we can create temporary wards—for example, by repurposing some hospital space.

As I said yesterday, our Ambulance Service and NHS have been there for us when we have needed them the most, and, in turn, this Government will support our NHS during its hour of greatest need. I look forward to the debate.

I move amendment S6M-01302.3, to leave out from “regrets” to end and insert:

“recognises that excessively long waits for an ambulance can lead to worse outcomes for patients, and that the Scottish Government and Scottish Ambulance Service have apologised to people who have experienced long waits; notes that the Scottish Government has previously invested an additional £20 million to increase staff capacity in the ambulance service by almost 300; welcomes that an extra £20 million is now being invested to increase capacity further, including funding military personnel, recruiting additional Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers, working with NHS boards to create Temporary Admission Wards

and aiming to recruit 100 paramedic students to help alleviate the current pressures on ambulance staff, NHS workers and patients; further notes that the steps outlined by the health secretary will help alleviate pressure on the service in the immediate term and looking ahead to the winter; commends military personnel and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which are providing driving support to the ambulance service in order to free up paramedic and technician time; supports the additional investment of £500,000 to improve ambulance service staff welfare, and the ongoing discussions between the board and trade unions to develop a rest break action plan and put it in place as quickly as possible.”

16:45

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): We all know the statistics by now. We have the worst A and E waiting times on record; we are 1,000 acute beds short ahead of winter; the fire brigade, taxi drivers and our British Army have been called in to help; and the NHS Louisa Jordan field hospital has been closed. All that is happening as our NHS faces its hardest winter in living memory.

Yesterday, the SNP-Green Government announced, finally, that it accepts that our NHS and Scottish Ambulance Service are in crisis. Today, we call for concerted and well thought out action. I say to the cabinet secretary that the days of knee-jerk responses must be over. Of course, at this late stage, the challenge is huge, so today I want to help the cabinet secretary by providing some advice. I also want to ask some of the key questions that I will expect answers to when I read his forthcoming winter action plan. I am not patronising him when I say that; it is simply that our NHS and Ambulance Service are in crisis on the SNP’s watch

Let us start with data. I welcome the cabinet secretary’s announcement a moment ago about ambulance response times, but I ask for the data to be published weekly. If it is, we will be able to keep track of what is happening on the ground and to fine tune the plans, where necessary.

Data also provides us with lessons that enable us to avoid making planning and resourcing mistakes in the future. If we do not measure, we cannot improve. I am calling for that because I want to help; I want to advise. I do not want to see problems spinning out of control. Speaking as a doctor, I can say that we know that early intervention is key to treating disease. The same goes for managing policy in a crisis.

Our Ambulance Service is under enormous pressure. With regard to the valuable assistance of the police, the fire service, taxi firms and our British Army, we also need transparency around the scale of crisis support. From week to week, we need to evaluate how much we depend on that support, how long we will need it and what lessons we can learn and take forward for NHS planning.

Processes and procedures are also important. What exactly is it that the Government is asking the fire service and taxi firms to do? Are the processes and pathways in place for that external support? Can we see them? How is the Scottish Government going to evaluate the work of the fire service, taxi firms, our British Army and police support? What are the Government's target response times for ambulances and taxis? How can the cabinet secretary ensure the safety of taxi drivers and their passenger patients? There is still a lot of Covid out there. Also, has the Scottish Government started the Disclosure Scotland process for those drivers yet?

The action plan for the NHS and Ambulance Service will not be a credible plan without joined-up thinking across services and departments regarding workforce planning. In order for planning to help, we need that. In a crisis, plans might need to be adapted as the data informs us of the reality on the ground, but we need a well thought out blueprint in the first place. That requires details of clinical pathways.

NHS staff and, indeed, the Scottish people need to know the patient journey, given the reality on the ground of staffing levels, patient waiting times, cancelled operations and the rapid approach of winter. What can patients expect? How will the patient journey evolve? What will need to be changed? We need clarity on those issues and we need to communicate clearly with staff and patients.

Finally, let us consider pop-up wards. Just as the failure over years to plan for and maintain stocks of personal protective equipment exposed clinical staff and patients to danger during the pandemic, the decision to close the NHS Louisa Jordan field hospital is coming back to haunt us. What an example of poor planning and waste that is. We need to act now to establish pop-up wards at hospitals, but I give a word of warning: such wards should not be used to fudge A and E waiting time stats. If patients are waiting in a ward to be seen, that is what is happening: they are waiting.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The member is in his last minute.

Sandesh Gulhane: Will the cabinet secretary commit to maintaining the four-hour A and E treatment target, regardless of the emergency care setting? Will he provide details on workforce planning, clinical pathways and temporary facilities? Will he provide weekly reports on the external support that is being provided to the NHS and the Ambulance Service?

There have been five SNP ministers in charge of health—a straight line of cabinet secretaries since Nicola Sturgeon held the position from 2007 until 2012. We are in a crisis. Please act.

I declare an interest as a practising doctor.

I move amendment S6M-01302.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises that A&E waiting times have reached record highs, and believes that the four-hour A&E treatment target should be followed regardless of the emergency care setting; calls for the publication of weekly ambulance response time data so that progress can be measured in every region, and further calls for this year's planned efficiency savings for the Scottish Ambulance Service to be halted.”

16:51

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I thank the Labour Party for choosing to devote some of its parliamentary time to this issue. The Labour Party is correct to say that the Government has failed, because it has. It has failed Gerard Brown, Catherine White, Lilian Briggs and many others who have been forced to wait hours for help while in agonising pain, often being unable to access food and water or even to go to the toilet. For those who are not as directly involved in politics as we in the chamber are, the stories that broke last week in the *Daily Record* will have come as a great shock. Sadly, however, the crisis has been on the cards for a long time.

In the summer of 2016, a Scottish Liberal Democrat freedom of information request revealed figures that showed how much pressure the Ambulance Service was under. In 2015-16, the Scottish Government's target to respond to serious incidents in less than eight minutes was missed more than 51,000 times. In Glasgow, the number of patients who faced waits of 20 minutes or more almost trebled from 80 to 233. In Aberdeen, the number rose from 16 to 40. The warning lights have been on for years, but the Government still has the audacity to blame the pandemic, in large part, for its own failures.

Two weeks ago, after I lodged an urgent question on A and E waiting times, the health secretary told me that I needed to ground myself in reality, so let me take the opportunity to lay out for him what the reality looks like. The reality is that one in 20 patients who are in pain is waiting more than a year for treatment; that nearly 8,000 patients are waiting more than four hours to be seen in our A and E departments; that 8,356 ambulance staff working days were lost due to mental ill health in 2020 alone; and that Gerard Brown lost his life because he waited 40 hours for an ambulance. While the health secretary dances around scrutiny, berating anyone who dares to

hold him and his Government to account, people are hurting and people are dying.

Granular improvements are not good enough. The delays are not the result of the pandemic alone, and they are certainly not the fault of members of the public who call in desperation for emergency care. They are a symptom of an overrun and understaffed healthcare service that has been ignored for too long by a Government whose priorities have been elsewhere.

If resources are not offered soon, staff will leave and the NHS will be in even more trouble. Last year, my colleague Liam McArthur led the campaign to pay student paramedics. In October 2020, the former Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, Joe FitzPatrick, said that he agreed with the principle but could not agree to a bursary—that is, until the election campaign, when the polls indicated that the SNP had to do something. It is too little, too late.

The ambulance waiting times crisis did not come out of nowhere. It is the result of failure after failure at the hands of the Government. The unimaginable pressure that our health service is under is scarring a generation of healthcare professionals. Staff are struggling and are fighting against impossible workloads.

The health secretary failed to provide any light at the end of the tunnel with his NHS recovery plan. It was a bundle of repackaged announcements, most of which will not take effect until years down the line. Nothing in his statement yesterday reassured the public or Parliament that things will get better. Staff, patients and their families not only deserve more from the Government; their health actively depends on it.

I reiterate my call to the Government. If the health secretary is content and confident that the problem is purely an aberration that has been caused by the pandemic, let him conduct a review into waiting times and into why deaths, such as that of Gerard Brown, happened. If the cabinet secretary is confident about the statistics and results, let him publish them for Parliament and the public, who are watching the ambulance waiting times crisis.

We are happy to support the Labour Party motion.

16:55

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): We debate many motions that thank various workers and groups for their efforts. Although such motions have a place in the work that we do here, the weight of the crisis that affects ambulance availability and the subsequent stress that is

caused to patients and front-line workers should hold greater sway than usual.

Although I applaud all of our dedicated staff, I will use my time better in trying to find out why the Government keeps letting them down. My standing here telling paramedics, call responders and technicians how thankful we are for their work will have made no difference if I am back here in a year doing exactly the same, while an unresponsive Government continues to make excuses for the problems.

We cannot change processes, adjust targets and rebrand services and call that reform. It is not. It is a branding exercise, not responsible governance. The key to the whole situation is simple. The Ambulance Service is underfunded, understaffed and lacking in resources: fix that, and we fix the problem.

I cannot stress enough to the Government that chasing targets and small headline improvements over proactive structural reform is not the way to run a health service. It is disappointing that the health secretary wasted his time this week briefing the *Daily Record* on his statement before informing Parliament, because doing so only further ingrains the image that this is all about expectation management and public presentation.

I do not want to manage the expectations of the woman who was left lying in Ayr town centre for four hours last month as she waited for an ambulance; I want her to be treated and back home with her family. That example is not even one of the extreme ones. Reports of patients waiting more than 40 hours for an ambulance create anxiety and stress throughout many communities, which are well aware that a delay in making it to hospital could, as we know, be the difference between life and death.

At least there is some positive news this week, as Covid rates seem to be declining across Scotland. I believe that we should use any breathing space that that allows us to focus all our efforts on preparing the NHS for the coming winter, and on alleviating pressure on the worst-impacted parts of our hospitals. Instead of doing that work, however, we might have to pick up the pieces from the missteps that have been taken over the past couple of years.

As my party colleagues and other members have mentioned, a concerning clinical backlog needs to be addressed right now that requires new field hospitals to tackle it. That is exactly what we should be doing. I understand that the health secretary has not ruled that out; I would support any steps to achieve that goal. Regardless of how it is reported, it is important for patients and the communities.

Before I close, I reiterate that all the problems—queues of ambulances, lack of beds, overworked staff—are deeply interconnected. We cannot tackle them without addressing the problem of underfunding. The Government has committed £1 billion of investment in the NHS over the next five years. Although some of that investment has gone towards training and recruiting new staff, that process will take almost a decade to bear fruit. In fact, nearly all the funding was already earmarked before May, with a fair amount of previous commitments already having been shelved.

That investment will not be enough. The NHS needs emergency measures to cope now. We see from feelings in the chamber that reports from our constituents suggest that the public wants action, too. After emergency measures, we need to address the problem of long-term planning and the failure to bring in well ahead of time the resources that the NHS requires.

The chamber should deal with the difficult issues, and we should pursue whatever works for the NHS. The strength of Scottish Labour's motion reflects that intention, so I hope that it will be supported in that spirit.

16:59

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I start by reiterating what other members have said: the Scottish Ambulance Service is the heartbeat of our NHS. There is no service like it. Providing emergency care for the public 24 hours a day, every day of the year, our Ambulance Service has a unique and challenging job. I place on record my thanks to the paramedics and others who make sure that the service is available to those who need it, not just during this dreadful pandemic, but always.

As the cabinet secretary said, there is no ignoring the strain that the pandemic has put on our services. We are in a crisis and, despite the lifting of restrictions and some aspects of daily life feeling a little more normal for many of us, that strain on the NHS is still very much there. Covid has not gone away, and there is no denying that the Ambulance Service is under immense pressure from unusually high demand. Our emergency departments are busier than ever with complex cases. Just last month, more than 10,000 life-threatening incidents were responded to, which is double the figure in 2018. As members of other parties have said, we also have to accept that the pressure on the Ambulance Service predates the pandemic.

The fact that anyone is having to wait the reported times for an ambulance is completely unacceptable. I, too, have been contacted by constituents who faced unacceptable waits, and I

have taken up their cases where appropriate, as MSPs of all parties—governing parties as well as Opposition parties—would be expected to do. I welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement yesterday. I am glad that we have recognised the unacceptable place that we are in and that we are now taking swift and appropriate action to ease the pressure.

That pressure needs to be looked at in the round. A lot of the debate today has been about criticising the Government—and only the Government. However, I think back to a pre-pandemic case of individual in my constituency who waited for an ambulance for a long time—I cannot remember the number of hours, but it was certainly hours—after she slipped on ice as a result of cuts to gritting. We need to look at everything in the round: how not only the Government but local authorities can improve the situation. The public expect us to speak constructively about that.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Fulton MacGregor: I will not have time—unless I get the time back, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: There are about two minutes in hand to the end of the debate. As you are not in your final minute, it is up to you, Mr MacGregor.

Fulton MacGregor: I give way to Mr O'Kane.

Paul O'Kane: The member acknowledges, I think, the scale of the crisis and the issues that existed before the pandemic. He made a point about ice, but would he accept that cutting local government funding and budgets contributes to our wider problems in the health service, and that it has a knock-on effect? We have to fund local government properly if it is to deliver services.

Fulton MacGregor: I do not accept that characterisation. Local authorities have their own decisions to make and, as Mr O'Kane might be aware, the local authority in North Lanarkshire is made up of a Labour and Conservative coalition.

However, I was not trying to get into a political bun fight about what Labour might be doing in North Lanarkshire and what the SNP is doing at Holyrood; I was trying to say that things need to be looked at in the round. We need to take a whole-systems approach where everything interacts with everything else. I hope that the member agrees with that.

I whole-heartedly welcome the announcement yesterday of the additional £20 million that will be invested in the Ambulance Service. That will allow for extra personnel to ensure that services can continue to operate and, ultimately, that sick patients can be helped timeously. It is good to

hear that we are pulling in resources from the military, paramedic students, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the British Red Cross, among others.

In relation to student paramedics, as Alex Cole-Hamilton said, the Scottish Government recently implemented the £10,000 bursary scheme. A lot of the credit for that goes to Liam McArthur, but I also want to give some credit to Hollie Carragher from my constituency, who lobbied me and the First Minister. I want Alex Cole-Hamilton to know that people from wider society successfully lobbied on that issue.

The Presiding Officer: Could you please wind up, Mr MacGregor?

Fulton MacGregor: I am sorry, Presiding Officer. I thought that I was going to get two minutes back.

The Presiding Officer: No. Speeches are four minutes this afternoon.

Fulton MacGregor: I am sorry; I picked you up wrongly. In that case, I end by saying that I support the Government's amendment.

17:04

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): Yesterday, the First Minister finally admitted that our NHS is in crisis, but only after growing pressure from NHS boards, healthcare professionals, unions and MSPs, who warned the Government that if it did not act, it would push our NHS beyond breaking point.

The Scottish Conservatives repeatedly warned the Government that our NHS was at breaking point long before the First Minister's admission. A and E waiting times, ambulance waiting times, the cervical cancer screening scandal, waiting lists for vital diagnostic tests and waiting lists for child and adolescent mental health services are just some of the issues that have been raised in the chamber. It is clear that, after 13 years in government, the SNP does not have the willingness or the ability to fix the problems that it has created.

It is also clear that the crisis was entirely preventable, but because of the length of time that it took the SNP to act, those long-standing pre-Covid issues have now been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic.

Further to yesterday's announcement by the cabinet secretary, more than 100 military personnel will be drafted in to provide much-needed assistance to our hard-working NHS staff. This morning, we heard that taxi drivers will be recruited to help to transport patients to hospital for appointments. Those are the same taxi drivers

who were hung out to dry during lockdown by the SNP Government.

In my region, NHS Lanarkshire will benefit from the services that will be provided by the staff who are deployed by the British Army, the fire brigade and taxi services. That assistance will provide welcome relief to my constituents and NHS Lanarkshire's front-line staff. However, we should never have ended up in this position in the first place.

Over the past few weeks, we have heard devastating news of people dying as a result of the length of time that they had to wait to receive urgent care. We have heard of elderly people who lay on the floor in agony, hoping that someone would come and help them. People have waited for hours on end at A and E, while others have turned up at hospitals because they could not see their GP face to face, as GPs are so overworked and overwhelmed. All those situations arose on the cabinet secretary's watch, and it can never be allowed to happen again.

The Scottish Government had every opportunity to intervene to fix those issues but, instead, the health secretary told people to think twice before calling an ambulance. Will he finally apologise for that, or will he continue to dismiss the notion that what he said was reckless and irresponsible?

The SNP's amendment does not even begin to address the immense issues that our heroic NHS staff have had to endure. Frankly, the SNP should be ashamed. The Scottish Conservatives will vote against the SNP's amendment. Instead, we will vote for a position that will force the SNP Government to declare major incident status in our Ambulance Service, halt its planned efficiency savings, maintain the four-hour A and E treatment target and publish ambulance response time data on a weekly basis so that progress can be measured in every region.

I agree with the points that are raised in the Labour motion, especially the recognition that is given to the wonderful Scottish Ambulance Service paramedics, technicians, call handlers and other front-line workers who have been failed by the Government. It is only right that we continue to support our NHS heroes who are always on hand to respond to an emergency. I urge Labour to vote for our amendment to its motion, to recognise our hard-working NHS staff but also to ensure that the Scottish Government is held to account for the NHS crisis that it has created.

17:08

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): First, as everyone else has done, I pay tribute to the incredible hard-working staff of the Scottish Ambulance Service. They are undoubtedly at the

sharp end of our health service provision, and they deal with some of the most serious situations that we will ever face in life in a professional and caring manner. They see things that would make most of us blanch, and they still save countless lives each and every day as part of their job.

However, I think that it is important that our admiration for the work that they do is not tarnished by the negative attention that they have received lately, including this afternoon, from media and politicians alike. The critics may prefix their attacks by telling them how much they admire them, but what the NHS worker hears when the part of the service that they work in is continually criticised is, "You're hopeless." We all know that that is unfair and untrue, and I am sure that that is not what the people concerned want them to think.

I understand that it is the job of politicians to raise the concerns of their constituents and oppose the Government, but last week's Conservative debate on GPs and Labour's debate today on the Scottish Ambulance Service are beginning to look like a co-ordinated political attack on our health service as it tries to deal with the effects of a pandemic that none of us saw coming and a Brexit that slashed the number of workers in health and social care.

At least Jackie Baillie is always up front; she will use any chance to have a go at the SNP health secretary and the First Minister. I am pretty sure that the *Official Report* will show that she mentioned the FM more often than she mentioned the pandemic.

We have had two debates from Labour on two very important issues—rail and ambulances. Labour's solution to both appears to be to spend money that we simply do not have. There is no money tree out in the parliamentary garden. That is not real politics—that is student politics. There are real issues to be dealt with, and they must be dealt with. However, the unwillingness of any of our opponents to accept that the pandemic is a serious factor in all this does not serve anybody any good.

I was pleased by yesterday's announcement from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care that volunteer drivers from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will be drafted in to assist the Ambulance Service, and that, from this weekend, the Army—or, as the Conservatives continue to call it, "the British Army"—will be helping to take some of the pressure off. That is very welcome news, which I hope will at least begin to address some of the problems that we are experiencing. In addition, 100 trainee paramedics will be tasked with call handling, which will help to alleviate some of the backlog caused by an increased level of calls.

It is a difficult situation that is obviously worrying to the public and not easily resolved. However, we should remember that it is a situation without precedent in Scotland or the UK and that we are not alone in dealing with these problems. For example, four out of 10 ambulance trusts in England are using Army personnel to help deal with the situation.

I echo and agree whole-heartedly with the appeals of the health secretary that members of the public should ask for an ambulance only if they believe that the situation is life threatening, particularly just now. In all other circumstances, they should phone NHS 24 on 111. If NHS 24 believes that an ambulance is necessary after someone has talked to it about the situation, an ambulance will still be dispatched, even though the member of the public did not call 999—I know that because it has happened in my house. That advice is being given all over the UK, as well as in Scotland. It is important that we adhere to it in order to reduce waiting times for the most serious cases.

I am not sure that there is a quick fix to the situation—I know that that is not for want of trying on the part of our dedicated health professionals across the Ambulance Service, the NHS and social care in Scotland. We should also remember that Brexit has prevented a lot of the workers who used to work in social care in Scotland from coming here, which is having a huge impact on our ability to get hospital beds emptied and people back into the community.

I appeal to my colleagues in all parties in the chamber to pull together and give all our support to the people who are working so hard to battle the pandemic and keep our citizens alive in the most demanding of circumstances, and to stop seeing them as a weapon to be used in a political battle. They deserve much more than that.

17:12

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): I, too, thank our ambulance crews and all those working in emergency care and the wider NHS for continuing to work extremely hard in very difficult conditions. The stories of extremely long waiting times for ambulances make for distressing reading and I cannot imagine the distress felt by the people who have faced those agonising waits. I am grateful for the measures that the cabinet secretary set out yesterday, and I hope that they begin to make an impact quickly.

Ambulance crews are working incredibly hard to reach people who need help as quickly as possible, but demand is simply outstripping supply. The pandemic means that staff have been working flat out for 18 months with no respite, and

I am extremely concerned about the impact on their mental and physical health. There have been disturbing reports of crews being unable to access food, water or rest for whole shifts. How can we expect them to care for us when they have no time to care for themselves?

We need to protect Ambulance Service staff. As people become frustrated with long waits, staff will inevitably bear the brunt. I welcome the Scottish Government's announcement of additional wellbeing support, but we also need strong messaging that abuse or intimidation of ambulance crews is not acceptable. There have been reports of call handlers receiving abuse due to long waits. I would therefore be grateful if the cabinet secretary could confirm whether the additional wellbeing support that is being put in place for ambulance crews will be extended to other staff.

Extra clinical capacity will no doubt relieve some of the pressure that is being placed on teams, and I am extremely grateful to the 100 second year students who will be working across the Ambulance Service while carrying out their studies. They should rightly be applauded. However, I have concerns about the impact that it will have on their studies and the potential risk of burnout. I therefore ask the cabinet secretary to confirm that no students will be academically disadvantaged and that they will receive wellbeing support.

The demand for ambulances will undoubtedly place pressure on other emergency and out-of-hours services, and I am concerned about the secondary impact of long waits on NHS 24 and out-of-hours general practice. We must ensure that they are properly supported to meet a potential surge in demand. Likewise, delayed discharge is placing pressure on hospital wards, A and E departments and the Ambulance Service as patients occupying hospital beds cannot be discharged without a care package.

We need to take a whole-system approach when looking at how we can relieve pressure. Dr Daniel Beckett, an acute care consultant, has spoken in the media today about the fact that, if we could meet patients' social care needs, patients would be able to move out of hospitals, which would in turn reduce crowding in wards and emergency departments as well as reducing ambulance delays. A national care service is of course the Parliament's long-term goal, but social care needs support now. I have previously spoken about the need for a social care recovery plan and I urge the Government to give serious consideration to that.

Although a whole-system approach is vital, we must also respond to acute pressure points in the system. NHS Forth Valley, in my region, is

currently the worst-performing health board in terms of the four-hour A and E target. Nationally, 71.5 per cent of patients are being seen within four hours, whereas in Forth Valley it is just 53.4 per cent. That is a significant difference and I would be grateful to hear from the cabinet secretary whether he is considering targeted interventions for Forth Valley.

We must prioritise staff welfare. Our dedicated NHS workers continually go above and beyond, but that should never be taken for granted. Clapping on the doorsteps is not enough when paramedics cannot access food and water throughout a 12-hour shift.

17:16

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): As many members have done this afternoon, I thank those working in our health service and emergency services, including our Scottish Ambulance Service paramedics, technicians, call handlers and other front-line workers, who are under significant stress. We know what the pressures are at the moment.

I am somewhat disappointed to be returning to a debate that seems to be based on arbitrary requests and does not really look at the systemic issues or support the Government in what it is trying to do to tackle the issues. Last week, we had a call for GPs to resume "normal" and "face-to-face" services at a set date. *[Interruption.]* No, thank you, I will not take an intervention.

It was an arbitrary request, and doing what was asked would do nothing to help the situation that we are in. Jackie Baillie talked very well about the systemic issues and all the points of pressure on our health service, including those regarding getting people into social care and out of hospital. However, the motion asks us to set

"a 30-minute maximum turnaround time for ambulances from arrival at hospital",

and, again, those words will not really address the problem at all. They are just arbitrary words for the debate.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

Clare Adamson: No, thank you.

The tone of the debate is that everything to do with the management of the health service rests on this Government alone. *[Interruption.]* No, thank you.

If we look to Wales, we see that the BBC reported today that morale in the Welsh Ambulance Service is "at rock bottom". There was a 57 per cent increase in calls in July. Mark Drakeford is requesting support from the Army

because of the pressures. Treatment times are under pressure, and there are pressures in areas outside hospitals as well.

On the health service, there is no denial of where we are or that there are problems. When anyone loses their life or has to wait for an unacceptable time, it is never said that that is acceptable—it is not. What I hear is that we have to work on the pinch points by, for example, investigating whether we can open up more admission wards in hospitals or whether we can use a pop-up solution—*[Interruption.]* To say that the situation is just on this Government is to completely ignore the situation in the wider UK, where all Governments are under the same pressures. We have talked about the shortage of doctors—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Ms Adamson, give me one minute, please. Colleagues, there are a lot of comments coming from sedentary positions across the chamber. I would be grateful if we could hear Ms Adamson.

Clare Adamson: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I have obviously touched a raw nerve. Members do not want to hear that this is a broader issue than just one for Scotland.

Hundreds of student paramedics will now receive a bursary, as Fulton MacGregor said. The *Daily Mail* reported that there are 50,000 vacancies for doctors in the health service in England. We are all experiencing the pressures.

That is why I want to highlight what the Scottish Government is doing. We should all get behind the Government to help our health service. There is additional investment of £20 million for the Scottish Ambulance Service to improve response times, alleviate pressures and improve staff wellbeing. We need to get behind the service and we need to train more paramedics. I am glad that we have paid trainee paramedics and nurses double the bursary that is paid in England.

We need to get behind the work that the cabinet secretary is doing. We are listening to the Scottish Ambulance Service, we are listening to people's calls and we are investigating where the pressures are. The Government has wellbeing at its heart, and we know that it will consider the wellbeing of the workforce.

17:21

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): My constituent Susannah Jackson, who has previously suffered a stroke, had a bad fall at home. An ambulance was called at 5.30 pm but did not arrive until 10.30 that evening. My constituent was worried and in pain. She was taken to Edinburgh's royal infirmary, where she

had to wait on a trolley in the corridor before finally being seen at 5.45 the next morning. The staff said, "Monday nights are always bad."

That was no isolated incident. An elderly constituent of mine, Helen Fraser, is a local community champion who recently led a street-to-street campaign against plans for a builders merchants yard in a residential area of Haddington. Against the odds, she won. Helen is a fighter. She is not one to complain, but last week she sent me an email about her husband's treatment at the hands of the SNP Government. It opened:

"Dear Craig. As you know, Ian is terminally ill. Over the weekend he developed a further problem which caused great pain and our GP attended to him at home yesterday. The doctor said Ian needed an Xray and arranged for an ambulance to the Western General. The GP mentioned the current ongoing delays of hours, and said if things got worse to dial 999."

Helen reports that the Ambulance Service logged the instruction on Monday at 1.45 pm. Around 6 pm, she got a call to say that Ian was in the system and to apologise for the delay. The operator could not indicate when the ambulance might arrive. A further call came at 9 pm, with the same message. There were other calls on Tuesday morning, at 1.15, at 3.15 and at roughly 6 am. Helen says that the calls were all the same, apart from one with a nurse, who asked more questions. On the final call, Helen asked whether she could change to the 999 system. She was told that the wait for emergency vehicles was bad and would be hours; Ian would have to be triaged again, and there simply were not enough vehicles.

Helen said that it was impossible to sleep. Finally, she decided to use a taxi. She tried to cancel the ambulance by using the incoming number, but it did not accept incoming calls. She called the Western general hospital and asked for the message to be passed on that she and Ian were still coming in. She asked whether the ambulance could be cancelled, but the person to whom she spoke said that she was not able to do that.

When, at last, the receptionist at the hospital booked Ian in, she agreed to cancel the ambulance. However, Helen said that after she got home later that day, a neighbour told her that an ambulance had been at her door at 8.30 am, 19 hours after it had been ordered. Helen said:

"I really hope no one thinks we left home without consideration of the consequences."

In her email, Helen Fraser speaks for many. She says that the NHS is in a "complete shambles". She says:

"There is no blame whatsoever to be attached to the hardworking staff and our medics and nurses. The problem lies squarely with the incompetence of the Scottish

Government—no amount of blaming Westminster, or Boris Johnston, or Covid, can cover up statistics”.

She says:

“Ours is just one case but how many other patients were caught up in this ongoing catastrophe.”

Ian Fraser deserved to be treated with dignity, but under this SNP Government his urgent needs were disregarded. For Helen and Ian Fraser’s sake, and the sake of the thousands of Scots who are caught up in this unfolding catastrophe, the minister must get a grip of the crisis.

The Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I call Sue Webber. You have up to four minutes, Ms Webber.

17:25

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I am sorry, Presiding Officer, but that caught me a bit and I welled up just there.

We have heard that our Ambulance Service is at breaking point. There can be no doubt that the Scottish NHS is in crisis and that the SNP is to blame, not the pandemic. The SNP has ignored the warning signs for years. As Jackie Baillie outlined earlier, all the concerns of stakeholders—unions, patients and healthcare professionals—have been ignored, resulting in unnecessary deaths. The failures are systemic—they are not pinch points, as Clare Adamson said. The SNP has dithered and taken far too long to respond to the crisis.

Action must be taken; the Scottish Conservatives are calling on the SNP to provide an emergency funding package and publish a detailed strategy to maximise the use of military staff to tackle the crisis. Every day, we read about cases of long waits for ambulances that sometimes lead to needless deaths and the kind of heartbreaking stories that we just heard from my colleague Craig Hoy.

The Scottish Government has requested the support of the British Army in tackling Scotland’s ambulance crisis. Although we welcome that request being made, it should have happened already; that just exposes the SNP’s shambolic handling of Scotland’s health service. In addition, firefighters and taxi services have now been drafted in to help the Scottish Ambulance Service. However, even after Humza Yousaf’s statement to the Parliament yesterday, Unite the union warned that drafting in the army and firefighters as drivers “will not be enough” to cope with the crisis. Further, my colleague Meghan Gallagher highlighted the cabinet secretary’s hypocrisy in announcing that taxi drivers will now be recruited to help transport patients to hospital for their

appointments: those are the same taxi drivers who were hung out to dry during lockdown.

The pandemic has exposed the many deep-rooted weaknesses that existed in our health service long before we heard of Covid and that are due to the SNP’s mismanagement. The deep-rooted workforce crisis was mentioned by Mr Cole Hamilton in his speech. Our healthcare professionals have worked in those extreme conditions for years, juggling staff and equipment shortages, just to keep patient services going. Although there has rightly been a focus on tackling Covid in our health service, other illnesses and diseases cannot simply be forgotten about. The number of excess deaths in Scotland is tragic, and my thoughts are with those who have lost a loved one.

Yesterday, Nicola Sturgeon finally admitted that the NHS is in crisis, but Ms Sturgeon and Mr Yousaf would not confirm when an NHS winter plan would be published. It should have formed an integral part of any NHS Scotland remobilisation plan, but it has not. We are calling on the SNP-Green Government to shelve plans for £15 million in “efficiency savings”—that is not the same as cuts; they have been requested to make “efficiency savings”—in the Ambulance Service and instead announce a series of actions to tackle the crisis, including an emergency funding package that focuses on saving lives. The SNP needs to develop a real plan of action to fully remobilise our NHS, fund our Ambulance Service properly and bring waiting times back under control. Although that will be a challenge for the SNP, it is about time that we got some detail and not just soundbites.

The Scottish Conservatives will vote against the SNP amendment, and I urge Labour to vote for our amendment—laying out some of the questions that we need answers to from the Scottish Government—to strengthen Jackie Baillie’s motion.

The Presiding Officer: I call Humza Yousaf. You have up to five minutes, cabinet secretary.

17:29

Humza Yousaf: There can often be more heat than light in these debates and I am pleased that there have been some helpful suggestions. I do not agree with everything that was said, but I will try to address as many comments and questions as possible.

There were calls during the debate to thank Scottish Ambulance Service staff, provide additional investment, get support from the armed services, protect staff welfare and increase the workforce by encouraging recently retired workers to temporarily return to the NHS. The Scottish

Government has delivered on all those asks, as set out over the course of yesterday and today, which is why our amendment includes all the asks in the original Labour motion.

A number of members spoke passionately about constituency cases. Once again, as I did yesterday, I apologise unreservedly to anybody who has not received the standard of service that they should have

We heard about a number of other asks that the Government currently cannot support but will continue to consider. For example, we have concerns about the clinical safety, or the lack thereof, of pop-up tents to support A and E, which was something that was mentioned by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine in a statement that it put out. A lot has been said by Jackie Baillie and others about mandating a 30-minute maximum turnaround time at hospitals. I guarantee that we want turnaround times to be as short as possible, but we must monitor that as part of a wider drive towards system improvement. We all want turnaround times to be as short as possible, but simply mandating it does not make it so.

Jackie Baillie: Does the cabinet secretary agree that that was not a random request, as was suggested by Clare Adamson, but came from ambulance staff? Unite the union and its ambulance workers said that that could be part of the solution to the problem. Does the cabinet secretary agree with that?

Humza Yousaf: I know that that was an ask from Unite, as I spoke to Unite yesterday. It welcomed the statement that I made and pushed the Government to go further, and I accept that. I also accept that Ms Baillie is making the point out of sincerity. I give her a guarantee that we want turnaround times at our hospitals to be as short as possible.

A number of members mentioned flow at hospitals and rightly made the point, which I hope I reflected in my opening speech, that this issue is about not just the Ambulance Service but the whole system. I made an announcement yesterday about almost doubling the number of hospital ambulance liaison officers—HALOs—in our hospitals, particularly at our busiest sites, which goes back to the point that Gillian Mackay made about interventions at our worst performing sites. That will hopefully help with patients being discharged from ambulances and their flow through the hospital site.

Carol Mochan spoke passionately about staff. She was right: staff do not need warm words. I am sure that they would welcome warm words, but they need more than that, which is why I am pleased that the Government has recognised our

staff by making sure that they are the best paid in the UK. The recently implemented 4 per cent pay rise is the largest single pay rise in the history of devolution.

It was remiss of me not to welcome Dr Gulhane to his front bench role, and I wish Annie Wells the very best for her recovery. From my private messaging to her, I know that she hopes to be recovered and back on the front bench soon, but in her absence, I am sure that Dr Gulhane will do a good job. He asked a number of questions on data; I think that I answered a lot of them but I will take back some of his suggestions. He asked for a commitment that we will not scrap the four-hour target in relation to A and E. I give him an absolute commitment and assurance that we will not do that. I should say that in May, the UK Government intended to scrap that target; I do not know whether it followed through with that. We will certainly not do that; we commit to that target regardless of whatever temporary admission wards and so on are created.

Gillian Mackay asked a number of questions about additional wellbeing support. Of the funding that was announced yesterday, £500,000 will be for targeted wellbeing. She made a good point about making sure that second-year paramedic students who are helping us, particularly in control centres, are not disadvantaged academically. That is the intention, but I will consider the issue further. She was right to make her point, as other members did, on social care.

Clare Adamson was also right—I am not sure why members were getting so anxious about her contribution—to say that these are shared challenges across the UK. That does not absolve the Scottish Government from responsibility here; not at all. That is our responsibility and my responsibility, but these are shared challenges. I accept the fact that our A and E record times are challenging, but we are still the best performing A and E in the entire UK.

We have set out an additional £20 million of investment for the Ambulance Service and I will update the Parliament on our forthcoming winter plan. The NHS will always have this Government's full and entire support.

The Presiding Officer: I call Paul O'Kane to wind up the debate.

17:34

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): There can be no doubt that the Ambulance Service in Scotland—and, more widely, our NHS—is in crisis. Each member in the chamber today will have had correspondence from constituents about having to wait hours for help to come, and a number of members have spoken very powerfully of those

cases today. We have seen ambulances queueing at our hospitals and we know that waiting times at A and E are at their worst levels since records began. Tragically, people have died. We heard today from Jackie Baillie about Susan Donald and her father from Aberdeenshire, and we have all heard about Gerard Brown from Glasgow, who passed away after waiting 40 hours for an ambulance.

Families are broken-hearted and they are asking why, because it did not have to happen. We have heard the calls from paramedics, doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff for immediate help to support a workforce that is “exhausted, undervalued and overwhelmed”. Those are the words of a whistleblowing paramedic, who does not want to be identified, because she fears for her job. She goes on to say:

“In all the years I have been a paramedic I have never seen the job as bad as I do now.”

Nobody denies that we are living through unprecedented times, but we know that things had been worsening for years before the pandemic. Services were struggling to keep up with demand and there was a growing backlog of care. The pandemic has exacerbated a bad situation.

Although we have heard it before, it is important to hear it again. Another paramedic whistleblower, who is based in Glasgow, said:

“I am fed up reading and hearing in the news that the pandemic is causing the problems with delays. It’s true that it’s a contributing factor but this has been a disaster in the making for years.”

That is not me, Jackie Baillie or any other politician saying that; it is a paramedic who is working on the front line, and the cabinet secretary and the Government cannot ignore those words. As much as James Dornan might want to make it about the hard-working staff versus Opposition politicians, those words cannot be ignored. [*Interruption.*] The cabinet secretary must listen to my point and explain to hard-working staff and bereaved families why he was missing in action—as my colleagues Jackie Baillie and Carol Mochan pointed out—until he went to the *Daily Record* to give that interview.

The reality is that the crisis did not start 18 months ago with a global pandemic. It has been consistently building, and the warning signs have been there year after year. In 2019, compared with 2014, there was a shocking increase of 634.4 per cent in long turnarounds, which impact on the availability of ambulances to respond to emergency calls. Those trends continued into 2021. Last week, Unite the union claimed that lives

“are being put at risk”,

as the average 999 ambulance waiting time across Scotland has increased to six hours.

In the debate today, other members have spoken about the problems with acute bed capacity, staffing and retention, as well as delayed discharge. The Scottish Government has been forced to take remedial action to alleviate the pressures that our Ambulance Service is facing, as has been evidenced in the debate, and the Government finds itself playing catch-up.

Scottish Labour’s priority is to give our Ambulance Service the urgent support that it needs in order to save lives. As such, we welcome the Government’s decision to request help from the Army, but the Government must go further and explore the potential of calling on recently retired ambulance staff to help during the crisis. We must acknowledge what the trade unions are saying to us about how much help the Army will be in practical, front-line roles.

Scottish Labour also supports the call from Unite for the introduction of a 30-minute maximum turnaround time for ambulances from arrival at hospital, which will release paramedics to answer other calls. As Jackie Baillie outlined, that is not a random request and we did not make it up; we spoke to Unite, which represents the staff on the ground, and they say that that would make a real difference.

In addition, temporary wards and field hospitals must be looked at. I appreciate what the cabinet secretary has said, but I ask him to work closely with the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and others to look at those options thoroughly.

We also recognise issues that Dr Sandesh Gulhane raised around reporting. We are in agreement that more regular reporting on response times has to happen, and I note what the cabinet secretary has said about improving the data that is available. We will therefore support Dr Gulhane’s amendment.

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me a second, Mr O’Kane. I ask colleagues to please not indulge in conversations in the chamber while business is on-going.

Paul O’Kane: We have heard a lot of chat this afternoon about warm words and I want to point out some of the words that have been used by the Government in the past about the NHS. It has said that the NHS is

“Our most cherished public service”,

that it will “protect” and “nurture” it, and that

“shorter waiting times and treatment that continues to improve”

are the Government’s core priorities for it. Those are all quotes from SNP manifestos over the

years. The reality is that patients and the hard-working staff of the Ambulance Service and the wider NHS are facing the consequences of 14 years of Government inaction on those issues.

Staff are upset, distressed and angry, and they fear for the winter ahead. That is why I want to speak about staff wellbeing, which is fundamentally important to supporting the workforce on the front line. I acknowledge what the cabinet secretary said about the wellbeing fund, but it needs to go further and deeper to make a difference. That is what the unions and the Royal College of Emergency Medicine are telling us, and the BMA told us that yesterday in committee.

The Presiding Officer: Mr O’Kane, please wind up.

Paul O’Kane: Certainly. As Gillian Mackay said, we need to ensure that we have better support for staff who are working on the front line. The reality is that we must put staff and patients first. They deserve better. I support the motion in Jackie Baillie’s name.

Business Motion

17:41

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01328, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 28 September 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister’s Statement: COVID-19 Update

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Keeping the Lifeline - A Call to Cancel the Cut to Universal Credit

followed by Environmental Standards Scotland: Appointment of the Chief Executive

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 29 September 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Health and Social Care; Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 30 September 2021

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister’s Questions

followed by Members’ Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

followed by Ministerial Statement: Autumn and Winter Vaccine Programme

followed by Scottish Government Debate:
Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 5 October 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

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

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 6 October 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Justice and Veterans;
Finance and Economy

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 7 October 2021

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 27 September 2021, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: Any member who wishes to contribute should press their request-to-speak button now. I call Stephen Kerr.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I rise to speak against—

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry. Excuse me for one moment, Mr Kerr.

Thank you, Mr Kerr. If you could just bear with me, we will hear from Mr Bibby first.

17:42

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I wish to move an amendment to the business motion, requiring a ministerial statement to take place on Covid vaccination certificates. Scottish Labour requested that at the Parliamentary Bureau both last week and this week.

Parliament voted for certification after the Scottish Government brought forward a debate, but it did so before the Government could set out how the scheme would be implemented. The Government rightly saw the importance of debating the principle of the certification in Parliament. We did not support the Government's proposals, but it is equally important that there is now proper and full scrutiny in the chamber of the Government's implementation of the scheme.

The First Minister's Covid updates are on a range of issues and we need dedicated time, so that members can raise the many questions that they have about the implementation of the scheme. Many sectors of the Scottish economy have questions that they want us to raise on their behalf, and we learned today that the Night Time Industries Association is launching a legal challenge.

The scheme will have a massive impact on businesses and workers and it will go live at the end of next week. We need a statement, because there are still too many unanswered questions. For example, where is the economic impact assessment? Will one be carried out? There are further questions about what is and is not a nightclub and detailed questions for venues that do not normally have door staff about how and when enforcement will be carried out.

I would not expect the Minister for Parliamentary Business to be able to answer those questions now. That is why we need a dedicated ministerial statement, or another debate if the Government wants one, in the chamber to address the many outstanding concerns that our constituents have.

I move amendment S6M-01328.1, to insert after "First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update",

"*followed by* Ministerial Statement: COVID-19 Vaccine Certification Scheme".

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Stephen Kerr.

17:44

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

After a false start, I rise to speak against today's business motion. The proposed programme does not include a further debate on the details of the Scottish Government's shambolic vaccination certification plans. Although we will support Neil Bibby's amendment, we believe that the final business motion, if amended, still falls short of an adequate level of scrutiny. Members should need no reminder that it is the business of Parliament to scrutinise the Executive.

After weeks of the Deputy First Minister dodging questions on the definition of a nightclub, yesterday the First Minister believed that she had clarified the matter. In fact, her definition raised more questions than it answered. Dr Liz Cameron, chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said that the Government's new definition will mean that

"thousands of ... businesses will now be caught up in vaccine certification rules, with little time left to understand, plan and implement"

them. She also said that the Scottish Government was now going

"beyond what was initially proposed."

Each time the Deputy First Minister dodged the question, it was Scottish businesses that lost out. Each time a Scottish National Party back bencher read a Google definition of a nightclub, in what I am sure they thought was a clever debate rebuttal, it added to the confusion for Scottish businesses.

With the First Minister's new definition, thousands of business owners are despairing at being included in the category of nightclub despite being nothing of the sort. There is genuine confusion. The First Minister might assume a certain level of intelligence among those to whom she speaks, but I, for one, would prefer that the Government explained itself, rather than suggest that those who do not understand are simply stupid.

I hear that a legal challenge is now being mounted. Presiding Officer, we must have more time to properly scrutinise the proposals in a meaningful way. The business motion does not allocate time to do so, which is why we will oppose it at decision time.

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

17:46

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): When I took on the role of Minister for Parliamentary Business, I vowed that I

would be reasonable with colleagues in the Parliament. On numerous occasions, I have said to Mr Bibby that there will be times when we can work together, and I will be able to ensure that he gets a statement that he has requested, and there will be other times when I will not be able to do so. I will give the reasons why that is the case here shortly.

I have tried to be reasonable. From Mr Kerr's contribution just now, we can see how difficult it is to be a reasonable individual when trying to work through the business that we have in front of us. How can I be reasonable with someone who is constantly showboating and playing to the gallery? It is impossible to deal with that.

The issue of how vaccination certification works is extremely important, and it is my position that we have had the opportunity to debate, question and discuss the matter. *[Interruption.]*

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con) rose—

George Adam: If we can forget the theatrics for the moment, we can possibly move on to the reason why I believe that we have had ample time to discuss the matter. Last week, we had a topical question on the issue. We had Covid statements—*[Interruption.]* Over the past two weeks, we had Covid statements, on which the First Minister stood for two hours answering questions from every single individual who asked one.

I was told at Bureau that the issue was important, and had to be debated and discussed. However—this may shock you, Presiding Officer—five Opposition members asked questions about it.

Therefore, over the past two weeks, the First Minister has been on her feet for two hours answering questions on Covid statements, there has been a topical question on the matter, and, in addition, the Deputy First Minister attends the COVID-19 Recovery Committee every two weeks.

Let us review the position again, Presiding Officer. Apart from the topical question, two hours of questions on Covid-19 statements, and the Deputy First Minister's attendance at the COVID-19 Recovery Committee every two weeks, I do not think that there is much more that we can do.

Mr Kerr feels that there is not enough time to scrutinise the Government, but it is not my fault that he is not good at doing that. He needs to ensure that he gets his act together.

The Scottish Parliament has already had a full debate on the issue and it agreed to move forward with the vaccination certification scheme.

Let us consider the matter. The whole point is that ministers must review the regulations at least every three weeks to assess whether any of the

requirements are still necessary to protect against, control or—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Colleagues—

George Adam: —a public health response—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Adam, I am concerned that not all colleagues in the chamber can hear your contribution. [*Interruption.*]

Members: Oh!

The Presiding Officer: I would be grateful if we could hear Mr Adam.

George Adam: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

I was trying to say that, as soon as ministers consider the requirements no longer to be necessary, they must be revoked. The default position is that the vaccination certification regulations are due to expire on 28 February 2022.

In closing, all that I can say is that our place here is to scrutinise—[*Interruption.*]—and come up with solutions, not to start the pantomime season before it is Christmas.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-01328.1, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

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

17:51

Meeting suspended.

17:55

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the division on amendment S6M-01328.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01328, in the name of George Adam, which sets out a business programme.

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)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowe, 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01328.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, is: For 53, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01328, in the name of George Adam, which sets out a business programme, 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)
 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)
 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)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)

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|---|--------------------|--|
| Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con) | 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) | | Wednesday 29 September 2021 |
| Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con) | 2.00 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con) | 2.00 pm | Portfolio Questions: Health and Social Care; Social Justice, Housing and Local Government |
| Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab) | | |
| Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab) | | |
| Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con) | <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business |
| Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con) | | |
| Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con) | <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con) | | |
| Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con) | 5.10 pm | Decision Time |
| Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab) | | |
| Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) | | Thursday 30 September 2021 |
| Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab) | 11.40 am | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD) | 11.40 am | General Questions |
| McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab) | | |
| Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab) | 12.00 pm | First Minister's Questions |
| Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con) | <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab) | | |
| Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con) | 2.30 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) | | |
| Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab) | 2.30 pm | Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture |
| Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con) | <i>followed by</i> | Ministerial Statement: Autumn and Winter Vaccine Programme |
| Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) | | |
| Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Government Debate: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture |
| Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) | | |
| Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab) | <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con) | | |
| White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con) | <i>followed by</i> | Decision Time |
| Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab) | | |
| Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con) | | |
| Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD) | 5.00 pm | Decision Time |

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01328, in the name of George Adam, which sets out a business programme, is: For 68, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 28 September 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

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

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Keeping the Lifeline - A Call to Cancel the Cut to Universal Credit

followed by Environmental Standards Scotland: Appointment of the Chief Executive

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Tuesday 5 October 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

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

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 6 October 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Justice and Veterans;
Finance and Economy

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Thursday 7 October 2021 | |
| 11.40 am | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 11.40 am | General Questions |
| 12.00 pm | First Minister's Questions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| 2.30 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 2.30 pm | Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills |
| <i>followed by</i> | Stage 3 Proceedings: Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 27 September 2021, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

18:00

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam to move motions S6M-01329 and S6M-01330, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, motion S6M-01332, on substitution on committees, and motion S6M-01333, on the office of the clerk.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/299) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Katy Clark be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Public Audit Committee;

Paul Sweeney be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Economy and Fair Work Committee;

Rhoda Grant be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Colin Smyth be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Finance and Public Administration Committee;

Claire Baker be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee;

Paul O'Kane be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Carol Mochan be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee;

Rhoda Grant be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Jackie Baillie be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the COVID-19 Recovery Committee;

Jackie Baillie be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee;

Martin Whitfield be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Education, Children and Young People Committee;

Mercedes Villalba be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee;

Daniel Johnson be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Criminal Justice Committee;

Mark Griffin be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee;

Sarah Boyack be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Tess White as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance and Public Administration Committee;

Russell Findlay be appointed to replace Sue Webber as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee;

Sue Webber be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that, between 1 February 2022 and 31 January 2023, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 15 April, 18 April, 2 May, 27 May, 2 June, 3 June, 16 September, 2 December, 23 December, 26 December and 27 December 2022, and 2 and 3 January 2023.—[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

18:00

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Graeme Dey is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Graham Simpson will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-01300.2, in the name of Graeme Dey, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01300, in the name of Neil Bibby, on ScotRail, 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01300.2, in the name of Graeme Dey, is: For 68, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: As the amendment is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Graham Simpson falls.

The next question is, that motion S6M-01300, in the name of Neil Bibby, on ScotRail, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My device is not connecting. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Dowey. We can record your vote on your behalf.

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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01300, in the name of Neil Bibby, on ScotRail, as amended, is: For 68, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the opportunity for decisions to be taken in the coming months that will shape the future of Scotland's railways; acknowledges the opportunity to create a national rail service that meets the country's needs and travel patterns by building back to pre-pandemic levels but also provides for expected future demand; thanks Scotland's railway workers and staff for their commitment to keeping services running during unprecedented circumstances; recognises the financial challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also believes that staff should be paid fairly and expects the employer to lead dialogue with trade unions to resolve current industrial disputes, with the aim of restoring rail services and re-establishing mutually acceptable industrial relations; welcomes that 22 September 2021 is World Car Free Day, a day to promote and undertake alternatives to car use; notes that Scottish ministers are committed to an affordable, clean, green, reliable and modern railway that is publicly owned and accountable, and founded on Fair Work First criteria, with representation for staff and passengers in the governance of a new public sector operator, and recognises that the Scottish Government will set out a vision for the future of Scotland's railways based on service improvement, fair work, the decarbonisation of passenger rail services and an increase in rail freight, to help meet Scotland's net zero ambitions.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01302.3, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01302, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on taking action on the national health service and ambulance crisis, 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01302.3, in the name of Humza Yousaf, is: For 68, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01302.2, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01302, in the name of Jackie Baillie, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to vote. If I had voted, I would have voted yes.

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

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My connection dropped and I was unable to vote. I would have voted no.

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

I call Siobhian Brown for a point of order.

Regrettably, we are unable to hear from Siobhian Brown.

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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 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)
 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 (Caitness, 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 vote on amendment S6M-01302.2, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, is: For 53, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01302, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on taking action on the NHS and ambulance crisis, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 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)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01302, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on taking action on the NHS and ambulance crisis, as amended, is: For 70, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament thanks the Scottish Ambulance Service paramedics, technicians, call handlers and other frontline workers who are under significant stress as they cope with the current pressures on the health service; recognises that excessively long waits for an ambulance can lead to worse outcomes for patients, and that the Scottish Government and Scottish Ambulance Service have apologised to people who have experienced long waits; notes that the Scottish Government has previously invested an additional £20 million to increase staff capacity in the ambulance service by almost 300; welcomes that an extra £20 million is now being invested to increase capacity further, including funding military personnel, recruiting additional Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers, working with NHS boards to create Temporary Admission Wards and aiming to recruit 100 paramedic students to help alleviate the current pressures on ambulance staff, NHS workers and patients; further notes that the steps outlined by the health secretary will help alleviate pressure on the service in the immediate term and looking ahead to the winter; commends military personnel and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which are providing driving support to the ambulance service in order to free up paramedic and technician time; supports the additional investment of £500,000 to improve ambulance service staff welfare, and the ongoing discussions between the board and trade unions to develop a rest break action plan and put it in place as quickly as possible.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on four Parliamentary Bureau motions. Does any member object?

As no member objects, the question is, that motions S6M-01329, S6M-01330, S6M-01332 and S6M-01333, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/299) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Katy Clark be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Public Audit Committee;

Paul Sweeney be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Economy and Fair Work Committee;

Rhoda Grant be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Colin Smyth be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Finance and Public Administration Committee;

Claire Baker be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee;

Paul O’Kane be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Carol Mochan be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee;

Rhoda Grant be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Jackie Baillie be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the COVID-19 Recovery Committee;

Jackie Baillie be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee;

Martin Whitfield be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Education, Children and Young People Committee;

Mercedes Villalba be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee;

Daniel Johnson be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Criminal Justice Committee;

Mark Griffin be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee;

Sarah Boyack be appointed as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee;

Jamie Halcro Johnston be appointed to replace Tess White as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance and Public Administration Committee;

Russell Findlay be appointed to replace Sue Webber as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee;

Sue Webber be appointed to replace Maurice Golden as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that, between 1 February 2022 and 31 January 2023, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 15 April, 18 April, 2 May, 27 May, 2 June, 3 June, 16 September, 2 December, 23 December, 26 December and 27 December 2022, and 2 and 3 January 2023.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Point of Order

18:17

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):

On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Once again, noise in the chamber has prevented me from participating in some parts of today's proceedings. I thank you for continuing to remind members of the barrier caused by excessive noise in the chamber.

However, I am particularly annoyed by what I believe to be ableist comments made either when I challenge others or after you intervene, Presiding Officer. When I challenged a member who shall—for now—remain nameless that I could not hear over their shouting, that was met with a shrug and a comment about others not taking interventions.

I remind all in the chamber that it is often their behaviour that is a barrier to others' participation, not our impairments. I would be grateful, Presiding Officer, if you could advise on what more can be done.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank Ms Mackay for her point of order. I am in no doubt that colleagues have heard those comments.

This will not be a silent chamber: colleagues will show their appreciation, disquiet, discomfort and dissatisfaction with other members' comments. However, as I have said frequently, I think that we could reach a position in which we conduct business with courtesy and respect, which will involve ensuring that every member of the chamber can hear what is happening.

I appreciate that there will sometimes be lively and noisy interludes, but I ask members to bear in mind that, across the chamber, hearing may not be the same for every member. I would like to reach a position where every member in the chamber can hear what is being said, at least most of the time.

National Eye Health Week 2021

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-00792, the name of Stuart McMillan, on national eye health week 2021. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes National Eye Health Week, which it considers does great work in promoting the importance of maintaining good eye health and, in 2021, runs from 20 to 26 September; believes that it continues to be vital for people in Scotland to book their free eye health check every two years in order to pick up changes to the eyes before they affect the vision; understands that 50% of sight loss is avoidable; notes the measures put in place in optometry practices across Scotland by healthcare professionals to make attending an eye health check safe during the COVID-19 pandemic; commends the work of Optometry Scotland and RNIB Scotland to encourage people to return to practices and check their eye health; emphasises what it considers the need to not forget eye health checks, and notes the call for people in Greenock and Inverclyde, and across Scotland, to book their free eye health check if they have not attended an examination in the last two years.

18:22

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I am delighted to have secured this debate and I thank members from across the parties who have signed the motion. I also thank all the organisations that provided briefings for the debate: the Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland, Sight Scotland, Optometry Scotland and the RPP Group.

As convener of the cross-party group on visual impairment, I seek to highlight national eye health week every year to raise awareness of the importance of looking after our eye health. I do that not only in one week each year; I talk to constituents and raise the issue throughout the year.

Since 2006, people in Scotland have been able to attend a free eye health check every two years. It is vital that we all make use of that service, even if we think that our eyesight is fine. That is because eye examinations not only help to detect changes to the eyes before they affect vision but can pick up other health conditions such as high blood pressure, raised cholesterol, diabetes and an increased risk of stroke. Going for a free eye

examination every two years is important not only for eye health but for overall health.

Covid-19 has made us all pay more attention to our physical and mental health but, worryingly, there were 4.3 million fewer eye appointments during the pandemic. That is both understandable and concerning.

Covid-19 has also resulted in increased waiting times for appointments, with many postponed due to lockdown. The longer patients wait to receive treatment, the more serious their eye condition is likely to become, which can result in further deterioration of vision. Vital eye care has been available throughout the pandemic at emergency eye care treatment centres and through virtual appointments. After the easing of restrictions, optometrists have offered routine eye health checks, with measures in place to minimise the risk of spreading Covid-19.

At present, there are around 178,000 people in Scotland with sight loss, including almost 3,000 people in my constituency. That national figure is expected to double in the next 20 years.

The most common cause of sight loss is age-related macular degeneration, but people of all ages can experience sight loss, with the most common cause of sight loss among working-age people being diabetic retinopathy.

According to the RPP Group, in Scotland, glaucoma affects approximately 10 per cent of those over the age of 75, or around 47,000 Scots, and it only becomes more common and severe with increasing age. Glaucoma is also responsible for approximately 10 per cent of United Kingdom blindness registrations.

Considering that 50 per cent of sight loss is avoidable, I cannot stress enough the importance of getting a free eye examination. I got an examination again this summer, and the experience was excellent. My message to Scotland is simple: now that restrictions have eased greatly and optometrists are open for business, please pay that visit.

Another way in which we can reduce our chance of developing sight loss and improve our overall health is to quit smoking. I have never smoked, but I know people who have successfully quit and others who have struggled to do so. Research shows that smokers are twice as likely to become visually impaired compared with non-smokers, because the chemicals in cigarettes can affect the lenses and blood vessels in the eyes.

Wearing sunglasses is also important in protecting vision. Although we might joke about the Scottish weather and Scottish summers, it does not need to be scorching hot and sunny for

ultraviolet light to harm a person's cornea, retina and lenses.

Eating a well-balanced diet is also important, because a diet that is rich in vitamins can preserve eye health for longer.

National eye health week is also about recognising the issues that are faced by people who are already living with sight loss. For them, the past 18 months have been additionally challenging. Sight Scotland asked more than 400 people for their views on how they were impacted by coronavirus restrictions. Its findings show that 70 per cent said that their sight loss had made lockdown an even harder experience, and 43 per cent said that they were still not confident about going back into society with social distancing requirements in place.

In thinking about how we emerge from the pandemic and what our recovery looks like, we have to be mindful of people who are living with sight loss. Additional outdoor seating and the reconfiguration of public spaces and pavements are welcome, but we have to consider how they affect visually impaired people. Such adaptations should seek to improve accessibility for everyone, and they should not make navigating pavements, paths or parks more difficult for people who are visually impaired. As Miles Briggs will be aware, that issue has come up in the cross-party group on visual impairment.

It is also important that we improve the support and services that are available to people living with sight loss. In the latest research carried out by Sight Scotland, 55 per cent of participants said that they did not have enough information about where they could find support after their diagnosis; 83 per cent said that it was important to provide more support for family members and carers; and 58 per cent said that they had not been made aware of the financial support that is available to them.

I therefore welcome Sight Scotland's new national support line for visually impaired people, which the minister launched today. Its purpose is to enable visually impaired people to access advice and talk through concerns. The number is 0800 024 8973. The support line is part of Sight Scotland's new family wellbeing service, which aims to reach everyone in Scotland who is living with sight loss. It is free and is open from 9 am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. A person can get in touch by telephone or email, or by requesting a call back from an adviser.

RNIB Scotland also offers advice and support to people who phone its helpline on 030 123 9999. People can even ask Alexa to call the helpline without needing to touch their phone. RNIB

Scotland also has services and resources to help people rebuild any lost confidence.

I am sorry that I cannot attend tomorrow's Optometry Scotland webinar, which is on the future of community eye care in Scotland, as I will be attending the funeral of a former MSP, Bruce McFee. However, I encourage MSPs and their staff to log on and engage in the webinar. I know that Optometry Scotland works well with the Scottish Government, and I encourage the continuation of that engagement.

Most people say that sight is the sense that they fear losing most, and ensuring that people take care of their vision is key to prevention.

I again thank the members who signed the motion to allow us to have the debate, and I look forward to hearing colleagues' speeches.

18:19

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the national eye health debate, and I congratulate my friend and colleague Stuart McMillan on securing it.

Eyesight is one of our most important senses—80 per cent of what we perceive comes through our sense of sight.

This week is national eye health week, which has been established to communicate the importance of good eye health. It rightly encourages people from every walk of life to take better care of their eyes and have regular sight tests.

There are five key areas to protecting and promoting good eye health, which Stuart McMillan has covered in more detail than I perhaps will in the time available to me.

It is worth reiterating that a healthy diet is really important. Studies show that what we eat can affect our vision. Antioxidants can help to prevent retinal damage, and one antioxidant that is hugely beneficial is lutein. Exercise is also important. Lack of exercise contributes significantly to several eye conditions, particularly among people aged 60 and over. Reduced alcohol intake is an interesting area—excessive alcohol consumption can lead to serious health conditions that can have a detrimental effect on eye health. Stopping smoking is another area. After ageing, smoking is the biggest risk factor in the development of macular degeneration.

My younger sister, Buffy, is an ophthalmic nurse specialist who specialises in glaucoma care. She keeps me and her patients right with her expert knowledge. It will be interesting to hear what she thinks of the debate, because I know that she is watching.

Optometrists play a crucial role in our community. However, as with all health professionals, they have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Over the course of the pandemic, I engaged with Optometry Scotland on the negative impact that the pandemic has had on optometry, with eight months of no face-to-face appointments.

Sight Scotland has carried out research since lockdown that involved speaking to people in Scotland with visual impairment and those close to them. I thank Sight Scotland for its briefing ahead of the debate. Its report highlighted that 70 per cent of respondents said that their sight loss made lockdown a worse experience; 50 per cent said that they would not be confident about offering support to someone with visual impairment; and a large number of people said that they were unable to attend their optometrist and therefore attended hospital instead.

I recognise the impact that Covid has had on optometry services and encourage the Scottish Government to ensure that they are supported in the upcoming budget. We have heard that optometrists are potentially looking for a 3 per cent fee increase—that is the request from Optometry Scotland.

In 2016-17 alone, community eye care in Scotland saved the national health service £71 million through carrying out 1.8 million primary eye examinations. Importantly, in 2016-17 community optometry services preventing more than 370,000 people from having to attend hospital for eye issues.

In 2019, I saw for myself the very positive impact that community optometry can have when I visited Stranraer Specsavers, where I met the chair of Optometry Scotland, David Quigley, prescribing optometrist, Elaine Hawthorne, and communications officer, Ross Stevens. During the visit, I heard that, as well as identifying any specific issues with sight, an eye check—which is free in Scotland—can help to identify conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and even signs of dementia. I also heard about the benefits of having a 3D eye scan, which can give the optometrist a better picture of the eye and enable them to pick up any developing issues early, preventing late diagnosis and the need for secondary or acute care.

An issue that was highlighted was that optometrists are not recognised as allied health professionals. I was told that such recognition would help optometrists to be better at working in partnership with the national health service. I therefore ask the minister to consider whether optometry personnel could be added to the list of allied health professionals.

I realise that my time is up. I again welcome the debate. I thank Optometry Scotland for all that it does and encourage everyone to have their sight checked regularly.

18:34

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I, too, thank Stuart McMillan for bringing this important members' business debate to the chamber and, more importantly, for all his work in the Parliament campaigning on eye health issues. It is important that we recognise that as well.

National eye health week is an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of good eye health. I pay tribute to Sight Scotland and the RNIB, as other members have, for their useful briefings ahead of the debate. Both charities do exceptional work in supporting blind and partially sighted people across Scotland.

In today's *Edinburgh Evening News*, Edinburgh old-age pensioner Charlie Burns, who is 83, and his daughter Gail Burns, praise Sight Scotland for its new national support line. Charlie has been diagnosed with macular degeneration, which is the most common cause of sight loss. Gail got in touch with Sight Scotland to ask what support would be available to both Charlie and herself. She said:

"It would have made a huge difference to have had support at an earlier stage after Dad's diagnosis."

The experience of Charlie and Gail reinforces Sight Scotland's recent findings. It found that 83 per cent of participants said that it was important to provide more support to family members and carers, and 87 per cent said that support with the emotional impact of sight loss was important.

We face huge challenges in preventing sight loss across Scotland. There are currently 178,000 people in Scotland with sight loss, and that number is expected to double over the next 20 years. The pandemic has clearly had a negative impact on eye health, with fewer eye checks being carried out over the past year and a half. In my own region of Edinburgh and the Lothians, patients are experiencing extremely long waits for ophthalmology services. All of that combined presents a number of concerns, which I hope the debate will bring to ministers' attention.

I noticed ahead of the debate that there has been a significant call to ministers by the sector to consider a proper long-term funding settlement. Optometry Scotland has asked for

"a minimum budget increase of 3% annually in real terms on fees."

It also called on the Scottish Government to agree to an annual process for reviewing and negotiating eye-care examination fees. I hope that, in closing

the debate, the minister can touch on how we can ensure that services recover post pandemic and that as many people as possible are able to access eye-health services across Scotland.

On a separate note, at the end of the previous session, Scottish National Party ministers announced that they were withdrawing funding for a replacement for the Princess Alexandra eye pavilion. Throughout the past year, I and other colleagues—I see that Sarah Boyack is in the chamber—have campaigned to ensure a U-turn from ministers on that.

This is an important opportunity to highlight the need in Edinburgh and the Lothians for information on when that hospital replacement—a long-term proposal—will take place. I would appreciate it if ministers could outline a timetable or timescale for that replacement hospital. Have ministers specifically considered the need for maintenance at the old eye pavilion in the capital? It is no longer fit for purpose—there are already significant challenges, such as old lifts that are often out of use.

I put on record, as others have already done, my huge thanks to opticians and healthcare professionals across Scotland, who continued to provide eye-health checks during the pandemic. Most importantly, I fully support the call by Stuart McMillan, Optometry Scotland and RNIB Scotland to encourage people who have not had an examination over the past two years to return to practices to get their eye health checked.

18:38

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, start by thanking Stuart McMillan for his work, and I congratulate him on securing tonight's excellent debate. I agree with the praise that he has rightly given to RNIB Scotland and Optometry Scotland, and I, too, thank Sight Scotland for the fantastic work that it is doing across the country.

I am very keen to support eye health for my constituents in the Lothians, whether at a very local level or in getting access to emergency services. Over the past year, as Miles Briggs has said, the situation has been brought to the forefront, first by the cancellation of the new eye pavilion and then by the very welcome U-turn, with a commitment that we will get that new eye pavilion. As Miles Briggs has said, however, it is five years off, even though a huge amount of work has been done on it by NHS Lothian.

Stuart McMillan's motion rightly highlights how vital it is for people to book their eye check every two years—and it is free. The impact of the pandemic has made many people not do that, and it is understandable that people are nervous about going back to clinical settings. The briefing that we

received from RNIB Scotland outlined just some of the fantastic steps that clinicians are taking to ensure that the service is safe, so that people do not need to be worried and can get their eyes checked.

Emma Harper and Miles Briggs highlighted the work that is being done by optometrists, which was very important during the pandemic and will be crucial going forward. I hope, therefore, that the minister will tell us what her response will be to Optometry Scotland's request not only for a fee increase this year, but for an agreement on reviewing fees so that optometrists can plan ahead.

As Miles Briggs has said, the announcement of the new eye pavilion in Edinburgh really lifted people's spirits. It was a welcome U-turn, although it took a lot of campaigning to get there, and the issue certainly came up at a lot of hustings before the election. I was also struck by the series of *Edinburgh Evening News* articles about people's real-life experiences, highlighting the importance of all our eye services. In that respect, I am talking not just about services at community level and at the eye pavilion, but the clinical expertise and excellence that is needed in those emergency situations when there is only a matter of minutes to save someone's eyes. I know from personal experience the very long hours that those clinical staff work and the 24-hour service that they provide and, indeed, have provided even through the pandemic. They have been fantastic, and we need to thank them.

I hope that progress on the new eye hospital will be rapid. As has been said, NHS Lothian has already done a lot of work on the project. We also need to think about the community services that should sit alongside that kind of emergency treatment to ensure not only that people get their eyes checked but that any diagnosis is followed up. I want to thank the NHS and third sector organisations for the awareness-raising work that they are carrying out to improve eye health outcomes for people across Scotland. Indeed, that is what this debate is all about.

I urge everyone to book an eye health check—and then book another two years from now, because it should not be a one-off. The service is accessible and free, and it is vital to everyone's health and wellbeing, so let us get on with it.

I thank the Presiding Officer for her understanding about the fact that I will not be able to stay for the whole debate, but it has been great to be present and to see everyone's energy and enthusiasm for this service. It is certainly important that we agree on this issue.

18:42

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank Stuart McMillan for lodging a motion on national eye health week. I have the pleasure of being a member of the cross-party group on visual impairment, of which Stuart is the long-standing convener, and after attending the group's annual general meeting earlier this month, I am pleased that it will continue to have a large active membership in this new parliamentary session.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who look after our eye health—our optometrists, our opticians and everyone else who helps us take care of our vision. Key to such care are the eye health checks that are carried out at local optometry practices. Since Labour introduced free checks in 2006, everyone in Scotland has been able to book a two-yearly check-up at no expense, and I strongly encourage everyone to do so. After all, we could have an eye condition without knowing it; indeed, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy affect the eyes before they affect vision. Although the initial changes caused by such conditions are not always noticeable, they can be picked up by an optometrist at an eye health check and can be treated and have their progression slowed before they affect someone's sight.

Eye health checks can also be crucial in picking up conditions before they get worse. I will briefly share my own experience in that respect. Some time ago, I noticed what appeared to be a few floating objects and little flashes of light in my vision, so I popped into my local Specsavers—other brands are, of course, available—to describe my condition and ask for advice. I was seen straight away and was very quickly diagnosed with a torn retina; I was then referred to the hospital that very day to see the on-call ophthalmologist, and the next morning, I received laser treatment to repair the tear. Had I not had such prompt service, the tear could very easily and quickly have led to a detached retina, which could have permanently affected my vision.

As Stuart McMillan pointed out, eye health checks not only pick up such conditions but can detect general health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Indeed, that ability to pick up eye and more general conditions makes such checks one of the most vital forms of preventative medicine.

As with all health services, optometry practices have had to adapt to the pandemic to create a Covid-secure environment and minimise the risk of transmitting infection. They have done so superbly, and constituents can be assured that it is safe to attend their local optometry practice. However, even though the environment has been made safe, I have been worried to hear in the

debate about the significant reduction in the number of people choosing to attend eye health checks over the past 18 months. As a result, fewer eye conditions will have been picked up in their early stages, which means that more people will be diagnosed with more advanced eye conditions. We need to keep highlighting the importance of those routine eye health checks.

If someone is diagnosed with a more advanced condition, it is vital that they do not face that diagnosis without support. Being diagnosed with an eye condition can leave people feeling shocked, saddened and scared about their future. They have worries about whether they will retain employment, be able to pay their bills and continue to take part in the things that they love. That can be deeply overwhelming. It does not have to be like that. We know that, with proper support, people with even the most complex eye conditions can often continue in their jobs, maintain financial stability and be eligible for payments to cover the increased costs of living independently, and they can continue to do the things that they love.

A key group that provides support to help people do that is eye clinic liaison officers. Based in eye clinics, they can discuss the impact that an eye condition is having on a patient's life, listen to any fears or worries that a patient has and answer questions that they might not have had when they were given a diagnosis. They can also advise on services, covering everything from rehabilitation to financial support, and on the benefits of registering as sight impaired or severely sight impaired. Their support can be both emotional and practical, making it easier for people to get used to how they are going to live with sight loss.

In this national eye health week, I want to thank all our ECLOs, ophthalmologists and optometrists who have continued to work through the pandemic to detect, treat and help people with eye conditions—in fact, I thank every one of our health workers who have done so. I also thank all those charities and groups that support people who are living with visual impairments, from RNIB to Sight Scotland, for the extraordinary work that they do. They really have made a difference to so many people's lives.

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

18:46

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): I have listened with great interest to the debate, and I add my thanks to Stuart McMillan for giving us the opportunity to mark national eye health week and

discuss eye health and eye care services in Scotland.

I also thank Goskirk Pettinger Optometrists, whose Dingwall practice I had the pleasure of visiting on Monday, and Sight Scotland, which I visited this morning to help launch its new national support line for visually impaired people and their families. It was also a pleasure to hear my colleague Miles Briggs mention Charlie and his daughter Gail, who I met this morning. Gail spoke so eloquently about the support that Sight Scotland gave them when Charlie first developed visual impairment. She talked about telephoning the helpline and it being like a "warm blanket" wrapped around her. It was wonderful to hear such a glowing report of a service.

I am sure that we can all agree that general ophthalmic services are one of the many NHS success stories in Scotland. I assure members that remuneration for the service and a system for reviewing remuneration are under active consideration. I am absolutely confident that we will reach a mutually agreeable solution on that.

In 2006, the introduction of free universal NHS-funded eye examinations set Scotland apart from the rest of the UK, and the Government is committed to maintaining the policy. That year was the first time everyone in Scotland, regardless of their personal situation, had access to an eye examination free of charge.

A regular eye examination in Scotland provides a full health check of the patient's eyes, as well as a normal sight test. As others have said, that examination helps to detect early signs of sight-threatening conditions, as well as other serious health conditions. Also, unlike in the rest of the UK, patients in Scotland can be seen by an optometrist for free, as often as it is considered clinically necessary, between regular eye examinations. That supports the on-going care of patients, as it allows referrals to the hospital eye service to be refined and patients to be monitored. It also allows emergency eye problems to be seen and treated in the community or appropriately referred, as Colin Smyth outlined.

Optometrists in Scotland are the first port of call for any eye problem, and the majority of general practitioners and other health care professionals signpost patients to their local optometrist. That has helped reduce the burden on GPs and hospital services; before Covid, Scotland had nearly 50 per cent fewer new hospital eye service out-patient appointments than England.

The service is enhanced by the increasing number of optometrists who have undergone further training to become independent prescribers, and are thus able to issue NHS prescriptions for eye problems. More than 350

community optometrists are now fully trained independent prescribers—that is a quarter of the optometrist workforce in Scotland and more than one third of all IP optometrists in the UK. I believe that we should continue to grow that number.

Despite those successes, it is important that we do more to promote eye health and regular eye examinations, and the Scottish Government will continue to work with others to do that in many different ways.

First, we recently launched Eyes.Scot—Scotland's new national website for information about eye health and eye care services. Eyes.Scot is the first website of its kind in the UK and it supports the public and professionals by providing easy access to information about how best to look after our eyes and vision.

Secondly, we will ensure that national initiatives such as the right care right place winter campaign continue to promote the importance of regular eye examinations and that of contacting an optometrist as the first port of call for eye problems.

Thirdly, we will work with the national Scottish Eyecare for Everyone—SEE—group to run targeted awareness-raising campaigns among specific patient groups in which take-up of eye examinations is lower, including people who live in more disadvantaged communities.

The Scottish Government remains committed to ensuring that Scotland's eye care services remain world class, which is why we have set out ambitious but achievable plans in our NHS recovery plan and programme for government to manage more patients in the community and closer to their homes. I want to take this opportunity to set out some of those plans in more detail. First, from April 2023, we will begin to roll out a national low vision service for visually impaired people, which accredited community optometrists and dispensing opticians will provide in the community. That national service will standardise low vision services across Scotland, improve access and reduce waiting times, particularly in areas where the service is currently provided in hospitals. The physical and mental wellbeing of visually impaired people will be improved, which will help them maintain their independence and reduce both isolation and the need for other support services.

Secondly, we will pilot a new community glaucoma service this year. When fully rolled out, approximately 20,000 lower-risk glaucoma patients will be discharged from hospital and accredited IP community optometrists will manage their care in the community. Thirdly, from next summer, we will support IP optometrists to manage more anterior or front eye conditions in

the community, which, again, will help reduce the burden on GPs and hospitals.

As well as those new services, the Scottish Government will continue to provide significant investment in new digital technology such as tele-ophthalmology equipment, and a once for Scotland electronic patient record to support two-way communication between community optometrists and hospital ophthalmologists. The EPR in particular is a game changer, which will ensure regional and national working across Scotland. It will make certain that a patient's optical record is shared across the primary and secondary care interface, which will prevent duplication of effort, provide robust outcome data, ensure that ophthalmologists can provide meaningful feedback to optometrists and support the management of more patients in the community.

On the matter of the replacement Princess Alexandra eye pavilion, which Miles Briggs raised, construction is due to be complete in 2026.

I finish by putting on record the Government's sincere thanks to our eye care professionals and third sector organisations. Their outstanding dedication, commitment and professionalism has ensured that patients have continued to be safely managed and supported through the pandemic and will ensure that we continue to be able to deliver for the people of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 18:53.

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