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Wednesday 17 November 2021

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 17 November 2021

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

Portfolio Question Time

Covid Recovery and Parliamentary Business

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon. I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face masks should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Parliament campus.

The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is Covid-19 recovery and parliamentary business. As ever, if a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or place an R in the chat function during the relevant question. There is quite a bit of interest in this portfolio and the next portfolio. I am keen to get in as many questions from members as possible, so please let us have succinct questions and answers.

Covid-19 (Pandemic Handling) (Independent Public Inquiry)

1. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the anticipated timescale for the publication of the independent public inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00372)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): By the end of this year, the Scottish Government will establish, under the Inquiries Act 2005, an independent Scottish public inquiry to scrutinise decisions that were taken in the course of the pandemic and to learn lessons for the future. That will include a statement to the Scottish Parliament on the appointment of the chair and on the terms of reference for the inquiry, in accordance with the requirements of the 2005 act. The Scottish Government remains committed to working with the United Kingdom Government to develop the approach to the UK-wide inquiry, avoiding—where possible—duplication and overlap.

Emma Roddick: What assurances can the cabinet secretary give that the voices of bereaved families will be fully heard during the inquiry?

John Swinney: I am engaging actively with bereaved families in preparation of the inquiry's remit. The families have had the opportunity to submit responses to the consultation that we undertook on its terms of reference, and I have had a number of meetings with different groups of bereaved families. We will continue that engagement as we progress towards agreement of the remit.

Once the inquiry is established, it will be for the chair of the inquiry to determine the role of particular relevant parties, and it would be wrong for ministers to prescribe that. That approach is set out in the terms of the Inquiries Act 2005, and any chair who is appointed will operate on that basis. My view, and what the Government will set out to the inquiry's chair, is that we want the families who were bereaved during Covid to be central to the issues that are raised in the inquiry.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Paul O'Kane has a brief supplementary question.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): As we have heard, there are thousands of front-line staff, social care users and bereaved families for whom the inquiry will be crucial if they are to get answers on why Scotland was not better prepared. It is important that those who were responsible for that are properly held to account. Will the cabinet secretary confirm the inquiry's relationship with the wider judicial system? Will it be set out in the terms of reference that he mentioned, and will that information include how the inquiry will handle evidence of potential criminality?

John Swinney: That issue will not be set out in the remit of the inquiry. Those are entirely separate functions. The Lord Advocate and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service are independently responsible for determining whether there is any criminal consideration to be borne in mind. The inquiry will have no involvement in, and no proximity to, those discussions and decisions, which are entirely the preserve of the Lord Advocate and the Crown Office.

Covid-19 (Recovery Consultation)

2. Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its work in connection with the consultation paper, "Covid Recovery: A consultation on public services, justice system and other reforms". (S6O-00373)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The consultation closed on 9 November, and I am pleased to report that almost 3,000 responses were submitted by individuals and organisations. Those responses will be considered fully as part of the development of the Covid recovery bill, which

Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise when it is introduced, later in this parliamentary year.

Collette Stevenson: In relation to the increase in online services over the pandemic, how could those modernised and efficient services offer on-going benefits to the public sector, front-line staff and service users while ensuring protection for those without internet access, so that they can still access vital services?

John Swinney: A range of developments have taken place during the pandemic, with an increased emphasis on the delivery of services through digital means. Collette Stevenson's points about the importance of the delivery of efficient services through digital means and of individuals being able to access those digital resources without impediment are valid.

The Government has a commitment to improving connectivity. The work on the R100 contract, the 4G mobile infrastructure, mobile hotspots and the voucher schemes that are available to support people on low incomes to access devices are all part of the Government's response, to ensure that those services are in place and that no obstacles exist to individuals accessing them.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Something that was not of benefit to the public was the temporary release from prisons of 340 criminals, 40 per cent of whom went on to reoffend. Does that sound like the sort of temporary measure that we want to make permanent?

John Swinney: A range of measures in the bill are the subject of consultation. As Mr Greene knows, the Government had to take difficult decisions around the question of early release in order to provide a response to the pandemic.

We will obviously consider those matters that were the subject of consultation, and the Parliament will have the opportunity to decide whether it wants to legislate on them. Full parliamentary scrutiny will be available for members—a process in which, I am sure, Mr Greene will take every opportunity to make his voice heard.

Covid-19 (Vaccination) (Transmission Prevention)

3. Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the reported findings in *The Lancet* that having two doses of a vaccine does not prevent the transmission of Covid-19, and how that might impact its Covid passport scheme. (S6O-00374)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): I recognise the findings of the article that *The Lancet* published, which found that vaccination did not prevent transmission of Covid-19 in those who are infected with the virus.

A number of studies have highlighted the fact that vaccines have some effect in reducing transmission, but more data is required to confirm the magnitude of that effect. It is likely that it varies with different viral variants and hence is lower with the current delta variant.

However, it is clear from the paper that the vaccine reduces the risk of delta variant infection and accelerates clearance of the virus. Furthermore, it is also clear from the evidence to date that a significant vaccine effect exists in relation to reducing the risk of serious harm from Covid. It is therefore critical that those who are unvaccinated come forward and receive both doses and that those who are eligible get their booster.

The study also highlights the importance of mitigation measures such as certification to protecting individuals and managing the spread of the virus.

Sandesh Gulhane: I urge everyone to get their Covid vaccination, as it is our best weapon against the virus.

We all agree that the science will see us through the pandemic. Nevertheless, *The Lancet* showed no scientific evidence that the Scottish Government's Covid passport cut significant transmission of the virus. In the absence of science, we have a policing app, which the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens have mandated. Will the Scottish Government end the compulsory use of that app for policing Scottish businesses?

John Swinney: No, it will not. The First Minister set out to Parliament yesterday the rationale for why that is the case. The Government is interested in navigating a careful course through the dangerous circumstances that we face. We are intent on ensuring that businesses are able to continue to operate—a matter that members of the Conservative Party are forever mentioning.

Dr Gulhane knows as well as I do that the settings in which the vaccination certification scheme is applied are comparatively higher-risk settings than others, hence the justification for the application of the certification scheme. The rationale for our taking that stance is our intention to sustain those venues for as long as possible, because the alternative is to apply greater restrictions, which the Government does not wish to do. We have seen that the vaccination certification scheme has contributed to an

improvement in vaccination levels in the critical age group of 18 to 29-year-olds.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Although two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine will not fully prevent transmission of the virus, I have viewed a range of evidence that full vaccination lowers the risk of passing on the virus and of developing serious complications and/or requiring hospitalisation. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the vaccination certification scheme provides greater reassurance to many members of the public who are considering attending venues or large-scale events that are covered by the scheme?

John Swinney: I agree with that. The vaccination certification scheme is a proportionate measure that will contribute to reducing the risk of transmission and of serious illness and death. In doing so, it will help to alleviate the pressure on the healthcare system and allow higher-risk settings to continue to operate as I have just explained to Dr Gulhane. At the same time, we believe that it will help to increase vaccine uptake.

No single measure on its own will control the virus, so we need a range of targeted measures to keep transmission under control. The vaccines help to prevent transmission of the virus because vaccinated people are less likely than unvaccinated people to become infected and ill, and only infected people can transmit the virus.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Is the cabinet secretary aware of concerns about the Covid passport scheme not being enforced rigorously or consistently at large sporting events such as football and rugby matches? How will the Scottish Government address such concerns, to allow the Covid passport scheme to have its desired impact?

John Swinney: We engage with the football clubs and the rugby authorities in relation to the application of the scheme at large events. From the information that I have seen, all the authorities are reporting very high levels of participation. In the consultation document, we said that we did not envisage 100 per cent certification, but we do place an obligation on the relevant authorities to take the appropriate steps to ensure adequate levels of certification. From the evidence that I have seen so far, I am confident that that obligation is being taken seriously by the football and rugby authorities. However, the point that the member has put on the record is an important one, as it reinforces the necessity of their so doing.

Parliamentary Business (Scrutiny)

4. **Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the Minister for Parliamentary Business has had with

ministerial colleagues regarding steps that can be taken in relation to transparency of its activities to better enable scrutiny during parliamentary business. (S6O-00375)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): The Scottish Government is fully committed to maintaining its strong track record of supporting effective parliamentary scrutiny. The Government will continue to make appropriate use of each of the routes approved by the Presiding Officer for making announcements.

Stephen Kerr: Ministers regularly make important Government announcements via back-door answers to written questions, Parliament seems to organise its timetable to suit ministers' convenience, ministers determine which questions fall within their remit before answering them, and the First Minister reads out scripted answers to scripted questions at First Minister's questions. What is the point?

In the previous session, Parliament accepted the commission on parliamentary reform's recommendation to

"review the operation, capacity and effectiveness of the Parliament"

before the end of this session. Does the minister agree that we must begin that process now?

George Adam: Where to start with that? When we stuck to the parliamentary process over the past few weeks, Mr Kerr said that he had an issue with Government-initiated questions. GIQs are and have been used to ensure that Government activities are brought to the attention of all members of the Scottish Parliament. He might wish to reflect on the fact that GIQs are a means of improving, rather than reducing, the transparency that he seeks.

However, I accept that there is a judgment to be made about whether a GIQ is the appropriate means by which Parliament should be informed about Government activity, or whether a ministerial statement would be more appropriate. I keep that under regular review with my ministerial colleagues. All members know that I am open to representations on these issues, which we discuss regularly at the Parliamentary Bureau.

Covid-19 (Vaccination Passport Scheme)

5. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of the Covid-19 vaccination passport scheme, including on the hospitality sector. (S6O-00376)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): In line with our legal duty, statutory measures are reviewed every three weeks. We consider the

necessity, proportionality and targeted nature of the regulations, taking into account a range of evidence across the four harms. Covid vaccination certification is part of that package of measures, and considering whether the impact on the business sector, including hospitality, and society at large remains proportionate is part of the review.

Ministers always consider whether our measures could be relaxed or ended, but, given the state of the pandemic, we have also been clear that we are considering whether it would be necessary and proportionate to expand certification.

Colin Smyth: It is not clear to me what the cabinet secretary means by an impact that is “proportionate”, but we know that the introduction of vaccination passports has had a negative impact on hospitality. Why is there still no sign of any additional support for the businesses that have been affected by the introduction of vaccination passports and the many more that will be when he extends the scheme? Why is the Government now saying that it plans to consider not just a vaccination passport or a negative test being required for entry into venues, but both? What assessment has been made of the potential impact of such a decision?

John Swinney: No decisions have been taken about extension of the vaccination certification scheme. That will be the subject of discussion at the Cabinet on Tuesday, and Parliament will be advised in the First Minister’s statement on Tuesday afternoon. Any suggestion by Mr Smyth that decisions have been taken is not correct.

Mr Smyth asked whether measures were proportionate. That is the test that ministers must satisfy in relation to any measures that they intend to take—such measures must be proportionate to the scale of the pandemic and the threat to public health. That is a very material issue, on which ministers have been challenged in the courts. In the most recent case, the courts did not support those who challenged the Government’s decision to apply a limited certification scheme to nightclubs and other limited venues, with which Mr Smyth is familiar.

The Government will give consideration to the issue at the Cabinet on Tuesday. Any question of financial support must be considered in the context of the resources that the Government has available to it. Mr Smyth will be familiar with the fact that, over the course of the past 18 months, the Government has provided in excess of £4 billion of support as part of its Covid-related activities to deal with the challenges that businesses and other organisations have faced.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will allow a couple of brief supplementaries. I ask for brief questions and brief responses.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I have been contacted by a number of businesses in the hospitality sector that are extremely concerned that they might be brought within the reach of the vaccination passport scheme, given the announcement that is due on Tuesday. Is the Scottish Government carrying out an economic impact assessment of the impact on such businesses, should the scheme be extended? If so, will that be published in tandem with any announcement being made?

John Swinney: As the First Minister set out yesterday, the Government will produce an evidence paper on some of those questions later this week. The Government must consider a range of factors in assessing the proportionality of the actions that we propose to take, should we decide to take those actions. As I explained to Mr Smyth, that is the legal obligation in relation to which we must satisfy ourselves, and it is one that ministers take very seriously.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Cinemas are only just getting back on track, yet we are told that the Scottish Government is considering expanding the use of Covid identification cards to cinema attendance. Will the Scottish Government explain to stakeholders why that is being considered when no outbreaks have been traced back to cinemas?

John Swinney: Part of the judgment is about ensuring that we have sufficient resilience in the measures that we have in place to protect the population against wider impacts that could be damaging to the public health of the country.

On many occasions, we have gone through the dilemmas that the Government faces. The principal dilemma is about the damage to health, and—[*Interruption.*] We have had countless demands, even from heckling Conservative members, for us to protect public health. When the Government comes forward with measures to protect public health, we are criticised for bringing forward those measures. Such are the dilemmas that we face.

Mr Simpson says that there is no evidence. If Mr Simpson wants to ask me a question, he is perfectly entitled to appeal to the Presiding Officer to be invited to ask a question. I am always here to answer questions. What evidence does Mr Simpson need? How much evidence of the harm to public health does he need for the Government to have to act? If Mr Simpson wants to stick his head in the sand, he is free to do so, but the Government has a duty to act proportionately to protect the health of the population.

Parliamentary Business (Changes)

6. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether regular and last-minute changes to parliamentary business impact on the effective scrutiny that recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic requires. (S6O-00377)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I assure Sarah Boyack that the Parliamentary Bureau makes every effort to provide as much certainty as possible on the timetabling of chamber business. Circumstances can, of course, require that business be changed. In those circumstances, changes are proposed after full consultation with all members of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Sarah Boyack: Does the Scottish Government agree that increasingly short notice of parliamentary business impacts not only on the third sector, businesses and our constituents' ability to express concerns and views on the issues that we discuss in Parliament, but on our capacity, as parliamentarians, to be effective in scrutinising the Government's work? We realise that there are lots of challenges, but short notice impacts fundamentally on our capacity to do the job that we are here to do.

George Adam: I agree with much of what Ms Boyack has said. Normally, we try to ensure that we have as much time as possible to ensure that members have the opportunity to do all that. I will take on board some of the points that you have made, Ms Boyack, and you can mention the issue to your business managers in order that they can bring it up in the Parliamentary Bureau so that we can discuss it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Speak through the chair, please, minister.

Covid-19 (Impact on Front-line Services)

7. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will undertake a cross-government Covid-19 strategic review into the impact of the pandemic on front-line public services. (S6O-00378)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The impact of Covid-19 on Scotland's public services, people and places is well understood, and it has driven the Scottish Government's response to tackling the wide-ranging harms that the pandemic has caused.

We continue to work closely with our partners across local government and service providers to monitor closely the impact of the pandemic on services across Scotland, particularly as we prepare for wider winter pressures. The "Scottish

Government Health and Social Care Winter Overview 2021-2022" outlines a package of over £300 million of investment in national health service and care services this winter to help to address those pressures.

The recently published "Covid Recovery Strategy: For a fairer future", in addition to specific proposals for the NHS, justice and education, was developed in recognition of the huge impact that the pandemic has had on services, workers and the people who use the services.

Alex Rowley: My problem is that that is not what I see on the ground in health and social care. I see a situation that is getting worse by the day, never mind by the week. It is absolutely heartbreaking that health and social care authorities are now writing to older and vulnerable people to tell them that their care packages will be cut in order that they can manage. The number of emails, letters and contacts that my office is dealing with is heartbreaking.

We have had exchanges on the matter quite a few times. Although I accept that Brexit and the ending of free movement are factors, as is low pay—I am sure that the cabinet secretary will accept that—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question, please, Mr Rowley.

Alex Rowley: What is the plan? My problem is that I cannot see a joined-up plan to address those issues across the public sector.

John Swinney: Mr Rowley is correct to say that he and I have had exchanges on the issue. I know the seriousness that he brings to these exchanges.

The challenge that the Government, our local authority partners and service providers are facing up to relates to having adequate capacity to deliver the social care support that is required in the community. That is partly because there are few people around to do that because of the ending of free movement. Mr Rowley acknowledges that that is part of the problem, and I accept that it is part of the problem.

The Government has already taken steps to increase social care workers' pay. I appreciate that Mr Rowley does not believe that that is sufficient, but we have taken steps to do it. We will continue to keep the matter under review, and we are in active dialogue with our local authority partners on what further steps we can take to improve the situation.

Mr Rowley is absolutely correct. If we do not address the fact that some people are currently in hospital who could be at home with an effective social care package, we will have greater congestion in our hospitals and will therefore

weaken our resilience in dealing with winter pressures and Covid, as the months pass. I take seriously the points that Mr Rowley has raised and I assure him of our determination to address them—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, cabinet secretary. Question 8 is from Michael Marra.

Covid-19 (Recovery Plans)

8. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress with implementing its published Covid-19 recovery plans. (S6O-00379)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The Scottish Government is committed to publishing a plan for how we will deliver and report on the actions set out in the Covid recovery strategy before the end of 2021, and for subsequent quarterly reporting of progress, thereafter. The plan will be agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to ensure successful and collaborative delivery to support the people across Scotland who have been most affected by the pandemic.

Michael Marra: Today, at the Education, Children and Young People Committee, three witnesses from organisations that represent young people told me that they were not aware of any significant analysis by the Government that assesses the pandemic's impact on young people's education. Linda O'Neill from the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection informed us that they do not have data that they can use, in which they could look at the before, during and after, and that the data shows where there are gaps, but they have known about them for a long time. How can we begin the process of recovery if the Government has not attempted to understand the baseline of the challenge that is faced?

John Swinney: Obviously, I am not familiar with the evidence that the committee took this morning, but from my experience as education secretary, I am familiar with the volume of data that was available prior to the pandemic. I should point out that a lot of it was resisted by the Labour Party when it was first put in place; the Labour Party was completely hostile to the level of reporting on such measures that I put in place. That was before the pandemic.

We have taken a proportionate response in the education system to ensure that teachers are not being asked to provide information on the capacity of pupils when they have not had adequate

opportunity to engage with pupils because of the disruption to learning.

One thing of which I am absolutely 100 per cent certain is that every teacher in the country is focused on ensuring that the learning needs of children are being met. That is something that the Parliament should applaud.

Net Zero, Energy and Transport

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next portfolio is net zero, energy and transport. Again, if a member wishes to ask a supplementary, they should press their request-to-speak button or put an R in the chat function. We have a lot of interest in this portfolio, so again I ask for succinct questions and answers, please, ministers.

Covid-19 (Bus Travel)

1. Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to encourage the public to travel by bus, in light of reports that the recent Transport Scotland Covid-19 transport trends indicate that concessionary bus travel is down by 35 per cent on pre-pandemic levels. (S6O-00380)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Covid-19 had an unprecedented impact on passenger numbers and revenue across the public transport system. To date, more than £210 million has been made available to the end of March 2022 to enable bus operators to maintain services during the pandemic. We are working closely with bus operators to support the safe and confident return to public transport, which is vital to ensure that there is a viable and sustainable public transport system for the future.

Foysoil Choudhury: Pre-pandemic Scottish Government analysis showed that Scottish bus passenger numbers were falling by an average of 10 per cent per year, yet on Lothian Buses services, passenger numbers had remained constant. Given the success of that mutual ownership model, is the Scottish Government prepared to give local authorities the resources that are provided for in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, so that the rest of Scotland can enjoy the level of service that is offered by Lothian Buses? Will the Scottish Government take this opportunity to support Scottish Labour's call for free transport for the under-25s?

Graeme Dey: The member makes a good point about Lothian Buses bucking the trend, which is one of the reasons why the powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 are a full range of powers, and they will be supported by a community bus fund in order to extend their implementation.

On the point that the member makes about free bus travel, as he is well aware, from January, we will be extending it to under-22s. As part of the fair fares review, we will look at further opportunities in that regard.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Free bus travel for young people from January will be really transformative for them and a shot in the arm for struggling bus services across Scotland. How prepared are the communication plans for the scheme? How will schools and colleges be involved? Will we see the minister or some other influencers appearing on TikTok, Instagram or YouTube to get the message out to young people well ahead of the start date?

Graeme Dey: The idea of my being an influencer on TikTok fills me with utter dread. *[Laughter.]*

Let me answer the point more seriously. As Mark Ruskell knows, a targeted marketing campaign commenced on 25 October, to advertise the new scheme. Further work is being done on a full marketing campaign to make young people aware of it. One of the partners in the project is Young Scot, which is assisting us in that regard. A great deal of work is going into ensuring that young people have the opportunity to access the scheme.

Ferry Building (Update)

2. Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the two CalMac ferries being built by Ferguson Marine. (S6O-00381)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): The turnaround director of Ferguson Marine updated the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee on the delivery timetable and budget for vessels 801 and 802 on 30 September. The cost to complete the vessels remains the same as was reported in the turnaround director's December 2019 report. The delivery of 801 is planned for between July 2022 and September 2022 and the delivery of 802 is planned for between April 2023 and July 2023.

Russell Findlay: Hull 802 was ordered in 2016 and was originally due to be in service in 2018. There is a lot of speculation that it will never see service. Can the minister give an undertaking that it will indeed become serviceable on a CalMac route?

Graeme Dey: As the Minister for Transport with responsibility for ferries, I can say to the member that we are planning for the introduction of 802 into the service.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): We are all acutely aware that the standing position of

the Tories since the 1980s has been to close shipyards. The illusory "frigate factory" on the Clyde is a more recent example in a long list of Conservative betrayals of Scottish shipbuilding.

Ferguson Marine employs more than 400 people. Does the minister share my view that, were it not for the Scottish National Party, that shipyard would be closed and those 400 employees would probably have had to seek work outside the shipbuilding industry?

Graeme Dey: That is, absolutely, a fact. Nevertheless, we must all now focus on working with the yard to ensure that it has a sustainable long-term future.

Public Transport Use

3. Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to encourage people to use public transport rather than cars. (S6O-00382)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): We have a comprehensive suite of measures to promote sustainable journeys instead of private car journeys, in line with our national transport strategy. Our target to reduce the distance travelled by car by 20 per cent by 2030 is world leading and is backed by landmark investment in active travel and bus priority infrastructure. There is also the forthcoming under-22s free travel scheme, which I mentioned earlier.

The second strategic transport projects review will help to prioritise investment towards interventions that are aimed at reducing further the need to travel unsustainably.

Katy Clark: Does the minister think that ScotRail's proposal to cut 300 train services a day is consistent with our meeting our net zero targets?

Graeme Dey: As we have discussed in the Parliament before, the proposals for next May represent a 100-service gain from the current, pandemic situation. Of course, in the long term, we want an increase in services, with the return of services that existed pre-pandemic and additional services. However, there is no getting away from the fact that, here and now, we face considerable financial pressures and we cannot be running trains that are not occupied.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): The Government has pledged to revisit the development of a rail connection between Aberdeen city and Ellon, with a possible extension to Peterhead and Fraserburgh. Even if we are successful in realising the project, it will not happen overnight. Given that many people in my constituency have no option but to use their cars, what is the Scottish Government doing to enable

people in rural Scotland and Aberdeenshire East to rely less heavily on petrol and diesel cars in our everyday lives?

Graeme Dey: A great deal of support is going into the north-east in that regard, and members would take it badly if I were to stand here and list it all. I will say to the member that we work closely with Nestrans—the North East of Scotland Transport Partnership—on all this. Nestrans has a mass transit proposal for Aberdeen and the wider area, which—if memory serves—contains proposals to improve bus connectivity to Ellon, for example, in the member's constituency.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): If we want more people to use public transport, public transport has to be reliable. The recent incidence of industrial action means that that has not been the case. The Scottish National Party's approach was to stand back and let the employer and the unions fight it out, even after I showed the minister that, contractually, the Government should have been front and centre. Does the minister now accept that, to encourage more people on to public transport, the SNP has to take a greater and more proactive role in industrial action?

Graeme Dey: Where it is appropriate to do so, the Scottish Government will work with employers, whoever they are, to bring about resolution of industrial action in order to ensure that we do not have disruption to transport services, whatever form they take.

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): The introduction of free bus travel for under-22s from the end of January 2022 will see approximately 1 million young people travelling free of charge. That is in addition to the third of Scotland's population who already benefit from the older and disabled persons free bus scheme. Does the minister therefore agree that the SNP Government has already taken significant steps to encourage the use of public transport?

Graeme Dey: Yes, and we should give credit to our Green colleagues for the part that they played in the under-22s scheme. Of course, as I noted earlier, we have the fair fares review going on at the moment to try to ensure that we best capture opportunities to support our citizens to enjoy easy access to public transport.

Net Zero (Housing)

4. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what role passivhaus homes and off-site manufacturing have in the Glasgow Shettleston constituency in supporting its aim to achieve net zero by 2045. (S6O-00383)

The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick

Harvie): We continue to take action to increase the energy efficiency of new homes and to modernise construction to put Scotland's homes on the pathway to net zero by 2045.

We are currently consulting on improvements to the high energy standards in Scottish building regulations for introduction next year. Those improvements will be strongly focused on reducing overall energy demand in new homes, and we are also developing a strategy to build more high quality and energy-efficient affordable homes in communities across the country, through greater use of off-site construction.

John Mason: Will the minister join me in congratulating West of Scotland Housing Association, CCG and hub West Scotland on the passivhaus development at Parkhead, which I believe is the largest in Glasgow so far and will mean high standards of insulation and ventilation and keep heating costs to a minimum?

Patrick Harvie: Yes, I am delighted to congratulate West of Scotland Housing Association, CCG and hub West Scotland on the delivery of the new development at Springfield Cross in Glasgow, and I welcome many other positive developments.

The development will deliver 36 new homes with the support of grant funding through the affordable housing supply programme. The homes are being built to achieve high energy efficiency standards, which will result in low fuel bills for tenants when they move into the completed homes next year.

Ferry Services

5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to improve ferry services to island communities. (S6O-00384)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Our £580 million investment in ports and vessels that was announced in February will support and improve Scotland's ferry services over the next five years. As part of our wider infrastructure investment plan, we continue to work constructively with partners and key stakeholders to progress a sustainable and efficient fleet replacement programme. I note the recent purchase of the MV Utne, which I am pleased to tell the chamber has arrived in Scotland and will shortly begin her fit-out. Of course, we continue to look at opportunities to bring other second-hand tonnage into the fleet to improve reliability and availability.

Engagement with stakeholders to develop detailed deployment, cascade and related timetables for the 2022 summer season continues.

Rhoda Grant: The minister will be aware of a number of cancellations due to crew testing positive with Covid-19, which obviously occur at short notice. What steps is the Scottish Government considering to minimise the risk of ferry cancellations in the event of positive Covid cases among crews over the winter months, when infections are high and are likely to rise and when ferries already face disruption due to weather?

Graeme Dey: The member makes a fair point. I am pleased to say that I had discussions just yesterday with Caledonian MacBrayne management on that matter. She will appreciate that the primary consideration when something like that happens is, of course, the health and wellbeing of the crews and the need to take essential measures. However, we are actively looking at whether we can assist CalMac with speeding up the testing procedure and also with aspects such as deep cleaning to minimise disruption to vessels.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not at all surprised that there is considerable interest in the issue of ferries. A number of members want to ask supplementary questions. I hope to get through as many of them as possible, so I ask for brief questions and answers.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The Lochranza to Claonaig ferry route is vital to the Isle of Arran, not least when the ferry from Brodick to Ardrossan cannot sail, but in the winter it is replaced by a once-a-day service to and from Tarbert. What steps will the minister take to extend and enhance that vital service?

Graeme Dey: I am aware of the request from Arran stakeholder groups to extend the winter timetable between Lochranza and Claonaig. However, as Mr Gibson is aware, that request has been considered several times by CalMac Ferries and Transport Scotland. I assure him that it was considered in great detail, but it is simply not possible to operate a reliable service in the winter due to the nature of the slipway at Claonaig.

CalMac has also looked closely at the request to provide more sailings from Tarbert to Lochranza but, again, as Mr Gibson will know, any such deliberations need to factor in the benefits set against the disbenefits for affected populations. In this case, more sailings from Tarbert to Lochranza would mean reducing the Tarbert to Portavadie timetable, which would be problematic for regular users of that service, who include children and young people who use it to get to and from school.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): We learned today that full lifeline ferry services to Harris and Uist will not be reinstated next summer. The Isle of Harris transport forum says that that could cost the island £3 million a year in lost

business and that it wants a meeting with the minister. Will he commit to meeting it and reinstating the full ferry service?

Graeme Dey: I met the Isle of Harris transport forum a few months ago and I understand entirely the concerns that it has on the subject. My officials are currently engaging with CalMac to see whether it is possible to arrive at a compromise on the issue. The costs that are involved in providing a full service, in terms of using the mezzanine deck and having full weekly services, are prohibitive. However, we are keen to see whether we can find a compromise, and my officials will engage directly on that.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): As the minister indicated, CalMac is consulting on two options for the Uig triangle timetable that have no additional cost implications but would result in less capacity than in previous years. Given how busy the route is in the summer months, can any consideration be given to alternative options that would see an increase rather than a decrease in capacity?

Graeme Dey: That is happening at the moment. Mr Allan wrote to me earlier this week and one of the suggestions that he made is being considered as a possibility.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Will the Scottish Government commit to expanding the free bus travel scheme to internal ferries for under-22s in island communities, because they rely on ferries in the same way that their mainland counterparts rely on buses?

Graeme Dey: As the member knows, responsibility for interisland ferries lies with local authorities. However, all fares for ferries and others form part of the forthcoming fair fares review.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The purchase of the MV Utne in October is the latest instalment in a series of investments that the Scottish National Party has made in our ferry services, vessels and infrastructure since 2007. Despite the vessel reportedly being earmarked for the Oban to Craignure run, will the minister detail how other island communities will benefit from that addition to the CalMac fleet?

Graeme Dey: I am delighted to say that the Utne arrived in Scotland this week, and I look forward to seeing her enter service. She is earmarked for the Oban to Craignure route, which will enable a year-round commutable service from Mull alongside the larger vessel that serves Oban to Craignure customers. The potential additional benefits for the introduction include the return of the MV Coruisk to the Mallaig to Armadale route, improving the service frequency and freeing the MV Lord of the Isles to operate solely on the

Mallaig to Lochboisdale route. With the addition of the Utne, fleet resilience during dry-dock periods will also be improved.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 6 was not lodged.

26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (Sustainable Development Opportunities)

7. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it sees as the sustainable development opportunities emerging from the decisions and outcomes of COP26. (S6O-00386)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): In advance of COP26, the Scottish Government recognised our moral responsibility to respond to the urgent need for global action on loss and damage. That is why the First Minister announced a £1 million partnership with the Climate Justice Resilience Fund to help some of the world's most vulnerable communities prepare for and adapt to climate change, tackle structural inequalities and recover from climate-induced loss and damage. Responding to calls that activists and young people from those communities made throughout COP26, the Scottish Government will treble, rather than double, our climate justice fund, including £1 million to specifically address loss and damage.

Bill Kidd: I would be grateful if the cabinet secretary could outline the plans that the Scottish Government has to promote sustainable and ethical pension options for public sector workers, and say whether it considers pension investment to be an important avenue through which we can boost business in sustainable and ethical models, whether those are operating in Scotland or further afield.

Michael Matheson: Of the five Scottish public pension schemes, four are unfunded and therefore do not make direct investments; only the local government pension scheme is funded. It is clear that environmental, social and corporate governance issues can affect the performance of investment portfolios. We are aware that some Scottish local government pension funds have already signed up to the principles of responsible investment and exercised a preference in new investments with positive ESG—environmental, social and governance—characteristics, which they have set out in their financial criteria.

I can also inform the member that Scottish ministers intend to liaise with the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board with a view to launching a consultation on climate risk reporting and on ESG standards for local authority pension funds, in line with the recommendations of

the task force on climate-related financial disclosure for companies to describe the impact of climate-related risks and opportunities on organisational business, strategy and financial planning. I assure the member that we intend to progress that work in a timely fashion.

Oil and Gas Businesses (Engagement)

8. Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is engaging with oil and gas businesses in the north-east, as Scotland transitions to a net zero economy. (S6O-00387)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The Scottish Government engages with companies that are operating in the oil and gas sector across the north-east, recognising that the knowledge and experience of the sector and supply chains will be important for developing and investing in new and emerging technologies. Ministers engage regularly with a range of stakeholders, including the Scottish Council for Development and Industry and the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. Most recently, on 19 August, I chaired the oil and gas and energy transition strategic leadership group, which was also attended by the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work. The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise is scheduled to meet the chamber of commerce next month.

Audrey Nicoll: My constituency of Aberdeen South and North Kincardine is home to a range of businesses, many of which are family run, that have been part of the oil and gas sector supply chain for many decades. Many have a skilled workforce, established suppliers and a knowledge of the energy sector. What support will the Scottish Government provide to ensure that opportunities in the renewables sector will be available to such businesses in order to protect jobs and support the local north-east economy?

Michael Matheson: We already provide significant support for the north-east economy. I recognise that there are specific sectoral challenges facing the region, but there are also significant opportunities. We have committed some £500 million to a new just transition fund for the north-east and Moray over the next 10 years, and we are calling on the United Kingdom Government to match that investment. The Scottish Government's £75 million energy transition fund will also support our energy sector and the north-east over the next five years. Those funds will help to protect existing jobs and create new jobs by opening up opportunities through energy transition, harnessing private sector funding and supporting our thriving sector.

In addition, I can tell the member that those who are bidding to take part in the leasing round for our ScotWind programme, which I believe is one of the largest offshore-wind leasing programmes in the world, are required to submit a supply chain development statement that sets out how they will use the domestic supply chain to support any developments that they may be awarded. The purpose behind that is specifically to help to secure greater investment in our domestic supply chain and to support the very businesses in the member's constituency to which she referred as we transition from an oil and gas sector to one that is much more dominated by renewable energy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. I thank members and both ministerial teams for their co-operation in allowing us to get through as many questions as we did.

Circular Economy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Lorna Slater on "Towards a circular economy". The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:51

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): One of the fundamental changes that we need to make to our society and economy to tackle the climate emergency is the transition to a circular economy. That means that, instead of having an economy in which we take, make and dispose, we design to last and we reuse and repair while wasting as little as possible.

Finding better ways to deal with the waste that our economy is currently creating and to reduce the total amount of waste is key to building a circular economy. I am working on creating a comprehensive vision for how we reduce and manage waste in Scotland, and I will give you an update on our progress towards that vision so far.

The Government's flagship scheme for reducing litter and waste and for increasing recycling is the United Kingdom's first deposit return scheme. In 2020, Parliament passed legislation to establish the deposit return scheme, with the intention of having the scheme operational in 2022. Unfortunately—as, I know, members are all keenly aware—2020 was an unprecedented year. The global pandemic and Brexit had a major impact on businesses, particularly retailers and those involved in their supply chains, and challenges persist today. Unfortunately, the very businesses that will be most instrumental in making the DRS operate—including hospitality businesses, small convenience stores and small brewers—were and still are badly affected by the pandemic and the mismanagement of Brexit.

There have also been unresolved issues such as a lack of clarity from the UK Government on the VAT treatment of deposits. Such issues add unnecessary cost, time delay and risk to the project. I have written to the UK Government twice and have offered to meet it to discuss the matter further, as did the former Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. Industry, too, has written.

However, I heard only yesterday from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that they do not see a route to removing VAT from deposits. That is deeply disappointing. The financial secretary has offered to work with my officials and industry on potential VAT adjustments. I

understand that that falls well short of what is needed, but I have tasked my officials to work on the issue urgently in order to understand the implications and agree a way forward. *[Interruption.]*

The Government is committed to the scheme being operational as soon as is practically possible. Roll-out of the DRS is being spearheaded by Circularity Scotland Ltd, which is a non-profit company that was set up last February by private sector producers, retailers and wholesalers and which was approved as the scheme's administrator by the Scottish ministers in March. Officials and I are working hard with Circularity Scotland and the industry to agree a final timescale and clear milestones for delivery, and I will announce that schedule to Parliament in due course. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, minister.

Could we have no interruptions, please? I made that clear at the outset, and it is normal courtesy when any statement is given.

Lorna Slater: Thank you.

Reducing waste through the implementation of the DRS is just one part of the vision for waste management in Scotland. Another piece is modernisation of our infrastructure to boost Scotland's recycling performance by supporting local authorities. That is why I am delighted to announce today that we are making our first investments through our £70 million recycling improvement fund. I can confirm that more than £7.1 million has been awarded to local authorities to enable them to increase the quantity and quality of recycling. That marks the beginning of one of the biggest investments in recycling in Scotland in a generation.

Seven local authorities have successfully bid for support from the first round of the fund: Fife Council, Midlothian Council, North Ayrshire Council, Highland Council, East Lothian Council, Aberdeenshire Council and South Ayrshire Council. A range of improvements will include more frequent recycling collections, the extension of food and garden waste collections, and local service redesigns to align with Scotland's household recycling charter.

The funding will also unlock bold innovation in our recycling provision. For example, the investment that has been made today will allow Fife Council to become the first local authority in Scotland to locally sort and separate the plastic films that it collects for recycling, enhancing Scotland's ability to deal with that problematic material.

The investment will also include funding for improved reuse services. In North Ayrshire, reuse services at household waste recycling centres will be extended and will include a new initiative to reuse bed mattresses in an innovative partnership with the third sector.

The landmark investment that I am announcing has the potential to reduce CO₂ emissions by 17,200 tonnes each year—the equivalent of taking 9,100 cars off the road—and that is just the start of the fund's impact. I hope to provide further updates on investment in Scotland's recycling infrastructure soon.

In addition to reducing waste and providing better recycling, we need to correctly manage the waste that is produced even as the total amount of it declines in line with our ambitious waste reduction targets.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to ending the practice of landfilling biodegradable municipal waste by 2025. That is an important step in tackling our contribution to climate change. Landfilling biodegradable municipal waste produces methane, a particularly potent greenhouse gas that received well-deserved attention at the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26. I am pleased to say that the amount of waste that is going to landfill in Scotland is at its lowest level since records began, and we are on track to exceed the 2020 European Union target on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste.

However, we need to maintain progress beyond 2025, too, and make sure that how we treat residual waste aligns with our emissions reduction targets. Our programme for government set out a commitment to review the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy in Scotland. In September, I set out our intentions, including that the review would be led by an independent chair, and I am pleased to announce that we have appointed Dr Colin Church to that role. Dr Church brings a wealth of experience from across the waste and environmental sectors.

I am particularly conscious of the fact that how we treat our residual waste can have wider, unwanted impacts on communities and the environment in both the short and the long terms. That is why the review will include scope to consider the societal impacts of residual waste treatment, including health and community impacts, as well as how emissions from existing incinerators can be reduced.

Of course, Dr Church will determine the detailed scope and timings of the review. However, my previous update set out our intention for the scope to include an assessment of the required incineration capacity, to ensure, as some

members have rightly pointed out, that we are not building unnecessary infrastructure that is not in keeping with our ambitious waste reduction targets.

To alleviate concerns about a rush of planning applications for incinerators before the review has completed its work, we have today issued a temporary notification direction. It asks that planning authorities notify the Scottish ministers of new planning applications and of when they are minded to grant planning permission for incineration. The notification direction will be in place only for the duration of the review and should not in any way disrupt local authority preparations for the forthcoming ban, in 2025, on sending biodegradable municipal waste to landfill.

We are already taking action to reduce waste and to reach our targets. Last week, the Scottish Government laid before the Scottish Parliament legislation that bans some of the most problematic single-use plastics. Every year, hundreds of millions of pieces of single-use plastic are wasted in Scotland. They litter our coasts, pollute our oceans and contribute to the climate emergency. That has to end, and the ban will be another step forward in the fight against plastic waste and our throwaway culture. That is another example of the bold action that is needed if we are to deliver on the commitments that were made at COP26.

We recognise that the ban is at risk from the UK Internal Market Act 2020, which effectively exempts any items that are produced in or imported via another part of the UK. However, we continue to work with the other Administrations across the UK to find a way to ensure that the ban in Scotland is not undermined.

We continue to work with the rest of the UK to progress the extended producer responsibility scheme for packaging, ensuring that it fully meets the polluter-pays principle and that local authorities benefit from additional funds as a consequence. We are also currently reviewing Scotland's progress in delivering on our 33 per cent food waste reduction target.

Those are all building blocks towards a comprehensive vision for waste reduction and management in Scotland, to which we will bring more detail in our route map, in order to meet our 2025 waste and recycling targets, as well as looking ahead to 2030 and beyond.

A circular economy is about much more than waste management; it is also about sharing and repairing, so I am delighted that we are providing support for the new national network of community sharing libraries and repair cafes. New business models that are based around repairing, remanufacture and recycling will bring opportunities.

As I stated, I will return shortly to inform Parliament of the final timeline for the deposit return scheme. I am also looking forward to progressing a transformational circular economy bill as an urgent priority in this parliamentary session. Building a circular economy is key to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and I look forward to working with all members to achieve that.

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

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement.

We have just seen the Green minister again break her promise to ban new incinerators. Unless she can somehow burn and recycle the same waste, how does she expect recycling to improve?

The minister has just suggested that the deposit return scheme might not launch as planned. If there is going to be a delay, I hope that ministers at least use the time wisely to improve the scheme. They can do that by ensuring a future-proof open standard system that is compatible with that in the rest of the UK. A digital app to allow home collections is essential to prevent disabled and vulnerable groups from effectively being excluded.

Finally, there is an issue of transparency. The deposit return scheme is shrouded in secrecy, with a multimillion-pound tender process that has been hidden from the public and the Parliament. Freedom of information requests will not work, because the Scottish National Party used a private company to oversee it. We do not need to see the commercial responses, but will the minister release the brief and the specification that have been provided to bidders?

Lorna Slater: I thank Maurice Golden for the question and I will try to cover all the points. With regard to incineration, Aberdeenshire Council, which is Tory and Labour, is pushing for a new incinerator; Maurice Golden's position on that is unclear.

The notification direction that we have issued today is the same tool that was used to effect a temporary moratorium on unconventional oil and gas extraction. I stress that the notification direction is temporary and does not in any way pre-empt the outcome of the review of incineration.

I am delighted that Maurice Golden is keen for the deposit return scheme to be introduced, especially given that, during the debate when Parliament passed the legislation in 2020, the Tories pushed for a delay to the scheme, and then for a further delay.

The next point was on home collections. Annie Wells said:

“Scottish Conservatives support the delay of implementation ... in light of the Covid-19 outbreak, but we do not think that that goes far enough.”—[*Official Report*, 13 May 2020; c 93.]

I am delighted that the Conservatives have changed their position and now support the quickest possible implementation of the deposit return scheme.

With regard to home collections, online collections are absolutely part of the legislation for the scheme. As yet, the UK Government has not defined its deposit return scheme, so there is nothing for us to align with. As with so many other things, the Scottish Government is leading the way with the scheme.

Maurice Golden: I do not care about the UK; we are in Scotland. The minister has not answered my question.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Golden. The question was asked, and the minister has responded.

Before I call the next member, I remind all members who wish to pose a question—I am not looking at anyone in particular—to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement. We recognise that Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs position on VAT is challenging, but VAT deposits have not been a barrier to implementation of deposit return schemes in other European countries.

The minister says that the Scottish Government “is committed to the scheme being operational as soon as practically possibly.”

Can she confirm that there will be no delay to the July 2022 implementation date?

We know how concerned the minister was about industry lobbying causing delays to the scheme, so can she confirm what discussions she has had with large-scale producers to ensure that they, and not local authorities, will foot the bill for any delay?

We acknowledge that the minister has committed to come back to the chamber to outline the final timeline, but can she confirm today when she will return to the chamber?

Lorna Slater: I thank the member for her questions. Again, I will try to address them all.

The member asked about the date for the deposit return scheme. The scheme is comprehensive and involves tens of thousands of collection points around the country, big retailers, small brewers and our hospitality sector. I am engaging with all those stakeholders to figure out the shortest possible period of time in which to implement the scheme, given the challenges around Brexit and the pandemic, which is still raging. There is constant industry engagement.

I re-emphasise that Circularity Scotland is a non-profit company that has been set up by private sector producers, retailers and wholesalers. The scheme will be implemented by industry for industry. Therefore, industry engagement is at the core of the scheme, the implementation of which will be based on the producer pays principle.

The member’s final question was about when the announcement will be made. A firm date for industry as to when the scheme will go live is absolutely critical, and I will return to the chamber as soon as possible to make that announcement.

I am currently engaging with industry to ensure that the scheme is on the quickest possible timeline and that we have concrete visible milestones to allow us all to see active progress on the project.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): The actions that are set out in today’s statement will help us to reach our world-leading targets for zero emissions by 2045. Dr Church’s review of the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy in Scotland is particularly welcome. What impact will that have on planning applications for new incinerators, such as the Overwood farm proposal in South Lanarkshire?

Lorna Slater: I absolutely agree that moving towards a circular economy, using less, reusing and recycling are critical to meeting our climate aspirations.

With regard to incinerators, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of any individual planning proposals. The notification direction requires planning authorities to make ministers aware of new planning applications that involve incineration facilities, and they must notify ministers if they are minded to grant planning permission for incineration facilities. That will ensure that both the review and Scottish ministers are fully aware of any on-going and new planning applications that are submitted during the review process. It will also give ministers the opportunity to decide case by case whether national interests are at stake that would merit ministers calling in an

application for their own determination, or to allow the local authority to issue a decision at local level.

The notification direction is the same tool that was used to give effect to a temporary moratorium on unconventional oil and gas extraction. I stress that the notification direction is temporary and does not in any way pre-empt the outcome of the review of incineration.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The minister has blamed her Government's latest failure on deposit return on everything except her Government. However, she says that she and her officials have been working hard. What are the projected start-up costs of the scheme, and how will it be funded?

Lorna Slater: The scheme is being run by an independent administrator, which is a private company. It is responsible for pulling in the funding and for planning. It is external to Government; it is a separate body.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Has the minister finished responding to the question?

Lorna Slater: Yes, thank you.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): My constituency is an important renewable energy source. However, due to the dispersed nature of communities on islands and remote mainland areas, many of the proposals to achieve a circular economy can be more expensive to implement. Will the minister advise what the Scottish Government is doing to support communities such as those in Argyll and Bute?

Lorna Slater: I understand the different challenges that communities across Scotland face in building a circular economy, including island communities such as those in Argyll and Bute. We are working with local authorities to identify and address specific challenges that authorities with island or rural communities face in delivering the forthcoming ban on biodegradable municipal waste, and we are providing support through Zero Waste Scotland to enable authorities to secure alternative solutions for their residual waste.

Zero Waste Scotland has made funding available through the islands green recovery programme refill fund to empower existing small and medium-sized enterprises in island communities to take steps in the war on waste by ditching single-use packaging and moving to reusable options.

The recycling improvement fund has been developed in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers to support all local authorities in improving recycling infrastructure.

I urge all local authorities to engage with Zero Waste Scotland and to bring forward applications to the fund, to help deliver a step change to modernise our infrastructure and boost Scotland's recycling performance.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): According to Greenpeace, the increase in littering as a result of the deposit return scheme not being implemented runs at a rate of 21 million discarded bottles and cans a month. Does the minister agree that that externalising of cost to the public sector and the local authorities that have to collect the waste is not sustainable? If the scheme's implementation continues to be delayed, will the minister be on our side and push for local authorities to get the extra money that is needed to cope with the continued expense of picking up litter?

Lorna Slater: As with the Scottish Conservatives, I am delighted that Labour has changed its mind about the issue. At the time of the debate on the deposit return scheme in 2020, the Labour spokesman said that they felt that this was not the time for a deposit return scheme and asked for a delay to its implementation. *[Interruption.]* I am delighted that Labour is on board with having the scheme implemented as soon as possible, and that is what I am working towards every day. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me. Could we listen to the minister, please? Thank you.

Lorna Slater: We are engaging with stakeholders, including landowners and local government, on a new national litter and fly-tipping strategy, which will be launched early next year. We will consult the public on actions around littering before the end of the year.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Circularity Scotland has produced estimates of the key requirements that will largely determine the overall costs of the proposed deposit return scheme. Its estimates are broadly double the Scottish Government estimates, which, at the time when the Parliament approved the scheme, totalled £2,410 million over 25 years.

What are the total costs now? Have they doubled to around £5,000 million? Will the minister publish or arrange to publish the Circularity Scotland estimates? In the light of that and other extremely significant challenges, will she instruct an independent review of the proposed scheme, including reappraisal of all other options so that the objectives that we all share can be achieved in the most effective and manageable, but affordable, fashion?

Lorna Slater: My priority is to implement the deposit return scheme as quickly as is practically possible. The cost of the scheme is borne by

industry. It is organised by Circularity Scotland, which, I reiterate, is a private company. As such, it is for it to decide what information to publish. The full business case—

Mercedes Villalba: Who is paying?

Lorna Slater: Industry is paying. This is an industry scheme funded by industry; it is not a publicly funded scheme. The full business case addendum that was published last March sets out the strong economic case for the DRS.

There are successful deposit return schemes throughout the world. I have interacted with the one in Sweden, where deposit return machines provide a community hub. People go to shops to return their bottles and cans every day and, in doing so, they support and increase footfall to local businesses. Successful schemes are run all over the world and they deliver significant environmental and economic benefits to the public. We are confident that Scotland's DRS will do the same.

We are aware that some in industry have been exploring alternative values for some of the assumptions that are set out in the full business case. We have not had an opportunity to assess the evidence for those alternative assumptions in detail, but I understand that industry is suggesting that the number of containers may be higher than was anticipated. It is wonderful news for reducing litter and waste in Scotland that the scheme may be able to collect more containers than was previously thought. The more containers that are captured by the DRS that might otherwise have been littered or gone to landfill, the greater the environmental and economic benefits will be, because the DRS will ensure that those containers go for recycling.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): This is the second delay to the scheme, and now we do not even have a date for its introduction. Meanwhile, small businesses, particularly in rural and island areas, lack the information and clarity that they need in order to be able to prepare. Given the international precedents for rolling out deposit return schemes, why is the Scottish Government making such a mess of introducing a DRS in Scotland?

Lorna Slater: In 2020, Willie Rennie, who was leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats at the time, said that it was beyond him why we were rushing the scheme through. I am delighted, therefore, that the party has changed its mind and is now in favour of the scheme being delivered as quickly as possible.

I am absolutely aware of the criticality to industry of a firm delivery date, and I will return to the chamber to give a firm delivery date as quickly

as possible, because I agree with what the member says.

Small businesses have been writing to me asking for delay to the scheme due to problems with Brexit and the Covid pandemic. Those are exactly the businesses that have been most badly affected, and I am listening to them. I am also engaging with big retailers—I have spoken this week to some of the biggest retailers in Scotland—as well as bottle producers and non-governmental organisations in order to find a route map for the scheme that will be as quick as is practically possible and will take into account the concerns of those businesses, which the member mentioned.

There are schemes in other countries around the world, many of which are less ambitious than the scheme that Scotland is proposing. For example, some of them do not involve small businesses. In Scotland, we want to support small businesses, because we believe that the scheme will increase footfall and improve the outlook for them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I want to make two points. First, could we have less chuntering from a sedentary position? When the minister is asked a question, we need to hear how she responds. Secondly, if we have more succinct answers, I will be able to bring in members who are seeking to pose a question.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It is great to see momentum building behind the circular economy. Although I share some of the frustrations about the delay to the DRS, I welcome the minister's commitment to deliver the most ambitious scheme on a timescale that will set the model for the rest of the UK to follow, instead of Scotland following a weak UK scheme that has been watered down by vested interests.

The VAT treatment of deposits is of considerable concern to industry, and the latest decision from the Treasury will no doubt be ringing alarm bells. Will the minister explain the latest position? How have she and the Scottish Government been consulted by the UK Government on the issue?

Lorna Slater: I must confess that our interaction with the UK Government on the VAT issue has been very frustrating. I have written two letters to the UK Government and have asked for a meeting on the issue, but it has been very slow in coming back to me. It came back to me yesterday saying that it would not implement industry's requested action, which was aimed at ensuring that VAT returns on deposits in the scheme would be handled in the way that was best suited to getting

the scheme up and running quickly and as cheaply as possible.

There are still many unresolved questions around VAT and the details that industry needs in order to be able to implement the scheme. I will continue to work with the UK Government and industry to figure out the details of all the matters around VAT. It is a complicated issue, but it is frustrating that the UK Government has been so slow in coming back to us on the scheme and appears to be dragging its feet.

The members to my left—the Conservatives—could support the scheme by speaking to their colleagues at Westminster about getting the VAT matter sorted out in a timely fashion in order to enable the deposit return scheme to be delivered as soon as possible.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the minister provide an update on the plans to introduce a charge for single-use drink cups?

Lorna Slater: In 2019, Scotland became the first country in the UK to ban plastic-stemmed cotton buds. We have taken further action this year by banning more problematic single-use plastic items such as cutlery, straws, plates, and expanded polystyrene food and drink containers. We will now take further steps and consult on a charge for single-use disposable beverage cups, in line with recommendations from the expert panel on environmental charging and other measures.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): According to the industry, the scheme will need an estimated 10,000 reverse vending machines. Will those machines be constructed here? Will all materials that are collected in the scheme be recycled here?

Lorna Slater: That is an on-going matter for the industry to consider. The purchase of 10,000 reverse vending machines is an exciting opportunity. As the member can imagine, with the short timescale that we have to implement the deposit return scheme, there is a question about how quickly we can scale up to build those machines. I am hopeful and confident that as many machines as possible will be built in Scotland, but the industry will have to do what it can to meet the ambitious targets for the implementation of the scheme. I very much support building and manufacturing in Scotland.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Will the minister elaborate on how the five-year £70 million recycling improvement fund will help us to accelerate progress towards meeting Scotland's ambitious waste and recycling targets and fulfil our net zero commitments?

Lorna Slater: Today's announcement marks the beginning of one of the biggest investments in recycling in Scotland in a generation. Across Scotland, that funding will be transformational. It will make it easier for households to recycle more; help to deliver the rates of recycling that are needed to meet Scotland's ambitious climate targets; support local authorities in improving recycling and reuse infrastructure; help with the alignment of recycling collections to Scotland's household recycling charter; and maximise the quality and quantity of recycling. The investment will also help local authorities to get ready for future developments including the deposit return scheme and the reform of producer responsibility systems for packaging.

The first £7.1 million of funding, which was announced today, will enable a range of improvements across Scotland, including more frequent recycling collections, the extension of food and garden waste collections, the replacement of litter bins with recycling bins, and local service redesigns to align with Scotland's household recycling charter. The investment has the potential to reduce CO₂ emissions by 70,200 tonnes each year, which is equivalent to taking 9,100 cars off the road.

Road Infrastructure

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): 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.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-02838, in the name of Graham Simpson, on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button now.

15:23

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Tom Arthur is a likeable chap. As a back bencher, he was affable and straight talking. However, during questions on the draft national planning framework last week, he showed that he has quickly learned the art of being a Scottish National Party minister, because Fergus Ewing—also a straight talker—asked the minister whether he could

“provide reassurance to me and my constituents in Inverness and Nairn that his statement does not and will not, in any way, manner or means, delay, detract, diminish or dilute the absolute commitment of the Scottish Government to dual the remaining sections of the A9 between Perth and Inverness and the section of the A96 from Inverness to Auldearn, and to do so as swiftly as possible?”—[*Official Report*, 10 November 2021; c 28.],

which was a great question. Unfortunately, Mr Arthur did not give a straight answer, so we were left none the wiser. Jamie Halcro Johnston had a go as well and did not fare any better.

Today’s debate is an opportunity for the Scottish National Party to drop the prevarication and tell us straight: will the A96 and A9 be dualled in their entirety—yes or no? I will happily take an intervention if the minister can tell us that.

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Carry on.

Graham Simpson: “Carry on”, he says.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could we have less chat between one member who is seated and one who is standing? If no intervention is taken, there is no intervention.

Graham Simpson: The minister does not wish to intervene, and the reason is that, although the SNP might agree with us that those roads and others need to be upgraded, they have become ensnared by the extremist Greens. Maggie Chapman has already declared that she is confident that the A96 project will not be viable for environmental reasons. Anyone who is hoping that Ms Chapman will be overruled will have to wait for

the results of what is being described as a transparent, evidence-based review that will not report until the end of next year. The Government is kicking the can down the road to keep happy a party that would take us back to the horse and cart era.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Speaking as a rural motorist, I find that the real cost to me is the cost of fixing my suspension or something else in my car after I have run over loads of potholes. Does Mr Simpson not agree that the focus needs to be on maintaining our roads rather than sinking billions of pounds into new trunk roads? Is that not what people in rural communities really want? They want road maintenance rather than white elephant trunk road building schemes like his.

Graham Simpson: Investing in roads is what this is all about, and if we invested more in roads, Mr Ruskell would not have his car broken by potholes.

The SNP might have been taken hostage by the kaftan crusaders opposite, but that does not mean that the people of the north-east and elsewhere should suffer as a result. Those of us who live in the real world know that Scotland needs to keep moving, that our connectivity needs to be improved and that, if we do that, we can, in the words of the Minister for Transport, Graeme Dey:

“improve road safety, journey times, and journey reliability”.

Long, slow-moving lines of traffic, stuck on roads that are not fit for purpose, and belching out fumes for longer than is necessary, do not help climate change and they do not help the economy. By improving existing roads, we can help to tackle climate change. We can build in electric vehicle charging points, hydrogen refuelling stations, and cycle and walking lanes. Mr Ruskell would be delighted by that.

We are way behind where we need to be with the charging infrastructure. The Scottish Government has a target of 30,000 chargers by 2030, but at the current pace it will take until 2066. I wish all members long and happy lives, but I do not think that many of us will be around to see that. If we are serious about climate change and getting people such as me and most other members to ditch our petrol or diesel motors, it is no good just banning the sale of new ones, because there will be plenty of old ones on the road for a good while yet. We need to provide the infrastructure to persuade people that electric vehicles are a viable option.

So far, I have mentioned only the A96. That is seriously unfair, so I will rectify it. Let me move on to the A9—although I would rather not. It is shameful that the main artery from Perth to Inverness is not a dual carriageway. Fergus Ewing

knows that. It is not just unfair to people who need to travel to and from Inverness and beyond, it is unfair to businesses that are trading from and with the north. It is often the peripheries that suffer—the north-east, the north-west, the south-east and the south-west—but they are every bit as important as the central belt, and it is not perfect, by any means.

Donald Cameron will talk about the A82 and A83. We have debated them previously to little effect in the way of outcomes. Brian Whittle will talk about the A77, which is the vital link to and from Ayrshire. He will also talk about the A75, which is the seriously lacking artery that links Gretna to Stranraer. It is essential to our connectivity with Ireland and to the economy of the south-west that that road be dualled.

The A74 and M74 are much improved—it is possible to travel north from England up the west quite easily, as long as you do not want to veer off to the left. However, on the other side of the country, the experience on the A1 is not so great. Why are we so petty that we do not even allow Transport Scotland to engage in the union connectivity review, when it could result in money flowing to Scotland to improve roads such as the A1 or the A75? It is quite pathetic.

All Scotland needs to be connected. Some members of the Scottish National Party understand that, and all Conservative members understand that. We need ministers to stand up to the Greens, because better roads can also mean a better environment.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that driving in most parts of Scotland is a necessity; believes that the Cooperation Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group should not prevent or delay the delivery of any future road projects, and calls upon the Scottish Government to reaffirm its commitment to dualling the A9 and A96 and commit to upgrading the A1, A75, A77, A82, A83 and A90.

15:30

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Graham Simpson's speech was amusing and entertaining, but let us deal in facts. Just last week, Glasgow hosted the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—at which nations sought to reach agreement on the greatest threat that our planet faces. In Scotland, the transport sector is our largest emitter. If we are to meet the challenging targets that were set by the Scottish Parliament—which, I seem to remember, the Conservatives voted for—we need to do all that we can to decarbonise transport.

Our “Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero”, which was published last December, includes a national commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030. We have adopted a sustainable investment hierarchy that focuses investment on reducing the need to travel and making best use of what we have before considering adding to existing—or building new—infrastructure. Members will be aware that the Scottish Government's transport strategy and investment priorities have pointed that way for several years but, importantly, in a balanced way, to ensure that the road and other transport infrastructure that is required for the country to operate successfully continues to be fit for purpose.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): At the Finance and Public Administration Committee's meeting on 31 August, when I asked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy about the Government's commitment to the A96 and the A9 and whether there had been any problem with that, given that the Greens and the SNP had entered a coalition, she said categorically that the Greens and the SNP being together in the Government would not affect either of those projects. Is that correct?

Graeme Dey: I will come to those projects later in my contribution.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to meeting our ambitious climate targets, but that does not mean that there will be no investment in our strategic road network. The trunk road network is one of our largest and most visible community assets. It carries 35 per cent of all traffic and 60 per cent of heavy goods traffic. Ensuring that it is safe, operates effectively and is maintained to a good standard is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Scotland. We need to balance the extensive changes that are required to meet our net zero ambitions with our duty to ensure that Scotland has that infrastructure. In 2020-21, we invested £470 million in managing, maintaining and operating the Scottish trunk road and motorway network, and this year's budget provides £529 million for that.

We are working hard to bring the benefits of the A9 dualling programme to the people of Scotland. That work has benefited from in-depth and innovative engagement along the route—Liz Smith knows that, as she represents part of the route—which has involved the whole local community. That process has ensured that a correct balance has been struck between improving a vital transport link, minimising the impact on the outstanding natural environment and taking the local community with us. In part, that has caused a degree of delay.

Work is continuing along the route, with dualling already in place between Kincaig and Dalraddy and Luncarty and the Pass of Birnam. Design work for the rest of the programme is progressing, and the statutory process is well under way for seven or the remaining eight sections. That is our commitment.

Meanwhile, procurement of design work is progressing on other trunk road projects around the country. On the A83, we are committed to ensuring continuity of access to Argyll and Bute by finding a long-term solution to the problem at the Rest and Be Thankful. While that long-term solution is developed, we are progressing work to develop a medium-term resilient route through Glen Croe. We will bring forward proposals on that next year.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: No—I need to make progress.

The Scottish Government is also committed to delivering improvements for the north and the east of Scotland, along the A96 corridor. We will take forward an enhancements programme that improves connectivity between surrounding towns, tackles congestion and addresses safety and environmental issues.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con) rose—

Graeme Dey: Alongside that, we will carry out a transparent evidence-based review of the A96 corridor, which will report by the end of 2022. That is sensible good governance for major investment of that level. I remind Mr Kerr, if I may, that his party endorsed that approach back in 2019 in supporting an amendment to the bill.

Liam Kerr: The minister's party promised to dual the A96. Will he?

Graeme Dey: The situation is very clear. The commitment remains to address those issues, and the dualling aspect is subject to the review.

We remain committed to making much-needed improvements on the A96. Development work has already been undertaken that will not go to waste. We also remain committed to improving the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan, and we are progressing a range of infrastructure projects that are related to the city and growth deals.

Our approach to the on-going improvements that I have mentioned aligns with the approach to assessing the need for infrastructure improvements in the future, as set out in the national transport strategy. We are clear that we will not build infrastructure to cater for unconstrained increases in traffic volumes. That was set out in the NTS and taken forward in the strategic transport projects review, which is on-

going, and it will be published for consultation this winter.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: I want to make progress.

STPR2 will include recommendations for future investment in the Scottish road network over the next 20 years. Although the commitments to improve the A9, the A96 and the A83 and the other projects are progressing separate to the review, the need for improvements to trunk roads across the rest of the country, including, for example, on the A75, the A77, the A90 and the A1, is being appraised and robustly assessed within the review.

Finlay Carson: Will the minister take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister is in his final minute.

Graeme Dey: May I take that intervention, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: If it is very brief and you wind up in your allotted time.

Finlay Carson: Does the minister agree that the Scottish Government needs to put aside its petty and divisive position and work with the UK Government, particularly if the Hendy report recommends major investment in the A75 for the good of the whole nation, and given that my constituents do not really care what purse the money comes from?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was not a brief intervention. I think that the minister has the gist. The minister should be brief.

Graeme Dey: The UK Government needs to show some respect for the devolution settlement.

We will, of course, also continue to progress our maintenance programme to ensure the continued effectiveness and resilience of the roads.

We have adopted a focused and rigorously assessed approach to investing in our road network that balances the needs of our people with our climate ambitions, and we will continue to do so.

I move amendment S6M-02138.2, to leave out from “driving” to end and insert:

“, in the face of the climate emergency and the imperative to cut greenhouse gas emissions, as a nation, there is a need to encourage more people to use more sustainable travel options and reduce their car use; acknowledges the need to shift away from spending money on new road projects that encourage more people to drive, and instead focus resource on maintaining roads and improving safety; agrees that people need a realistic and affordable alternative in public transport and active travel,

and notes that the Scottish Government will set out its plans for future investment in Scotland's transport network in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review."

15:37

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour believes that key routes in Scotland must be upgraded to improve road safety, reduce journey times and support local and regional economies. In many parts of Scotland, there is no practical alternative to the car, so the routes that we are debating are essential.

How we prioritise investment in transport generally is crucial. We must take full account of road safety, economic and community development, and our climate change ambitions. It is disappointing that the Conservative motion, which comes just days after COP26, makes no mention of climate change at all.

One of the reasons why so many people in Scotland have to rely on private fossil-fuel-burning cars is that the alternatives are not good enough or simply do not exist. I recognise that Mr Simpson mentioned that in his speech, but that is a serious omission from the Conservative motion. We should be united in challenging the Scottish Government to do more than just provide better road infrastructure; we should be challenging it to reverse the decline in public transport and address car dependency.

The reality is that public transport under the SNP Government is a joke. Bus passenger numbers are at record lows, and ScotRail is proposing to cut 300 services a day. Labour says let us make the road network better and safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, but let us also use this debate to call for practical alternatives to the car.

There is no question but that road maintenance suffered badly during the years of austerity. We have already heard that. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities says that its capital funding from Scottish Government budgets, supported by the Greens, has been cut by 6 per cent in real terms since 2013-14. For many councils, capital grants are not enough to meet existing spending requirements, let alone support the transition to net zero. The chronic underfunding of Scotland's councils has to be challenged and reversed.

The roads that are identified in the motion and in our amendment are part of the trunk road network. They are the direct responsibility of the Scottish Government. It is the Scottish Government's responsibility to ensure that vital infrastructure is upgraded appropriately; to prevent impossible detours at the Rest and Be Thankful; to make good on its promises to the action group and ferry

firms in the south-west of Scotland that are served by the A75 and the A77; and to tackle potholes on the network, the number of which is up from just under 4,000 in 2007 to 21,000 now.

I say to the Scottish Government that creating a more resilient transport network is about more than roads. The total number of bus passenger journeys in Scotland is down by 121 million under this SNP Government—a record low. A country that is serious about tackling climate change is not a country with record low levels of bus patronage.

It has been the policy of this SNP Government to preserve a broken bus market. Even now, with new rules secured by my colleague Colin Smyth that make public control of buses possible, there is no strategy to remake local bus services. When it comes to bus services, the preferred option of the SNP is, and always has been, the status quo.

Well, the status quo is not good enough. Bus services should be run for passengers before profit. If democratic alternatives to a broken bus market are good enough for Lothian, London and now Manchester, they are good enough for Glasgow, the west of Scotland and the rest of Scotland. The Government should be prepared to support councils choosing to bring bus networks under public control, and it should do so with investment.

The Scottish Government once described the Abellio deal to run our railways as "world leading"—but not any more. ScotRail will become a publicly run operator again after the Scottish Government was forced to bring it back into public ownership. However, under current plans, it will inherit a diminished timetable. We cannot shift travel from Scotland's roads to Scotland's railways if the rail network is being cut and the ambitions of COP26 are not being realised.

To drive modal shift, it is time that the Scottish Government finally delivered easier, more affordable travel. The COP26 summit showed that smart, integrated ticketing is possible, but it was restricted to COP26 delegates. Integrated ticketing makes travel easier. It should not be just for the select few at COP26; there must be integrated smart ticketing for all, all year round. Dublin has just announced an affordable 90-minute fare with free transfer across bus services. If Dublin can do it, why can we not? If there is to be a legacy from COP26 for the people of Scotland, let it be seamless, integrated ticketing on our public transport network.

Let us make travel more affordable for all. As a minimum, Parliament should endorse calls to extend free bus travel to the under-25s. To tackle the climate crisis and make transport more resilient, the Scottish Government must invest wisely and show the leadership that has been

lacking for far too long. That is what our amendment calls on it to do.

I move amendment S6M-02138.1, to leave out from “recognises” to end and insert:

“regrets that car dependency remains the norm in Scotland, partly due to Scotland’s inadequate public transport system; calls upon the Scottish Government to upgrade key routes, such as the A9 and A96, A1, A737, A75, A77, A82, A83, A90 and other vital road links, to deliver improved road safety, journey times and reliability; considers that decisions about investment in transport infrastructure, including roads, must have due regard to road safety, economic and community development and climate impact; further considers that local government requires a fair funding settlement to allow councils and communities to improve local roads and cycle routes, to bring local transport under democratic public control and invest in better local transport and green infrastructure; believes that all parts of Scotland would benefit from enhanced public transport, and calls upon the Scottish Government to support integrated ticketing on public transport, action to reverse the decline in local bus services, the extension of free bus travel to under-25s, the dedication of 10% of the transport budget to active travel, and the restoration of rail services to pre-pandemic levels.”

15:42

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I want to make three points on the importance of core connectivity between communities and the rest of Scotland; the safety of our roads and the need to maintain our public assets; and the balance between road transport and the environment.

Road building or upgrading should not be done for the sake of it. Scottish Liberal Democrats recognise that communities deserve an equitable standard of core connectivity to the rest of Scotland. Our rural, remote and island communities rely heavily on roads. Durness, in north-west Sutherland, which is more than two hours away from Thurso train station, is a community that is utterly reliant on road—and not just road, but single-track road. At home in Shetland, there is not a train or tram in sight. The Rest and Be Thankful, on the A83, is subject to landslides and closures, and communities are forced to take a 59-mile route diversion. The A9 is well known as one of the most dangerous roads to travel on in Scotland. It is dangerous to overtake on it, and multiple changes from single carriageway to dual carriageway and back again are a hazard.

We must not neglect infrastructure because of dogma, inadvertently allow accidents and deaths or overlook the importance of core connections for communities.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I recognise the safety issues on the A9. Why, then, did Liberal Democrat MPs oppose the introduction of safety cameras on the A9?

Beatrice Wishart: Repairs and other improvements fall in line with the recommendations of the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, which suggested that greater emphasis be given to maintaining public assets.

Scottish Liberal Democrats understand that there is a balance to be struck between the climate emergency and delivery of road projects, but, as I have said, road building or upgrading should not be done for the sake of it. Additional roads can increase traffic and carbon emissions, and they can impact on our environment and biodiversity, so we need to be decarbonising, protecting our environment and reversing biodiversity decline. All sectors need to reduce carbon emissions if we are to reach our net zero targets, and transport is lagging behind.

As Labour members said, the job of providing core connections must go hand in hand with work to establish a climate-friendly transport system. Scottish Liberal Democrats would give local communities control over bus routes and timetables, to ensure that buses go where people need them to go and not where they make the bus company the most profit. That would ensure that gaps and issues could be addressed, thereby bringing down car miles and addressing the steep decline in bus journeys under the SNP.

We want to establish new rail connections and reopen rail lines, and we want to get more freight on to railways, to reduce congestion and pollution. We want to accelerate journey times to the north and the north-east, which are basic connections.

However, those measures simply cannot take every car off the road. As I illustrated, in some parts of the country car travel is the only viable transport. Scotland needs to go electric, and quickly. The electric A9 website says:

“Scotland’s longest EV-ready route will stand as a beacon to those at home and abroad.”

We need such electric-vehicle-ready routes to pop up across the country. Scottish Liberal Democrats want more electric rapid-charging points to be installed—and to be working and ready to use. That is essential road infrastructure. If we can give people the confidence to buy an electric car, we can move older vehicles off our roads sooner.

We can jump-start that change by requiring new public sector vehicles to be electric, by spreading the costs through longer, Government-backed interest-free loans and by having a Government-funded scheme to enable everyone to try out an electric car for a weekend.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I advise members that there is no

time in hand. If you take an intervention, it must be absorbed within your allotted time.

15:46

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in the debate.

The dire need to invest in the south-west's transport infrastructure is a topic that I and my colleagues have long championed in this chamber. We have talked about the goat tracks that are the A77, the A75, the A76, the A70 and the A71 and about the ridiculous situation at the Bellfield interchange at Kilmarnock.

Given that Graeme Dey is so interested in facts, let us get some out. From Alex Salmond in 2010, when he opened the new Cairnryan terminal, after a £250 million investment from the ferry companies, to transport ministers including Alex Neil, Humza Yousaf and Michael Matheson, the Scottish Government has continually made promises and has continually broken them.

My colleagues and I have tried to encourage and persuade the Scottish Government to pay attention to the routes to and from the busiest port in Scotland—and the third busiest in Britain. We have said that the routes are not fit for purpose and that their state holds back the economic potential of the region. There was even, belatedly, support from the Government's back benchers, once they realised that they would need to support the upgrading of that infrastructure if they were to get public votes.

However, all of that was to no avail. Let us call it what it is. The Scottish Government has had more than a decade to go beyond platitudes and procrastination and to show that the south-west is as important a part of Scotland as any other place, but it has invested 0.04 per cent of the transport budget in the region. By any standards, that is a Government that is abandoning any notion of investing in the south-west and that is finding any and every excuse to kick the can down the road.

The Scottish Government's answer is to have another consultation and listening exercise, to go with all the other consultations and listening exercises—anything to avoid the significant commitment that would bring the infrastructure up to the basic requirements for such busy routes. Members should remember that 45 per cent of the goods that go to and from Northern Ireland go through Cairnryan.

I will turn to the motion. Let us bury the myth that road building is always bad for the environment. That is simplistic nonsense. What is important is what is on the road. Investment in the south-west infrastructure could generate a whole

new green economy. What an opportunity that would be. The creation of electric and hydrogen superhighways would take the trundling, stop-start heavy goods vehicle convoys from the ferries out of towns and villages, thereby hugely reducing carbon emissions. A west coast cycle route down that beautiful coastline would give us another new economy.

It is poor connectivity that is smothering the economy of the south-west. I challenge the Scottish Government to grasp the opportunity to show its green intentions post-COP26. I challenge it to prove that it has not abandoned the south-west and to develop the south-west infrastructure to the benefit of the green economy and the safety of people on the roads. I challenge it to allow the south-west to breathe.

Finally, I suggest that the target of a 20 per cent reduction in car miles is predominantly going to involve a reduction in shorter, more urban journeys and that how we connect up our rural communities in a more environmentally friendly way is going to require investment in new technologies.

The driving force behind purchasing an electric vehicle—if members will pardon the pun—is not always saving the planet. For many people, it is more about the cost savings that an electric vehicle can bring. We are past worrying about the range; it is more about the number of charging points, and the Scottish Government is way behind the target for those, as Graham Simpson said.

The time to invest in the green superhighway network in the south-west and the rest of Scotland is now. We should create infrastructure that encourages the behavioural shift that we are all striving for. There can be no more excuses and no more talk. We need action. I recognise that that is not the Scottish Government's strong suit, but we can all live in hope.

15:50

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): First, as someone who grew up in Orkney, where my family had no car until I was near the end of my primary school years, I want to say that I know how necessary cars are in remote, rural and island communities. Indeed, communities across Scotland need infrastructure projects to be delivered in order to improve safety, cut pollution and improve productivity, so that our communities and our economy are well served.

For instance, in my area, I am looking forward to the delivery of the East Airdrie link road, which will link the M80 at Cumbernauld with the M8 at Newhouse and will, crucially, serve the new Monklands hospital in the coming years. I was

incredibly proud to have played my part, alongside Alex Neil, in ensuring that that hospital would remain in Airdrie.

The new road will provide a crucial route for my constituents, as well as patients from across Lanarkshire, to access the site. It will also divert significant traffic from the congested roads in and around Airdrie. Parts of Chapelhall are among the most polluted in the country because of slow-moving traffic, particularly HGVs, travelling between the M8 and M80. I have confidence that the new link road would pass an environmental impact assessment because it will relieve the current congestion that is being generated along the bottleneck junctions of Carlisle road, which serves traffic going north and south between the motorways, and will cut pollution.

It is on that point that I find the Tory motion to be politically tone deaf. Although we all acknowledge the merit of the projects that are listed, there is zero acknowledgment in the motion of the need to decarbonise our nation, to carry out environmental impact assessments on our road infrastructure projects or to move away from using petrol and diesel cars and towards more sustainable modes of transport. It is as if the Tories have completely forgotten that the world was literally at our door for COP26 in Glasgow just last week. However, we can forgive them for forgetting, given that Boris Johnson himself forgot what city the conference was being held in, perhaps because he spent so little time there fighting for the deal that was needed.

I acknowledge how important all the projects that are mentioned in the motion are to the communities that they will serve, and that many of them involve safety considerations and congestion issues. Those projects have not been stopped, but the partnership agreement rightly says that we should be getting the balance right. I think that most reasonable people who are willing to acknowledge that we need to decarbonise are also willing—and understand the need to do so—to subject new road-building projects to environmental impact assessments as well as to invest in public transport, active travel and electric vehicle infrastructure. That is why I find the Tory motion startling.

When it was suggested last week that the subject for debate today would be in the net zero brief, I reckoned that the motion could mention COP26, transmission charges for our renewables sector, carbon capture and storage—perhaps how the north-east has now been let down twice on promised investment by the UK Government—or the incredible work that is being done with wave and tidal power in Scotland, in which we are leading the world. There are any number of other areas that could have been built on through

COP26 and which could have continued to project the leadership that was shown by Scotland in hosting the conference, and continued to find cross-party consensus.

However, we got the motion that we are debating, which undermines our progress. It also smacks of a complete lack of self-awareness, given that the Scottish Government's ability to deliver on infrastructure projects such as those that are mentioned in the motion today are hindered by the UK Government's having taken a wrecking ball to the Scottish Government's capital budget and having short-changed Scotland in replacements for EU structural funds.

Instead of trying to bypass Holyrood and undermine devolution, instead of trying to claim that we can burn all the fossil fuels that we want and still live up to our net zero goals, and instead of suggesting that we can continue to live with ever-increasing numbers of cars causing pollution in our communities, the Tories need to start getting serious and to join the rest of the world in finding ways to tackle the existential issue that is climate change.

15:54

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): Only the Tories would lodge a motion in the wake of COP26 that focuses solely on road building without any reference to public transport or active travel. Domestic transport continues to be the largest source of net emissions. Cars account for almost 40 per cent of those emissions and car dependency is increasing at unsustainable levels, with the proportion of single-occupant journeys reaching 66 per cent.

However, there is an alternative. A double-decker bus can replace 75 single-occupant cars, but to get people out of cars and on to buses requires public investment, democratic ownership and socialist ambition—things that we cannot rely on the SNP or the Tories to deliver. By all means, let us debate road infrastructure, but let us speak about connecting our communities with accessible and affordable public transport, making our pavements and cycleways safer for everyone and restoring biodiversity through a network of green corridors.

Road infrastructure must focus on delivering accessible and affordable public transport and creating an integrated transport network that seamlessly links communities and promotes active travel. It must also focus on making such a network environmentally sustainable, but the reality is that private control of our public transport is a barrier to achieving that. Tory-driven deregulation in the 1980s led us to the broken

transport system that we have today—it is expensive, disjointed and fragmented.

Bus operators extract profit from the most commercial routes while failing to invest in the wider network, despite receiving more than 40 per cent of their income from public subsidies. They continue to hike up fares, which have risen by more than 10 per cent above inflation over the past decade. All that has led to a decline in bus journeys, so it is no wonder that the Tories do not mention public transport in their motion, given their toxic legacy of deregulation, which they continue to champion.

However, the Scottish Government's amendment is no better. It acknowledges

“a need to encourage more people to use more sustainable travel options and reduce their car use”

but offers no practical steps to make that a reality. The Government has a target of reducing car kilometres travelled by 20 per cent by 2030, but has yet to outline what steps will be taken to achieve that.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 allows for publicly run bus services, but it is not backed by sufficient resources for local authorities, and the Government's proposed bus service improvement partnerships will leave control of fares, routes and timetables at the whim of private companies. Instead of capitulating to private interests, the Scottish Government should take innovative action, such as providing start-up capital through the Scottish National Investment Bank to enable the development of publicly run local bus services. Public ownership is key, because it means that profits that are generated can be reinvested to support non-commercial routes, deliver affordable fares and improve workers' pay and conditions.

To conclude, I contrast the empty rhetoric of the SNP Government and the lack of ambition from the Tories with the action that is being taken in Wales. The Welsh Labour Government has announced that it will suspend all future road-building projects, and the money that is saved by not building new roads will be used to improve existing ones, including creating new bus and cycle lanes and infrastructure for sustainable transport.

That is the kind of ambition that Labour in Government has, and is the kind of ambition that we need in the Scottish Parliament if we are to meet our climate change targets.

15:59

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): All members want to see improvements to our rail and bus services and public transport. We all want more active travel, whether by bicycle or Shanks's

pony, although this particular and somewhat ageing pony treks no more.

My first point has been made by other members—it is a trite point, but it is absolutely crucial to the debate. In rural Scotland—98 per cent of our country's land mass is rural—a car, van or tractor is a necessity, not a luxury. It will never be anything else; that will remain the case in perpetuity. For the majority of people in rural Scotland the car will, as far as we can see, continue to be the only method of transport.

In just a couple of decades—I hope that I will see it in my lifetime—petrol and diesel vehicles will be replaced by low-emissions vehicles. I hope that they will be powered by hydrogen rather than by electricity, but I am not an expert on that. My point is, however, that once that shift happens, we will still need roads. The last time I looked, the buses that colleagues in other parties so frequently, and quite fairly, talk about still needed to be driven on roads. [*Applause.*]

I am slightly embarrassed by the applause from the Conservative side of the chamber. Keep quiet, please. [*Laughter.*]

The point is this. We should not be anti-road; we should be anti-emissions. I address that reflection in particular to those who have, today, been dubbed our kaftan-clad colleagues.

Brian Whittle: Will the member take an intervention?

Fergus Ewing: Why not?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly. It must be absorbed in the member's time.

Brian Whittle: Does the member agree that there is an opportunity to create a road network for electric and hydrogen vehicles?

Fergus Ewing: To be fair, I think that the transport secretary will confirm that SNP members are committed to upgrading roads throughout rural Scotland, in particular on the ground of safety, although I cannot speak for the Government.

We should not forget that dualled links reduce massively the risk of head-on collisions. Some years ago, a friend of mine lost his wife on the A9 on the way to an SNP conference. All of us will know people who have been similarly affected—if they have not lost a loved one, they will have a family member who has received debilitating injuries that have ruined their life and the lives of their family for ever. The safety case for dualled links is paramount; I passionately believe that.

I turn to my constituency. The A9 is the major link to the central belt and beyond. It is vital for people, businesses and families—it is a link between families and friends throughout the country. It is vital for tourism, which is, in many

ways, the driver of the Highland economy, and it is the road to the islands, as well. The A96 is the major link between the north-east and the Highlands; it, too, is essential. I am therefore delighted that the SNP has, since 2009, been committed to dualling both roads.

I welcome the progress that has been made, to which the minister referred earlier. That includes the section that has been completed from Luncarty to the Pass of Birnam, the Tomatin to Moy section that is going ahead and the design work. However, I ask the minister to confirm today, in his closing speech, that we will deliver on our promises on the A9 and the A96. I am talking specifically about the revised promise, if you like: that the dualling of the stretch of the A96 from Inverness to Auldearn, including in particular the Nairn bypass, will go ahead and will not be subjected to the environmental test. That last point is a fine distinction, but an important one, and I will finish—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing, can you bring your remarks to a close, please?

Fergus Ewing: I will finish on this. The project should go ahead, as it has already gone through the public local inquiry process. That, for me, is a matter of honour.

16:03

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): As other members have expressed today, our roads are far more than just a means of travelling from one place to another—they are, in fact, vital routes for everyone, every day of every year. They are vital for businesses and economic growth; for tourism and the hospitality sector, which has been so heavily impacted during the pandemic; and for people who need to work or visit friends and relatives.

Once upon a time, the SNP was wholeheartedly committed to investment in our road infrastructure. It would be wrong not to acknowledge some of the major projects that have been undertaken in recent years. The dualling of the A9, which Fergus Ewing spoke about so powerfully just now and which has taken place over the past few years or even decades, has made my way home easier, faster and safer. However, the dualling project has been piecemeal and its future is now uncertain.

When the SNP went into coalition with the Scottish Greens, it was effectively announcing the death knell of future investment in our road network beyond the handful of projects that are mentioned in the co-operation agreement. Even then, as Graham Simpson said, there is doubt as to whether those projects will be delivered in full and within a reasonable timescale.

In the brief time that I have, I will focus on one road—it will not surprise the transport minister to find out which one that is. I make no apology for that, and I will go on mentioning this road again and again until the Scottish Government finally takes action to sort it out once and for all. I have spoken before about the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful pass. The road suffers from landslides and is frequently closed, cutting off Argyll and causing massive disruption and anxiety to locals. Interestingly, the road is affected by weather. There has long been a problem there, but it has got worse in recent years, which is quite possibly due to climate change and increasingly severe wet weather. However, is the solution to make no effort to improve and upgrade the road? Of course not. There is no alternative for residents and businesses.

In 2020, when Transport Scotland committed to replacing the route with a new permanent route, many people, myself included, welcomed that. The SNP manifesto had a pledge to

“deliver the short, medium and long term solutions required at The Rest and Be Thankful”,

although I note that that is not mentioned in the co-operation agreement. We have had consultation processes to determine the corridor for the replacement route, and we have an ongoing process to determine an option within that corridor. However, Transport Scotland has said that the process of delivering a new route could take up to 10 years.

Graeme Dey: I am sure that the member did not mean to mislead, but I want to draw a distinction there. The period of up to 10 years is for the conclusion of the long-term proposal. At the moment, we are talking about the medium-term proposal, which is being worked through.

Donald Cameron: I thank the minister for that clarification. Yes, the period of 10 years is for the permanent solution.

I realise that it is not a quick-fix project and that it is important that any solution is durable, but communities across Argyll cannot wait 10 years for a permanent solution. Many people have spoken about the need to deliver a medium-term route, which the minister just mentioned, by using the nearby forestry road, which they believe could be made available within weeks. However, Transport Scotland has said that it could take years to deliver even that. It is no wonder that so many people across Argyll and Bute feel left behind.

Graham Simpson referred to the A82, which continues to cause significant dismay to people in Lochaber. Many promises to upgrade that route have been made, but the Government has

dragged its heels when it comes to taking meaningful action.

Much uncertainty remains about whether the SNP-Green coalition is committed to any new road projects, let alone the projects to which the Government has long been committed. In the Highlands and Islands, we rely heavily on robust roads, yet all we have seen is dither and delay. As Brian Whittle and Fergus Ewing said, in terms of climate change, it is not roads that matter, it is what drives on them. Therefore, I ask the Government not to cave in to the anti-road agenda of others but instead to work with us and deliver a road network that is fit for the future.

16:08

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Here we are, with the ink barely dry on the Glasgow climate pact, and Opposition parties have come to the chamber falling over themselves to support new trunk road expansion across Scotland. Thousands of climate protesters at COP26 shouted out the question, "What do we want?" Now we have an answer from the Tories and Labour: "More roads! More roads!"

The Tories are back to full extremist mode. In this Parliament, they marked the start of COP26 with a debate in which they demanded that every last drop of oil be drained from the Cambo oilfield. They have now marked the end of COP26 with a list of trunk road projects as long as your arm.

As for Labour, this was its first big test to provide a credible green Opposition. To be honest, it has failed at the first hurdle. The Labour amendment is a transport wish list that is based on having more of everything, and particularly more roads. It is an unlimited and contradictory list of demands at a time when public funds are tight and coherent transport choices need to be made.

Neil Bibby: Will the member give way?

Mark Ruskell: Let me quote for Mr Bibby the excellent report from Scotland's rail unions—

Neil Bibby: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member does not appear to be taking interventions.

Please continue, Mr Ruskell.

Mark Ruskell: Mr Bibby might want to listen to Scotland's rail unions, as I do all the time. In their document "A Vision for Scotland's Railways", those unions say:

"Transport is the biggest emitter of CO₂ and 68% of transport emissions come from cars or vans and only 6% from trains. A fundamental requirement for Scotland to meet its environmental obligations is to change people's behaviour and shift them from road to rail."

How can we make that shift if the spending priorities are weighted towards road projects that will lock in car dependency?

Neil Bibby: Will Mark Ruskell give way?

Liam Kerr: Will Mark Ruskell give way?

Mark Ruskell: I will give way to Mr Kerr.

Liam Kerr: If the minister is successful such that we all drive zero-emission cars, how does increasing traffic on roads add to emissions?

Mark Ruskell: Mr Kerr should look at the challenge that we have in tackling climate change. I drive an electric vehicle. That will not tackle climate change; it will increase our energy demand. We need modal shift. It has been shown since the 1960s that new and expanded trunk roads generate new traffic and higher levels of emissions. They destroy our communities as well, and they create congestion, which affects the economy.

Members have spoken about the safety case for projects. There will be valid improvements that benefit road safety. I think back to the second session of the Parliament and the strong cross-party campaign, of which I was part, to improve the Ballinluig junction on the A9. However, just as Transport Scotland never accepted a safety case for dualling the entire length of the A9, so there is no credible safety case for dualling the entire A96.

Let us consider what has worked on the A9 to reduce accidents: average speed cameras. We should introduce those first on the A96, alongside a range of targeted improvements to roads and public transport infrastructure that reduce congestion and improve safety and connectivity between towns along the corridor.

Neil Bibby: Will Mark Ruskell give way?

Mark Ruskell: No.

Many of those measures are highlighted in the co-operation agreement between the Greens and the SNP.

Neil Bibby: Mark Ruskell voted for the budget.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Bibby, do not comment from a secondary position, please.

Mark Ruskell: Labour did not take an intervention from me, so why should I take one from Mr Bibby?

Members: Oh!

Mark Ruskell: Can I make some progress, Presiding Officer? I am being interrupted quite a lot.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes. I am trying to deal with that, Mr Ruskell. Please proceed, but

you have to conclude. You have up to four minutes.

Mark Ruskell: In January 2020, the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland called for

“a presumption in favour of investment to future proof existing road infrastructure and to make it safer, resilient and more reliable rather than increase road capacity.”

I am confident that that will be the starting point for the forthcoming strategic transport projects review. There will be cases for urgent road projects such as the A83, but, as the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport said earlier this year, the days of big road development projects are coming to an end. I think—I hope, for the sake of the climate—that he is right.

16:12

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): None of the roads that is mentioned in the motion directly affects my constituency, but I recognise the importance of road infrastructure development. The fact that roads such as the Aberdeen western peripheral route—procrastinated on by Labour and the Tories alike but delivered by the SNP—are being or have been developed suggests to me and many others that there was a complete lack of road infrastructure investment in the country. It also provides yet another example of why the union does not work for Scotland.

The routes that are mentioned in the motion will have gone through and be going through consultation and development strategically; they were not pulled together and designed at the last minute. That is quite right. Every project should be scrutinised as it is developed and delivered. That happened in the Parliament with the AWPR and the Queensferry crossing, to name just two examples. Opposition politicians would be criticised if that were not happening.

I always enjoyed the drive to Inverness when the SNP used to hold its conferences at Eden Court theatre until the party got so big that it could not go there anymore. However, the road—the A9—was crying out for investment to make it safer. I remember the campaign in the second session of the Parliament. Mr Swinney had a couple of members’ business debates on the issue, in which Murdo Fraser spoke as well. There were also campaigns regarding the Ballinluig junction and the Bankfoot junction. Mr Swinney demanded additional investment for parts of the route in his constituency. That was investment not for the sake of it but as a safety measure, particularly as tourist fatalities had occurred on the A9. Thankfully, that investment happened.

The landscape on road infrastructure investment is changing. It is imperative that we balance the

extensive changes that are required to meet a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions with our duty to ensure that Scotland has a high-quality infrastructure that meets the needs of all our residents, businesses and visitors. That is why the Scottish Government continues to work on the programme of trunk road improvement schemes, improving resilience and safety and delivering sustainable, inclusive growth for the people of Scotland.

Scotland’s national transport strategy—NTS2—sets out future investment in Scotland’s transport network. Those actions reinforce the commitment to sustainable travel and investment in the right places.

Finlay Carson: Will the member take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: I am sorry—I only have up to four minutes.

The Scottish Government is also setting out proposals for future investment in the Scottish road network through the forthcoming recommendations from the strategic transport projects review. The Scottish Government will also continue to progress its programme of trunk road improvements in order to improve resilience.

The Parliament needs to remember that transport is devolved to Holyrood, and the Tories should respect that. If they want to be helpful, they should join us in calling for the UK Government to deliver the funding that is needed to determine our spending priorities.

The Scottish Government has always sought to engage constructively with the UK Government—for example, on cross-border rail and a shared desire for high speed 2 to serve Scotland.

The Tories might not be happy to hear it, but the so-called union connectivity review is more like an echo chamber. That UK Government initiative was established with no discussion or meaningful engagement with Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. It is more akin to daein as we are told by London.

Quite rightly, the Scottish Government will engage with the UK Government in Scotland’s best interests, but it will not be complicit in Tory attempts at a power grab on the Scottish Parliament or a bid to encourage a race to the bottom on workers’ rights and environmental standards.

This debate will continue, and the chamber will hear more about transport projects. Delivering any transport project strategically, with safety being of paramount importance, as well as delivering for the climate emergency and making communities more sustainable, can be done only through a mechanism such as STPR2.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I call Colin Smyth to wind up the debate for the Labour Party.

16:16

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): This debate is an opportunity to shine a light on the Government's record on transport, and we can see why it rarely debates the issue in Government time. Route by route, the SNP is slowly dismantling our bus network. Passenger journeys have continued to fall by 120 million under this Government, as Neil Bibby highlighted, yet bus fares rise and rise—they have risen by nearly 50 per cent over the past 10 years. Two years ago, I proposed amendments to the Transport (Scotland) Bill to give councils the power to run their own buses but, two years on, the Government is yet to pass on those powers, never mind the funding to establish municipal bus services to put passengers, not profits, first.

In 2014, when it handed the keys of Scotland's trains to Dutch firm Abellio, the SNP promised that our rail system would be world leading. We certainly do lead the world when it comes to the cost of a rail ticket, with fares rising above wages and a failed franchise that was plagued by delays, cancellations and overcrowding. Passengers stood on platforms, not knowing whether their train would stop, trains ran late before they were even built, and the franchise was prevented from defaulting only when the targets were fiddled. Yet time and again, SNP and Tory MSPs together voted down Labour motions to bring our railways under public ownership. Even today, Green MSPs prop up a coalition that continues to support privatisation through the Serco franchise of the Caledonian sleeper and they vote against Labour motions to stop the axing of 300 trains a day. Yesterday, the First Minister came off the fence on Cambo. When will Green MSPs come off the fence and actually oppose the cuts to our rail services that their Government supports?

On active travel, the Government set a target to increase to 10 per cent the share of everyday journeys being made by bike by 2020, but pre-pandemic, in 2019, the share barely reached 1.5 per cent. It is little wonder, as Mercedes Villalba highlighted, that transport emissions are Scotland's largest source of greenhouse gases—at 37 per cent in 2019, of which 70 per cent comes from car travel—and that traffic volumes are 9 per cent higher under this Government. We will not tackle that or get people out of their cars and on to public transport by taking away those trains and buses.

I recognise that, as Fergus Ewing rightly highlighted, in many areas—particularly rural areas—car travel is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

The Government plans to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2032, so Beatrice Wishart was absolutely right to highlight the fact that we need to break down the barriers to ultra-low-emissions vehicles. For example, we need better access to rapid charging points. For too many people, buying an electric car is not about the big business agenda, as the co-leader of the Scottish Greens claimed; it is the only choice that they will have in order to make journeys. Therefore, when those necessary journeys are being made, we need to make sure that our roads are fit for purpose, not plagued by potholes that are the result of the cuts to council budgets that were supported by Green MSPs, such as Mark Ruskell, over the past few years. Too often, those roads, including our trunk roads, are not fit for purpose.

I will highlight two examples that were mentioned by Neil Bibby: the A75 and the A77. At a time when the Government is still committed to investing £3 billion to dual the A9 from Perth to Inverness—a proposal that was supported by the Greens when they backed the budget—there is real anger in the south-west of Scotland that, of the £10.5 billion of investment in road infrastructure from the Scottish Government between 2008 and 2020, just 0.4 per cent went to the A75 and the A77, which are key trunk routes. When asked about the upgrading of the A75 and the A77 in Parliament just 12 months ago, the current Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport said that

“the financial constraints within which the Scottish Government must operate limit our options when it comes to major capital investment”.—[*Official Report*, 20 August 2020; c 39.]

However, as Graham Simpson highlighted, the Scottish Government's petty attitude, sadly shown again by the minister, meant that it failed to engage in the UK Government's connectivity review, even if that includes the offer of investment in those key roads.

I appeal to the minister: if the Scottish Government is not prepared to fully upgrade the A75 and A77 as part of the strategic transport projects review, will it engage with the UK Government and support the investment? My constituents do not care where the money comes from to upgrade those roads; they just want to see the investment going in to sustain crucial trunk routes for the area.

For far too long, the south-west of Scotland's infrastructure has been neglected. For the safety of roads users, and to support the local economy, that has to end.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Smyth, you must bring your remarks to a close.

Colin Smyth: It is time to recognise that the upgrading of the A75 and the A77 is a strategic priority for the whole of Scotland.

16:21

Graeme Dey: Like others, I find the timing of the motion, in the week after COP26, to be truly extraordinary. To closely follow such a positive event, which refocused the cross-party support for Scotland's climate change targets, with a motion that is designed to criticise the Government for lack of investment in road building, demonstrates a remarkable lack of awareness. That is the politest description that I can think of.

Language such as "kaftan crusaders" and "goat tracks" really does not fit with the seriousness of the matters at hand. It is also a fact—

Neil Bibby: Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: No. I have a lot of things to which I want to respond.

It is also a fact that this Government has a strong track record of balancing vital investment, maintenance and improvement of the trunk road network with an on-going commitment to meeting climate change targets and protecting the natural environment.

What Scotland needs now is an infrastructure-led economic recovery to deliver new jobs and speed up the transition to net zero. Our infrastructure investment plan, which was published in February, sets out more than £26 billion of investments to stimulate a green recovery.

Graham Simpson: Will the minister take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: No. I want to respond to a lot of points.

Since 2007, this Government has invested approximately £9.5 billion in managing, maintaining and improving the trunk road and motorway network. In that period, we have delivered improvements across the country to meet the needs of all our population, including the Queensferry crossing, the Aberdeen western peripheral route, the M8, M73 and M74, the Dalry bypass and the A9 dualling programme.

Among other things, we are investing in buses, with £500 million committed to improve bus priority on Scotland's roads, including the trunk road network, and the extension of free bus travel to under-22s. We have delivered the Borders railway, and will reopen the line to Levenmouth to passengers and freight as part of the decarbonisation agenda for rail. *[Interruption.]*

I hear a member ask about East Kilbride. We are decarbonising East Kilbride.

Transport infrastructure investment should focus on projects that improve lives, boost our economy, support communities and work towards net zero. The move towards 20 per cent car kilometres reduction is a fundamental pillar in the approach to achieving that, but I agree with Brian Whittle and Fergus Ewing that we cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach to that issue. We must recognise that it is easier for those who live in urban settings to make that change than it is for those who live in remote rural areas. That will be reflected in the plan when it is published.

Robust research and evidence underpin and inform all our workstreams and policy aims. The important work that is being undertaken through the strategic transport projects review is the method by which the Government is planning for future investment. In that regard, we consider transport in the round.

I will pick up on a couple of points on charging infrastructure in particular. Graham Simpson claimed that Scotland is lagging behind. I will mark our homework, and nor should he. Let us ask Edmund King of the AA, who, last week, participated in the EV tour of Scotland, and is waxing lyrical about what he found here, particularly in comparison with the situation in England, where, funnily enough, the Conservatives are in power.

Graham Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: No, I want to make progress.

We do not rest on our laurels, and there is much left to do. A substantial piece of work is under way to ensure that what we deliver is not just numbers of chargers, important though that is, but the right infrastructure in the right places.

I want to be fair to Fergus Ewing, too, so I will pick up his points. The fact that we have made clear our commitment to dual the A9 and the A96, which run through his constituency, should offer the reassurance that he is looking for.

On the question when the funding will be confirmed, the answer is that that will happen as soon as we are in a position to confirm it. On Fergus Ewing's ask in relation to the A96 stretch from Inverness to Aldearn, which includes the Nairn bypass, the project is already excluded from the environmental assessment process, because it has already gone through a formal process. I hope that that provides the clarity that is sought.

I turn to the Labour amendment. As is the case with European Union charging infrastructure, Scotland is leading the way in the UK on tree planting as part of our response to climate change.

Unfortunately, “magic money tree” is not one of the tree species that are involved.

As ever, the Labour amendment is an anti-Scottish-Government rant, with a list of uncosted demands and no indication of which other parts of the Government budget it would see slashed. Perhaps we will get that from Labour as we go through the budget process, but I am not holding my breath.

Effectively striking the balance that I have referred to, between infrastructure investment and our climate ambitions, is a highly important and challenging commitment for the Government, but it is a challenge that we are determined to, and will, meet.

16:26

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Our motion simply asks that the delivery of future road projects be reaffirmed, recommitted to and delivered. It is interesting that only the Greens disagree with it—the other parties think that the list of projects could be broadened.

There is a real concern throughout Scotland that, despite years of promises and warm words, committed-to upgrades and projects look like they will be abandoned.

We know from the previous statement on the circular economy and the comments made on the deposit return scheme that the Green Party has a rather flexible view of what a manifesto promise means. Surely, when, as Donald Cameron pointed out, the SNP states in its manifesto that it will

“deliver the short, medium and long term solutions required at The Rest and Be Thankful”,

the electorate is entitled to expect it, and other promises, to happen. They must happen.

The minister was right when he said that the promised upgrades to the A9 would

“improve road safety, journey times and journey reliability”.

Accordingly, our motion refers to the A9. In 2018, the A9 was Scotland’s most dangerous road, with 25 accidents and 13 deaths.

However, we also cite the A96 in our motion. According to new information that I have obtained, in the past four years, that shocking road has seen 105 accidents, with nine fatalities in 2019 alone. In 1989, in response to it being the most dangerous road in Scotland, *The Press and Journal* launched its “End the Carnage—Spend the Cash” campaign. It is a disgrace that three decades have passed and still the A96 is not dualled. I say to Stuart McMillan that that is not diligence—it is negligence.

What makes it worse is that the SNP promised otherwise in 2011. I find the words of Neil Greig, the policy and research director at IAM Roadsmart, persuasive:

“Many of the crashes on the A96 ... are head-on incidents.

“They remain the least survivable type of crash, even in a modern vehicle.

“The only long-term solution to such crashes is to dual the entire road as soon as possible”.

On the minister’s second point, Donald Cameron pointed out that our roads are

“vital for businesses and economic growth ... for tourism and the hospitality sector ... and for people who need to work”.

Brian Whittle reminded us that, while the Scottish Government dithers and delays with yet another consultation on the A77, 45 per cent of goods going to and coming from Northern Ireland go through Cairnryan.

Dr Liz Cameron, who is the chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said that upgrading the A9 and A96 is

“not a luxury but a necessity”.

Why? She says that that A9

“is not only about increasing much needed capacity, it is Scotland’s longest trunk road and gateway to the Highlands, and the A96, a key transport corridor essential for Scottish exports, must be taken forward to ensure the future of rural communities and their economies.”

Fergus Ewing: Will Mr Kerr give way?

Liam Kerr: I will not, because I am very tight for time. [*Interruption.*] Okay, then—if you are quick, Mr Ewing. [*Laughter.*]

Fergus Ewing: The power of persuasion.

I very much agree with what has been said—the roads are really important to rural communities. However, I ask for clarification. Just before the Holyrood elections, the Conservatives pledged that they would add an extra lane to the motorway between Glasgow and Edinburgh. I believe that the cost of that would be around £5 billion, which would use up the whole budget for some considerable time. Is that pledge extant, or have they dropped it?

Liam Kerr: We absolutely stand by the manifesto but, as per my comments, the A9 and the A96 have to be the priority. We have rightly heard about the environment today. Graham Simpson persuasively pointed out that slow-moving stop-start lines of traffic stuck on not-fit-for-purpose A roads, belching fumes as they grind gears, do not help to tackle climate change. We can help to tackle climate change by building in EV charging points, hydrogen refuelling stations and cycling and walking lanes. Let us create the

green superhighway networks that Brian Whittle spoke about.

Some members expressed the concern that if we build roads, car use increases. That is the concept of induced demand, sometimes known as Braess's paradox, yet without those roads, car use has increased 8 per cent in Scotland, which rather reinforces Neil Bibby's point about the attractiveness of public transport under the SNP. However, the paradox is clear: the issue is roads in the wrong locations. Neil Gray talked about the new link road in his constituency cutting congestion and pollution. I am grateful for that. The point is answered simply by following the science, understanding induced demand, modelling properly, and building and upgrading in the right locations.

Mark Ruskell suggested that upgrading roads leads to worse emissions, but Brian Whittle reminded the chamber that taking trundling stop-start HGV convoys out of towns and villages and allowing them to maintain constant speed in gears, hugely reduces emissions. Donald Cameron said:

"it is not roads that matter; it is what drives on them."

If all the vehicles on the roads are zero emission, clearly the emissions argument is completely nullified.

I note that the minister has not acknowledged that point, which tells us three things. Either he does not believe that he will achieve zero emission vehicles at scale, or he is ignorant of the science on how technology advances, or he is completely beholden to a Green Party that is not interested in practicality and simply wishes to pursue a reactionary vendetta against the private car driver.

Speakers in the debate have been clear. Safety, the economy, business, jobs, tourism and the environment need these upgrades and mandate further investment in roads. Last month, the transport minister said:

"Some people think road building is bad; I'm not in that space. We need a well-maintained road network."

He is right. So, vote for our motion today. Follow the science, the needs of the economy and the safety of the people of Scotland, and consign the extreme policies of the Greens to the scrapyard.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland. Before the next item of business, I will allow a moment for those who wish to move seats, to do so.

Medical Students (Funded Places)

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next of business is a debate on motion S6M-02139, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students. I would be grateful if members who wish to speak in the debate could press their request-to-speak button now.

16:33

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): Imagine a scenario in which a country's health service is in crisis, struggling to deliver timely care after years of failed workforce planning. Imagine that that country's Government is fully responsible for running healthcare and that it controls, by diktat, the number of local school leavers who can enrol as student doctors, nurses and paramedics in our country's universities. That is where we are in Scotland today. The Government consciously limits the number of locally domiciled students to just over half of all medical school places across Scotland's universities. Those are the very students who are most likely to stay and work in Scotland once graduated. Little wonder, then, that there are staff shortages, and it is all down to the Scottish National Party.

Before discussing a solution to tackle the damage from a decade of failed workforce planning, let us consider the current calamity in more detail.

According to the Royal College of Nursing, our national health service needs another 3,400 nurses. That situation has not happened overnight but has happened under the watch of five SNP health secretaries. It is important to remind the country that, when the First Minister was in charge of health, she was the one who failed to future proof the workforce by cutting the number of student nurse places in 2012—a spectacular error of judgment. By 2015, our NHS had a shortfall of 1,613 nurses, and that number rose year on year: by June 2019—nine months before the pandemic—the shortfall was 2,879. Let us get this straight: that situation had nothing to do with Covid. The Government might argue that Scotland has more nurses now than ever, but there are also more vacancies now than ever—4,800 nursing and midwifery posts are unfilled. Where is the plan?

Let us now turn to students of medicine—our future doctors. According to the Scottish Government, just 54.5 per cent of nearly 5,000 students are Scotland domiciled, which is down from 63 per cent a decade ago. To be fair, the total number of medical students has risen over

the past four years and the annual student intake has increased by 190, but that increase came on the back of year-on-year declines since 2007. Trainee doctors account for 44 per cent of doctors whom NHS boards employ.

I am sure that members now realise that chaotic knee-jerk reactions to a staffing crisis do not work. The situation has been unfolding for more than a decade.

Let us take primary care. It takes at least 10 years to qualify as a general practitioner and every year during that time students enter medical school and highly experienced doctors retire. The chronic shortage of GPs that impacts the health of the country today is a direct consequence of decisions that were made in 2009 when the First Minister ran health.

Let us not pin everything on the leader, because her successors are not crowned in glory either. According to the British Medical Association, 83 per cent of GP practices report that demand now exceeds capacity; 42 per cent report that demand substantially exceeds capacity; and 28 per cent report at least one vacancy, which means that as many as 225 full-time equivalent GPs are missing in Scotland.

Allow me to quote the Government's own data: the number of full-time equivalent GPs in Scotland in 2019 was 3,613—62 fewer than in 2013. Between 2015 and 2018, only 39 additional GPs were recruited. I stress again that those figures are from before the pandemic.

According to Audit Scotland, even if the SNP managed to recruit 800 more GPs, the number of doctors who are expected to retire would wipe out the gains. When retirements are taken into account, the number of GPs would increase by only 18 in the 10-year period to 2027. The SNP-Green Government risks a bitter legacy. Where is the plan?

In our hospitals, workforce planning is also in chaos. BMA Scotland reports that vacancies for consultants have risen by 15 per cent. We now know that one in five consultants who were 45 to 49 in 2010 had left the profession by 2020. The BMA also finds that 45 per cent of surveyed consultants are considering retirement over the next five years. The SNP-Green Government is clearly too distracted by other matters to focus on retaining those highly experienced doctors, who are vital for patient care and for training the next generation of doctors.

There have been characteristically knee-jerk responses, such as the £32 million to create a further 139 trainee doctor posts, which, although welcome, is not at all part of a well-thought-out strategic plan.

On this side of the chamber, we want to provide solutions. I want to focus strategically on workforce planning. It is important to ensure that more Scottish nurses, doctors, paramedics enter universities in Scotland, because students who have gone to school or have a close connection here are more likely to stay when they graduate from a Scottish university. Those students will stay here to care for the patients in Scotland's NHS and will go on to train the next generation of healthcare professionals.

I find it shocking to read that Scotland has a lower percentage of home-domiciled doctors than England and Northern Ireland. Around 78 per cent of England's and 89 per cent of Northern Ireland's foundation doctors are home domiciled, but only 54 per cent of Scotland's are.

The problem is the arbitrary cap on the number of young Scots the Scottish Government will fund through medical school. As the workforce stats made clear, yearly decisions on the cap are not based on realistic workforce planning.

It is also not down to our young Scots not getting qualified. More and more Scots are meeting the academic entry requirements for medical schools. That has led Professor Angela Thomas of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh to warn of a brain drain, where high-achieving Scotland-based school leavers with no place to go in Scotland move to England.

The cap also creates a barrier to medicine for students who come from less affluent families. Despite having the grades, if they cannot enrol in Scotland, they will be faced with university fees that they cannot afford. So much for widening access.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Will the member take an intervention?

Sandesh Gulhane: I am sorry; I am a bit tight for time.

It is important that we listen to the professional organisations that exist to protect patients and improve education and practices across our NHS. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow concluded that removing the cap is the right thing to do and it would be a shot in the arm for the NHS. The medical schools need to optimise student numbers, as the standards must remain high and the funding model must be right.

Scotland needs to start training larger numbers of nurses, doctors, surgeons, and other healthcare professionals in order to cope with the demand. Removing the cap on medical school places will not solve the crisis that we face this winter, but it will be a step in the right direction, and it will mean

that we can build an NHS in Scotland that will be the envy of our neighbours and of the world.

Let us do this: remove the cap permanently and provide opportunities here in Scotland for our own bright young people, and let us ensure that we have a well-staffed and resourced NHS that is able to deliver world-class care.

I move,

That the Parliament calls on the Scottish Government to remove the cap on funded training places for students from Scotland studying for frontline NHS roles.

16:41

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Sandesh Gulhane's motion asks us to remove the controlled intake cap on funded training places for students from Scotland studying for front-line NHS roles. I can understand why that might seem a laudable aim, but I fear that the unintended adverse consequences have not been thought out clearly. I will speak to some of those shortly.

We have a controlled intake for medicine for very good reasons, which I will also set out shortly.

Last week, I received advance sight of a soon-to-be published report by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. Although the report talks of the need to grow Scotland-domiciled and widening access student places as part of a planned approach to expansion—something that we agree on—it makes no mention of removing the cap. Our planned expansion will maintain our commitment to widening access and Scotland-domiciled student places. I will come back to that point, which I wanted to make when I tried to intervene on Dr Gulhane and he could not take the intervention.

The Conservatives seem to be attempting to fix a problem that does not exist. Last year and this year, every single Scotland-domiciled student—even those who had requested a deferral or appeal in 2020—who met the conditions of their offer at a Scottish university was offered a place, and we have approximately 6,000 students studying medicine in Scotland.

We would not have known from listening to the Conservatives and Dr Gulhane that, since we took power, there has been a 20 per cent increase in the number of NHS staff, a more than 11 per cent increase in the number of qualified nurses and midwives, nine consecutive years of growth in the number of NHS staff and an almost 60 per cent increase in medical and dental consultants.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that almost every medic we speak to says that there is a shortage of doctors, with one of the reasons for

that being the cap on places, particularly in relation to people who are domiciled in Scotland, which prevents some universities with medical schools that would like to take more students from doing so?

Humza Yousaf: I agree that we need to increase the number of medical graduates and, in turn, doctors. That is why our manifesto committed to increasing the number of medical graduates, which is what we are doing. We promised to increase that number by 100 per annum.

Let me turn to some of the reasons why I think that there would be unintended consequences. As I said, we have seen an increase in undergraduate numbers since 2016 in response to a UK-wide undersupply of graduates. Between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the controlled intake for medicine grew by 22 per cent. It further increased to 1,117 in 2021-22. Our modelling shows that we need to increase that number, as Liz Smith said, which is why the 2021 programme for government commits to increasing undergraduate numbers by 100 each year during the current parliamentary session. That will allow us to increase numbers to ensure that we have sufficient supply with a degree of headroom, but in a planned fashion.

If we were to go down the route that Dr Gulhane and the Conservatives suggest, my concern would be that we would have no idea of how many students to expect until they matriculated each year, and we could find that we did not have the clinical capacity to train them. Even if we were able to train them, we might find that there was no job for them as a qualified doctor at the end of the day. That would lead to a real danger of creating medical unemployment.

Secondly, our planned increases have allowed us to focus undergraduate education on areas of known NHS patient need. For example, we know that, in the future, we will need more doctors working in community settings to care for our ageing population. That is why we commissioned Scotland's first graduate medical entry programme, with its focus on producing GPs and on remote and rural placements, and GP track courses at the University of Glasgow and the University of Aberdeen. If we had no control over places, that would limit our ability to commission our medical schools to adopt new and innovative approaches to respond to the long-term policy drivers.

My third point is one that I wanted to make in my attempted intervention on Dr Gulhane. Our planned expansion has allowed us to focus on opportunities for Scottish students from all sectors of society. The 50 ring-fenced widening access places that were introduced in 2016, and which have been maintained annually thereafter, were increased to 60 in 2021. This year, all those

places have been filled by students from some of the most deprived backgrounds in Scotland. We probably all welcome that.

We have also set up two pre-medicine entry courses at Glasgow and Aberdeen universities, which are aimed at potential applicants from less socially advantaged backgrounds who might have narrowly missed the grades that are required in order to study medicine.

We have also widened access to medicine in the widest possible sense. The University of Edinburgh course for graduate health professionals is a unique route for experienced healthcare professionals to use to study to become a doctor. That HCP-med programme is specifically designed for healthcare professionals who live and work in Scotland. If we were to have no control at all over numbers, widening access students would be the first to lose out. If we were to have a free-for-all, those who have traditionally been furthest away from gaining entry to medical school would be the ones who would lose out.

I understand that I am probably fairly short of time, Presiding Officer. It is important to have a mixed economy of medicine graduates for many other reasons. We are delighted to have people from across the UK and international students who want to study to become doctors here, too.

For all the reasons that I have highlighted, including—crucially—my point that if we remove the cap, we will remove the ring-fenced places that are designed to widen access, as well as the fact that all UK nations set controlled intakes for medical undergraduate places, I ask Parliament to reject the motion and to support our current process of planned expansion to meet the future medical workforce needs of the NHS in Scotland.

I move amendment S6M-02139.2, to leave out from “calls” to end and insert:

“welcomes the sustained increases in medical undergraduate places at Scottish universities; notes that the level of new domestic training places for medicine is proportionately higher in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK; further notes that, this year, the Scottish Government fully funded all places for Scottish domiciled students holding an offer from a Scottish medical school, where they met the terms of their conditional offer; recognises that the Programme for Government sets out steps to substantially increase training places further; believes that widening access to medicine is essential, and supports doubling the number of widening access places to help create a more diverse medical workforce.”

16:47

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I have much sympathy with the intention that underlies the Conservative motion, so we will support it at decision time, but I am genuinely concerned about the practical implementation of lifting the cap on

medical training places. I also think that restricting the proposed measure to front-line staff could result in an unfortunate focus on some parts of the NHS and not others where there are critical shortages, too.

I thought that the SNP amendment was a tad self-congratulatory, considering that the SNP has been in charge for the past 14 years. I cannot help recollecting that we were discussing workforce planning 10 years ago, when I was last Scottish Labour’s shadow health secretary. It is beyond depressing that nothing much has changed in that period. There is no getting away from the fact that it is the SNP that has presided over historic workforce planning failures across our NHS.

The problems are not new—they pre-date the pandemic—but they have absolutely been exacerbated by the pandemic. I well remember Nicola Sturgeon cutting the number of nursing places when she was health secretary, despite warnings from me and the Royal College of Nursing about the consequences of so doing. In fact, during her tenure in that role, she presided over some of the smallest intakes of medical students in the past 14 years.

To deliver on removing the cap on funded places, there will require to be additional investment in our medical schools across the country and in the capacity to deliver foundation places to all graduates on completing their degree.

I am not sure that the Conservatives have done their sums on that or that they have any idea what that would cost. Where would they set the bar? Should everyone who applies be given a place? Last year, 9,530 people applied to study medicine in Scottish universities and 1,290 were given a place. I am sure that the Conservative proposition is not that all 9,530 people should be offered a place, so a limit would probably need to be set. Understanding that is critical.

Who are regarded as front-line staff? We know that there is a shortage of accident and emergency consultants, a shortage of nurses and a shortage of GPs, but what about consultants in neurology, vascular surgery or psychiatry, or allied health professionals in physiotherapy, diagnostic radio therapy or occupational therapy? There needs to be an expansion in their training places, too.

There is no doubt that there are acute shortages across the NHS. Just listening to the evidence that was presented to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee should leave no one in any doubt about that. John Thomson of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine told us that there was a shortfall of 130 A and E consultants. The BMA told us that the vacancy rate for consultants stood at 15.2 per cent, which was more than double the

official Scottish Government figure. Dr Lewis Morrison told us that doctors were

“washed out, physically and mentally”,

and Margo Cranmer of Unison said that nurses were “stressed and exhausted”. A paramedic whistleblower said that they were “exhausted, undervalued and overwhelmed”. All of that is before we reach peak winter pressure.

We need to urgently address workforce planning, but that will not alleviate the pressure on the NHS right now. It takes a long time to train those people for those roles.

Scottish Labour has put forward a series of suggestions about what we think needs to be done now. Let us start with a working time review for every member of staff who is planning to retire early and offering them flexible working so that we do not lose their skills from our NHS. Let us ask the hundreds of staff who have left the NHS recently to come back to help their community, especially over this winter. Let us give staff better facilities in the workplace, such as hot meals, rest spaces and access to mental health support. I know that the Government has made money available but, in some areas, improvement is far too slow and too patchy.

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

Jackie Baillie: I am afraid that I do not have time.

Let us also ensure that a long-term pay deal is in place that addresses low pay in the health and social care sector to stop the haemorrhage of staff. It should not escape our notice that, for the first time in its more than 100-year history, RCN members in Scotland have voted to take selective industrial action. There is a real urgency to improve pay in social care by paying staff £15 per hour.

Scottish Labour supports increasing the number of places for Scotland-domiciled students on medical and nursing courses, doubling the number of widening access to medicine places and increasing student intakes for key health professional roles.

The problems with workforce planning are manifest, and the time for talking has long gone. We need urgent action now, and the Government must listen to the royal colleges, the trade unions and the workforce if we are not to have a crisis each and every winter from now on.

I move amendment S6M-02139.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that the Scottish Government has presided over historic workforce planning failures across the NHS, with warnings of shortages and staff burnout long before

the pandemic; considers that, as well as recruitment, there is an immediate need to improve retention of staff, following reports that many are planning to leave their profession; calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that basic facilities, such as hot meals and rest spaces, are available to all staff, and to improve access to specialised mental health support for the workforce, and recommends that the Scottish Government offers a working time review to every staff member considering retirement, thereby offering more flexible working arrangements, and calls on the expertise of retired nurses and medical professionals willing to return to the NHS to increase workforce capacity over winter.”

16:53

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)

(LD): I thank Dr Sandesh Gulhane for securing time for this important debate. It is dispiriting that, once again, it is Opposition time that has been given over to the workforce crisis in our health service, particularly after the warnings that were given to the Scottish Parliament’s Health, Social Care and Sport Committee this week. Nonetheless, I congratulate Dr Sandesh Gulhane and assure him of the support of the Liberal Democrats at decision time, notwithstanding the caveats that Jackie Baillie rightly raised about the complete removal of the cap. However, I support his intent. Likewise, we will support Labour’s amendment.

A person’s decision to dedicate their life to joining the medical front line is a noble one, but it can also feel like a thankless one. As the past 19 months have highlighted, if they make that decision, they choose a career that is defined by self-sacrifice and perseverance in incredibly demanding circumstances. People who enter the profession do so because they care passionately about serving our sick and our vulnerable. There is no higher calling in our society. We are very fortunate to have so many such people in Scotland, but evidence shows that we are losing them. We cannot afford to do so in the current context.

This May, the BMA released a report that said that 15 per cent of consultant roles in Scotland could lie vacant. To put that into perspective, that is an entire large hospital’s complement of consultancies, should we not fill them.

At the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee last week, the Royal College of General Practitioners told us that there is an enormous strain on the workforce. As a result, individuals are having to choose between sacrificing their profession or sacrificing their wellbeing. At the same committee meeting, the Royal College of Nursing told us that nurses in Scotland face a similar struggle, which has led to a significant issue of retention in the nursing workforce.

That is just not acceptable. No one should have to choose between their profession and their

mental health. As a result of that choice and other factors, front-line medical professionals are choosing not to work in Scotland and are instead deciding to work south of the border or abroad, or they are giving up their professions entirely. We must do more to prevent that, given how much we have invested in those individuals.

A key part of the solution lies in planning for our workforce. As we are being told, the Scottish Government's workforce strategy is not equipped to deal with the crisis that our NHS is experiencing. Members should remember that this is the same Government that delivered its integrated workforce plan a whole year late. That is why the Scottish Liberal Democrats have called for the presentation of an annual workforce report to debate in this Parliament, which would include a study of reasons why newly qualified staff leave NHS Scotland to work elsewhere.

Moreover, we need to look at the way that we deal with people who work in our NHS—the way that they suffer burn-out and the way that we are not supporting them with their mental ill health. We need to do that from the very start of their career in the NHS. Currently, just over half of medical students at our universities are Scottish. We must ensure that Scots who wish to train and work on the NHS front line are equipped and incentivised to do so.

It should be no surprise that there are severe burn-out and mental stress issues, which may be off-putting. Among ambulance staff alone, mental health absences are up 300 per cent since 2017 according to a freedom of information response that was received by the Scottish Liberal Democrats. That is why we have called for a substantive mental health package for front-line staff to help to deal with the crisis.

The crisis is one that has grown under a complacent SNP Government. Perhaps we should not be surprised. After all, it is the same Government that is led by a First Minister who, in her tenure as health secretary, cut 300 student nurse places, claiming that it was the sensible way forward. That was not a sensible way forward, and we are reaping the rewards of that whirlwind now. Restricting training places, neglecting strategy and not providing staff with adequate support is not a sensible way forward in anybody's book.

The NHS is one of the most vital services—if not the most vital service—in our country. The people in it provide a service that we could not do without. Front-line staff deserve from this Parliament the same unwavering care, effort and support that they have continually shown to our country.

16:58

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con):

We have all witnessed the impact that a front-line medical staff shortage has had on our NHS. Shortages put pressure on our heroic NHS staff, who work tirelessly to ensure that we can receive treatment whenever it is required. The problem is that a shortage of NHS staff creates waiting lists, waiting times and backlogs for many people who are in urgent need of care or treatment. As we have heard in this chamber, people are waiting too long for an ambulance, too long to be triaged at A and E and too long to see their GP.

Our NHS was under pressure long before the pandemic, but it is now at breaking point. We need a solution to the staffing crisis, and we need it now.

If we look in more depth at the shortage of NHS staff, we see that the Scottish Government has presided over an increasing shortfall. Members do not need to take my word on it. When NHS Lanarkshire front-line staff were interviewed by STV, one emergency medicine consultant said:

“From a nursing point of view, the military support is helping as it gets the basic stuff done, like the observations and bloods and initial assessments, but they can only do certain things—we don't have more doctors. My colleagues and I don't want to think about winter, as we know it will be worse than it is at the moment. We need a break and we won't get one. We will cope because there is no other way.”

Health professionals are on the front line and, for them to be able to do their job, there need to be enough of them to cope with the demand of patients.

Staff shortages are not the fault of our NHS; they are the fault of the people who manage and oversee the internal structure of our healthcare service. They are the fault of the Scottish Government, which has not addressed long-standing issues.

The SNP has repeatedly been warned about the increasing shortfall in NHS nurses, doctors and ambulance crew. Despite recent funding commitments from the Scottish Government, more action is needed. As Sandesh Gulhane asked, where is the plan?

Since 2016, the Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to remove the cap on funded places for front-line medical students. I am therefore pleased to support the motion, which calls on the Scottish Government to do just that, to respond to concerns that emerged during the pandemic and to tackle issues that have existed for years.

It is not just the Scottish Conservatives who have called for the cap to be removed. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow has also called on the Scottish Government to

remove the cap on medical school places in Scotland.

The reason is clear. The past two years have presented an unlikely opportunity to create more spaces for students to take their rightful places on medical university courses after exam results were revised due to the exam fiasco that the SNP created. The upgrading of thousands of exam results has led to calls to increase places at Scottish medical schools, to accommodate the students who meet the entry requirements.

I acknowledge that the Scottish Government has increased the number of medical school places, but that is not enough. By further increasing the number of medical students that our universities can accommodate, and by looking at the shortfall in positions across Scotland, we can start to address the issues that all health boards are experiencing.

I want to thank our NHS staff for their dedication and hard work, especially during the peak of the pandemic. They need more support—and by “more support” I mean more colleagues. There is a staffing crisis across our NHS, which is directly impacting our NHS. The best and quickest way to create an opportunity to have more NHS staff is to remove the cap and allow more students to study and gain the qualifications that they need to advance their medical careers.

I join my colleagues in calling for the cap to be removed, to support students and to alleviate the staffing pressures that our NHS has experienced for years.

17:02

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. It is important that we set the context for the debate. Staffing levels in NHS Scotland are at an all-time high, after nine consecutive years of growth. As the cabinet secretary said, the Scottish Government has fully funded all places for Scotland-domiciled students who met the terms of their conditional offers from Scottish medical schools, and NHS staff numbers increased by 25,000 between 2006 and 2021. Last year alone, there was 3.6 per cent growth, with more than 5,000 more staff.

There is no doubt that there has been a rise in demand for services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Scottish Government is investing in several ways to address the issue. It has established the national centre for workforce supply, with investment of £11 million. One of the centre's areas of focus will be to offer boards expert advice in relation to labour market intelligence and to help to co-ordinate recruitment programmes.

That work needs to go hand in hand with social work recruitment. There is no doubt that Brexit has had a massive impact in that regard. In my constituency, staff have moved between the NHS and the care sector during the pandemic.

It is important to note that investment in medical and nursing education has been sustained during the pandemic. A record number commenced training in 2021: 4,206 people started nursing training and 1,138 people started in medicine. The numbers will rise further in the autumn. In addition, during the pandemic, work was undertaken with national bodies to ensure that as many former doctors, nurses and allied health professionals as possible who wanted to return to work could do so.

The Scottish Government has record staffing levels and the best-paid staff in the UK, having recently given staff a 3 per cent pay rise.

The proposed significant expansion in the number of trainee doctors underlines the Scottish Government's commitment to support the NHS, not only in response to the pandemic but as we look beyond it and build resilience for the long term.

In addition, £32 million has been committed for a further 139 trainee doctor posts to support NHS services. In psychiatry, five posts will be recruited for a 2022 start, which will provide much-needed support for the delivery of mental health services in NHS Scotland. There will be a further 22 medical specialties that will benefit from the creation of additional training places, including clinical radiology, anaesthetics, clinical oncology, medical oncology, geriatric medicine and infectious diseases, along with neurology and respiratory medicine. The majority of those trainee doctor places will commence in August 2022.

Since 2014, 574 trainee expansion posts have been created in a wide range of specialties, 100 of which have been in general practice. The Scottish shape of training transition group, which is responsible for deciding on the number of trainee posts and the medical specialties in which they will be created, will be undertaking a similar process for 2023.

I want to touch on the Labour amendment, which mentions staff burn-out. That is an important issue. The Scottish Government is committed to safeguarding the mental wellbeing of the workforce and has committed an additional support package of £4 million for staff wellbeing. Having led a members' business debate on mental health recently, I am aware that workers in health, social and social work experience higher levels of mental health problems than those in other groups, and that that has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The additional funding will focus on the physical and mental needs of staff

and will, of course, include provision for hot drinks, food and other measures to aid rest and recuperation.

Importantly, another £5 million has been committed to the establishment of a health and social care mental health network to enhance existing wellbeing and mental health provision, including the national wellbeing hub and the 24/7 national wellbeing helpline.

In conclusion, the level of new domestic training places for medicine is proportionately higher in Scotland than the level anywhere else in the UK and, with the measures that have been highlighted, that will continue to be the case. I urge members to support the Scottish Government amendment.

17:06

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): For me and most of my constituents, this is a simple issue. It is about doing what is right to help an NHS that is struggling to keep its head above water and it is about making sure that we have well-trained and well-looked-after staff who are supported to give the best care in the world. I do not want this to become a party-political issue—I do not think that the issue would benefit from that—but the Scottish Government must step up.

I worry that, going into winter, we will see a repeat of the capacity crisis that we have seen year after year in Scotland and elsewhere. That is undoubtedly exacerbated by the Scottish Government's failure to properly engage in serious workforce planning. That is not a new problem, nor is it, as some spin would have us believe, a problem that is caused solely by Covid. Warnings were in place long ago, and many of my colleagues who sat in the previous session of Parliament will make the same points that I will make today.

As Jackie Baillie indicated, Labour members will support the motion on removing the cap. We must remove that cap on funded places for front-line medical students, but we cannot do so without additional investment for our first-rate medical schools and the capacity to deliver foundation places to all graduates on the completion of their degrees. That is basic common sense, and I believe that it is achievable with the correct political will.

The problem is generally applicable across the medical fields, as Jackie Baillie indicated. I have repeatedly raised issues in the Parliament around the need to increase the number of trained pharmacists in Scotland. Without moving away from the purpose of this debate, I want to make that point again. There is a staff shortage

emergency in the NHS in Scotland, and we have to be honest about that.

Beyond the vital need to get more high-quality front-line staff into our NHS, we need to take care to look after those who are already putting in incredible shifts day after day. Margo Cranmer, the chair of Unison's nursing sector committee, has described Scotland's nursing team as "stressed and exhausted"—that has already been mentioned, but I thought that it was worth stating that again. She went on to say:

"Substantial investment in extra staff and changes to their working lives are essential."

Staff retention is nowhere near where we need it to be, and I view maintaining a satisfied workforce as a top priority for any service that wants to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. I do not think that, in all honesty, we can say that that is where we are in Scotland at the moment.

We have all spoken to constituents and representatives of medical NHS staff who have no end of stories about the strain and pressure that they are under. I want to give them something to hold on to, not just a few headlines or motions of thanks. Therefore, as well as lifting the cap, let us get a long-term pay deal that seriously reflects what health groups and trade unions are asking for, and offer a working-time review to every staff member considering retirement, which will give us the opportunity to offer more flexible working arrangements and retain staff for longer. Staff are fed up with being a secondary consideration.

At the heart of all this is low pay, which is a mistake that the Government makes again and again. We are supposed to be designing a transformational national care service, but the Government has still not committed to a wage of £15 an hour for social care workers. The NHS recovery plan that was presented to Parliament a few weeks ago was equally full—

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: Very briefly; the member is closing.

Humza Yousaf: Can the member tell me briefly how much a wage of £15 an hour for social care workers would cost and where in the health budget she would take the money from?

Carol Mochan: This is what the Government does time and again. It tries to move the debate away from what we know will solve many of those problems. The trade unions tell us that offering that wage to staff would have a positive result.

As the colder nights approach, we may be in serious difficulty no matter what, but if we start the work now and the Government delivers for NHS

staff, we can return to this place in the months and years to come with a sense of achievement.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Mochan.

Carol Mochan: It starts with pay, wellbeing measures and workforce planning, not spin.

17:11

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Standing in the Scottish Parliament, we are fortunate that we get to experience visceral reminders of the rich history of our country. Since the 18th century, Scotland has produced some of the greatest thinkers, writers, scientists and physicians that the world has ever seen—a formidable reputation that defines us to this day.

Such a reputation does not emerge through chance; rather, there is an undeniable relationship between the level of talent that we have and the established focus on education that has shaped the country for hundreds of years. Here in Edinburgh, we have the oldest medical school in the United Kingdom, and in my Glasgow Kelvin constituency, the University of Glasgow's school of medicine boasts incredible contributions from an impressive history of alumni that dates back to the 17th century.

Medical students face incredible challenges, navigating a notoriously competitive field of study while enduring the additional pressures of the pandemic, so I thank the students who volunteered to help the NHS during this time of crisis. There are now more than 21,500 extra NHS staff since the SNP Government came to office, including more doctors, qualified nurses and midwives, and the number of GPs working in Scotland has increased by nearly 12 per cent since 2006. It is our duty to ensure that those numbers continue to rise and that our NHS workforce is as strong as possible.

Remaining mindful of that goal, I am delighted that the number of medical places in Scottish universities has increased in recent years. The University of Glasgow has spoken positively about the upward trend in Scottish medical students, which was achieved by converting 100 former home-nations places into Scots places over a several-year glide path, in line with Scottish Government policy.

Our Government has shown that it is committed to improving the lives and working experiences of junior doctors up and down the country. That commitment is evidenced by a willingness to engage with external stakeholders about goals to implement a 48-hour working week, the £32 million pledge that will create additional trainee posts and the further £4 million for NHS staff support and wellbeing. Only by investing in the

mental and physical health of our workers can we expect to retain our new recruits, build long-term resilience and maintain high standards of care across the NHS.

There is no question but that recent disruptions have created ineluctable vacancies and gaps in the current system.

Carol Mochan: Does the member acknowledge that there were staffing problems before Covid and that it is not just Covid that has caused those problems?

Kaukab Stewart: I acknowledge that having free tuition in this country is the best way of widening that access and addressing any shortfalls in staffing, which we are making great progress on.

Although certain things have been outwith our control, we can influence the way in which we value our healthcare workers. An immense burden has been placed on their shoulders and, as we brace for winter, we assure Scottish medical students that there will always be a place for them and they will always be fully supported in achieving their goals and reaching their full potential, not least because of free tuition in Scotland.

17:15

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): Our NHS is under pressure like never before, and it is increasingly clear that the SNP has no positive ideas for how to turn things around. All that it offers the people of Scotland, and our hard-working NHS staff, is more excuses.

The SNP does not want to admit that removing the cap on funded places for key NHS roles is the right thing to do. The current crisis in the Scottish NHS is, in large part, down to the lack of GPs, doctors, nurses and paramedics—and the list goes on. The problem stems from Nicola Sturgeon's decision a decade ago, when she was health secretary, to cut the number of funded training places at Scottish universities. When this Scottish Parliament first sat in 1999, more than 60 per cent of medical places were filled by Scotland-domiciled students. That figure has dropped by around 10 per cent as a result of the decisions that have been taken in this chamber.

We cannot continue with a policy that is holding back our NHS. After having 14 years in which to sort things out, the SNP has failed. We know that the applicants are still there and are still applying, that Scottish universities are filling their funding places and could fill more with suitably qualified young Scottish people, and that the widening access places could and would be maintained. It

would, therefore, surely be worth giving that suggestion more than a cursory glance.

As Paul McLennan outlined, there is a wide and diverse range of new training places, which conflicts with the cabinet secretary's statement about the threat of a lack of training places for graduates of our medical and nursing schools. Would it not be a more desirable problem to have too many graduates, rather than the workforce crisis that we currently face? Surely our universities are better placed to meet and plan for the longer-term workforce needs.

At the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee earlier this month, the vice-president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine stated that the training scheme had nationally determined numbers and was six years out of date, and that one in five consultants was considering early retirement and one in two was seeking to reduce their hours. He went on to say that, right now, we have one A and E consultant for every 6,500 patients, when it should be one for every 4,000; we are 130 whole-time-equivalent emergency medicine consultants short; and GPs are already facing unprecedented demand. Andrew Buist from the BMA translated those figures to say that, right now, there are 250 whole-time-equivalent GP vacancies in Scotland.

We cannot keep on letting the problems get worse. The SNP's incremental increases in funding for places simply do not meet the scale of the challenge that we face. I urge members on all sides of the chamber to ask themselves whether we are doing enough to protect and future proof our NHS.

We cannot keep on doing the same thing and hoping that the staffing shortages will sort themselves out. We need a bold new approach. Is the SNP Government ready to admit that it has got it wrong? For a nationalist Government, which claims to care about Scotland, to be overseeing a system in which we are turning away bright young Scots who want to be the nurses, doctors and paramedics of the future is nothing short of shameful. By keeping the funding cap in place, we are selling Scotland short. We have the talent—let us do something about it and support the motion from Dr Gulhane today.

17:19

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):

The pandemic has been an extremely difficult time for all those who are learning and working in the NHS, and I, too, express my sincere thanks to them for their efforts.

We know that the NHS workforce was under pressure before Covid and that the pandemic has intensified that pressure, and it is vital that every

avenue is explored in efforts to ensure that our NHS has the staffing levels that it needs. However, it is also important that any decisions are made with a view to the long-term impact.

In its statement about today's debate, the BMA said about the Conservative motion:

"Simply taking steps such as these without a proper, strategic long-term plan for our whole workforce could potentially be counterproductive."

Right now, we have staff shortages in the NHS, and the staff who are in post have experienced huge increases in their workload. That means that the number of clinicians who are available to engage in teaching and training is reduced. Any move to increase medical student places must take account of that, or we risk piling even more pressure on existing staff and creating bigger class sizes with fewer teachers, which, as the BMA has warned, could affect the learning experience.

In the wake of the pandemic, proper workforce planning will be essential if we are to secure the sustainability of the NHS, but that must be long-term strategic planning that anticipates how the decisions that we make now will affect the workforce in future generations. The BMA has also warned that, if the Conservatives are proposing that we lift the cap on Scottish students without increasing student numbers overall,

"there are issues around how that is done fairly and appropriately."

Increasing student numbers is, of course, an important part of long-term workforce planning, but we must also look to the short term. We need to retain the staff who are in place now, but that will become increasingly difficult while the pressures on the NHS continue to increase. Staff are exhausted. They are worn down and burned out. Mental health support will play a key role in supporting the workforce, and I have heard positive feedback about the national wellbeing hub, although it is only part of the picture.

Fundamentally, we need to improve working conditions for staff and ensure that they feel valued and that their contribution is recognised. I have been dismayed by some of the questions that have been asked in Parliament about why GPs are "not seeing patients" or when GP practices can "reopen". GP practices are open and GPs are seeing patients. General practices in Scotland deal with more than half a million appointments every week. There are, of course, on-going issues with waits for appointments, and I do not want to minimise the distress that that is causing to patients. People are waiting for far too long, which is unacceptable, but that is due to the immense pressure that is being placed on GP services and it is not because their doors are shut

to the public. We do GPs a disservice by pretending otherwise, and that will certainly not help retention.

I turn to widening access. I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to doubling the number of widening access places to help to create a more diverse medical workforce. The NHS needs to reflect the diversity of Scotland, and there is evidence that a diverse workforce can improve the quality of care. Widening access is essential from a social justice perspective, but it also has numerous benefits for the NHS and patient care.

We know that students from the poorest 40 per cent of neighbourhoods are less likely to study medicine, or the other professional courses such as law, veterinary medicine and architecture. People who are care experienced, young carers and asylum seekers might also be less likely to study medicine. That means that we are missing out a significant pool of people who could go on to become excellent clinicians. That is to our and the health service's detriment, and it needs to change.

17:23

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Presiding Officer,

"We need a recruitment and retention strategy with real teeth because it is evident the one in place by Labour ministers is totally ineffective and is putting our NHS at breaking point."

That was said by a Conservative member of the Senedd in Wales. I do not believe the statement, and nor is it true of the NHS in Scotland. I could also make a point about the vacancy rate for nurses and midwives in Scotland, which is 7.1 per cent. That is not good enough and it is a significant issue, but the rate is 10.3 per cent in England. That is not to remotely pass the buck in relation to the significant and major issues in Scotland, but they should be placed in context.

I agree with many of the matters that Jackie Baillie raised. I absolutely agree that pressures on staffing existed before the pandemic, but that was not just in Scotland but across the UK. That can be true at the same time as we have record levels of investment in the NHS by the Scottish Government and record staffing numbers, with numbers up by 21 per cent over the SNP's time in office. Action was being taken to tackle the pressures prior to the pandemic, with the expansion of medical, nursing and midwifery training places, as well as an increase in levels of postgraduate specialist medical training.

As part of the NHS recovery plan, there is a commitment to grow the number of undergraduate medical training places by 100 per annum over this session of the Parliament, as well as an

ambitious plan to double the numbers of people training from the poorest backgrounds.

That puts into perspective the calls from the Conservatives to remove the cap on funded training places. Action has already been taken—the action of a costed plan to increase those places. However, I would welcome additional information from the Scottish Government on the creation of a national centre for workforce supply and what its relationship will be with more general workforce planning—there surely must be a connection—including in ensuring a sufficient supply of places at medical schools and across other disciplines. Those things have to talk to each other, because that is important.

By the end of this year, the Scottish Government will publish a national workforce strategy that supports the delivery of its Covid recovery plan with more details and key workforce targets. Will the national centre for workforce supply feed continuously into any revisions of those targets? Will the strategy have specific targets on recruitment and retention that we can monitor? Will it feed into the assumptions on training places over the years? It is right that all that should be scrutinised.

I return to Jackie Baillie's amendment, which references various important matters other than training places, such as recruitment and retention of staff across the NHS, as well as the idea of targeting potential NHS returners. I agree with that absolutely. I contend that much of that work is already happening but it is right that we do more where we can and monitor its success.

I wanted to say more but, in the time that I have left, I will talk about people who are already qualified to work in our NHS. I refer to people such as the nurses whom I met at an event in the Parliament a few weeks ago who were trained in Scotland but are not allowed to work in the NHS because of their asylum status. That is scandalous, against their human rights and an act of self-harm against Scotland and its NHS. Someone who is about to graduate in another medical discipline—they are not a medic and I do not want to mention their discipline—contacted me the other day to say that, because of their asylum status, they will not be able to take up paid employment in the NHS.

There are things that we can do in the Parliament to improve the situation, but surely to goodness there are also things that we can do in the UK to allow everyone who is qualified to work in our NHS to take up employment and do so.

17:27

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): As has been said throughout the debate, although

the chronic shortages of staff in our NHS have been exacerbated by the pandemic, they were not caused by it. The crisis is 14 years in the making.

As my colleague Jackie Baillie forensically set out, the Government has presided over historic failures in workforce planning. It was warned time and again. Further to that, for far too long, there has been underinvestment in higher education, which trains our NHS staff of the future.

The funding that is awarded for Scottish students comes nowhere near meeting the cost of training them. We welcome today's call for a significant increase in funded places for front-line medical staff, but there is a worrying lack of understanding from the Tories on the practical constraints on that. Jackie Baillie set out that there were 9,530 applicants last year and 1,290 students were admitted, and she asked a reasonable question about where the bar would be set.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and Paul McLennan fell into some of the same patterns by hailing the number of people admitted who met the entry requirements while seemingly unaware that those entry requirements are, in significant part, set to limit entrants based on the number of funded places that the Government supplies.

I welcome the broad agreement among members of all parties who have spoken about the fact that much more can be done to recruit young and older Scots. It would be good to hear more about how that can develop, so that we can increase the number of Scotland-domiciled people who are involved in our NHS. However, we currently have acute shortages in a range of areas. Those are in not only—to name but a few—vascular surgery, neurology, internal medicine and mental health, which Alex Cole-Hamilton highlighted, but nurses and, crucially, GPs.

Therefore, when the health secretary made a trip to my Lochee ward to glumly announce a national scheme for new GP surgery buildings—

Humza Yousaf: I was not glum.

Michael Marra: The photo that I saw was pretty glum.

It was not only the risible figure of £7 million that attracted ridicule but, crucially, the fact that there are no GPs to go into those fantasy buildings.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

Michael Marra: I will do so in a while, if the minister will bear with me.

Long-term cuts that are made to training places have real-world consequences, and not just for those young people who hope for a lifelong

productive career in medicine and care. Let us take the breast cancer care crisis in my home city of Dundee. From this SNP Government, we get denials and a Deputy First Minister burying his head in the sand—“Crisis, what crisis?” was the headline. Instead, Labour is listening to those who know what they are talking about, such as the workers in the service, the patients who require care and the tragically bereaved families. They know that one clinician cannot do the work that was previously done by three specialists. On the same visit, the health secretary—and I think that this is why he looked glum—told people in Dundee and across Tayside that there is a “full service”, but that is utter fantasy. The perverse situation is that the SNP says that the cause of the crisis—which we are, at the same time, to believe does not exist—is national staff shortages in those specialist positions. Who is in charge of training those people and providing those skills? The Government says that it takes years, but the SNP has had 14 years.

Carol Mochan touched on a relevant point in relation to that issue. As well as recruiting more, we should be retaining and valuing the workforce that we already have. If only the SNP Government and NHS Tayside management would listen to that point on retaining the specialist breast cancer staff in Tayside, we would not have a crisis in that service in my constituency.

As many members have said, NHS staff are doing tireless work, performing miracles every day under the harshest pressure and without the support that they need from the SNP Government. That is important, because the lack of planning and specialist staff means that services come under increased pressure and, for too many, those services cease to exist. The consequences are life threatening, and the population is reaping what the SNP sows.

17:31

Humza Yousaf: I will try to address some of the points that members of the Opposition and my colleagues on the back benches have raised. It has been a good and interesting debate, and we have managed to get into a bit of the detail of the Tory motion and the consequences that it would have, but the issue could do with further debate, and I am happy to engage in that debate with Dr Gulhane or health spokespeople across the chamber.

Jackie Baillie made a very good speech; she can put that in a leaflet if she wishes.

Jackie Baillie: No.

Humza Yousaf: She has declined my offer; I am not sure why. [*Laughter.*]

Jackie Baillie, Michael Marra and a couple of other members did well to focus on the pragmatic and practical challenges with the Tories' proposal. It is very clear that the Tories have not thought through the proposal in any great detail. For example, they are not able to answer questions about how many places the universities would have to take on or how much that would cost. Have they spoken to medical schools about whether they have the teaching staff in place? Have they spoken to NHS boards about the number of trainees that they have in place and whether they have the capacity to train an uncontrolled expansion of medical students? They have clearly not had those conversations, or else they would have gone into that detail. Jackie Baillie and other members went into those practical and pragmatic issues in relation to the cap. Somewhat strangely and bizarrely, Jackie Baillie said that she will still support the Tory motion, despite, rightly, poking holes all the way through it.

Jackie Baillie: Although they have not thought the practical consequences through, does the cabinet secretary not agree that the intention behind the Tories' motion is valuable?

Humza Yousaf: That is why am delighted that we committed to increase medical graduate places by 100 per year and that those places were filled. Every Scotland-domiciled student who met the conditions of their offer was offered a place in a Scottish university, so I am delighted about that.

Although many of the suggestions in the Labour amendment are very good, of course, I cannot support it, because I do not agree with its inaccurate preamble.

Jackie Baillie: How is it inaccurate?

Humza Yousaf: I will come to why it is inaccurate.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, if we look at our workforce statistics, we see that we have an excellent record on NHS staffing and that is why we have record numbers working in our NHS under this SNP Government.

Brian Whittle: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Humza Yousaf: I will not give way, at this stage.

Since we came to power, there has been a 20 per cent increase in our staffing. There has been a more than 11 per cent increase in the number of qualified nurses and midwives and a 58 per cent—almost 60 per cent—increase in the number of medical and dental consultants.

When I look at the figures across the UK, I note that we have 94 GPs per 100,000 in Scotland,

compared with 76 per 100,000 in England and 75 per 100,000 in Labour-controlled Wales.

I cannot speak much to Alex Cole-Hamilton's speech. It is a shame that he was not in the chamber, as I would have been able to intervene during his contribution, which was riddled with inaccuracies.

Meghan Gallacher asked when our workforce plan will be published, and I can tell her that it will be published later this year. I thought that she and Dr Gulhane perhaps portrayed something inaccurately: they both seemed to suggest that the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow said that the cap should be removed in perpetuity. That is not my understanding of the royal college's statement; rather, my understanding is that it had asked for the cap to be removed in 2020 due to the increase in applications caused by the exam situation. We did remove the cap in 2020 to deal with the additional applications. However, if I have that wrong, I am happy to correct the record.

Carol Mochan has regularly stood up here, quite rightly, to remind every single one of us, including those of us in government, that the wellbeing of our staff is crucial. That is why I am delighted that we have invested £12 million in the wellbeing of staff.

With regard to Carol Mochan's call for £15 an hour for social care workers, I asked a reasonable question about how much that would cost. She seemed to say that that is immaterial, but that is not correct. In government, I am afraid that we have to consider such matters. However, if, as part of the budget negotiations—which we are undoubtedly about to enter into—her party wishes to make such a proposal, it will have to demonstrate where the money will come from.

I know that I need to conclude, so I will end by saying that I understand that there are challenges, which have undoubtedly been exacerbated by the pandemic, but I am proud of this SNP-led Government's record on NHS staffing. Staffing is at record levels, and has been growing for nine consecutive years. I do not doubt that it will grow for a 10th year in a row.

17:37

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to close the debate for the Scottish Conservatives, especially given the urgent need for action.

I express my sympathy to those who have been directly affected by the NHS crisis, and offer my gratitude to the NHS staff who are working under extreme pressures to keep us all safe.

Today, members have heard my colleagues call for action from the Scottish Government on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students. Members have heard from my colleague Dr Sandesh Gulhane, who is a practising doctor who, alongside his colleagues, faces those challenges day in and day out. He could not have been more accurate with his comments. A distracted Government that focuses more on ideological and constitutional obsessions is no friend of the NHS.

I echo what Dr Gulhane said—we urgently require strategic workforce planning to ensure that the NHS is prepared for the future. That is why it is important that the SNP listens to medical staff on the ground, such as Dr Gulhane.

My colleague, Meghan Gallacher, referred to NHS Lanarkshire, whose staff have said that they “don’t want to think about winter, as we know it will be worse than it is at the moment”.

That is not all. My colleague, Sue Webber, highlighted the lacklustre increase in funded training places, which will not scratch the surface of the problems that we are facing.

I will pick up on a few of the other contributions from around the chamber.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Pam Gosal: I do not have enough time. I am sorry.

It was great to hear all the statistics from the cabinet secretary, but we need the plans to translate into change and delivery for those on the ground, but not only for the short term; we must have a long-term strategic plan that works.

I welcome the removal of the cap for a year, but why just a year? Why not just remove it?

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

Pam Gosal: I will not at the moment. I need to make some headway.

I thank Jackie Bailie for drawing attention to the SNP’s planning failures, and for highlighting the need to improve infrastructure to support current staff.

I agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton that we are losing people from the medical profession and that much more must be done about that. I also agree with him that the Government’s workforce strategy is not equipped to deal with the NHS crisis.

Today, we have heard from members from all parties; I will refer to some of them. SNP members Paul McLennan, Kaukab Stewart and Bob Doris basically said that action is being taken and that nothing is wrong. Kaukab Stewart was right to say

that we have great talent in Scotland—but let us keep it here.

Carol Mochan talked about the NHS keeping its head above water and said that nursing staff are “stressed and exhausted”. Gillian Mackay said that we need to have in place a proper workforce plan.

Our priority must be to ensure that we are able to provide the best standard of care for patients. We can do that only by improving the conditions on the ground and ensuring that the NHS and its workforce are prepared for the future. We do not need more sticking plasters from the SNP.

Every day, we read more reports that there are not enough doctors to keep up with demand, and that the chronic shortage of front-line staff is threatening the health sector’s recovery. Why has not the Scottish Government scrapped the cap already? There is something amiss about that.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member give way? I can explain.

Pam Gosal: Not yet.

Let me highlight some figures, just in case the SNP has forgotten them. First, 55 percent of surveyed Scottish Ambulance Service staff have witnessed adverse clinical events—that is, patients dying or becoming seriously ill—because of long waiting times. Secondly, 42 percent of GP practices are reporting that demand is substantially exceeding capacity. Last but not least are the figures on waiting times. The SNP Government is still failing to get to grips with the unacceptable strain on Scotland’s accident and emergency wards.

I highlight and make clear that we are not blaming NHS staff in any way. The failure lies solely with the SNP Scottish Government’s leadership.

I now want to talk about a personal experience. My son is studying medicine at the University of Dundee. However, that might not have been the case because he was denied a place at first, but was fortunate enough to be accepted in the second round. Many of his friends, who are also successful students, were not as lucky, so we lost that talent to universities outside Scotland. That is exactly the brain drain that my colleagues speak of.

Staff are working tirelessly and people’s lives are at risk, but there is a cap on the number of people who can train in the very services that this country so desperately needs. Our motion today calls on the Scottish Government to remove completely the cap on funded places for front-line medical students. The reality is that, without urgent action, the situation will only get worse.

I urge all parties to vote for our motion today. I support the Conservative motion in Dr Sandesh Gulhane's name.

Sandesh Gulhane: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise—I did not declare my interest as a practising doctor.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Dr Gulhane.

Just to be clear, I note that that concludes the debate on funded places for front-line medical students.

Business Motions

17:43

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-02155, 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 23 November 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 Ministerial Statement: International Development COVID-19 Support – Partner Countries and Humanitarian Responses

followed by Ministerial Statement: Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap – The Future of the Scottish Attainment Challenge

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scottish Government Response to the Report of the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

4.50 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 24 November 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 25 November 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 Motion
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
followed by Scottish Government Debate:
 International Day for the Elimination of
 Violence against Women
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 30 November 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 1 December 2021
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Justice and Veterans;
 Finance and Economy
followed by Scottish Labour Party Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.10 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 2 December 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 COVID-19 Recovery Committee Debate
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week

beginning 22 November 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.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S6M-02156 and S6M-02157, in the name of George Adam, on stage 1 timetables for bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 25 March 2022.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Miners' Strike (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 1 April 2022.—[George Adam.]

Motions agreed to.

Decision Time

17:44

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

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

The first question is, that amendment S6M-02138.2, in the name of Graeme Dey, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02138, in the name of Graham Simpson, on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

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

17:45

Meeting suspended.

17:50

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the division on amendment S6M-02138.2, in the name of Graeme Dey. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02138.2, in the name of Graeme Dey, is: For 86, Against 32, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-02138.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02138, in the name of Graham Simpson, on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, 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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02138.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, is: For 23, Against 95, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-02138, in the name of Graham Simpson, on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland, 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)

Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-02138, in the name of Graham Simpson, on delivering promised road infrastructure across Scotland, as amended, is: For 90, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that, in the face of the climate emergency and the imperative to cut greenhouse gas emissions, as a nation, there is a need to encourage more people to use more sustainable travel options and reduce their car use; acknowledges the need to shift away from spending money on new road projects that encourage more people to drive, and instead focus resource on maintaining roads and improving safety; agrees that people need a realistic and affordable alternative in public transport and active travel, and notes that the Scottish Government will set out its plans for future investment in Scotland's transport network in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-02139.2, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02139, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students, 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)
 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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-02139.2, in the name of Humza Yousaf, is: For 67, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-02139.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02139, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02139.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, is: For 51, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-02139, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students, as amended, 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. My app did not work. I would have voted no.

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 application failed. I would have voted yes.

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

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app also failed. I would have voted no.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
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 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)
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 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)

(SNP)

Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
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 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
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 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
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 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
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 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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-02139, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on removing the cap on funded places for front-line medical students, as amended, is: For 67, Against 50, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the sustained increases in medical undergraduate places at Scottish universities; notes that the level of new domestic training places for medicine is proportionately higher in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK; further notes that, this year, the Scottish Government fully funded all places for Scottish domiciled students holding an offer from a Scottish medical school, where they met the terms of their conditional offer;

recognises that the Programme for Government sets out steps to substantially increase training places further; believes that widening access to medicine is essential, and supports doubling the number of widening access places to help create a more diverse medical workforce.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month 2021

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-01259, in the name of Clare Adamson, on pancreatic cancer awareness month 2021. The debate will conclude without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges that November is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, and that 18 November 2021 is World Pancreatic Cancer Day; understands that pancreatic cancer is one of the most aggressive and least survivable forms of cancer, with more than half of people diagnosed with it dying within three months; further understands that pancreatic cancer can affect anyone, but that it is subject to multiple inequalities with poorer outcomes for certain communities and those living in more deprived areas; understands that survival rates have remained almost static for the last 50 years; highlights the importance of early diagnosis and intervention; notes the view that raising public awareness of key symptoms of pancreatic cancer is vital to that aim; understands that key symptoms of pancreatic cancer include abdominal or back pain or discomfort, unexplained weight loss or a loss of appetite, yellowing of the skin or eyes and/or itchy skin, a change in bowel habits, nausea or vomiting, and indigestion that does not respond to treatment; commends all of the charities and activist organisations and their dedicated supporters for their tireless efforts to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer, and wishes everyone involved with Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month every success in their endeavours.

18:07

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I promise not to sing tonight, Presiding Officer.

I pay tribute to the limitless dedication of the volunteers and campaigners who make pancreatic cancer awareness month happen. We are missing the sea of purple in the public gallery, but I know that they are with us tonight. The first time that we had a debate on pancreatic cancer awareness month in the Parliament was in 2017. As I pause to reflect on what has changed, I note that we will have more speakers from my party than we had in the whole debate in 2017. That is testament to the efforts of everyone who works to get pancreatic cancer in the political spotlight. I thank every one of my colleagues around the chamber who will take part in the debate and look forward to their speeches.

I will talk about optimism. We do not normally associate that with pancreatic cancer. First, I will outline some of the key statistics that show the need for action. Pancreatic cancer is the least-survivable common cancer in Scotland. Only one person in four who is diagnosed with it survives beyond a year. The five-year survival rate is only

5.6 per cent. Members should compare that to the five-year rate of 69 per cent for other common types of cancer. Seven people in 10 with pancreatic cancer will never receive any treatment but will move straight to palliative care and only one person in 10 will receive surgery.

Each November, we emphasise the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. However, recent surveys show that 55 per cent of people in Scotland know almost nothing about the disease and 73 per cent cannot name a single symptom. Let us work to correct that. Symptoms to look for are: abdominal pain that can spread to the back, unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite, new diabetes without weight gain, a yellowing of the skin or eyes, itchiness and a change in bowel habits, including indigestion that does not respond to treatment, smelly pee or floating stools.

Figures on pancreatic cancer have remained static for 50 years. I have said that in every debate that we have had since 2017 but do we really take on board what it means?

I was recently reading about "Succession" star and national treasure Brian Cox, whom I met in the Parliament at an event. In his autobiography, he talks about being pushed into acting largely because of the trauma that he felt after his father Charlie passed away from pancreatic cancer just three weeks after his diagnosis. I ask members to think of the span of Brian Cox's life, career and body of work. His experience, devastating as it was, is redolent of that of the many patients and families who experience a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, including those who have shared it with me. Today, in Scotland, more than 50 years after Brian Cox's family experienced that, another family could hear the same devastating news and face losing a loved one within a matter of weeks. That is why we are all in the chamber tonight.

What about the case for optimism? Where can we look for a change? We must remember that, with early diagnosis, pancreatic cancer can be survived. For patients who are diagnosed in time to receive potentially life-saving surgery, the five-year survival rate increases to around 30 per cent. Early diagnosis, intervention and holistic care can mean that people are able to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life.

Initiatives throughout Scotland are working to raise awareness of the disease. In the summer, I was pleased to take part in the big step forward, which was organised by Pancreatic Cancer UK. I had a walk around Strathclyde park, accompanied by Kim Rowan, who is a formidable campaigner on the matter, Dawn from Pancreatic Cancer UK, my assistant Julia Stachurska and Mullach the dog. If you want to raise awareness of an issue, you can wear all the T-shirts that you want in the world but, if you take a dog on a walk, you get

people asking what is happening. Thousands of people took part in the big step forward, and an amazing £240,786 was raised for world-leading research into pancreatic cancer.

I also attended the fabulous production of “Islets of Silence (The C Word)”, a play written and directed by Isobel Barrett. It was heart-warming and difficult but laced with purpose and hope. Most importantly, with the help of Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland, the play is taking awareness right into our local communities.

Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland also hosts the pan can van, which takes the message about pancreatic cancer awareness into our communities. It goes to events and into our town centres, and the staff explain to people how to look out for the symptoms of the cancer. The pan can van will be outside the Parliament tomorrow, and I encourage all my colleagues to visit it.

I also must mention the indomitable Lynda Murray, whose advocacy for the pancreatic cancer cause cannot be overstated. The death of her father, William Begley, has inspired her to campaign relentlessly for a patient pathway that will give people a chance that her father did not have.

This summer, Lynda linked me in with the Scottish HepatoPancreatoBiliary Network, or SHPBN, hepatocellular carcinoma and pancreatic cancer patient pathways improvement project. Wish me luck, because I am going to have to say that name again. The Scottish HepatoPancreatoBiliary Network aims to ensure equity in care for patients throughout Scotland with cancer of the liver, pancreas, gallbladder and biliary tree. The Scottish Government has awarded funding of £653,000 to that new SHPBN project to help to streamline and shorten the staging phase and, simultaneously, to enhance patient care and support through communication. I thank all the clinicians who are involved in the project—in particular, Ross Carter and Anya Adair—for their work.

Despite the grim statistics that we encounter, there is a well of innovation around pancreatic cancer. I could go on about areas such as Precision-Panc, but I know that we are really busy tonight and that those areas will be covered by colleagues in the chamber.

My final ask of the minister is to look at stereotactic ablative radiotherapy, or SABR, for treating locally advanced pancreatic cancer. That is currently being piloted in England. I ask the Government to look with interest to the success of that project as another way of fighting this cancer.

Continued investment, training, research and cultural shifts to holistic care are vital if we are to overcome pancreatic cancer. I hope that, one day,

this annual debate will not need to take place and that people and families who are affected by pancreatic cancer can look back to this time as one of change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Adamson. I know what you mean about taking the dog for a walk. I have one of those—he decides that he does not want to come back home with me all the time.

18:16

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): The pancreatic cancer ribbon is purple. It represents the love of one daughter for her mother. Rose Schneider died after battling pancreatic cancer, and her daughter founded the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network to support those affected. Purple was Rose’s favourite colour.

Tomorrow evening, as part of world pancreatic cancer day, Dunoon landmarks will be bathed in purple light to reflect the love of a family and a community for one of their own: local firefighter David Colquhoun. David was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in September this year. On behalf of David and his family, I thank my colleague Clare Adamson for ensuring that the Scottish Parliament plays its important role in raising awareness of pancreatic cancer.

David’s sister-in-law, Jacqueline Kennedy, said to me yesterday:

“All cancers need to be up there. We need people to talk about them.”

As Clare Adamson said, pancreatic cancer is the deadliest common cancer in Scotland. The five-year annual survival rate is only 5.6 per cent. Awareness levels of it in Scotland are low. Fifty-five per cent of people know almost nothing about the disease. Jacqueline is right: we need to talk about it.

David is Dunoon through and through. He has his own roofing business and is employed as a firefighter in Dunoon fire and rescue service. In August this year, he was one of the heroic firefighters who risked his own life during the horrific fire in Argyll Street. He has given much to his community. Tomorrow, his community will show its support for him and help to raise awareness of the key symptoms of pancreatic cancer.

The family wanted to use what they were experiencing to improve the prospects of others. By bringing their voices, commitment and energy, they are helping to change the pancreatic cancer story across Cowal. David’s daughter and her friends organised a sponsored wear purple day at Dunoon grammar school, and friends and family have taken on individual walking challenges. All

are raising funds for Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland and Pancreatic Cancer UK. Tomorrow evening, there will be a walk through the town in which people will visit all the purple-lit landmarks, from Dunoon fire station to Dunoon Castle House Museum.

The past couple of months have been incredibly tough, as David, his wife, his children, his immediate family and his friends have come to terms with the diagnosis, but the support that they have received from NHS Scotland as well as Sheila, their amazing Macmillan Cancer Support nurse, has been a huge help. Pancreatic Cancer UK and Pancreatic Cancer Action have also been great. Both charities work tirelessly for people who are living with and affected by pancreatic cancer. They support innovative research to find breakthroughs that will help how pancreatic cancer is understood, diagnosed and treated.

One example of that is pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy, or PERT. A tablet replaces the digestive enzymes that many people with pancreatic cancer can no longer produce. Only one in three people with pancreatic cancer in Scotland is being prescribed PERT. However, fortunately, Scotland is acting on that issue and leading the way in transforming PERT prescription rates.

I will finish with simple and honest words from Jacqueline that ring true for any illness, but even more so for pancreatic cancer, as it does not present in an obvious way. Jacqueline said to me:

“Keep listening to your body, and keep going to the doctor.”

18:19

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): November is pancreatic cancer awareness month and tomorrow is pancreatic cancer awareness day. I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to show my support. It is a fantastic chance for the pancreatic cancer community to come together to raise awareness and funds, and to remember loved ones who have, sadly, died of the disease.

Raising awareness is key, because two thirds of people in the United Kingdom cannot name a single symptom of pancreatic cancer. Even more worrying is that around half of pancreatic cancer patients will visit their general practitioner three times because of their symptoms before being referred to hospital.

Pancreatic cancer is the deadliest common cancer in Scotland. Only one in four of those who are diagnosed with it survives beyond a year. In the UK, 10,000 people are diagnosed each year, yet pancreatic cancer receives only 2 per cent of national cancer research funding, despite being the fifth-highest killing cancer.

Scotland is leading the way in pancreatic cancer innovation. For example, Precision-Panc is a major research programme that is being developed and run at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre in Glasgow. It collaborates with world leaders from the University of Glasgow, the Cancer Research UK institutes at the Beatson and in Cambridge and Manchester, the Institute of Cancer Research in London, the University of Oxford and the national health service.

My life before Parliament allowed me unparalleled access to the surgical treatment of this deadly cancer. I worked alongside upper gastrointestinal surgical consultants from across the country, including Ross Carter who was mentioned by Clare Adamson. I know from experience the complex nature of the surgery that is needed to treat pancreatic cancer. The specialist surgeons are dedicated and are committed to adopting innovation to reduce surgical operating time even by the slightest margins, and to seeking new ways to reduce surgical risk and post-operative complications. They work collaboratively across the NHS to do all that they can to increase their patients' survival.

However, the outcomes following the potentially lifesaving surgery are still a long way from being acceptable. If a patient is diagnosed in time for surgery, the five-year survival rate increases to around 30 per cent. We must diagnose people far earlier, so that they will live longer and experience better quality of life.

For anyone who receives a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, as my friend's mother has, life stops—albeit briefly—and family and friends must respond quickly. My friend Mike had to return from Australia: the only saving grace was that he was able to return to see his mum, which would not have been possible a year ago.

A diagnosis of pancreatic cancer affects every aspect of life and brings emotional, financial, and practical problems that can last long after treatment ends. If anyone who is in that position is listening to the debate today, I take the opportunity to direct them to the practical, emotional and financial support that is offered by Macmillan Cancer Support. Anyone can, as a first step, call their telephone helpline on 0808 808 00 00, or go to the Macmillan website for help.

I thank Clare Adamson for bringing the debate to Parliament, and for helping to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer.

18:23

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I congratulate Clare Adamson for securing the debate. I know that she has a long-standing

interest in the issue. I commend her initiative and her opening speech, which was made with compassion and real understanding of the issues.

It is important not only that we take the opportunity to recognise pancreatic cancer awareness month, but that we strive to improve the response to that dreadful disease. I will use the debate to ensure that the voices of some of my constituents who have been affected by pancreatic cancer are heard here. This is the 10th anniversary of pancreatic cancer awareness month, with world pancreatic cancer day being marked on Thursday.

More than 9,000 people die of the disease across the UK annually. Tragically, that is often within weeks of diagnosis. We need to raise awareness in order to save lives. Public awareness levels are really low: 52 per cent of the public know almost nothing about the disease and 73 per cent cannot name a single symptom. It has, mainly due to late diagnosis, the lowest survival rate of all the cancers.

A constituent of mine, Kayleigh Martin, contacted me to ask whether I would raise awareness of pancreatic cancer. It is an honour to do so in Parliament on her behalf. Kayleigh lost her mum, Helen Carson, to the disease in December 2020, only three months after diagnosis. Helen worked at the Scottish Trades Union Congress for 40 years—a job that she enjoyed very much. She was also a very proud Bankie, born and bred.

Kayleigh is pushing for better treatment nearer to people's homes and increased awareness of the disease. She feels that the general public and health professionals need to be more aware of the signs and symptoms of pancreatic cancer in order to enable quicker diagnosis. Her experiences have also convinced her of the need for enhanced end-of-life care and support. Better communication and streamlined services are essential to those who are impacted to enable them to use the time that they have left to greater effect.

Helen attended the New Victoria hospital and the Glasgow royal infirmary for further investigations, which left her exhausted and fatigued. Helen's disease was found to be so far advanced that treatment with chemotherapy was not an option. She felt that if information had been available to her sooner, that might have allowed her to spend more precious time with her family.

Another of my constituents, Kirsteen Smillie, also wants more awareness of this terrible disease, to which she lost her father, Donald Langan. Kirsteen's dad had a bit longer with his family; he lived for a year and a half after being diagnosed. During those final months, he had chemotherapy, prior to extensive surgery, during

which several of his major organs were removed. Unfortunately, when the cancer returned to his lungs, he lived only another nine days.

Kirsteen and her mum, Christine—Donald's beloved wife—and their family continue to fundraise to help to raise awareness and to continue research into the terrible disease. Throughout November, they are taking part in Pancreatic Cancer UK's "10,000 steps a day in November" challenge. I wish all the family the very best in their endeavours.

Those are the heartbreaking real-life experiences of some of my constituents, which highlight the importance of early diagnosis. We must ensure that compassionate care and support are there when people need them. As a member of the nursing team at St Margaret of Scotland Hospice, I saw at first hand how quickly patients deteriorate and die from pancreatic cancer. Unfortunately, late diagnosis resulted in palliative and end-of-life care being the patients' only options. I will never forget the impact that the cancer had on families, whose love, compassion and support were unwavering and selfless. That is reflected and recognised in the testimony that I have given on behalf of my constituents.

I welcome the debate and everything else that has been done to promote the importance of early diagnosis. I am humbled by the determination of my constituents to see more action on the matter. In memory of those who have lost their lives to this terrible disease, we must work together collectively in order to do all that we can to increase awareness of pancreatic cancer and aim for more positive outcomes.

18:28

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank Clare Adamson for bringing this important debate to the chamber. On behalf of Scottish Labour, I am proud to highlight the importance of pancreatic cancer awareness month, and of marking world pancreatic cancer day tomorrow.

Pancreatic cancer is truly one of the most aggressive cancers and is perhaps, sadly, the deadliest common cancer in our country. It is a cancer that often brings an abrupt end to the lives of the people whom it targets. In my local health board, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, it has killed between 50 and 70 people every single year for the past decade. That is 50 to 70 more families being devastated year after year.

A close family friend died from pancreatic cancer many years ago and I am sure that today he will be thought of by so many people, including my parents and family, who have some very fond memories of him.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways, but one of the most concerning impacts has been the reduction in levels of early cancer diagnosis. Staff shortages, pressure on the NHS, and long general practitioner waiting times have, among a host of other factors, contributed to figures that Cancer Research UK calls “devastating”.

Admittedly, the context of there being a global pandemic has impacted on the ability of health services across the world, but in Scotland we must act with purpose to reverse those concerns, resume early detection and give those who have cancer the best chance of life.

However, it is absolutely devastating that, even after diagnosis and treatment, many of the people who are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer are not given that chance of life, due to their symptoms not being noticed or treated with concern until too late. Therefore, it is important to highlight again that the

“key symptoms of pancreatic cancer include abdominal or back pain or discomfort, unexplained weight loss or a loss of appetite, yellowing of the skin or eyes and/or itchy skin, a change in bowel habits, nausea or vomiting, and indigestion that does not respond to treatment”.

Just as important is that it be made very clear to the public that the NHS is—even although it is under strain and is still suffering from staff shortages—open and accessible, and that if a member of the public has concerns, it is better to have a medical examination than to wait until it is too late. The importance of public awareness of the symptoms and of the fact that treatment and examination are available, should people need it, cannot be overstated. Everyone in the chamber would agree that any person who is concerned should go and seek treatment.

As Clare Adamson rightly mentions in her motion, despite the fact that some progress has recently been made, the survival rates for pancreatic cancer have remained stubbornly similar for far too long, so it is incumbent on all of us to do more, to act and to raise awareness of this awful disease in order to help people to secure the early diagnosis and treatment that can be so vital to their future.

As I often do, I want to bring to members’ attention the health inequalities that underpin cancer survival rates. According to Public Health Scotland, greater deprivation is linked to poorer survival rates from cancer. We must strive to do something about that. It is unjust and unfair that that remains the case in Scotland in 2021. Much more work needs to be done to address the clear health, social and economic inequalities that mean that a person’s postcode can make the difference between their having a stronger chance and their

having a weaker chance of survival from the deadly disease.

I thank the organisations, which many members have mentioned, that have done so much work to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer. The value and importance of their work cannot be overstated; as parliamentarians, we must do all that we can to support them.

As we continue to make progress in our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, as we hope we will, the Scottish Government needs to ensure that its priorities include addressing late diagnosis and focusing on early intervention. It must also do more to tackle the widespread health inequalities that, to this day, remain a stain on our society and adversely impact people from our most deprived areas.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You need to wind up now.

Carol Mochan: Again, I wish all those who are involved in pancreatic cancer awareness month the very best, and I thank Clare Adamson.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Mochan.

I am conscious of the number of members who still want to contribute to the debate, so I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Clare Adamson to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[Clare Adamson]

Motion agreed to.

18:33

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): I am grateful to Clare Adamson for securing this important debate to highlight pancreatic awareness month, and to Pancreatic Cancer UK for its briefing.

In the past 18 months, the world has, of course, been thrown into an unprecedented public health crisis. As a result, there has been less focus on other illnesses and diseases. Sadly, as other speakers have noted, the statistics show that, even without the additional strain on health services across the UK, pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest and hardest to detect cancers. It clearly requires more attention.

One of the main problems with pancreatic cancer is that it is difficult to diagnose. Even short delays between diagnosis and having surgery or chemotherapy drastically lower the chances of survival.

According to the NHS Inform website, in the early stages, a tumour in the pancreas does not usually cause any symptoms, and the first noticeable symptoms, such as back or stomach pains that come and go or unexplained weight loss, can be caused by many different conditions. As a result, people commonly attend three or more GP appointments before hospital referral, and therefore many people are diagnosed through emergency presentation, leading to very poor outcomes. Nearly 1,000 people in Scotland per year are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, with around 50 of them residing in the NHS Forth Valley area.

In January, University of Stirling student Keir Morton helped to raise thousands of pounds for pancreatic cancer research in memory of his dad, who died just over two weeks after diagnosis. In July, Jennifer Bairner from Stirling also raised money for pancreatic cancer research after her mum died, again less than two weeks after diagnosis. She had shown no symptoms at all, other than exhaustion and loss of appetite.

Our NHS does an incredible job in oncology, and of course the support of Macmillan and Cancer Research is amazing, but there is much more to do. We need to raise awareness among health professionals of the use of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy, or PERT for short, which could help people to deal with this cancer. Education is key. We know that dedicated research and awareness campaigns drove up early diagnosis of breast cancer, which has gone from being one of the most lethal cancers to one of the most treatable and survivable. A similar focus is now required on pancreatic cancer. The message is clear: early detection and treatment are essential.

I welcome the Scottish Government's action plan for cancer services. Additional funding for our health boards will support better access to diagnostics and treatment, and the creation of early cancer diagnostic centres is a significant step forward. Patient pathways through cancer services help to define a patient's overall experience and access to treatment, as well as, potentially, their outcomes. I therefore look forward to hearing of a successful redesign of the pancreatic cancer pathway.

As we know, Scotland's general health, including cancer rates, is the result of decades of structural inequality that the Scottish Government continues to tackle, and we cannot be complacent.

18:37

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I, too, congratulate Clare Adamson on again securing a members' business debate on the issue, and on

all her campaigning on it, which she has done with distinction for many years in the Parliament. As the co-convenor of the Parliament's cross-party group on cancer, I am pleased to take part in this year's debate, as I have done, along with Clare, every single year. I look forward to seeing lots of purple being displayed across landmarks and across our country—especially on social media, which I think has become an even bigger hit—as we aim to increase knowledge and understanding of pancreatic cancer.

As with all cancers, early detection and intervention are critical. As members have touched on, the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer is still just 5.6 per cent. Evelyn Tweed referred to other more survivable cancers, for which the average five-year survival rate is nearly 69 per cent. Arguably, with pancreatic cancer, early detection is even more critical than it is with other cancers, as the five-year survival rate increases to around 30 per cent among those who are diagnosed earlier and who are able to access life-saving surgery. It is a huge concern that 80 per cent of people with pancreatic cancer are still not diagnosed until the cancer has developed to an advanced stage.

Tomorrow is world pancreatic cancer day, and this year's theme is "It's About Time". Improving awareness of the risks and symptoms of pancreatic cancer is crucial, and it is important that we all work to ensure that we improve the survival rates.

I commend Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland on its mission of making the 2020s the decade of change for pancreatic cancer. We all want and can sign up to that. Over the past 50 years, there has been a lack of significant improvement in survival rates, so we need a concerted effort to ensure that more people are diagnosed early and survive the disease.

The past year and a half has been dominated by Covid-19, and the shift to focus our national health service on treating people for the virus has resulted in public health messaging shifting away from encouraging people to come forward and present their health concerns. We all share the concern that that will impact on outcomes for all cancers, and recent research by Pancreatic Cancer UK revealed that 31 per cent of Scots say that they are delaying seeking treatment. We need to turn that around and ensure that the message is sent out that people should not delay taking concerns to their GP or other medical professionals.

Of those people who are less likely to seek help, around half of them—49 per cent—say that they do not want to be a burden on the NHS, while 24 per cent say that they are still concerned about contracting Covid-19. Making people aware that

our NHS is up and running and that it wants people to present is very important. I hope that the debate sends the message that people should be getting checked out if they exhibit any of the symptoms that other members have outlined.

It is clear that we have a long way to go to improve survival rates. Sadly, we have not seen the 5 per cent rate get to 10 per cent, 15 per cent and then 20 per cent. When the minister closes the debate, I hope that he will point out what work will be taken forward to review patient pathways, which is one of the key things that we all want to be looked at, especially post pandemic.

I thank all those who have worked and campaigned over many years to support the work of Pancreatic Cancer UK, including my constituent Kim Rowan and the wonderful Lynda Murray. They have done so much work; sadly, they cannot yet come to the Parliament, but I am sure that they will be here for next year's debate. That is our hope, too.

Clare Adamson started by talking about hope, which is really important. For me, the person who really personifies that is our former MSP colleague, John Scott. John is well and living his happy post-politics life to the full. Examples of people who have successfully fought pancreatic cancer are really important for people and their families who are facing the hell of a pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

The debate has once again given us the opportunity to highlight the great work of Pancreatic Cancer UK and the principles and work of pancreatic cancer awareness month. Much progress needs to be made in the years ahead, and I hope that MSPs from all parties will continue to speak out and keep pressure on ministers. Above all, I agree with what Clare Adamson laid out: there is hope, and we should all work towards a better future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Briggs. Please convey our best wishes to John Scott—that was good news.

18:43

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I thank Clare Adamson for what is, I think, her fifth consecutive year of securing a debate on pancreatic cancer awareness month. The dedication that she shows to the cause provides us with a platform to raise awareness of this terrible disease and of its impact on people who suffer from it and on their loved ones.

When we read out statistics on pancreatic cancer—this is true of any cancer, but particularly pancreatic cancer—I am always aware that people will be watching the debate who may have just

received a diagnosis, or who are in treatment or are close to someone who is. The survival rates of the disease are difficult to hear, and people with a diagnosis will be only too aware of what it could mean for them. The reality of those rates makes it particularly important that we have this regular debate and use our platform to shine a light on how to detect the disease early.

I did not speak in last year's debate but I sat and listened to every speech. It was particularly poignant because John Scott was back in the chamber and he was looking a lot better. It is great to hear that he is continuing to do well, because that gives us hope that this is a cancer that people can survive.

In last year's debate, Clare Adamson talked about vital research and clinical trial work at our universities to improve future treatments and outcomes. In particular, the University of Glasgow, partnering with the Beatson institute and other partner universities across the UK, has worked on the Precision-Panc platform.

That research is investigating the molecular profile of individuals with pancreatic cancer and is bringing together expertise from 20 UK hospitals that offer clinical trials. Those trials use the genomics of the patient and their tumour and offer hope for the 85 per cent of pancreatic cancer patients who are not eligible for surgery. Maybe we can get to the future that Clare Adamson described, where we do not have the statistics that we have now.

As everyone says, early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer is vital. For those who are diagnosed in time for surgery, that five-year survival rate improves by 30 per cent. I applaud the awareness-raising campaigns of Pancreatic Cancer Action in Scotland, and I will of course be sharing their material as widely as I can. It is important that we MSPs use our platforms to inform our constituents of those early symptoms. People watch the videos that we put up on social media, so we should use the platforms that are available to us to tell people what the symptoms are, and I will close my speech by doing so.

People should get themselves to their GP if they have any of the following symptoms. If their back or stomach hurts, that could be because the tumour is pushing against nerves or organs near the pancreas and blocking their digestive tract. Similarly, if they feel bloated, they should get that checked, because pancreatic cancer can cause digestive problems such as gas, bloating and a build-up of extra fluid in the abdomen. Other symptoms are loss of appetite, indigestion, nausea and constipation or diarrhoea. If someone is losing weight and does not know why, it could be because cancer is causing their body to burn more calories than usual and is breaking down their

muscles and decreasing their appetite. If someone's skin or eyes look yellow, that could be jaundice caused by a tumour blocking the bile duct, which ordinarily allows bile to flow from their gallbladder into their small intestine.

People should be aware of all those symptoms. As Miles Briggs said, people should not think that they should not go to their doctor because of the pandemic. All those symptoms are signals that something could be wrong. Hopefully, it will turn out that nothing is wrong, but people must get those symptoms checked out.

18:47

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I thank Clare Adamson for securing today's important debate and commend her for her consistent campaigning on pancreatic cancer.

As we have heard, pancreatic cancer is Scotland's deadliest common cancer, and just under 1,000 people in Scotland—10,000 across the UK—are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer each year.

Despite being the 12th most common cancer in Scotland, pancreatic cancer is responsible for the sixth-highest number of cancer deaths, which means that it has a significant and disproportionate impact. As members may know, I still practice part-time as a GP and I have seen at first hand the truly devastating impact that pancreatic cancer has on patients and their families.

A significant issue is that the disease's symptoms are not widely known. I will not repeat them, as Gillian Martin and others have already listed them, but I hope that people who are watching this debate are able to understand what they are. According to Pancreatic Cancer UK, two thirds of people in the UK cannot name a single symptom of this disease. As a result, less than 20 per cent of people with pancreatic cancer are diagnosed at an early stage, and seven in 10 people will never receive any treatment at all. Tragically, around 80 per cent of people are diagnosed when the cancer is at an advanced stage and it is too late for life-saving treatment. Currently, no screening or early detection tests exist to help doctors to diagnose the disease.

When I recently met Pancreatic Cancer UK, the focus of our meeting was support, because, when someone is diagnosed with a cancer that kills one in four patients within a month, they need all the support that they can get. However, currently, there are all too many missed opportunities to provide the emotional support that is needed. At key moments—diagnosis, the beginning and the end of treatment, before and after surgery—

patients are really vulnerable and they need help because they struggle with their mental health.

Discovering the poor survival statistics for pancreatic cancer is a difficult moment for any patient and is one through which people need to be effectively and thoroughly supported with specialist mental health support. In my view, the most experienced people to speak with, other than those in the NHS, are those involved in Pancreatic Cancer UK, which has a dedicated helpline—Sue Webber read out its number earlier. It is staffed by specialist pancreatic cancer nurses, who provide expert support with symptoms, medication and anything in between, as well as a much-needed listening ear.

That is why I want to ensure that everyone with a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer is immediately signposted to Pancreatic Cancer UK's support line. Currently, only 10 per cent of people who are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in Scotland access that free service. It is my mission today, and it should be our mission over the coming year, to drive up awareness of the service, so that everyone with a diagnosis, or even just a suspicion of pancreatic cancer, gets the support that they need from day 1. We need to reach that remaining 90 per cent.

I want to see signposting to the Pancreatic Cancer UK support line included, by default, in all communications that are shared with those who are diagnosed. I also want to go further. When people are diagnosed with cancer—any cancer—I propose that they be linked with the appropriate leading third sector organisations, such as Macmillan Cancer Support, Bowel Cancer UK, Pancreatic Cancer UK and other specialists.

I would like to see all patients with cancer get the appropriate third sector agency telephone number and website information, together with a leaflet, in the diagnosis letter that they receive, and when they are in the surgery with their doctor. That would enable vulnerable patients to get wraparound support straight away, and the specialist support that they need when they speak to one of the nurses who staff many of the telephone lines. I ask the minister to implement my suggestion, because it would be a cheap way of providing help.

I apologise to members in the chamber for having to leave early, but I must attend a Diwali event that is being hosted in the Parliament. However, I felt compelled to speak in the debate, despite not being one of the Conservative members who were down to speak today.

18:51

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important

debate ahead of world pancreatic cancer day tomorrow, 18 November, and I congratulate Clare Adamson, who is sitting right in front of me, on securing it. Clare has done a huge amount of work to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer, and has led the debate each year since 2017.

I am also glad that Miles Briggs and Gillian Martin mentioned former MSP John Scott, and it is good to hear how well he is doing. I thank the clinicians and staff who care for people with pancreatic cancer. I remind members that I am still a nurse, and many of those folks are my former colleagues.

It is worth noting that the Covid pandemic has created many additional challenges for cancer services across Scotland. I agree with Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland that increasing awareness, encouraging awareness of symptoms earlier, improving pathways to diagnosis, and support, information and care are more important than ever before.

As colleagues across the chamber have stated, pancreatic cancer is currently the deadliest common cancer in Scotland, with statistics indicating that, each year in Scotland, 800 people die within just two weeks of a diagnosis. That is a pretty stark statistic.

The Scottish Government has invested in research, and its current action plan, "Recovery and Redesign: An Action Plan for Cancer Services", recognises the disease and less survivable cancers. The announcement of £653,000 of funding to support the Scottish HepatoPancreatoBiliary Network's improving pancreatic cancer pathways project is extremely welcome.

The example of research on which I will focus my comments, and which Gillian Martin also touched on, is the Precision-Panc platform. I spoke about it last year, too. Not all pancreatic cancers are the same. Precision-Panc clinical trials are delivered through the NHS, and match people who have a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer to the clinical trial that is most likely to work for them. Precision medicine is about tailoring treatments to an individual's cancer. The trials, involving chemotherapy, are based on the genomics of the patient and their tumour.

The Precision-Panc platform brings together expertise from the University of Glasgow, Cancer Research UK, the Beatson Institute for Cancer Research, the CRUK Cambridge institute, the CRUK Manchester institute, the Institute of Cancer Research in London, the University of Oxford and the wider NHS.

There is excellent evidence that participation in clinical trials is associated with better outcomes for patients, so there can be optimism. Those types of

clinical trials allow researchers across the country to share expertise and knowledge, as well as to create and share infrastructure, which leads to trials that are quicker to set up and recruit for.

The Precision-Panc platform has a proven track record of delivering positive outcomes and research for pancreatic cancer patients, so there can be optimism, as Clare Adamson has already stated. Development of biomarkers, prognosis and response to treatment have taken place and the platform has successfully identified why pancreatic cancer is resistant to some drug therapies.

Current trials are PRIMUS 001 to 005 as well as the master protocol, some of which are now reaching the clinical report stage, which is scheduled for early next year. I ask the minister to give a commitment that the Scottish Government will continue to support that vital work.

I briefly want to highlight the issues that my constituents across Galloway face when accessing treatment for pancreatic and other cancers. Despite living in one of the most remote and rural parts of Scotland, people who live in Dumfries and Galloway, including in Stranraer and Wigtownshire, do not have access to non-means-tested travel reimbursement to and from treatment appointments. I know that the minister is aware that I have pursued the matter and I ask that she continues to assist me in that work for constituents.

I again congratulate Clare Adamson on introducing the debate and I welcome the on-going work to advance treatment of pancreatic cancer, which means that we can continue to be optimistic.

18:56

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): I thank Clare Adamson for bringing this important debate to the chamber and members for their informed contributions.

As we have heard, pancreatic cancer can be ruthless. Recently, I was told a touching story about a family whom pancreatic cancer has devastated, and they have given me permission to share it today. Bridget, a mother of three and grandmother to 13, was 79 when she died from pancreatic cancer, just three months before her 80th birthday. She went back and forth to the doctor's for two years. She was told that the pain in her back was due to wear and tear; that the night sweats were due to her age; that indigestion was a hiatus hernia; that the weight loss was from her diabetes; and that her low mood was because she was depressed due to caring for her husband.

However, when a new doctor joined the practice, Bridget was sent for an ultrasound, which

detected black lesions on her liver. The consultant thought that it could be secondary cancer that had spread from somewhere else. Bridget was referred for a magnetic resonance imaging—MRI—scan that never happened, because she was rushed to hospital screaming in uncontrollable pain shortly after her ultrasound. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which had spread to her liver and lungs, and died at home 40 days after the diagnosis.

Tragically, 17 hours after Bridget died, her husband Dick passed away—of a broken heart, the family said, after watching his wife of 40 years suffer from that cruel disease. That was seven years ago, but the heartache continues daily for Bridget's family.

Have we made progress since 2014? We have heard from colleagues the facts and figures that surround pancreatic cancer, the most shocking of which being that it has the lowest survival rate of any of the most common cancers. If Bridget's story tells us anything, it is that early detection is key and that knowing the signs is just as important.

Pancreatic Cancer UK reports that two thirds of people in the UK cannot name a single symptom of the disease. We need to change that. Can members spot them? We have heard some of the symptoms thanks to the earlier speakers, but it is important to reiterate them: back pain, stomach pain, weight loss and yellowing of skin or eyes, as well as the ones that Bridget had, such as hot flushes, the shivers and indigestion.

I thank people such as Gavin Oattes, a Troon-born author and comedian, whom Pancreatic Cancer Action Scotland asked last year to share the story of his father, who died from the disease. Gavin set out to spread awareness of the symptoms and to encourage people to seek out a diagnosis. His father Eric died at just 65. He had been given six months to live, but fought bravely for 16 months. His symptoms presented as indigestion.

The message that members have repeated is that early diagnosis is key. Under Scotland's cancer recovery plan, three early diagnosis centres are being piloted across Scotland, including one at University hospital Ayr, which I visited earlier this year.

The centre, which comes under NHS Ayrshire and Arran, is dedicated to early diagnosis, with the aim of getting patients tested and, if required, referred to a specialist within 21 days. That is life saving and will help to pick up cancer earlier if patients do not meet referral guidelines and have non-specific symptoms like Bridget's weight loss and fatigue.

We are getting better, but we have a long way to go. Let us look at Australia. Although Australia has

one of the highest cancer rates in the world, it also has one of the lowest mortality rates for cancer. Why is that? According to the World Economic Forum, the answer is sound policy and planning. Every country needs a cancer control plan in which data is monitored and which aims to treat and prevent cancer.

We need to continue to raise awareness of the signs of this cruel disease. We owe it to people such as Bridget and their families. The message, again, is: know the signs and symptoms, visit your doctor and trust your instincts.

19:00

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): I thank Clare Adamson for bringing the motion to the chamber, and all my colleagues for their powerful and often personal contributions. It is wonderful to hear that John Scott is doing well, and it has been great to see so many members actively engaged in the debate, which has given us the opportunity to reflect on the work that we have achieved and what further work there still is to do.

In closing the debate, I will touch on a few of the points that have been raised, but first I want to make sure that members know that the Scottish Government buildings will be lit up to raise awareness tomorrow evening, on 18 November, world pancreatic cancer day.

Raising awareness of pancreatic cancer and its common symptoms—back pain, yellowing skin, indigestion, tummy pain and weight loss—is absolutely crucial in detecting this cancer early. We know that the earlier that cancer is detected, the easier that it is to treat, which is why we continue to invest in our £44 million detect cancer early programme, with an additional £20 million committed over this parliamentary session.

We know that, over the pandemic, our urgent suspicion of cancer referral rates fell below pre-Covid levels. In order to increase uptake, public awareness campaigns and messaging have run throughout the pandemic to encourage those with possible cancer symptoms to seek help. I am pleased to say that our urgent referral rates are now above pre-Covid levels. I absolutely encourage any individual who may be experiencing common symptoms of cancer to present to their GP. I want to let members know that, from December, we will run a national awareness campaign on the NHS being open, which will include a national door drop.

Unfortunately, pancreatic cancer continues to be one of the less survivable cancers. Pancreatic Cancer UK has stated that only one in four people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer survives beyond a year. The five-year survival rate is even lower,

with only 5.6 per cent of people surviving in Scotland, compared with the average five-year survival rate of 69 per cent for more survivable cancers. For those reasons, we have focused on improving outcomes for the less survivable cancers in our national cancer plan.

The Scottish Government works closely with a number of partners to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer and to improve outcomes after diagnosis. Pancreatic Cancer UK is a key partner, alongside the less survivable cancers task force, in continuing to push forward work streams and improve cancer outcomes. We know that, during the pandemic, the need for further support of patients was amplified, with third sector organisations such as Pancreatic Cancer UK seeing a significant increase in helpline calls, with a peak increase of 50 per cent. I thank our third sector partners for their continued work and for their support of cancer patients.

In addition, we are working with the Scottish HepatoPancreatoBiliary Network—I will just use the acronym SHPBN next time—to improve pathways across pancreatic and liver cancers. We have provided £653,000 of funding to the network over two financial years to redesign those cancer pathways. That work is aimed at improving patient outcomes and experiences.

We know that patients with a cancer diagnosis and those around them can be impacted mentally as well as physically by diagnosis and subsequent treatment, as we have heard so powerfully in the chamber this evening. The work of the SHPBN is looking at the investigative and diagnosis stage of the pathway. In order to improve the pathway, a new navigation team will improve communications within the health service and directly with patients. That work is one step that we are taking to increase the support offered to patients. I hope that that responds to the points that Dr Gulhane raised.

The national cancer plan, which sits alongside that work, outlines the development of the single point of contact and our transforming cancer care partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. A single point of contact will help to ensure that patients are supported in relation to all clinical aspects, including mental health, along their cancer journey. We recently awarded funding to 12 pilot programmes, based across the three cancer networks. The Scottish Government's partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support will ensure that every cancer patient in Scotland has access to a specialist key support worker who can provide emotional, financial and practical support to those who need it most.

Further to providing patients with support, we must focus on the best available treatment. Many members will be aware of pancreatic enzyme

replacement therapy, in which a capsule that replaces the enzymes that the pancreas would normally make is taken. If a person has pancreatic cancer, taking pancreatic enzymes can help them to digest their food. However, as has been mentioned, not all patients are offered PERT at the point of diagnosis, for a variety of reasons. There could be legitimate reasons for not prescribing—for example, perhaps the patient is on a palliative care pathway, or there might be a cultural preference. Equally, many pancreatic cancer patients present as asymptomatic, despite exocrine pancreatic insufficiency. In addition, patients are diagnosed through many different pathways, so not all clinicians have the knowledge and experience to know about the importance of PERT.

Clare Adamson raised the use of stereotactic ablative radiotherapy. I am pleased to inform members that a project was funded in the most recent funding round, with up to £1.6 million committed over two years. We are taking a once-for-Scotland approach to roll out that treatment across Scotland.

The Precision-Panc research, which has been highlighted by a number of members, including Emma Harper, is led by a team at the University of Glasgow, and it is absolutely world leading. Research into precision medicine remains a high priority for the Scottish Government.

In order to inform best practice, the Scottish Government continues to learn from the best available evidence. As members have highlighted, the Scottish cancer patient experience survey, which is run in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, has a survivability bias. The survey is designed to be comparable with cancer patient experience surveys that are run in England and Wales.

Clare Adamson: Will the minister have a look at the timescales in which that survey is delivered? We have heard about the difficulties around pancreatic cancer, and patients have often passed away within the delivery timescale. Will the minister reflect on that?

Maree Todd: Absolutely. I am very keen to take that point on board.

In order to capture the experience of patients with a less survivable cancer, we are using tools such as Care Opinion and working with our third sector partners to collate the best available evidence. I am happy to get back to Clare Adamson with any further evidence that we have on that issue.

Members may be aware that NHS England has announced a new national pancreatic cancer audit, on which NHS Wales is partnering it. Fortunately, in Scotland, our partners in the

SHPBN have completed audits annually since 2010. The 2013 to 2019 audits are based on quality performance indicators, including some that are specific to pancreatic cancer. The annual audit reports are available on the SHPBN website, and the 2020 audit is currently in progress.

As we have heard, the Scottish Government and all of us in the Parliament are absolutely committed to increasing awareness of pancreatic cancer and improving cancer patients' experiences and outcomes. I thank all our partners who help us in achieving those goals, from the clinicians who work in the NHS to our third sector partners, who have tirelessly supported patients. Together we can improve, and together we can achieve our ambitions.

Meeting closed at 19:09.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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