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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 17 March 2022

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

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

The first item of business is general question time. In order to get in as many members as possible, I would appreciate short and succinct questions and responses.

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

1. Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that people visiting rural Scotland, including the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, are aware of the Scottish outdoor access code. (S6O-00886)

The Minister for Environment and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): NatureScot is the primary agency that is responsible for promoting the access code. It works with key partners on awareness raising.

Last year, NatureScot's traditional and social media activity resulted in more than 15 million impressions and drove more than 500,000 page views of the Scottish outdoor access code website.

However, more needs to be done to raise awareness. NatureScot is working with VisitScotland and other members of our visitor management strategy group, and will undertake a further awareness-raising campaign in 2022.

Evelyn Tweed: There has been a notable increase in the number of visitors to rural areas across Scotland, including rural Stirling. Although most people enjoy the outdoors in a respectful manner, some do not. Will the minister advise how we can encourage the public to treat rural Scotland with more respect?

Màiri McAllan: Ms Tweed is absolutely correct. During the pandemic, there was an increase in the number of people spending time in our natural world and enjoying its restorative benefits for their physical and mental health. It was perhaps a glimmer of light in an otherwise dark and difficult situation.

However, Ms Tweed is also right that access must be taken with care. I reiterate that rights come with responsibilities, and the statutory right of access is that of responsible access. I mentioned our visitor management strategy last year. Through that work, we have seen a much improved response to countryside challenges, some of which Ms Tweed mentioned, and the centrality and importance of rangers and the face-to-face work that they do has been clear.

I am pleased to say that the Scottish Government is considering what we might do for the coming season, and I expect an announcement to be made shortly.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Minister, I look forward to our meeting next week to discuss the issue. The access code is nearly 20 years old and, given the huge demands on the countryside, which became even more apparent during the pandemic, is it not time for an update and relaunch?

Màiri McAllan: I know that that question has been considered, and my understanding is that there is no concrete evidence that revision is required. We have been dealing with different circumstances over the past couple of years, but I believe that education and communication are the key ways in which we will continue to strike the important balance between a responsible access right and an understanding that our countryside is a living and working one. As I said, education and communication are the keys to that. I look forward to discussing that further with Edward Mountain.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The Scottish outdoor access code covers access to inland waters. In the context of Loch Lomond, will the minister advise whether she will consider robust restrictions on jet skis in the forthcoming review of byelaws, given the antisocial and, often, dangerous behaviour that was experienced from irresponsible jet ski users last summer?

Màiri McAllan: I thank Jackie Baillie for that important question. The national park has a really good track record of using byelaws to respond to some of its concerns, for example on camping, and about 4 per cent of the land around the loch is now covered by a byelaw. It is of course for local authorities and access forums to develop byelaw plans, which the Scottish ministers consider on their merits when they are presented to us.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): As we move into lambing season, it is particularly important that livestock are not disturbed. How will the Scottish Government support livestock owners to ensure that the outdoor access code is adhered to on their land?

Màiri McAllan: The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021

came into force on 5 November 2021. It strengthened the law around livestock worrying by increasing the maximum penalties for offences. Police Scotland and farming and crofting stakeholders are combining their efforts to address such crimes and behaviours. For example, the Scottish partnership against rural crime, which is chaired by Police Scotland, is launching the livestock attack and distress campaign with the slogan “Your Dog—Your Responsibility”, which is intended to educate dog owners about the new legislation, through the lambing season in particular. The small minority who do not treat livestock with respect and care can and must be held responsible, and the consequences they face must reflect the severity of the issue.

General Practitioners (Power of Attorney)

2. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support is in place to assist general practitioners in certifying power of attorney documents. (S6O-00887)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): The certification of power of attorney documents is a private matter between GPs and their patients. GPs may charge fees for providing the service at their discretion, and they are not required to provide it under the current contract.

Fulton MacGregor: My office and the local citizens advice bureau in Coatbridge have recently been dealing with a significant number of cases where people, many of whom cannot afford legal fees, are struggling to get a GP to complete the certification documents, often citing the busyness of GP surgeries. We all know that GP surgeries have been extremely busy during the pandemic, and that they continue to do a fantastic job as we come out of the pandemic. Can any further support be provided to help GPs with the important task of certifying power of attorney documents for those who need them?

Humza Yousaf: I will, of course, explore whether we can do anything more in relation to this issue. However, it should be said that the British Medical Association has provided guidance on the fees that can be charged for the service. I will also have a conversation with Ash Regan about the eligibility for legal aid in this regard and come back to the member with more details.

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): During the pandemic, people who have learning disabilities and the organisations that support them raised concerns about the use of blanket “do not resuscitate” orders and confusion about the role of the power of attorney in supporting and protecting people who have a learning disability. What further support can be given to GPs and

other organisations so that they can support people who have a learning disability, to ensure that their human rights are protected so that we never again see a situation such the one we saw around blanket DNR?

Humza Yousaf: We will look to explore what more we can do as we and the national health service recover. Paul O’Kane and some other members have raised this issue with me previously, and we all recognise that our constituents are still saying that they want more face-to-face access to their GPs. We will work with GPs to restore such access, and although we still have telephone and video consultations, I know how important face-to-face access can be, particularly for those that might have a learning disability. We will continue to make sure that those who have a learning disability and their families understand their rights fully. I will take the question away and see what more we can do with our third sector partners to communicate that.

Rural Health Services (Funding)

3. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what additional funding is being provided to restore and enhance rural health services. (S6O-00888)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Our national health service recovery plan sets out key ambitions and actions to be developed and delivered now and during the next five years to address the backlog in care and to meet the on-going healthcare needs of people across Scotland, including those in rural areas.

The Scottish Government also remains committed to the recommendations set out in Sir Lewis Ritchie’s report “Shaping the Future Together”, which aims to enhance primary care across remote, rural and island communities.

This year’s programme for government committed to delivering in the current parliamentary session a national centre for remote and rural health and social care. Scoping work is under way, with an expectation that the centre will be operational by spring 2023.

Finlay Carson: A community group in my constituency—the Old Luce Development Trust—is stepping up to the mark and planning to build a new GP surgery, which will cost in excess of £400,000. The need for a new surgery was identified by the health board in 2015 and, although it has contributed nothing financially to the development, I understand that NHS Dumfries and Galloway has been told by the Scottish Government that it must carry out a full options appraisal as outlined in the Scottish capital

investment manual for guidance. That is, of course, for NHS projects. However, two similar projects—the Staffin community trust on the Isle of Skye and a new medical centre in Fort Augustus—do not have to follow such guidelines. Will the cabinet secretary investigate why that is the case and why there is such a discrepancy between those projects and the one in Dumfries and Galloway?

Humza Yousaf: I will do that. The member must forgive me, as I do not have the details of the issue that he raises to hand, but I will take a look at it, and will come back to him in full detail.

Children and Young People (Opportunities)

4. **Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what work is being done by sportscotland and Creative Scotland to provide opportunities for children and young people. (S6O-00889)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): Sportscotland works across clubs, communities and education to provide opportunities for children and young people to take part in sport. We are working with sportscotland to increase the operational and staffing budget for active schools to drive and sustain the programme's inclusion work through a focus on poverty, additional support needs and care-experienced young people.

Via Creative Scotland, the youth music initiative provides a year's free music making to every child before they leave primary school. Creative Scotland also supports the nurturing talent fund, which gives small grants to young people to undertake cultural and creative projects.

Liam McArthur: In a discussion that I had recently with a headteacher in Orkney, I was reminded of how much children and young people have missed out over the past two years and of how important the return to routine in our schools is in rebuilding confidence, reassurance and a sense of normality.

The headteacher also talked about the need over the coming months to create wow moments—things for pupils to really look forward to. I am not sure that she was angling for a visit from the local MSP. Will the minister agree to consult Creative Scotland, sportscotland and other such bodies about the role that they might play in facilitating visits to schools across Scotland by people from the worlds of music, theatre, film, sport and so on, in order to create such genuine wow moments?

Maree Todd: Certainly. I could not agree more—our children and young people need those wow moments to recover from the harm that the

pandemic has caused them. I would be more than supportive of exploring that suggestion.

Last year's get into summer programme, which was in place across all 32 local authorities, was a brilliant initiative that aimed to create opportunities to socialise, to play and to reconnect. Sport and physical activity, as well as cultural opportunities, which improve wellbeing, were right at the heart of that. This year, we intend to build on get into summer 2021 to deliver a summer 2022 offer for children and families in low-income households. That will provide co-ordinated access to food, childcare and rich-experience activities.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I know that the minister agrees that children having access to sport, music, art and drama can have a significant impact on the rest of their lives, and recognises that Covid has had a very negative impact on that. Does she agree that it will take significant input from the Government to redress the balance in that respect? What steps will the Government take to make sure that our children have access to those essential services?

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, minister.

Maree Todd: I absolutely agree. Our pre-pandemic work on adverse childhood experiences showed just how important rich cultural and sporting experiences are, how protective such experiences can be against adversity and how that protection can last a lifetime, and I have absolutely no doubt that we will use that learning as we invest in the future.

The issue that Brian Whittle raises is everyone's responsibility, not just the Government's. In my portfolio, we will double the investment in sport and physical activity over the course of the parliamentary session, and I hope that we will see the benefit of that in the future.

Energy Sources

5. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether a mix of energy sources, including renewables, could facilitate a reduction in energy prices for consumers. (S6O-00890)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): Scotland has had the good fortune to be blessed with huge and varied renewable energy generation capabilities. Unfortunately, Scotland's ability to take full advantage of those resources has been curtailed by an unfair transmission charging regime that has directly disincentivised investment in generation in Scotland.

Renewable energy presents better value for customers than nuclear energy and does not present the same safety and environmental

concerns. The latest contracts for difference auction delivered offshore wind at £39.65 per megawatt hour, which is substantially below the £92.50 per megawatt hour that was awarded to Hinkley Point.

Jamie Greene: The only thing that puts off investment in Scotland is this minister's moratorium on even the exploration of new nuclear energy. It is putting companies off from investing in Scotland today.

The reality is that renewables do not account for 100 per cent of our energy: today, 30 per cent of it comes from fossil fuels. A fusion power facility, using less than one tonne of fuel, could create as much energy as 10 billion tonnes of fossil fuels.

Why will the Government not drop its ideological opposition to nuclear fusion? Why will it not work with companies to support a sustainable energy source that will drive down consumers' bills once and for all?

Michael Matheson: Let me directly address the point about fusion power. The reality is that fusion power is at a very early stage of development and that the earliest point at which it could be deployed is 2040. It will not make a substantial contribution to our energy mix in the short to medium term. It is misleading to give the impression that fusion energy is part of the solution to the significant challenges of today's energy market.

The reality is that nuclear energy is one of the most expensive forms of energy generation. Consumer prices are being forced up because of the costs associated with nuclear power. We need to maximise Scotland's renewable potential. That includes the use of wind and marine energy, battery and hydrogen storage and pumped storage. It would also include the use of carbon capture, utilisation and storage, if the United Kingdom Government could get its act together to support the Scottish Cluster.

Ukrainian Refugees

6. **Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the action it is taking to prepare for Ukrainian refugees arriving in Scotland. (S6O-00891)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray): Tomorrow, I will chair the first meeting of the community integration partnership, which will bring together key partners from across Scotland. I will also meet with international non-governmental organisations working in Scotland to discuss how they might contribute to the United Kingdom Government community sponsorship route, given their experience of the Syrian resettlement

scheme. That will build on the incredible partnership work that is already under way.

I thank Scottish Government officials, whom I meet daily and sometimes hourly, and their partners in local government and the public, private and third sectors for their work in recent weeks. We continue to work closely with the Home Office, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, local authorities themselves and other partners to provide people with the safety and security that they need to rebuild their lives.

The UK Government's proposals remain insufficient, given the urgency and gravity of the situation. We continue to urge the UK Government to follow the examples of Ireland and countries across the European Union and to waive visa requirements for all Ukrainians and develop a comprehensive resettlement programme to ensure that Ukrainian citizens can be provided with the safety and security that they need to rebuild their lives.

Willie Coffey: Further to the statement made yesterday by the First Minister, can the minister confirm that work is going on to ensure that the Ukrainian people who come here will have access to general practitioners, dental services, childcare and language support services to add to the warmth of the welcome that they will surely get when they arrive in Scotland?

Neil Gray: I thank Willie Coffey for his interest and for raising those critical issues. We are engaging with a range of partners to ensure that wraparound support is in place for all displaced people arriving in Scotland. People who come here from Ukraine have a right to work and to benefits and public funds, so we will ensure that people are aware of, and get access to, services such as those that Mr Coffey mentions.

We are working rapidly to establish welcome hubs that will triage people and find out what support they need. Multiagency teams are lining up support that will cover a range of areas, from healthcare to clothing and food. Welcome packs and information leaflets translated into Ukrainian and giving information about how to access support, including social security, will also be provided and translators will be on hand to help.

I reiterate Scotland's long history of welcoming and supporting displaced people and asylum seekers. We stand ready to support people from Ukraine, as we have people from other countries.

Ukrainian Communities (Support)

7. **Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to Ukrainian communities in Scotland. (S6O-00892)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray): Scotland has a proud history of welcoming refugees and people seeking sanctuary from war and violence. The Scottish Government and Scotland's local authorities have made clear to the United Kingdom Government that we stand ready to offer refuge and sanctuary, where necessary, for those who may be displaced.

I look forward to chairing the first community integration partnership meeting tomorrow, which will consider how to ensure that we are effectively supporting Ukrainian communities in Scotland. We will build on the work that is already under way.

We will continue to engage with our Ukrainian communities as we work to ensure that all those arriving in Scotland, as well as those already here, receive the support that they need. I was pleased to meet the acting Ukrainian consul general, Yevhen Mankovskiy, when he was in Parliament yesterday and to discuss those matters directly.

Fiona Hyslop: The minister will, no doubt, agree that it will be important for Ukrainians who are seeking refuge from war to connect with the Ukrainian community here in Scotland and to be supported by local community support hubs. Can he confirm what measures have been taken, and at what pace, to set up Ukrainian support hubs across communities in Scotland—perhaps, as the Ukrainian and Polish consul generals have suggested, with cities and towns twinning with cities and towns in Ukraine—so that communities can be together? Will he join me in thanking all the Scottish families who have offered their homes for support and refuge?

Neil Gray: Yes—absolutely. Fiona Hyslop raises very important issues about twinning, which are being explored. We very much welcome people's generous offers to open their homes and their hearts to the people of Ukraine. I absolutely join her in thanking families for offering their homes and their time, for making donations and for the messages of solidarity and support.

As the First Minister said in Parliament yesterday, our priority is to ensure that we are ready to welcome displaced people from Ukraine to Scotland by the weekend, when the first visas, I hope, will start to be issued. The welcome hubs that we are establishing will provide a warm welcome, safety and any immediate assistance. We will also be funding the Scottish Refugee Council to provide support for the Ukrainian family scheme and humanitarian sponsorship pathway in Scotland, which includes planning for increased protection and integration support.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Criminals (Risk Assessments)

1. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Two weeks ago, the SNP Government admitted that hundreds of criminals had received the wrong assessment of the risk that they pose to the public. Assuming that all records have now been fully reviewed, I ask the First Minister, first, how many criminals were given a lower risk assessment than they should have been and, secondly, how many were freed from prison before that was safe?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has already given much of that information to Parliament in a statement and then in his appearance before the Criminal Justice Committee, although I am happy to confirm the details, as we understand them at this stage.

Following a review by the Scottish Prison Service, we can confirm that there are no public protection issues as a consequence of the issue in relation to the eight first grant of temporary release cases that have been identified. There were, as I said, eight cases.

Jamie Greene asked just a couple of weeks ago who the eight people were and where they had been released to. I can confirm that, of the eight individuals, seven are actually still in custody as we speak, because, of course, first grant of temporary release is not final release, but is about allowing a prisoner some limited access—often escorted access, perhaps for a few hours—to the community for the first time.

All 285 of the open cases that the risk-scoring issue appeared to have affected have been checked by social work professionals, who have provided assurance, again, that no public protection issues have been identified.

On the specific question about the risk scoring—this is a key and fundamental point that Jamie Greene will, I know, understand—it is important to note that a decision to grant release would never be determined based solely on the displayed score. In such cases, there is a more holistic assessment of wider circumstances. Following the decision, there is a process of on-going and dynamic risk assessment and management.

It was a serious issue that was identified and the steps that I just outlined have been taken. Of course, if there is more information to share with Parliament, we will do that speedily, as we have done to date.

Jamie Greene: It is all very well to say that there were “no public protection issues”, but the reality is that we still do not know how many people were wrongly released. We also do not know how many of them possibly went on to reoffend in our communities. I am afraid that the blunder is just another sign that the Government has lost its way on justice, because it is not just letting criminals out early by accident. Half of violent criminals avoid jail completely. Even when they do go to jail, the SNP’s latest proposal is to cut automatic early release even further so that they serve even less time in prison, in the first place.

The First Minister will probably say in reply that there is a consultation out on the matter, but I will ask her for her personal view. Does she think that it is morally right that serious criminals are automatically released just a third of the way through their sentences?

The First Minister: Before we move on from the information technology issue, I say that although Jamie Greene says that

“It is all very well to say that ... ‘no public protection issues’” were identified, that is the fundamentally important matter to address.

Jamie Greene has also asked questions about the eight individuals who were identified as having been given first grant of temporary release. I have confirmed to the Parliament today that, of the eight, seven are still behind bars—in jail, in custody. However, there has been no response at all to that, because it does not fit the narrative that Jamie Greene wants to share with Parliament.

These are important issues. Information was shared appropriately with Parliament, and that will continue to happen as the whole issue is reviewed. Being able to give an assurance to the public that there were no public protection issues is important, regardless of whether it fits the Tory narrative.

On the wider issue, it was this Government that ended the system of automatic early release—which was, I believe, introduced by a previous Tory Government. It does not bear any scrutiny to say that we in Scotland take a light-touch approach to prison. We have one of the proportionally highest prison populations, if not the highest, in western Europe, which is why we are focusing so much on doing more about rehabilitation and preventing reoffending.

Sentences are, of course, a matter for courts and judges. The important thing is that we have the right statutory legal framework in place. We continue to take steps to ensure that that is the case.

Jamie Greene: I asked the First Minister a simple question. I asked whether she thinks that it is morally right that people are released from prison just a third of the way through their sentences. That is a current SNP Government proposal. I did not hear an answer to that question, so perhaps the First Minister can pick it up in her answer to my next question.

The First Minister said that she does not really have a view. Clearly, however, she used to have a view. In 2015, the First Minister said:

“Our objective remains to end the policy of automatic early release ... as soon as we are able to.”—[*Official Report*, 2 April 2015; c 10.]

What has changed?

The problem is that the whole system is stacked against victims, right from the very start. They cannot even get their court cases heard in the first place. We now have the worst court backlog on record; it is sitting at more than 43,000 cases. The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service tells us that it will be 2026 before the backlog is cleared, which just prolongs the agony for victims. Of course Covid has made the situation worse, but there were tens of thousands of cases in that backlog before the pandemic even started, so it cannot be used as an excuse.

Is justice for the victims of crime even a priority for the Government any more?

The First Minister: We are investing in a recovery fund, and we are investing more than £50 million to tackle the backlog that has been caused by Covid. We will continue to work with the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service and the whole justice community to do that.

I will go back to the issue of early release. I find the Tory hypocrisy on the matter utterly breathtaking. Let me set out clearly exactly why. Back in 2016, this SNP Government reformed release arrangements for prisoners who were serving long-term sentences. That meant that the most dangerous prisoners no longer received automatic early release. It ended a system that was introduced by a Tory United Kingdom Government in 1993. That is the background.

Why do I think that the Tory position today is hypocritical? It is because, when we did that in 2016, the Tories in this chamber voted against the change that scrapped automatic early release for the most dangerous long-term prisoners. That change will not be affected by the proposals on which we have consulted. We will continue to take appropriate decisions about our justice system, and we will ensure that the most dangerous serious criminals serve sentences in prison, while we also support and promote rehabilitation in order to cut reoffending.

We have one of the lowest crime rates and we still have one of the highest prison populations, so we will continue to take action. Whether the Tories support that or merely indulge in rhetoric, as they are doing today, is a matter for them.

Jamie Greene: The only hypocrisy in the chamber today is from the First Minister, who said on record that she would end automatic early release but now refuses to rule out letting people out of prison after they have served just a third of their sentence. Our party is clear on that: we believe that automatic early release is not fair—it is not fair for the victims of crime.

Justice is not a priority for the Government. We know that because we have a response to a freedom of information request that we made to the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service. It clearly states—I quote directly from the paper—that

“Justice is no longer a priority”.

It is there is black and white, and we know that the facts back it up, because our courts were short-changed by £12 million in this year’s budget.

Let me tell the First Minister who is impacted by such decisions. We have spoken to a woman who is taking a convicted domestic abuser to court. She has been waiting three years for justice. Her case has been delayed 18 times—18 times it has been postponed. She told us that now

“it feels like court sanctioned abuse”.

That is a shocking case, but she is not the only one, and today we have learned that there is more evidence of that. A BBC investigation has uncovered that victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence are actually asking to have their cases dropped because the court delays are so long.

Is it the case that the Scottish courts were right all along—that justice simply is not a priority for this Government? It should be.

The First Minister: To complete the point on automatic early release, I note—as I set out very clearly in my previous answer—that what we committed to, we delivered and implemented in 2016, so the most dangerous prisoners who are serving long-term sentences no longer have access to automatic early release. I say again that that is not affected by what we have consulted on. I also note that, at that time, the Conservatives in this chamber actually voted against it.

There is a serious backlog in our court service that is caused, and has certainly been exacerbated, by Covid. We are, with the court service and the wider justice community, very focused on addressing that. I know that everybody who works in our court service and everybody who works in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal

Service is very seized of the importance of prioritising cases of domestic abuse and violence against women and children. They are very serious cases, as I absolutely acknowledge.

That is why we have invested in the justice recovery fund. It is why, in the budget, we are increasing the resources that are available to the courts service so that it can tackle the backlog for as long as that takes. We hope that there will be ways in which we can accelerate the process, which will be a priority for us.

More generally, and as my final point, I say that I do not think that it is right for anybody to downplay the seriousness of the impact of crime on victims; I never will. Any victim of crime is one victim too many, and the personal impact on them is serious.

However, the fact of the matter is that it is because of the priority that we in this Government have given to justice—not least through increasing, and maintaining the increase, in the number of police officers on the beat, and a range of other initiatives—that we now have one of the lowest rates of crime, including violent crime, for many years.

We will continue to take balanced and sensible decisions to make sure that people who deserve to be in prison are in prison. We will also support and promote wider efforts to reduce reoffending and support rehabilitation, because that is in the long-term interests of potential and actual victims of crime.

Cost of Living Crisis

2. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Across the country, people are worried about the cost of living crisis. Prices are rising every day, and each weekly shop or trip to the petrol station is leading to anxiety and stress for many. We also know that, over the course of this year, things will only get worse. Petrol costs will rise further, food prices are going up and energy bills will rise by at least £700.

Both of Scotland’s Governments need to be doing much more to help. We have published detailed plans for actions for both the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments. Next week, in its spring statement, the Tory Government must cut VAT on fuel bills, scrap the national insurance increase, reverse the cut to universal credit and introduce a windfall tax on oil and gas companies that are making billions, with the money going directly into people’s pockets. Will the First Minister finally instruct her MPs to back Labour’s plan?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): My MPs in the House of Commons just yesterday led a debate calling for a windfall tax not just on oil and gas companies but on any company that has

made substantially increased profits as a result either of the current global situation or of the effects of the pandemic. They literally led that call in the House of Commons yesterday, and I have made clear my views on that in response to Anas Sarwar previously.

I hope that we can unite, in this Parliament, to call on the chancellor to make substantial and significant interventions next week to help families across Scotland and, indeed, across the UK who are struggling with the rising cost of living.

For our part, although our powers and resources are very limited, we will continue to do everything that we can, including the 6 per cent increase in the benefits that are under the control of Social Security Scotland, which was announced yesterday. We will take the action that we can, but, across Parliament, all of us should be calling on the chancellor to do much, much more when he gets to his feet in the House of Commons next week.

Anas Sarwar: Scottish National Party MPs clearly did not get the memo, because they were asked repeatedly yesterday at Westminster whether they back a windfall tax on oil and gas companies and, repeatedly, they refused to confirm that they do. SNP MPs did not back a costed plan for a windfall tax on multinational oil and gas companies, but they presented one paragraph that would have taxed Irn-Bru and Pets at Home. I have no idea why the SNP backs attacks on ginger but not on gas. Frankly, Scotland deserves better.

The Scottish Government has the power to act, too. Had the SNP followed just one of our proposals. *[Interruption.]* I say to Mr Swinney that this is serious, so perhaps he should listen. Had the SNP followed just one of our proposals, those who are most in need would have received £400 directly into their bank accounts. Instead, the SNP's flagship cost of living policy is to copy the Tory policy and provide £150 through a council tax rebate—a policy that the Poverty Alliance has called “misguided”, “a missed opportunity” and “deeply disappointing”.

Now we learn that not a single person in Scotland will receive £150 in April. Instead, almost every council will have to split the money over 10 months. That means that the Scottish Government's flagship cost of living policy is worth just £15 a month for the next 10 months. At the same time, *Which?* said this morning that Scottish families will be spending an extra £84 a month on food and fuel.

First Minister, people are struggling right now. How can you possibly believe that that is good enough?

The First Minister: On the £150 payment, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy has set out clearly that, because of our limited powers and control over the data around that payment, we have made it in a way that gets help to people as quickly as possible, instead of it taking months and months.

Where we hold the power, we are doing so much more. We are doubling the Scottish child payment, for example, to help children in families on the lowest incomes. Unlike the Government south of the border, we have protected the council tax reduction scheme so that thousands upon thousands of households across Scotland do not pay any council tax at all. Where we have the power, we use that power, and where the power is limited, unfortunately, we cannot act in the way that we would want to.

That brings me back to the windfall tax. I do not know whether Anas Sarwar read the motion that was tabled in the House of Commons by SNP MPs yesterday. It called for a windfall tax on any and all companies that have made increased profits, which would include oil and gas companies. This is something that Anas Sarwar might want to reflect on. Yes, let us include oil and gas companies, but why would he want to exclude Amazon, for example, from that approach?

My final point is this: instead of Anas Sarwar standing up, week after week, asking for my views on something that I have no control over, would it not be better if he argued for those powers being in the hands of this Government in the first place?

Anas Sarwar: I hate to break it to the First Minister, but the cost of living crisis is happening right now. There is no independence or constitutional answer to that question. People's bills are going up, whether they voted yes or no. It is simply not good enough for the Scottish Government to point at the Tories and say that they could have acted but not to use its own powers. *[Interruption.]*

What the First Minister said about the £150 is simply not true. The Government could have used that more progressively, as the Poverty Alliance has said. What the First Minister said about the windfall tax is not true. SNP MPs were asked repeatedly to confirm whether a windfall tax would include oil and gas companies, and they repeatedly refused to do so. Why? Why be on the side of the big oil and gas companies and not on the side of people paying their bills?

People's energy bills are going up by £700. It is estimated that fuel will go up to more than £2 a litre. Food prices are on the rise, and, at the same time, we have two Governments lacking ambition—failing to back a windfall tax on the big energy companies that would put money in

people's pockets; failing to use the budget to support those who are most in need; making it worse by hiking rail fares and water charges; and failing to back detailed and costed plans just because they come from Labour.

The crisis is only getting worse. Warm words will not keep the bills down. The Government must step up to the challenge that Scots face right now, stop tinkering around the edges and provide the support that the people of Scotland need.

The First Minister: We are using the power. We are doubling the Scottish child payment—a game-changer policy, according to child poverty campaigners. Where we have the powers, we use them.

Anas Sarwar says that the argument about powers does not matter. He has chosen to come to the chamber and major on the issue of a windfall tax. The Scottish Government does not have the power to impose a windfall tax. Let me be clear: the motion tabled in the House of Commons yesterday by SNP MPs would include oil and gas companies. Any reading of it would lead anyone to that conclusion.

The issue is really serious for families across the country. So, in the interest of trying to build consensus, I will prepare and sign this afternoon a joint letter with Anas Sarwar to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking them not only to impose a windfall tax but, because I suspect that their answer will be no, to give this Parliament the power to do it at our own hand. Then we can join forces and ensure that it is done and that it includes oil and gas companies, Amazon and other companies that have increased their profits. [*Interruption.*] Rather than just indulge in rhetoric, will Anas Sarwar argue for the means for the Parliament to do it?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I would be grateful if members would remember that we behave in a courteous and respectful manner to one another at all times.

Maternity and Neonatal Services (Adverse Events)

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the serious adverse events review and subsequent NHS Lothian action plan that was published recently following the death of my constituent Amanda Cox on 10 December 2018 shortly after the birth of her son, Murray, when she became disorientated but it took seven hours to find her in a stairwell, dying from a brain haemorrhage.

Does the First Minister agree that, although the recommendations in the action plan for better hospital closed-circuit television, better signage

and the observation of headaches in pregnant women—it is disgraceful that such recommendations need to be made—came more than three years too late for my constituents, every national health service board in Scotland should not only be aware of them but act on them so that nothing similar happens again? That would give the family some very slight comfort after that dreadful tragedy.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I very much agree with all of that, and I thank Christine Grahame for bringing that tragic issue to the chamber today. The death of Amanda Cox was heartbreaking and a tragedy, and I again convey my thoughts and sympathies to her family.

It is absolutely imperative that all health boards take steps to ensure that the situation is never repeated. Last year, we published the “Maternity and neonatal (perinatal) adverse event review process for Scotland”, which will standardise and improve approaches to the review of any adverse events in maternity.

We also continue to prioritise improvements to care through the implementation of the maternity and neonatal best start programme, in partnership with senior leaders and clinicians. That group is currently producing Scotland-wide standards of care for the management of women who present with neurological conditions, including headaches, and care pathways for women who present with acute medical conditions, including those who present to accident and emergency.

None of that will lessen the pain and grief of Amanda's family, but I hope that it gives them some assurance that lessons are being learned to ensure that such a tragedy never occurs again.

Ferry Services (Cairnryan-Larne)

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): In the past few hours, worrying events have emerged with regard to P&O ferry services and their staff. Of particular concern to me is the Cairnryan-Larne crossing in my constituency. The Scottish Government needs to take its transport responsibilities seriously with regard to Cairnryan, as it is a lifeline ferry service and a major employer in the south-west.

Is the First Minister aware of the situation? What discussions, if any, has the Scottish Government had with P&O? I ask for assurance that the Scottish Government will work constructively with the United Kingdom Government to ensure that Stena Line and P&O can operate from Cairnryan long into the future.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Obviously, I am aware of what has been reported about an announcement that will come from P&O later today. We sought to engage with the UK

Government this morning to seek further details, and we will seek to engage fully with P&O as more detail emerges. The relevant issue for Scotland is the Cairnryan-Larne route, and we will pay particular attention to any implications for that route, which supports a number of sailings every day.

We will keep Parliament updated as we get more detail. Obviously, we have to await that detail, but this will be a seriously worrying time for those who work for P&O. I know that, with the pandemic, this has been a difficult time for ferry operators—I do not underestimate that—but I hope that we are not about to see a mass-scale fire-and-rehire situation.

This will be a worrying time for everybody. We will engage very closely with all those involved and we will, of course, keep Parliament fully updated.

Test and Protect (Redundancies)

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I have been contacted by constituents who work in test and protect in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Following the First Minister’s announcements on Tuesday, the management told staff that they would be made redundant and would have only four weeks’ notice of that. That very evening, staff received a—frankly—tone-deaf letter that provided a web link for redundancy Scotland. I understand that that has not been the case in other boards, which have confirmed continuing employment until September and, indeed, redeployment in the national health service.

After almost two years of working to support people and protect all of us, and in the midst of the worst cost of living crisis in memory, surely those key workers deserve better than a web link and a thank you letter. Can the First Minister provide clarity on whether test and protect staff will be redeployed to other roles across the NHS in which they can continue the vital work that they have been doing so far?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I express not for the first time and certainly not for the last time my deep and enduring gratitude to everyone who has worked in test and protect over the past two years. That work is vital. Part of the reason for our longer transition in testing is to ensure that we treat staff fairly.

I will certainly look at the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde material. It is important that all health boards engage properly with those staff, and the Scottish Government will ensure that that is the case.

These services are coming to an end in England at the end of March. We have extended them for public health reasons, but also to ensure that we treat staff as fairly as we possibly can.

We will seek to redeploy as many staff as possible and as many as possible who want to have roles elsewhere. We need people working in our broader health and social care system right now, and there will be opportunities for staff there.

I again express my gratitude to everybody who has worked to help us through the pandemic over the past two years. As we see from the pressure on our NHS right now, it is possible that this week will be the toughest in the pandemic so far in terms of the impact on the service. Everybody who is working to help us through is doing a sterling job, and they have my and the Government’s deep gratitude.

Ukrainian Refugees

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): As the war on our continent continues, it was a source of at least some comfort yesterday to hear of Scotland’s plans for welcoming Ukrainian refugees. What lessons has the Scottish Government taken in its current approach from the experience of the Syrian resettlement scheme, in which each local authority settled families in its area?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I said yesterday, we are drawing very heavily on the lessons from the Syrian resettlement scheme. I think that most people agree that, overall, that scheme was a success, but there will be lessons to learn about things that can be improved on.

The reasons why we have put the supersponsor proposal to the United Kingdom Government—we are, of course, still working on agreement on the detail of that—is to expedite the ability of Ukrainian refugees to come here and to ensure that we can operate in a holistic way. We are working very closely with local authorities and other partners to ensure that there is a real local focus, because I know that all parts of Scotland are keen to give a warm welcome to those who are fleeing the horrors in Ukraine. The approach that we are taking enables as many people as possible to do that.

Tackling Racism

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): Tim Rideout, who is a senior Scottish National Party adviser, made appalling racist comments about the Home Secretary. Such comments have no place in society, let alone in political debate. I welcome the fact that the SNP has taken quick action in suspending Mr Rideout and launching an investigation into his conduct, but racism incidents are never isolated, and all parties must condemn racism. Will the First Minister assure black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Scotland and the broader public that her party will continue to

root out and condemn toxic racist political discourse?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I will. The individual concerned—as Pam Gosal fairly pointed out—was immediately suspended from the SNP; it would be wrong for me to comment any further.

I represent the most diverse constituency in the whole of Scotland in this Parliament—I represent the biggest BAME communities in the country. I understand these issues, I understand how serious it is that all parties take these issues very seriously, and I am absolutely committed to doing so.

I think that this is an issue for all parties. We all have to be prepared to act when necessary in a way that aligns with what we say around these things. For my part—I am probably speaking more as leader of the SNP than as First Minister here—I am determined that my party does so, and I call on other parties to ensure that they always follow suit. That is something on which we can, I hope, unite.

Care Home Places (Funding)

Foysool Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Can the First Minister confirm what action the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that shortfalls in Government funding for non-self-funded care home places are not being made up for with an unaffordable raise in the cost of care for self-funders?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am happy to reply to the member in more detail, but we are, of course, continuing to work closely with all those in the social care sector to deal with current pressures. Free personal and nursing care is a key part of how we fund social care in Scotland, and we have increased the rates for that.

From the point of view of self-funders, the thresholds that apply in Scotland are different from, and better than, those in other parts of the United Kingdom. We have a strong foundation in Scotland, but we recognise, as we work towards the national care service, that there is more work to do, and we are very focused on achieving that.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. **Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S6F-00901)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Tuesday.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am very grateful for that reply.

We learned this week that, when it comes to child and adolescent mental health services across Scotland, almost a third of children are not seen in time. In Glasgow, Forth Valley and Dumfries and Galloway, the figure is more like half. Thousands of young people are waiting for more than a year.

We may be just days away from welcoming hundreds of children from Ukraine. Many will be separated from parents, suffering bereavement and dealing with untold trauma. They may be here with us for years, and they will certainly need access to CAMHS. It is to the Government's shame that they too will have to join the longest queue in the national health service.

We have been warning about this crisis for years. In that time, the First Minister has failed a generation of Scottish children. It is beginning to look as though the Government just does not care enough about this issue.

Why should we trust that the situation will get any better, either for Scottish kids who are on the list now or for those Ukrainians who will be arriving soon?

The First Minister: These are issues of the utmost seriousness and are treated as such by the Government. Since the Government took office, NHS funding on mental health has increased by 65 per cent and staffing has increased by 83 per cent. We take these issues extremely seriously.

Waiting times, and the proportion of young people who are not yet being seen within 18 weeks, are not good enough. Yes, the pandemic has impacted on that, but we know that we had challenges before the pandemic. However, it is important to note with regard to the statistics that were published this week—I am not trying to take away from what the member has said—that, although the proportion of those who are seen within 18 weeks has fallen, and we need to address that, the number of those who are actually seen was the second highest ever. What we face here is a situation in which we are seeing more young people but the demand for mental health services is also rising. Many countries are facing that situation, and that is what we need to address.

That is why the additional funding and the additional staffing are so important, but so too is the redesign work that we are doing. We are investing more in prevention and early intervention so that all schools now have access to counsellors—that is important. In addition, there is the continued investment that is set out in the recovery and renewal plan to continue to build that capacity.

This is a big challenge for all countries—it was big before the pandemic, and it is now even bigger

given the pandemic's mental health impacts. That is why we will continue to ensure that we have in place the funding, staffing and reform of service delivery in order to meet that challenge, both for children who are here now and for any children who might come to Scotland in the future.

Waste Reduction (Durable Goods)

4. Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to reduce the waste of unsold, durable goods in Scotland, in line with the net zero targets. (S6F-00920)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are progressing a circular economy bill as a priority in this parliamentary session. We will obviously consult on the contents of that bill in May. However, I can confirm that it will include proposals to ban the destruction of unsold durable goods. That aims to prevent needless waste and it will also help to support initiatives such as Fresh Start here in Edinburgh, which provides goods that would otherwise be destroyed, as well as goods donated by the public, to low-income households and people moving out of homelessness.

Fiona Hyslop: Reports from ITV last year revealed that Amazon destroys millions of items of unsold stock every year—products that are often new and unused. In the face of a climate emergency, that makes no sense at all, so it is welcome that Scotland is keeping pace with other European countries and showing ambition in tackling the issue. What lessons can be learned from countries such as France, which has recently enacted a ban on such waste?

The First Minister: I think that people were understandably concerned by the reports about Amazon, for example. When those reports surfaced, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency investigated the allegations and, although it did not find breaches of regulation, it made a number of recommendations. SEPA continues to work with Amazon so that it can comply with best practice.

The French legislation has only recently come into force. However, we will look at France's experience and look to learn where we can, including about which products to target, how to encourage the reuse of products and how to monitor and regulate the proposal. We will also be seeking views and looking to learn from others more widely as part of the forthcoming consultation on the circular economy bill. I would encourage all members across Parliament to engage actively with that.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): We all want to see waste tackled. The amount of waste in Scotland is rising and recycling has

declined for two years running. The Scottish Government has missed its 2020 household recycling target and even the 2013 target has not been met. Why?

The First Minister: We know that all these things are challenging, but if we look, for example, at the amount of waste that is going to landfill, we see that it is at its lowest since records began. We need to do more to maintain progress. We have also just recently announced the first investments from the recycling improvement fund to improve the quantity and quality of recycling. We continue to press ahead with all that, including, of course, the deposit return scheme, which will have a big impact on waste. We encourage people across the country to work with us as we try to reduce waste and have a more circular economy and to choose to recycle in the way that we all want them to. The Government will back that with the investment that is needed.

National Treatment Centres (Staff)

5. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the First Minister when construction of the national treatment centres, which are due to open this year, is completed, whether they will have sufficient staff to begin tackling the Scotland-wide patient backlog. (S6F-00908)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. Recruitment is already progressing well and I can tell members that a significant number—around 200 of the 1,500 that will be required for the national treatment centres—have been recruited. The full complement will be in place once the network of 10 national treatment centres is fully operational. Of course, over the next 12 months, three of the new centres will open their doors and start treating patients. That will include the Inverness national treatment centre, which will be up and running by the end of the year. Clearly, increasing specialist recruitment on that scale is not without its challenges. That is why we have provided the national health service with targeted additional funding to develop workforce supply and international recruitment.

Edward Mountain: The First Minister's comments about Inverness are interesting, because the plan was announced in 2015, giving us ample time for training. So far, NHS Highland has secured about 25 per cent of its team—65 people, 20 of whom come from its own resources—leaving only about 200 to find. Does the First Minister agree that NHS Highland's staffing problems for its national treatment centres could have been answered by establishing a medical school in the Highlands, for which I have been calling for years?

The First Minister: We have increased recruitment and intake to medical training. We will

continue to take the right decisions in terms of the overall NHS workforce. However, I can tell members what else would have helped NHS Highland's recruitment efforts over recent times: if the Tories had not taken us out of the European Union and stopped freedom of movement, because that is one of the biggest challenges that is being faced right now in recruiting people into our NHS and social care. Perhaps a bit of reflection on that point from the Conservatives would go an awfully long way.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The Royal College of Nursing Scotland says that the workforce strategy provides "scant detail" on how increasing the number of nurses will be achieved, given the record levels of vacancies, or how to retain existing experienced staff. Similarly, the British Medical Association Scotland notes that the workforce strategy:

"says little about retention of staff: just one of the worrying gaps which suggests it certainly won't provide any relief in the short or medium term."

Are the RCN and the BMA wrong?

The First Minister: No. Those are big challenges that we are working to address, and we are working very closely with organisations such as the RCN and the BMA. The health board delivery plans for the strategy will set out a lot of the detail of how individual health boards will go about retaining and recruiting staff. Of course, we have already seen a significant increase in the overall NHS workforce under this Government, which includes qualified nurses and midwives. We are in a very difficult recruitment climate right now for a whole host of reasons, not least the reason that I cited in the previous answer. That is why we are investing in wellbeing support for staff, so that we can retain staff who are already in our NHS and why we are funding international and domestic recruitment campaigns. We will work with the RCN, the BMA and other professional organisations and trade unions as we get more and more staff into our NHS in the years ahead.

Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 (Interim Targets)

6. **Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government anticipates meeting the interim targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. (S6F-00918)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will publish the next tackling child poverty delivery plan for the period 2022 to 2026 a week today, and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government will make a parliamentary statement to coincide with that.

This is our second delivery plan and it will outline the transformational actions that we, together with partners across the country, will take to deliver on our national mission to tackle child poverty and meet the targets in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The plan will be underpinned by new economic modelling that sets out the anticipated impact of our actions in relation to both relative and absolute poverty, and projecting poverty levels for those measures in 2023, which is the year that our interim targets are due to be met.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I look forward to the publication of the plan next week.

We did not deliver devolution to leave powers on the shelf or blame others but, unfortunately, that is what is happening. All the work that has been outlined is laudable, but the fact is that it is not enough—and it is not just me saying that. The Fraser of Allander Institute, the Government's own Poverty and Inequality Commission, swathes of third sector organisations and, most recently, in their report "Tackling Child Poverty and Destitution", published yesterday, the Trussell Trust, Save the Children and the Institute for Public Policy Research have all said that the Government will miss the targets if it does not change course.

One child in poverty is too many, and one day too long. I urge the First Minister to change course and to use all the powers of the Scottish Parliament to lift children out of poverty; not because they are targets, but because they are children. What different and specific actions will the First Minister's Government take to lift children out of poverty and meet the targets? Will those actions include an increase to the Scottish child payment to £40 in time to meet the targets, as recommended in the report that was published yesterday?

The First Minister: The social justice secretary will set all that out when she makes a statement to the Parliament next week. The Cabinet discussed it in detail at its meeting this week. We are very focused on all those issues. It is important that we meet the targets and Pam Duncan-Glancy is right: not just because they are targets, but because we want to lift every child that we can out of poverty. However, it is simply not true, and it is not fair by any objective standard, to say that, on this issue, the Scottish Government simply tries to blame other people. We have already doubled the Scottish child payment and that has rightly been described as game changing.

The impact of the various Scottish Government initiatives on the matter was set out in "The Cost of a Child in Scotland" report that the Child Poverty Action Group published last week, which showed that the combined value of Scottish Government

policies, including our lower childcare costs, will reduce the net cost of bringing up a child in Scotland by up to 31 per cent—almost £24,000—for lower-income families once the Scottish child payment is doubled and the expansion of free school meals is fully delivered. The author says that the rising

“cost of raising a child and the failure”

in recent years

“to match this with improvements in help from the state has left many families in the UK struggling to make ends meet ... In Scotland, families are significantly better off in this regard, as a result ... of Scottish government policies seeking to address the problem”.

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): A new report shows that Scottish Government policies and lower childcare costs could reduce the cost of a child for low-income families by almost one third. Does the First Minister agree that the full impact of those policies is being diminished by the damaging impact of Westminster control, toxic cuts and a spiralling Tory cost of living crisis, which the United Kingdom Government is not addressing in any meaningful way?

The First Minister: Siobhian Brown puts her finger on the fundamental issue. An independent report says that the impact of Scottish Government policies—the things that we can do and are doing within the powers that we have—are reducing by one third the cost of raising a child in a low-income family. That is the impact of having powers lying here in this Parliament. However, that impact is being undermined, because too many powers in that regard still lie in the hands of a Conservative Government at Westminster that is taking money away from the lowest-income families.

If we can reduce the cost of raising a child in a low-income family by 31 per cent with limited powers over welfare, just think what we could do if we had all the powers and if this Parliament were independent.

The Presiding Officer: We return briefly to supplementaries.

Survivors Access to Justice

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): We have already heard about the Scottish Government’s victims task force report, which highlights worrying levels of attrition, with survivors dropping cases because of lengthy delays. I know that both the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans take the issue very seriously. How can we better support survivors to access justice, given that defendants can demand in-person trials, which causes further delays? What can we do now to speed up non-harassment orders and interim

interdicts, or other emergency protections, while the backlogs are addressed?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are seeking to make those improvements with the laws that we have passed and the policies that we have put in place, but there is more to be done. Of course, the ordering of interim interdicts or non-harassment orders are issues for courts. I have already said how seriously we take addressing the backlog, particularly for victims of domestic abuse or violence against women and sexual violence. That is very important. We are also increasing money to front-line organisations so that women in those situations can have access to help and support.

There is a great deal to be done to recover from the pandemic and get back on track with making those changes. The Parliament has made world-leading changes over many years and in many cases, because too many women suffer the impact of domestic abuse and it is incumbent on us all to ensure that the policies and resources and the legislative framework are in place to better tackle that.

NHS Forth Valley General Practices

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): NHS Forth Valley has admitted that general practices in central Falkirk, Polmont, the Braes, Camelon and Stenhousemuir are full. That admission followed an investigation into GP registration when a constituent, after suffering chest pains, could not access diagnosis and treatment due to the lack of a GP.

Given the very welcome arrival of many thousands of Ukrainian refugees, what steps are the First Minister and her Government taking to ensure that all people in Forth Valley can access a GP?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are working towards a target of increasing the number of GPs and all health boards have a duty to ensure that patients have access to general practice services. That will continue.

I hope that we get the ability, which is still dependent on the Home Office, to start to welcome significant numbers of Ukrainians to Scotland from as early as this weekend. Part of the work that we are doing is to ensure not only that we provide them with the immediate support that they need, but that we plan for their longer-term support as well.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister’s question time.

Fair Trade Pledge

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-02664, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the fair trade pledge. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak button or place an R in the chat function.

Due to illness, Gordon MacDonald has agreed to step in for Clare Adamson.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Fair Trade Forum works closely with parliamentarians from all parties to support actions to improve the livelihoods of farmers and workers who consumers, including those in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency, rely on to produce many everyday foods and products; recognises what it understands to be the Fair Trade Pledge, to ensure better prices, safe working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers; understands that the pledge also includes the selling and buying of Fairtrade products, from coffee and tea to flowers and gold, and encouraging consumers to look for the Fairtrade Mark; welcomes what it sees as the Scottish Government's commitment to further progress Scotland's potential to achieve inclusive growth through the delivery of increased sales and awareness of Fairtrade products, and notes the view that these actions, which were adopted in the International Development Strategy published in 2016 and are planned up to 2030, are key actions in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

12:51

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Unfortunately, as the Presiding Officer said, Clare Adamson is unable to speak to her motion on the Scottish Fair Trade Forum pledge. As I have supported the Balerno fair trade group in my constituency for many years, I hope that I can do justice to the motion.

The Scottish Fair Trade Forum pledge is a way for MSPs to show their support for all actions that improve the livelihoods of farmers and workers from developing countries who produce many of the products that we consume every day. The pledge involves supporting a fair economy and committing to tackle the climate emergency.

The Scottish Fair Trade Forum was established in 2007 by a group of Scotland-based fair trade campaigners to promote the cause of fair trade in Scotland and support our becoming a fair trade nation.

The forum has similar aims to those of the Fairtrade Foundation, which was established back in 1992 by Christian Aid, New Consumer, Oxfam, Traidcraft, the World Development Movement and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. That same year, Co-operative Group

supermarkets became the first supermarket chain to sell a Fairtrade product, Cafédirect coffee.

The first Fairtrade fortnight in the United Kingdom, which was directed by Barnaby Miln, was launched on 12 February 1997 at the Augustine United church on Edinburgh's George IV Bridge. During Fairtrade fortnight, Miln encouraged supporters to ask for fairly traded products, and he provided them with a list of 85 supermarkets in Scotland's cities and larger towns.

In 2013, Scotland became, after Wales, the second nation in the world to achieve fair trade nation status and support sales of products that offer a better deal to workers in developing countries.

The result of all that effort is that, today, there are more than 6,000 Fairtrade products on sale, from coffee and tea to flowers, clothes, wine, beauty products and even gold. What they all have in common is that they carry the Fairtrade mark, which certifies that products or ingredients have been produced in safer working conditions in which workers' rights are respected and with fairer pay levels.

Why is promoting fair trade important? In developing countries, independent small farmers who work their own land and market their produce through a local co-operative are paid a price that covers the cost of sustainable production. They are also paid a premium, which producers can invest in development. By being able to exceed their production costs, they can improve their lives by having access to better education and healthcare and more nutritious food.

We also have Fairtrade producers. I will give an example. Most Fairtrade tea is grown on estates, and the primary concerns for the workers who are employed on tea plantations are fair wages and decent working conditions. If the producers agree to pay decent wages, guarantee workers the right to join trade unions, provide good housing, where relevant, maintain health and safety as well as environmental standards, and ensure that no child labour or forced labour can occur, they are awarded contracts that allow for long-term planning and sustainable production practices and under which they can receive partial advance payments when requested. As a result, fair trade benefits workers and communities by spreading profits more equitably and stimulating the local economy. Profits are often reinvested in community projects such as health clinics or childcare and education projects.

Almost 1,900 certified Fairtrade producer organisations across 71 countries received a Fairtrade premium of £169 million in 2020. On average, each producer received £90,000 as an

additional premium to support their local community.

There are a large number of local fair trade community groups across Scotland. Balerno, in my constituency of Edinburgh Pentlands, gained Fairtrade status in 2013, thanks to the volunteers who promoted the benefits of fair trade to the local community. Every year, Balerno fair trade group organises among schools the fair trade art competition, and hosts the annual coffee and craft fair. During the year, it encourages local businesses, from family-run Carlyle's Bar and Kitchen and the local Scotmid to the community café at the Mill, to stock fair trade products.

That effort to keep fair trade in the public eye resulted in Balerno fair trade group being awarded Fairtrade community of the month by the Fairtrade Foundation in June last year.

Our schools also promote fair trade, especially during Fairtrade fortnight, and I know that Clare Adamson would have thanked schools in her area, such as Newmains, St Aidan's, Morningside primary and St Bernadette's, for their efforts in raising awareness of fair trade produce.

I should also take this opportunity to mention the schools in my constituency, starting with Stenhouse primary, which was awarded fair trade status in 2010, as was Dean Park primary in 2013, and the continued support of and participation by pupils and staff at Balerno high in local fair trade events.

Many of the schools in my constituency and in Clare Adamson's will promote fair trade by selling fair trade products in their tuck shops, or using fair trade products in their staffroom. Their pupils will learn about how global trade works and why fair trade is important, and produce awareness-raising posters for their school and their local communities.

We can all help the fair trade movement not only by supporting local organisations during Fairtrade fortnight, but by stimulating demand by asking for fair trade products in shops, cafés and restaurants. We can also spread the fair trade message among our families, friends and colleagues, and, as a result, assist, in a small way, in supporting communities in developing countries.

Edinburgh is a fair trade city, and Scotland has been recognised as one of the first fair trade nations. That highlights the fact that we, the people of Scotland, share a vision of being a good global citizen and are committed to playing our part in addressing poverty.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr MacDonald.

I am aware that I might have inadvertently given the wrong number for the motion, which is S6M-02864.

The first speaker in the open debate is Sharon Dowey, who joins us remotely. She will be followed by Colin Smyth. You have up to four minutes, Ms Dowey.

12:58

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): I thank Clare Adamson for lodging the motion for debate and wish her a speedy recovery.

Many of us will have seen the Fairtrade logo in shops, often on coffee, chocolate or bananas, but, beyond recognising the Fairtrade sticker, I do not think that many of us know what fair trade is, what it means and what role it can play in our future. That is why, for the past couple of weeks, I have been learning about fair trade businesses in Ayrshire. The Honeybee and the Hare café in Ayr, for example, is a small, independent café that provides high-quality artisan coffee, hand-made food, art works and gifts. I have learned a lot about the sustainable supply chain and sustainable products, which has helped me to put fair trade business into perspective. The owners explained that fair trade means workers' rights, fairer pay, safer working conditions and sustainability, while for shoppers, it means quality and ethically produced goods for a fair wage.

To learn more about fair trade in Scotland, I have been communicating with the Scottish Fair Trade Forum to understand its approach, its activities and how it is bringing together fair trade groups, businesses, non-governmental organisations, faith groups, universities, colleges and public sector organisations. Fair trade is not just about buying nice chocolate; it is a culture that we need to develop across Scotland.

Local authorities have an important role to play in promoting fair trade through supporting local organisations. Across South and East Ayrshire, those organisations include Ayr Fairtrade Partnership, South Ayrshire Fairtrade zone committee and East Ayrshire Fairtrade Group. It is encouraging to see that, because of their work, South Ayrshire became a Fairtrade zone in March 2018—that zone brings together the work of Ayr, Prestwick and Troon—and East Ayrshire became a Fairtrade zone in October 2016. That is why, today, across South and East Ayrshire, many businesses can be found that have committed to fair trade business practices.

It would make a real difference if all MSPs encouraged their local authorities to get more involved in fair trade activities such as Fairtrade fortnight. The annual Fairtrade fortnight activities help to spread the message about the importance

of fairer and more sustainable trading practices. Fairtrade fortnight also provides an opportunity to hear stories about workers from the developing world who grow food and clothing materials, or mine precious metals.

Such initiatives can help us in achieving our sustainable development goals and fairer trade. Educating younger generations is a great start that gives us all a better chance of becoming more sustainable. Younger generations can utilise their skills and knowledge to shape a more compassionate and sustainable world. That is why I am pleased that many South Ayrshire schools take part in fair trade events. Kyle academy, whose geography and religious, moral and philosophical studies departments won a prize for sustainability at the Scottish fair trade awards in November, is a great example. I urge all MSPs to encourage schools from their constituencies to get involved.

There is so much more that we, as MSPs, can do. We can encourage our councils to do more for fair trade groups and campaigns. We can also sign the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's fair trade pledge campaign, which demonstrates our support for all actions that improve the livelihoods of workers who produce many of the products that we consume. I am proud that I signed that pledge in October but, as MSPs, we should be leading by example, which is why I urge my colleagues across the chamber to sign the pledge. We should also come together to push for the Parliament to stock more Fairtrade products. Those steps would demonstrate our unity in seeking to achieve fair trade goals.

As a fair trade nation, our efforts aim to embed fair trade values across all sectors of Scottish society, whether that means looking for the Fairtrade mark on the products that we buy, attending one of the many fair trade events or simply donating to help to promote fair trade.

13:03

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank Clare Adamson—whom I wish a speedy recovery—for lodging her motion, which provides us all with an opportunity not only to highlight just how important fair trade is, as her able assistant Gordon MacDonald did, but to say thank you to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum and everyone who is part of the fair trade journey in Scotland.

It is less than two weeks since Fairtrade fortnight took place. As convener of the Parliament's cross-party group on fair trade, as well as being the chair of the Dumfries and Galloway regional Fairtrade steering group, I am passionate about fair trade, but it is the local

groups, the businesses and the producers in our communities that make Fairtrade fortnight happen.

After the past tough two years of us all being separated from our friends and families, it was great to once again get out and about and take part in person in Fairtrade fortnight events. I was lucky enough to attend a number of events in my region, including the wonderful Fairtrade big brew in the Dumfriesshire village of Dunscore. Per head of population, it must have more fair traders than anywhere in the country.

I saw at first hand just how tirelessly local volunteers are working to promote fair trade, despite the challenges that we have all faced. I want to say a heartfelt thank you to every volunteer, shop, organisation and school across the country that is helping to deliver trade justice for so many vulnerable farmers and workers in developing countries, week in and week out. As the motion highlights, they, and parliamentarians, are supported in their endeavours by the Scottish Fair Trade Forum under the leadership of its chief executive, Martin Rhodes, and its chair, Charles Sim, and vice chair, Liz Manson—both Charles and Liz, I am proud to say, are South Scotland constituents of mine—and the other vice chair, Rachel Farey, of the One World Shop in Edinburgh.

The forum does an invaluable job in supplying information, knowledge, training and resources to local fair trade groups. It promotes fair trade businesses here in Scotland and has supported partnerships with producers during the pandemic. It also supports producers worldwide, and has Fairtrade producer representatives from Malawi and Rwanda on its board. The work of the forum led to the step change in fair trade activity that resulted in Scotland securing fair trade nation status almost a decade ago. That remains vital as we take the next step on the fair trade journey.

The fair trade principles of better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for workers have never been more important. Fair trade challenges the injustice and unfairness of conventional trade. It is also at the heart of the fight against climate change. Trade justice and climate justice work hand in hand.

During Fairtrade fortnight, the forum arranged for producers from Ghana, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malawi and Palestine to take part in online events, including one with our own cross-party group. During those events, I was struck by stories of the devastating impact of climate change on some of our most vulnerable developing countries. Farmers of crops such as tea, coffee and cocoa, who are already battling the impact of volatile market prices and rising production costs with little power in the multimillion pound supply chains that they contribute to, are now having to deal with

more freak weather, extreme rainfall, prolonged dry seasons and the prevalence of plant disease in their crops.

By ensuring that farmers and producers in the global south are paid a fair price for their goods, the Fair Trade Forum is a lifeline for those producers, allowing farmers to be more resilient and to reduce their own carbon footprint without worrying about how to afford medicine, food or their children's education and housing.

Is there more that we as individuals and the Government can do to support fair trade? Of course there is. Ask any local fair trade group that has tried to get a fair trade sign placed at the entrance to its village but which has been hit by bureaucracy. Look at how much, or how little, of the multibillion pound public sector procurement budget is actually spent on fair trade goods. It is clear that there is an awful lot more that we can all do.

That is why we should be proud to be a fair trade nation. We should all back the fair trade pledge and commit today to redoubling our efforts to support fair trade and, by doing so, to change the world for the better by a little bit every day.

13:07

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): This time of global conflict reminds me how interconnected our lives are. The fallout of what happens in Ukraine will not only affect geopolitical matters but will lead to difficulties in food supply and security. Ukraine is one of the world's biggest exporters of grain. Tectonic plates have shifted politically and economically in the weeks since the invasion. How the world works together, not only at a time of conflict but in one of climate change and drought, will have an impact on us all.

Today's motion says that the fair trade pledge is there

"to ensure better prices, safe working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers"

and that the Parliament

"understands that the pledge also includes the selling and buying of Fairtrade products, from coffee and tea to flowers and gold, and encouraging consumers to look for the Fairtrade mark".

Many of the products that we buy and use every day are grown or produced by people who are not paid a fair price for their work or produce over a long period of time. Workers and farmers with smallholdings often work in poor or dangerous conditions and are denied fair access to markets. Fairtrade ensures that workers and small farmers are paid a fair price and campaigns for those

producers to have the opportunity to participate in global markets without exploitation.

One of the successes of fair trade has been the building of a partnership between consumers and producers. Many of the staple goods that we find in our homes come from producers who were not previously paid fair prices for their work or products. That perpetuated a cycle of poverty and denied many families a dignified life.

As MSPs, we all have a role in our own constituencies and in Scotland as a fair trade nation. Prior to the election last May, every one of us was asked to sign the fair trade pledge, which stated:

"If I am elected to the next Parliament, I will take actions to promote Scotland's fair trade nation status, listen to the voices of producers in global supply chains, support actions to build back a fairer economy and tackle the climate emergency. I also support measures to increase the public procurement of fair trade products."

Colin Smyth mentioned that. It is something that we need to work with our councils on.

What can we do practically? We can join our local fair trade groups. I am part of a fair trade group in Dunbar, which is going really well, and there are a few others in East Lothian. Fair trade groups are at the heart of the fair trade movement. They organise, activate and lobby to raise awareness of the need for fair trade and to bring about change at all levels. There are groups in communities, schools, colleges, universities, faith groups and, of course, workplaces. Many workplaces have worked towards achieving Fairtrade status from the Fairtrade Foundation. Collectively, those groups make Scotland a fair trade nation and contribute to the international Fairtrade towns movement.

We can also encourage our schools to teach fair trade. The Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade school awards take schools and nurseries on a journey from awareness of fair trade through to embedding it in the life of the school or nursery and the local community. Going for the award offers a great opportunity to consider global issues from a fair trade perspective. Teaching about fair trade fits within the curriculum and it can support pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that are needed in our interconnected world.

We can also encourage businesses in our constituencies to support fair trade and to buy and sell Fairtrade products. Ethical consumption is on the rise in the UK, and consumers expect businesses to be taking more action than ever before to make their supply chains transparent, equitable and environmentally friendly. What was once a unique selling point is now industry standard. It is one of the greatest successes of the ethical consumer movement. Investing in fair trade

can help businesses to effortlessly signal a commitment to more sustainable, more responsible and fairer standards of production. Fairtrade products fulfil the ethical commitments to fairer wages, improved working conditions, community investment and environmentalism.

I thank Clare Adamson for lodging her motion. Let us do what we can to support fair trade in our localities and in Scotland.

13:11

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Clare Adamson for lodging the motion and Gordon MacDonald for speaking to it in her absence. I wish Clare a speedy recovery. I apologise that I cannot stay for the whole debate, but I am grateful to be able to speak. I thank the Deputy Presiding Officer for letting me leave early.

Fair trade is not just good in itself as a system of standards for buying and selling specific commodities. It is also a model for how we can do trade better, both globally and locally, and how we can build fairer, healthier and more peaceful and sustainable relationships within Scotland and across the world. The climate crisis, the Covid pandemic, international arms and the conflicts that they exacerbate—all those things remind us that none of us are islands, even those of us who live on them. We are linked together in global relationships of responsibility, complicity, shared history, future possibility and, I believe and hope, solidarity and care. The fair trade movement offers us a way to acknowledge those relationships and to build them together.

Fair trade is an urgent and effective remedy for particular instances of trade exploitation—those networks of oppression that dominate international trade in sectors including the cotton, banana and chocolate industries. Fairly traded supply chains represent a vital alternative to those horrors. However, fair trade is a hugely important framework for a wide range of goods and commodities, and not only the most egregiously exploitative. We have the opportunity in our positions of privilege to make sure that the decisions that we make and those that we influence are aligned with fair trade principles and practice.

The Fairtrade premium is at the heart of the Fairtrade system, and what it tells us needs to be at the heart of how we look at our economies. The premium is paid to suppliers not as individual farmers or businesses, but for the benefit of the communities that they belong to. It reminds us that we are not the atomised actors of traditional economic theory, coldly calculating our maximised self-interest. We are communities, ecosystems and neighbourhoods that are intricately bound

together in shared experience. Our economies, like the economies of co-operation that are supported by the Fairtrade premium, are there to enable that shared endeavour, and not the other way round.

Communities in the majority world—the global south—are facing deeper and crueller challenges than ever before. They include the intensification of climate impacts, as we have heard; the health and vaccine inequalities of Covid; fortress nations clanging the gates shut against refugees; and land grabs to feed the rich and fix the net-zero balance sheets. This is not a question of charity; it is a question of basic justice and fundamental human rights. The best fair trade organisations know that. They do not just seek increased markets and better conditions for the suppliers that they deal with; they are looking for transformational change at every level, and we, in the Scottish Parliament, as well as people in our Fairtrade towns and cities across the country, can be a part of making that happen.

I am proud to have signed the fair trade pledge and to celebrate the work of the fair trade movement, not least in the continent of Africa, where I was born and grew up. However, significant as those benefits have been for many in the majority world, fair trade needs to go much further, much wider and much deeper. We need to challenge not only the worst, most brutal and cynical forms of trade exploitation but our everyday assumptions and our unthinking expectation that the majority world will be a giant supermarket shelf, crammed with monoculture goodies to feed our pleasures. In a world where we are rightly looking to feed ourselves more locally and sustainably, we need to ensure that everyone can do the same.

I look forward to the day when we need no fair trade pledges, no Fairtrade certificates and no Fairtrade labels—when fair trade is simply trade and the alternative is unthinkable.

13:16

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I congratulate Clare Adamson on recognising the fair trade pledge and bringing this important issue to the chamber. I thank Gordon MacDonald for opening the debate.

My constituency of Cunninghame South sits within North Ayrshire. In 2014, through the hard work of the North Ayrshire Fairtrade zone group, supported by the local authority, North Ayrshire was recognised as a Fairtrade zone. I am pleased to say that that status has been awarded again this year, for the eighth year running. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the members of the North Ayrshire Fairtrade zone group, and I

recognise the hard work and determination of everyone who has been involved in making that happen. Thank you.

When we discuss fair trade, people automatically think about products such as coffee, bananas and chocolate. However, it is not just about the products; it is about the people. Buying Fairtrade means rights for workers, safer working conditions and fairer pay, and consumers can pride themselves on buying high-quality, ethically produced goods.

However, despite the efforts of groups such as the North Ayrshire Fairtrade zone, a vast number of products continue to be grown or made by workers who are not treated fairly. Those workers often produce goods in dangerous conditions and are denied the same access to markets as other producers.

We are a nation of chocolate lovers: the United Kingdom chocolate market is worth billions of pounds, and demand is growing yearly. It leaves a bitter taste to learn that cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana live in abject poverty, with the Fairtrade Foundation reporting farmers earning as little as 75p per day—the same amount as one bar of chocolate that is sold here costs.

It is also reported that, as is often the case, women bear the greatest burden, having fewer rights than men. They not only work long hours in the cocoa fields to earn less than men; they are expected to look after their children and to manage extra tasks such as carrying water and household chores.

In today's more informed and connected world, we cannot be ignorant of the truth. The fair trade pledge, along with Fairtrade fortnight, gives a stage for thousands of individuals, businesses and organisations across Scotland to come together and share the stories of the people who, like the cocoa farmers, work hard to produce goods but are exploited and underpaid, and to join together and reject those practices. I urge everyone to choose the world we want and to highlight the inequality and injustice that is felt by those people.

Education and awareness are powerful tools. It is important that, while we advocate for change, children develop their understanding of how fair trade benefits farmers and workers across the globe. A number of schools in my constituency are registered as Fairtrade schools. Secondary and primary pupils alike are striving to achieve awards, ranging from understanding how their school uses Fairtrade products to fully embedding fair trade into their daily school life and working to raise awareness of fair trade in their local community. I express my gratitude to the teachers in those schools, who have played key roles in informing

the next generation of the benefits of fair trade, normalising equality and making lives better.

Buying Fairtrade is easy. There are more than 6,000 Fairtrade products. I encourage everyone to look for the Fairtrade mark when shopping. Choosing Fairtrade means standing with others for fairness and equality, allowing farmers to tackle poverty and build resilience to the climate crisis that we face.

Everyone can change the world for the better by businesses signing up to the fair trade pledge, consumers choosing to buy Fairtrade products and all of us educating our children to do the same.

13:19

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, want to thank Clare Adamson for securing today's debate. I also thank Gordon MacDonald for standing in to kick off the discussion, and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum for all its work.

It is timely that we meet so recently after Fairtrade fortnight to highlight the benefits of fair trade, but we also need to focus on it all year round. Fair trade is crucial in ensuring that goods are produced ethically, and it is a key tool that we, as consumers, have in knowing that the price that we pay delivers for our environment and in relation to fair work principles for producers. Fair trade directly benefits the communities that the producers live in.

The Corana RI Irupana co-operative in Bolivia provides a brilliant example of the benefits of fair trade for people and communities. Research shows that the co-operative is in a stable situation that has resulted in 60 per cent of its members being able to access electricity, 97 per cent recycling their organic waste, an impressive 86 per cent believing that they are better off in the organisation than they were before being in it, and 54 per cent having jobs created in their community. The delivery of high-quality sustainable products, easier access to credit for smallholders and investment in community services, including food security and scholarships, are but a few of the many benefits that fair trade has for consumers and producers worldwide.

A couple of weeks ago, at our cross-party group on fair trade, it was inspiring to hear from producers. There was the story of Sholi Coffee in Rwanda, which started as a small association of 30 women and has not stopped growing since. We heard about the contribution of the Kasinthula Cane Growers' Association from Malawi, which managed to convert largely unproductive land to sugar cane production, thereby providing an income for 282 subsistence farmers and employment for nearly 800 permanent and

seasonal field workers. We then heard about the positive impact of fair trade in supporting producers and their communities in Palestine.

As other members have said, however, the challenges that have been posed by the pandemic have had an impact; they have left producer organisations struggling to cope, and have affected the livelihoods of their workers. Research shows that Covid-19 significantly affected the business viability of fair trade producers, with a majority of producers reporting a decrease in production and lower fair trade and non-fair trade sales in 2020 than there were in 2019. A significant minority experienced lower prices and fewer buyers. The Africa and middle east region was the worst hit, with almost 70 per cent of the sampled producer organisations there reporting declines in production and sales.

There is much more that we need to do. Fairtrade has made a difference to the lives of more than 500,000 farmers and workers in nearly 60 countries. As the second country in the world to be named a fair trade nation, Scotland is ahead of the game, but there is so much more that we need to do. It is not us just about signing the pledge as individuals; we must also consider how ethical public sector procurement can make the maximum possible difference. It is about looking at what we as consumers can do to support local fair trade shops.

I am proud of the fact that Edinburgh has been a Fairtrade city since 2004. We have fantastic shops such as Hadeel, with its focus on Palestinian fair trade crafts, and the One World Shop, which brings in fantastic sustainable and fairly traded goods from across the world. We have, on our high streets, access to fair trade products in Oxfam shops, which have products from more than 70 countries around the world. As Gordon MacDonald said, we also have Co-operative Group and Scotmid shops on our high streets across Scotland. At the recent meeting of the fair trade cross-party group, we also focused on the fact that we can all buy fair trade goods online, wherever we live in Scotland.

There is much more that we can do. Let us hope that today's message is a positive one. It is a call to action for all of us that we can all buy fair trade goods. I encourage everyone to go online, check out their local shops and support communities across the world. They need our trade and our investment, which is transformative.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call the minister to respond to the debate, for about seven minutes.

13:24

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray): At the outset, I thank Clare Adamson for lodging her motion. I wish her well and hope that she has a speedy recovery. I also thank my colleague Gordon MacDonald for stepping in so well.

In addition, I thank colleagues from all parts of the chamber who have shared stories from their constituencies, which has highlighted—as Gordon MacDonald set out so well—the level of support that exists for the fair trade movement in communities up and down the country.

I will reflect on some of the contributions that we have heard. Gordon MacDonald was absolutely right to congratulate the Balerno fair trade village group and the schools in his constituency, as well as those that he mentioned in Newmains and Morningside in Clare Adamson's constituency; I previously represented those schools when I was in the House of Commons.

Sharon Dowey mentioned the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, which I will come to, and rightly congratulated the Honeybee and the Hare cafe in the region that she represents. I pay tribute to Colin Smyth for his work in Parliament and his region on promoting and prioritising fair trade. I also echo his thanks to those who campaign in schools and communities to promote fair trade.

Paul McLennan reminded us why the issue is important, given the horrific events that we are seeing in Ukraine. As we know, the human cost of that is not felt by Ukraine in isolation—it is spread much more widely. As we look to ensure food supplies around the world, we must do so with fairness and with producers in mind.

Maggie Chapman rightly reminded us all of our collective and individual responsibilities, and pointed out that fair trade is not about charity but is about justice and rights.

Ruth Maguire mentioned the North Ayrshire Fairtrade zone group—I, too, congratulate the group—and reminded us of the work that we still have to do to extend availability of products to ensure better treatment for, for instance, the cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Sarah Boyack highlighted some real examples of the benefits—in Bolivia, Rwanda and Malawi—that fair trade delivers for people. She was right to say that we have more to do.

In my constituency of Airdrie and Shotts, Airdrie became a Fairtrade town in 2015 and North Lanarkshire Council achieved Fairtrade status in 2020. In addition, many organisations such as Shotts healthy living centre and St Andrew's Hospice sell fair trade goods. Members are absolutely right to draw on those experiences. I

thank those organisations for the work that they are doing.

Nevertheless, as Sarah Boyack and other members have said, we have more work to do. The year 2023 will mark 10 years since Scotland achieved fair trade nation status. We were rightly proud of that accolade back in 2013, and we continue to take pride in it as we prepare to renew our commitment to fair trade for a second time. Next year, an expert panel will decide whether we can continue to call ourselves a fair trade nation.

However, what does being a fair trade nation mean? How does it help the 700 million people around the world who still exist on less than \$2 a day; the 63 million children who still do not have access to education; or the 55 per cent of people living in rural areas who do not have access to soap and water? Being a fair trade nation means that, in everything that we do as a country, the principles of fairness, social justice and gender equity are at the forefront of our minds.

It also means that, as a Government, those principles must be at the heart of our policies. Gordon MacDonald set out perfectly the impact that that has on people around the world. That includes policies such as our commitment to ensuring that more of our funding goes directly to our partner countries, thereby shifting the balance of power and supporting people in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia to build more resilient and equal communities.

At the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—we committed to increasing our climate justice fund to £36 million over the current session of Parliament, thereby providing additional support for the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities.

From April 2022, we will start to increase our international development fund by 50 per cent, to £15 million per year, with the first increase, to £11.5 million, being due next month. In doing so, our programme will continue to recognise the needs of communities in our partner countries that are impacted by Covid-19, and we will carry on with our efforts of the past two years to provide them with support as they build back from the pandemic.

We also remain committed to responding to global crises through our £1 million per year humanitarian emergency fund, which has, over the past two years, been activated for Lebanon, Niger, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Afghanistan and, most recently, Burkina Faso.

Nevertheless, our funding is only one part of our contribution and support for the global south. Our approach on policy coherence for sustainable development makes it clear that our wider policies in Government, and how people in Scotland

embrace active global citizenship, also play huge parts in Scotland's global impact and contribution. Our buying choices and our commitment to fair trade are a key part of that.

Being successful in our bid to renew our fair trade nation status will be due in no small part to the efforts of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. The forum, which has been core funded from the international development fund since 2007, has worked tirelessly to build support for the fair trade movement across all sections of Scottish society. In all that it does—its engagement with fair trade groups from the Borders to the islands; the annual Fairtrade awards, which recognise the achievements of individuals, community groups and businesses; and its work in schools, helping teachers to educate the next generation about being good global citizens—the forum has been driving forward change.

The work of schools has been a thread in the debate, so I should say that my oldest two children, Isla and Finlay, have been learning about fair trade in their school. That is so important because they have become not just advocates but—to be frank—evangelists for ensuring that we buy fair trade goods when we are out getting the messages.

I am proud of all that has been achieved since we became a fair trade nation, but it is vital that we keep up the momentum. That is why I am pleased to announce, in addition to the £1.7 million that the Scottish Government has already provided to build its capacity, the Scottish Fair Trade Forum will be provided with another £324,000 over the next two financial years to take forward our fair trade nation work. In addition, I have—like many of my fellow members—signed the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's pledge. In doing so, I am committing to take action to promote Scotland's fair trade nation status.

When global catastrophes occur, whether they be natural disasters such as the recent devastation that was caused by tropical storm Ana in Malawi, or acts of aggression such as the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, we feel compelled to act. However, while pictures of the daily struggles of fair trade farmers and producers rarely make the headlines, the challenges that they face, day after day, simply to put food on the table, are a harsh reality for millions of people.

Sometimes it can feel like there is little that we can do to change that, but the simple fact is that there is something that we can do. We can make a huge difference just by choosing products that carry the Fairtrade mark, the next time we shop. The Fairtrade premium ensures that farmers and producers can feed their families, build homes, buy medicines and send their children to school. Those are basic human needs—things that many

of us take for granted—but for some, they are luxuries that remain out of reach.

Together, we can change that. Time and again, the people of Scotland demonstrate that we are a caring nation. Whenever there is a cry, whether it be from close to home or from the furthest corners of the earth, we will do all that we can to help. I thank Clare Adamson, Gordon MacDonald and colleagues for their leadership in that regard today.

13:32

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Education and Skills

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon. I remind members of the Covid-related measures and that face coverings should be worn while moving around the chamber and the wider Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is portfolio questions, on education and skills. Members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button or type R in the chat function during the relevant question.

Questions 1 and 2 were not lodged.

School Buildings (Condition)

3. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what proportion of schools are being reported as in good or satisfactory condition. (S6O-00880)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): School buildings across Scotland are in their best condition since recorded figures began. The proportion of schools in good or satisfactory condition has increased from 61 per cent in April 2007 to 90.2 per cent in April 2021.

Gordon MacDonald: Thanks to the Scottish Government's learning estate investment programme, the City of Edinburgh Council is building what it hopes will be the first Passivhaus school, to replace the current Currie high school, which is in my constituency.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that investment in our school estate is vital in supporting our young people's learning journey?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I very much agree with Gordon MacDonald. The investment in our school estate is absolutely key, which is exactly why we are moving forward with the third phase of the schools project to benefit from the £2 billion learning estate investment programme. That builds on the £1.8 billion in our Scotland's schools for the future programme, which in itself delivered 117 new or refurbished learning facilities. So far, within the current programme, we have 37 projects across 23 local authorities delivering investment in our schools.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): It has been nearly three months since, in lieu of the long-promised learning estate strategy, the Government released a frankly unacceptable 83-word answer to a Government-initiated question.

Can the cabinet secretary tell us when a full plan and criteria will be published, and what assessment has been made of the impact of the Government's delay on the proposed projects that are sitting on shelves across the country, including the Western Gateway primary school in Dundee?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: There has been no delay in the project. I point out to members that the upkeep of the school estate is the obligation and responsibility of local authorities; the money provided by the Scottish Government is in addition to that.

We are working closely with our partners in Scottish local authorities to ensure that the criteria are discussed and agreed. The criteria for phase 3 will be agreed by the learning estate investment programme governance board, which is expected to include the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, local authority representative groups, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust. As I have said in the past to Michael Marra and other members, if they wish to suggest criteria, we would welcome their contributions.

Refugees (Home Fee Status)

4. **Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to offer home fee status to refugees and other people displaced from Ukraine who wish to study in Scotland. (S6O-00881)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): The First Minister has called on the United Kingdom Government to follow the European Union's example by waiving all visa requirements for those resident in Ukraine who have been impacted by the Russian invasion and are looking to seek refuge in the UK.

Individuals who are granted refugee status by the Home Office and come to Scotland to live and study will be eligible for home tuition fee status and student support.

We are currently considering the impact on other people who have been displaced as a result of the crisis in Ukraine and wish to study in Scotland. We are taking forward discussions with the sector on the issue and are keen to find a solution where possible.

Sarah Boyack: I welcome that commitment to address the situation. Refugees and family members who are studying in Ukraine will be coming within days, so everything that we do will be important.

What discussions has the Scottish Government had with universities and colleges to make sure that those students have the chance to keep studying and that they can be matched with

appropriate degree and college classes, so that they do not miss out?

We all hope that the invasion will be over as soon as possible but, given that people's homes and buildings have been destroyed across Ukraine, does the minister agree that helping those students to continue learning will be important in helping Ukraine to recover and rebuild in the future?

Jamie Hepburn: Yes, I do. Two things are at play: we must do everything we can to support the Ukrainian nationals who are already studying in Scotland—there are a number of them—and we must reach out and ensure that we support those who will come to Scotland in due course. Ms Boyack is right to point out that some will be here imminently.

I met all university and college principals on 2 March to discuss the current situation and how we can collectively respond to it. I was heartened to see the sector embracing that need and responding in the appropriate fashion. Collectively, that is what we will continue to do to ensure that we support students who are here and those who will come.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Will the Scottish Government take action to offer support to Ukrainian and Russian students who have been financially impacted by the war?

Jamie Hepburn: Kaukab Stewart mentioned Russian students. It is important that we bear in mind that not everyone in Russia and not every Russian student who is here supports the Russian regime. We must ensure that we reach out to them just as we reach out to the Ukrainian community in Scotland.

I go back to the previous answer that I gave. I have had that discussion with universities and colleges. There is financial support in hardship funds, which international students can access through the specific coronavirus funding that we have put in place in the first instance. However, we continue to have dialogue and discussion to ensure that, where we need to go further, we will do so.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo the minister's comments on Russian students. I will ask a similar question. It is hoped that 3,000 refugees are on their way and it appears that most of them will be single parents with children. What discussions have been had with regard to the education that those children will need on their arrival in Scotland?

Jamie Hepburn: There has been concerted discussion with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in relation to that. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills is leading on

that rather than me, so I do not have the full detail of the discussions. However, if Martin Whitfield writes to us, I am sure that we will be able to give him more details.

University Principals (Meetings)

5. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Scotland's university principals. (S6O-00882)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): As mentioned a moment ago, along with officials, I most recently met Scotland's university principals on 2 March to discuss the Ukraine crisis, its impact on the sector and how students and staff are being supported.

Richard Leonard: When the minister talks to university principals, does he raise with them the universities pension dispute? Has he asked them why employers in Scotland have rejected the University and College Union's compromise proposals, which would avoid an average 35 per cent cut in members' pension guarantees? Has he asked them why they have made no attempt whatsoever to meaningfully engage with the UCU, with the result that, from next week, a further five days of industrial action will take place? Will he call on them to revoke those cuts, re-enter negotiations, show some leadership and settle once and for all the long-running dispute that they have consciously and intentionally provoked and prolonged?

Jamie Hepburn: With some rhetorical flourish, Richard Leonard asked me whether I engage with the sector on those matters. It might come as no surprise to him that I do. I have discussed the issue with the employers and unions alike. My clear expectation is that meaningful dialogue should take place on the basis and according to the principles of our fair work approach.

It is for the universities and the unions to resolve the dispute. I want to see minimal impact on students and staff alike. My sincere desire is that the parties engage in meaningful, proper dialogue and resolve the matter.

Apprentices (Real Living Wage)

6. Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that all apprentices are paid the real living wage. (S6O-00883)

The Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training (Jamie Hepburn): As they are employees, apprentices' wages are set by employers in line with the national minimum wage, which is a reserved matter for the United Kingdom Government.

Through our fair work policy, we encourage every employer to reward their staff fairly and, where possible, to pay at least the real living wage to workers of all ages, including apprentices. We have encouraged the UK Government to abolish the apprentice minimum wage rate and move towards the real living wage of £9.90 per hour for all workers.

We are fully committed to promoting fair work practices throughout Scotland, and we will continue to press the UK Government for the full set of powers over employment law so that we can fully deliver our fair work ambitions.

Katy Clark: As the minister knows, the national minimum wage for apprenticeships is only £4.30 per hour if the apprentice is 19 or under or is in the first year of their apprenticeship. Does the Scottish Government agree with that? If not, will it make paying the full living wage a condition for employer support? Can the Scottish Government confirm that all apprenticeships in the public sector are paid the living wage?

Jamie Hepburn: As I said in my initial answer, I believe that the apprentice minimum wage rate should be abolished and that there should be a move towards decency in wages across the board, including for apprentices. Despite the amount being the minimum that employers should pay, when the last Scottish apprenticeship pay survey was undertaken, in 2018, the median levels at that stage were considerably above the statutory minimum. Therefore, we see employers paying above the minimum rate.

If we had responsibility for these matters in the Scottish Parliament, we could, of course, legislate for the changes that we seek to embed in relation to the living wage more generally. We will continue to push for that.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Apprentice minimum wages are not sufficient to enable apprentices to rent privately, but in rural, remote and island areas, such as Shetland, the logistics of daily commuting are not always an option. What steps can the Scottish Government take to ensure adequate provision of affordable accommodation for apprentices near to their place of work that is perhaps similar to student accommodation?

Jamie Hepburn: I understand the analogy involving students, but the situation is not entirely analogous, in that apprentices are employees and will not have quite the same living circumstances that students living in student accommodation might have. We will, of course, take on board any suggestion that is earnestly made, and I would be happy to consider that, but the real task is to get on with our extensive programme of social house building, which will benefit Ms Wishart's

constituency, just as it will benefit the constituencies of every member in the chamber.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): It is important not just that our apprentices are appropriately paid and supported but that they have the opportunity to secure career pathways in the public sector. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to increase the number of apprentices in Scotland's national health service, for example?

Jamie Hepburn: It is, of course, important that every sector plays its part in supporting apprenticeships. That is as true of the public sector as it is of the private sector.

I am very pleased to say that the national health service is a very active employer of apprentices. It uses the various frameworks across foundation apprenticeships, modern apprenticeships and graduate apprenticeships. Skills Development Scotland regularly engages with NHS boards. Indeed, during Scottish apprenticeship week, which was last week, the First Minister launched a new £3.4 million Scottish Government recruitment programme, which will mean that 150 apprentice pharmacy technicians will be trained and recruited across Scotland this year. The NHS is therefore certainly playing its part.

Headteachers (Argyll and Bute Council)

7. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether the model to reduce the number of headteachers that is reportedly being proposed by Argyll and Bute Council will improve educational attainment. (S6O-00884)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I firmly believe that teachers and effective school leaders are the most important factors in improving children's outcomes in our schools and that they are key to ensuring excellence and equity for all.

As Jackie Baillie is aware, the recruitment and deployment of headteachers is a matter for individual councils, based on local needs and circumstances. It would not be appropriate for the Scottish Government to interfere in school management decisions that are made by Argyll and Bute Council.

Irrespective of management structures, I would expect headteachers to be supported by their local authority to work in consultation with parents and young people to achieve the very best outcomes for learners.

Jackie Baillie: Educational attainment is a matter for the Scottish Government, and the truth is that parents and teachers in Argyll and Bute are opposed to those plans. The proposals are—to be

frank—not evidence based, because there is no evidence that reducing the number of headteachers will improve educational attainment. The plans are fundamentally about cuts to education. What discussions has the Scottish Government had with Argyll and Bute Council about those plans? Does the Scottish Government support that model, which simply cuts the number of headteachers and does nothing to improve the attainment for which it is responsible?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Jackie Baillie said in her question that the council is currently consulting on the proposals. I appreciate that parents, young people, teachers and headteachers in the local authority area hold very strong views, and I encourage them to take part in the consultation process. It is then for the local authority to pay very close attention to their responses.

Leadership is very much recognised as one of the most important aspects in the success of any school. Leaders at all levels have to be empowered, and those who empower others as part of that can take ownership of the learning in a school. We have a very strong track record of ensuring the highest quality of learning and teaching. That is what the Scottish Government would wish to see, and I am sure that that wish is shared by all councils across Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are a number of supplementaries, and I intend to take them all.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): As the cabinet secretary will be aware, it is Scottish National Party cuts that have led to councils considering the shared leadership model. In Labour-run North Lanarkshire, the council is looking at shared leadership for schools in the Chryston area. Does she share the concerns of parents there that that could lead to a drop in the quality of education?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Scottish Government has been determined to deliver, and has delivered, a fair funding settlement for local government in the exceptionally difficult circumstances that we face, with cuts to our budget coming from the member's United Kingdom Government.

Within that, however, I recognise the concerns in North Lanarkshire, which were recently brought to my attention by Fulton MacGregor. Again, I appreciate very much the concerns that are being raised by the young people, parents and staff in that area. Consultation is key here, as is the need for the local authority to have a genuine understanding of the strength of opinion on these issues. Of course, it is then a matter for the local authority to undertake the recruitment and

retention of schoolteachers, including headteachers, in its area.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am a bit surprised that the education secretary does not seem to be that bothered that we are creating superheads all over the country. Last month, I reported that that is happening in the east neuk of Fife, with plans for nine schools and one superhead, to which locals are very much opposed.

In addition to the national cuts, there is clearly a shortage of headteachers. A report from 2009 by the Government indicated—warned—that there was going to be a shortage of headteachers, but the Government does not seem to have done anything about it. Why is the education secretary so laid back, and why does she not have a plan for increasing the number of headteachers?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I pointed out to Mr Rennie the last time that we had this discussion in the chamber, and I point out again, that the Scottish Government holds very dearly to the evidence that effective leadership in our schools is key to ensuring the highest possible standards in our education sector. It is for local authorities to make decisions about what that leadership looks like, in consultation with parents in the local area.

I appreciate that there is concern in a number of local authority areas about the decisions that local authorities are taking on that, and I am paying very close attention to that, in particular given the importance that we place on leadership in our schools. I point out to Mr Rennie that, in addition, we have the headteacher recruitment working group, which met on 28 January—

Willie Rennie: It is not a working group—it is a not-working group.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): It is a not-working group.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: —and it is currently discussing these issues to ensure that, if any further progress needs to be made, it will be.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the next member who wishes to ask a supplementary, I ask members to show a bit of courtesy and respect, please. If questions are asked, please listen to the answers. I think that the members know who I am talking about.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary says that she is paying very close attention to the issue. I think that not only members in the chamber but, more importantly, parents and pupils across the country would like to hear directly from the cabinet secretary whether she thinks that it is important that schools have a single leader—a headteacher—who can build the learning environment for the people in that school

and be a leader in the community. We are seeing such proposals across the country, and vague expressions that leadership might be important are not enough. What is the cabinet secretary's personal position? Does she think that it is right that we have individual headteachers in our schools?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Government's position on that is something that I have made clear again and again during question time today. It is that leadership in our schools is exceptionally important. The Government has demonstrated that over a number of years with the importance that we have placed on the role of headteachers and on the empowerment of headteachers within that.

If Mr Marra and other members who usually tell me not to interfere in local authority matters are asking me to dictate to local authorities what happens in every school across the country, let us be very clear that that is what they are asking me to do and what the implications are of that. In the meantime, I will continue to ensure that we work closely with our local authority partners, so that they understand the importance that the Scottish Government places on leadership in our schools. We will continue to work with local authorities on that basis.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 8 is from Gillian Mackay, who is joining us remotely.

South Lanarkshire College (Governance)

8. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking in light of reports of concerns regarding governance at South Lanarkshire College. (S60-00885)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Funding Council is responsible for investigating any potential issues around college governance. Following an independent review of governance at South Lanarkshire College, the SFC continues to work closely with the regional strategic body to ensure that arrangements are in place to secure good governance, sound leadership and positive outcomes for students.

Ministers' paramount interest is safeguarding the quality of learning at South Lanarkshire College and high standards of governance are crucial to ensuring that. The SFC will continue to provide updates to the Scottish Government as required.

Gillian Mackay: A number of colleges still have not implemented the nationally agreed dispute resolution process. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that every college—*[Inaudible.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will see whether we can get Ms Mackay back. It is not looking too promising. Just give us a few seconds to see whether anything is likely to happen—or not.

I do not know whether the cabinet secretary heard enough to make a stab at answering. I think that we will have to ask Ms Mackay to write to the cabinet secretary with her supplementary and the cabinet secretary can then answer it. I apologise to Ms Mackay and to members in the chamber.

That concludes portfolio question time.

Subsidy Control Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-03647, in the name of Ivan McKee, on the Subsidy Control Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

14:53

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): I am grateful for the opportunity to debate the proposed UK Government legislation and its implications for devolved powers.

The UK's interim subsidy control regime came into effect on the UK's exit from European Union membership. The UK must, of course, adhere to international obligations on subsidies that are agreed under free trade agreements, the EU-UK trade and co-operation agreement—the TCA—and the Northern Ireland protocol, and public sector organisations must ensure that subsidies comply with the relevant rules. It is important that the agriculture and fisheries sectors are excluded from the TCA and operate under World Trade Organization rules.

The UK Internal Market Act 2020 received royal assent on 17 December 2020. It completely overrides the devolution settlement by reserving subsidy control and giving UK ministers powers to spend directly in devolved areas without oversight by and consent of the Scottish Parliament and ministers. That has already been seen in the case of the Professional Qualifications Bill, which was debated in the chamber on 10 February and for which we have also refused legislative consent.

The UK Government introduced the Subsidy Control Bill to Parliament on 30 June 2021. Paul Scully, the Minister for Small Business, Labour Markets and Consumers, wrote to me at the end of June to ask whether the Scottish ministers would be content in principle to begin the legislative consent process in the Scottish Parliament. The legislative consent motion was lodged on 25 October. We do not propose to give consent, and I will outline why.

The bill, if it is passed, will bring further erosion of devolution through sweeping powers for the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy that override the devolution settlement and risk UK ministers intervening without proper consultation or knowledge of local circumstances. The bill will empower the secretary of state to refer subsidies and schemes in policy areas of devolved competence to the appointed independent body, which is the Competition and Markets Authority.

Where a subsidy has not yet been awarded or a scheme has not yet been made, a cooling-off period will kick in. The secretary of state will have the power to extend that period without consulting devolved administrations. If enacted, that measure would undermine the long-established powers of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish ministers to act in relation to matters that are within devolved competence, including economic development, the environment, agriculture and fisheries.

The Scottish Government has argued for the devolved Administrations to have equivalent powers to refer to the CMA subsidies that are made in other parts of the UK, or even by public authorities in their own jurisdictions. The UK Government has consistently rejected that proposal.

The absence of formal regulatory and enforcement arrangements undermines confidence in the process for grant awarding bodies and grants' recipients. The measures that are proposed in the bill are weak—particularly given the proposed advisory role of the CMA. We continue to press for prior appraisal of awards within a detailed regulatory framework, in order to provide greater certainty on what support will be compatible with the UK's subsidy control regime. That is essential for both subsidy awarding bodies and businesses that invest in Scotland and the UK.

We firmly oppose the inclusion of agriculture in the permanent regime. Agriculture is fully devolved. Farmers and crofters in Scotland face challenges that are not found elsewhere in the UK, yet the principles that are set out in schedule 1 of the bill risk constraining our ability to develop future policies that are tailored to the needs of Scottish agriculture.

For example, income and coupled support payments play an essential role in supporting many businesses that operate in our most remote and constrained areas. However, they appear to be incompatible with some of the proposed principles, especially principle F, which is on competition and investment within the UK. The UK Government has, however, pressed on and is ignoring our concerns.

The bill, and the internal market principle in particular, risk making the common framework process redundant by putting legislative restrictions on policy divergence within the UK rather than managing it through established mutual co-operation, via the framework. That concern is supported by the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

My colleague Mairi Gougeon, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, wrote to

the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy minister Paul Scully in June 2021, and to Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs George Eustice in November, setting out our concerns and proposing that the bill be amended to exclude agriculture from its scope. George Eustice replied in January, stating that, in his view, the new domestic regime will protect competition and investment in all parts of the UK. However, he did not address our substantive concerns about incompatibility with the principles or impacts on the common framework process.

On the potential lack of transparency, the bill originally proposed that awarding bodies would have six months to place information on the database and that interested parties would have one month to appeal. However, earlier this week, I received a letter from Minister Scully informing me that that has been amended and that awarding bodies will now be required to place information on the database within three months. That is a small and welcome concession, but although other minor technical amendments have been proposed, that goes nowhere near addressing our grave concerns regarding the bill. We still consider that the time limit for challenge should be increased to a more realistic period.

I have addressed a number of specific concerns. However, the overarching theme is that the bill remains high level. The crucial detail, including draft subordinate legislation and in-depth guidance, is lacking, and its absence makes it difficult to take a considered view.

The Subsidy Control Bill, as it stands, proposes broad powers for the secretary of state and will shape the future regime with little scrutiny from the UK Parliament and no scrutiny by devolved Administrations.

I suggest that Parliament backs the motion, refuses legislative consent to the bill as it stands, and backs our request that appropriate amendments be made that respect the Scottish Parliament's role in devolved competencies.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the legislative consent memorandum lodged by the Scottish Government on 25 October 2021; agrees not to give consent to the Subsidy Control Bill, as recommended in the report by the Economy and Fair Work Committee of 9 February 2022, and calls on the UK Government to amend the Subsidy Control Bill to remove agriculture from its scope, to provide equivalent powers to ministers in devolved administrations to those proposed for UK ministers, and to make it a requirement for it to seek the consent of the Scottish Ministers if it plans legislation that would impinge on devolved areas, to properly respect devolved responsibilities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Claire Baker, on behalf of the Economy and Fair Work Committee.

15:00

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Economy and Fair Work Committee. We considered the legislative consent memorandum on the Subsidy Control Bill at two evidence sessions in January. We heard evidence on the ramifications of the bill first from academics, legal experts and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, then from the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise. We published our report on 9 February.

Our report raises concerns about the Scottish Government's engagement with us. Although the bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 30 June 2021, the Scottish Government did not lodge its LCM until almost four months later. We did not receive a clear explanation for that. The delay curtailed the committee's opportunity for scrutiny. That is unsatisfactory, and I have raised the matter with the Conveners Group.

I turn to the bill. The committee accepts that there must be a subsidy control regime in the UK and we welcome the flexibility that the bill's proposals for a baseline legal framework for the award of subsidies provide. The Law Society of Scotland said that

"the bill creates a welcome opportunity for schemes tailored to Scottish circumstances."

However, the report agrees with the Scottish Government on a number of points. We note that the Scottish Government cannot recommend to the Scottish Parliament that it give consent to the bill.

The committee shares the concern that the bill will give considerable powers to UK ministers—powers that operate across the devolution settlement and impact on areas of devolved competence. We share the concern that that will, potentially, result in UK ministers being able to intervene in devolved matters without proper consultation or knowledge of local circumstances. Our witness panel highlighted the asymmetry of power that the bill will create between the UK and devolved Governments, which the majority of the committee agreed was a concern. I stress that the committee's concerns relate solely to devolved areas.

We are concerned that smaller organisations and community groups—which are at a disadvantage compared with those that have greater access to administrative and legal resources—might find the new regime harder to navigate.

There are also concerns that the changes will lead to excessive caution, which will stop investment. Although there are promises of streamlined and fast-tracked subsidy award pathways, and although the UK Government is now consulting the Scottish Government on schemes, the majority of the committee agreed that the Scottish ministers should have the power to introduce schemes in devolved areas.

We also heard that the bill will make changes to the devolution settlement concerning the status of acts of the Scottish Parliament and their susceptibility to judicial review and interpretation. The majority of the committee is concerned by those developments, so we urge the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to continue work in that area.

The majority of the committee is concerned that much of the detail of how the new subsidy control regime will operate is not in the bill, but will be detailed in secondary legislation and guidance, which will centralise decision making and not support scrutiny. It is frustrating that, although legislation that results from the exit from the EU could be used to recognise and support the devolution settlement, it instead reinforces a blinkered approach.

The committee notes that the Scottish ministers will not have equivalent powers to those of the secretary of state in terms of being able to refer subsidies or schemes to the Competition and Markets Authority. The Welsh Government shares the concern that those provisions do not reflect the interests of the devolved Administrations. The committee supports the Scottish Government's call in the LCM for equivalent powers for devolved Administrations to refer to the Competition and Markets Authority subsidies that are made in other parts of the UK.

My final point is that it is evident that, for whatever reason, Scotland spends significantly more on enterprise and economic development than the UK as a whole spends. That spending is likely to be registered as subsidy under the provisions in the bill, so the bill is anticipated to have a bigger impact in Scotland. The committee is also concerned that, in the absence of clarity, that aspect of the bill will create significant scope for conflict between the Scottish Government and the UK Government, which—frankly—there is enough of without manufacturing more.

All efforts must be made to minimise those concerns and to work in co-operation, if any of the proposed opportunities in the bill are to be realised.

15:03

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Subsidy control is a key part of ensuring an open, competitive and fair market economy. This UK bill tackles a vital missing part of the legislative framework for maintenance of a coherent UK market after our departure from the European Union. We were, of course, previously governed by the EU's state aid rules requirements. It has been a lengthy and often complex process, so far, to bring such controls into our domestic law.

Continued regulation of state aid is a requirement that has been formalised between the UK and the EU as part of the trade and co-operation agreement, which underlines the UK's continued links with the EU single market. However, it is also a system that will have a wide-ranging impact on a number of bodies across this country. The Economy and Fair Work Committee has looked at that area in some detail, and our report, which was published in February, is on the record.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): Does Jamie Halcro Johnston acknowledge that the bill drives a coach and horses through devolution? NFU Scotland's submission—one of the strongest that I have ever seen—to the UK Parliament says that it damages devolution. On a practical level, we need subsidy control, but the bill is deficient in respect of a number of measures that will make competition less favourable, could hinder investment in net zero and could cause risk aversion in partnership funding for important community projects.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: No, I do not agree. I hope that Fiona Hyslop will make that point in a longer speech later. I do not agree with her, but I will come to my concerns about the bill a bit later.

It is worth noting that the unanimous conclusion of the committee was that the Scottish Government's

“delay in lodging its legislative consent memorandum curtailed this Committee's opportunity for scrutiny”,

as the convener said. An LCM was lodged in the Welsh Senedd in mid-July, which allowed time for greater exploration of the bill. Here, we had to wait until late October and, as the committee concluded, there has been no satisfactory explanation for the delay.

The bill sets out a significant set of proposals. It is one part of recreating the structures of our internal market, if not quite from scratch, then certainly with a fresh start. In many ways, the bill sets a framework to be expanded further by means of secondary legislation and guidance. There have been comments from the devolved Administrations and Parliaments and the UK

Parliament noting disappointment in the bill's lack of detail. Although we should acknowledge that the bill will not be the last word on subsidy control, there is a reasonable case to be made that the lack of detail in the bill—at primary legislation level—has made scrutiny more difficult, notwithstanding the late stage at which it came to this Parliament.

However, as I hope members recognise, it is a necessary bill that will ensure the integrity of the UK internal market and meet our international obligations. We can see evidence of the chilling effect of uncertainty on subsidy provision, with public bodies erring on the side of caution in order to avoid legal challenge. That certainty must be returned, but we agree that the bill alone cannot provide it, which gives the associated guidance and secondary legislation a position of considerable importance. What must be provided is a degree of certainty for public bodies to operate within.

The committee heard a number of examples of the positive aspects of the framework that the bill sets out, including greater flexibility and autonomy in decision making for local bodies and a resultant ability to make decisions with greater speed and responsiveness.

My region—the Highlands and Islands—is one in which population density makes state support a more regular requirement in order to secure the policy objectives that the Parliament wants to achieve. We know all too well the rigidities of state aid rules, and the lengthy processes that are required in notifications to the European Commission. It is my hope that, while maintaining a system of fairness and integrity, the new subsidy control regime will go some way towards addressing those issues.

I will return to concerns about detail. I note that additional flexibility will not answer wider questions of policy. In the EU's state aid regime, many different approaches are taken by the Governments of the various member states. There will remain political questions about where support should go and about obtaining real value for taxpayers' money. In the previous parliamentary session, I was involved in the Economy, Job and Fair Work Committee's business support inquiry, which is a good body of work that deals with one small area of subsidy.

There will be choices to be made in Parliament about how to deploy subsidies effectively, and there is a much wider discussion to be had about how we do so. Responding to the consultation on subsidy control last summer, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy cautioned against “damaging” subsidy, such as

“unlimited subsidies to shore up failing companies, where there is no plan for their restructure”.

However, subsidy is largely used in a positive way and will, we hope, increasingly be seen in that light. It can support economic recovery, deliver policies such as net zero and achieve the sort of levelling up that needs to happen across the United Kingdom as a whole and in Scotland.

The Economy and Fair Work Committee has recognised some of the shortcomings in the area, and we need more clarity on how existing objectives will align with the new subsidy control scheme. This Parliament is certainly correct in its wish to see further information from the UK Government on those points.

We recognise some of the points that have been made about asymmetry. Although it should be emphasised that we are considering a matter that is reserved to the UK Parliament, and one in which we should legitimately expect UK ministers to be able to act for the whole United Kingdom, we recognise that there is a reasonable argument for granting to devolved ministers, as well as to the secretary of state, powers to refer to the Competition and Markets Authority.

We acknowledge the significance of the change that the bill will bring, as well as the concerns that members from across the chamber have raised and the remaining uncertainty that exists within a number of organisations and bodies across Scotland. However, we do not accept the Scottish Government’s position that any of the points is fatal to the bill’s progress. The bill has set out a positive direction for subsidy control in the UK, albeit that it is one that requires additional clarity.

I welcome the engagement that has already taken place between the Governments. If the fleshing out of future subsidy controls is to take place, that engagement must continue and go wider still.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Daniel Johnson to speak on behalf of Scottish Labour. Mr Johnson joins us remotely.

15:10

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I apologise for joining the meeting late. I have been having some network issues at home, hence the cable that members can see running over my left shoulder. Indeed, I will give the short version of my speech in case I get cut off.

I agree with Jamie Halcro Johnston that this is a necessary piece of legislation. We need an overarching framework for the regulation of subsidy across the United Kingdom now that we have withdrawn from the European Union.

Jamie Halcro Johnston’s acknowledgement of the need for “clarity”, as he put it, also points to the deficiencies in the UK Government’s approach, which lacks transparency and fails to consider the devolved Governments and the arrangements that we have across the United Kingdom. In so doing, the legislation is deficient. Scottish Labour therefore cannot support it and we will vote for the motion to withhold consent at decision time this evening.

This was an opportunity to rethink subsidies and the relationship between industry, enterprise and government. Ultimately, the UK Government has failed to seize that opportunity. What is more, the plans do not target regions or sectors for subsidies, and there are no measures for subsidies to help to tackle regional inequality—the levelling up that the UK Government professes to care so much about.

The bill lacks the transparency that is needed to ensure that taxpayers’ money is spent well. The Law Society of Scotland shares the view that

“a well-functioning subsidy control regime must be based on clear rules that provide legal certainty to businesses and granting authorities”

and that the bill must implement

“a regime that is clear, proportionate and gives businesses and local authorities ... the tools to operate confidently”.

Critically, it is the lack of respect for devolution that is most troubling. We raised those concerns with Westminster, and we also note the concerns raised by the Economy and Fair Work Committee about the lack of devolved engagement and the asymmetry of power between the United Kingdom and Scottish Government. This could have been an opportunity to enhance devolution and thereby strengthen it. However, yet again, the UK Government has shown that it either does not understand devolution or just does not care about it.

In the House of Commons, Labour tabled six amendments to ensure that the devolved Administrations were given a meaningful role in the design and implementation of the new subsidy regime. Although we understand that power over UK-wide subsidies should ultimately rest with Westminster, we also recognise that it is vital that all the nations of the UK are involved in that regime. The bill fails to respect the role of the devolved nations and it does not give them a meaningful seat at the table.

We tabled an amendment that would require the secretary of state to seek the consent of the devolved Administrations before making regulations that define the terms of subsidies, including those that are deemed to be of particular interest. We believe that the devolved Administrations should be a partner in making

those decisions and definitions. Those reasonable amendments were defeated, so the UK Labour Party abstained at the second reading of the bill.

We must ensure that we get this right. Poorly designed subsidies can give businesses an unfair advantage, trigger subsidy races and create a risk of international trade disputes. On the other hand, good subsidies can help to achieve policy objectives, boost regional growth and encourage research and development.

Indeed, historically, the UK has spent significantly less on subsidies than EU member states. In 2019, for example, the UK spent just 0.5 per cent of gross domestic product on subsidies, whereas France spent 0.85 per cent and Germany spent more than 1.5 per cent. On average, EU member states spend 63 per cent more of their GDP on state aid than the UK does.

Although a UK-wide system of subsidy control is needed, we are concerned that the lack of a role for the devolved Administrations under the proposed regime fatally undermines it. Labour believes that there is a need for a genuine four-nations approach. We are also concerned about the unworkable position of the UK Government having complete unilateral control over subsidies in Scotland, which flies in the face of the co-ordination that is required in our UK single market.

Although it is clear that some form of regulation is needed, the Subsidy Control Bill cannot be supported, because of its lack of transparency and because of its failure to enhance or even take account of the devolved settlement across these islands. Therefore, at decision time, we will vote with the Government to withhold consent for the bill.

15:15

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I despair. This is the third debate in recent weeks about situations in which our two Governments have been found to be incapable of reaching agreement on a matter that is fundamental to the operation of our country. We had the debate about the internal market and the debate about the shared prosperity fund, both of which demonstrated the inability of our two Governments to work together. People deserve better than this never-ending constitutional argument. They expect more, and they expect a bit of maturity from both sides, because each side is as bad as the other.

As Claire Baker said, there is an asymmetry of power, and that needs to change. I hope that this is the last time that we find ourselves in such circumstances, and that we get the Governments to work together for the benefit of people, who deserve better.

Ivan McKee: I am quite perplexed by Willie Rennie's approach. We have heard a Conservative member explaining the asymmetry in the bill and its other deficiencies. Is Willie Rennie saying that we should just roll over, not protect the devolution settlement and allow the UK Government to do whatever it wants in devolved areas, or should we stand up for Scotland and make sure that those areas are protected in the interests of Scotland's economy as a consequence?

Willie Rennie: The minister should probably be a little less impatient and wait to hear what I have to say.

I make it clear that there is a need for a UK subsidy bill. As was the case when we were in the European Union, we cannot have a race to the bottom in the different nations and regions of the UK, but there needs to be a process of engagement between the nations and regions of the UK. That is what I am calling for. I think that we need to have a federalist arrangement, as I have argued previously in relation to the shared prosperity fund and the internal market. We need to find ways of agreeing better together across the UK, instead of taking the approach that the SNP and Conservative Governments love to take, which is that of having a never-ending constitutional argument. People deserve better, as I am sure that the minister truly understands.

There is some hope, because discussions are taking place in the House of Lords about the possibility of having a non-legislative route for agreement of such issues. That gives us a constructive proposal to work around, but it has not been agreed yet. Therefore, we will vote with the Government this evening, because—

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

We want to withhold legislative consent because the decision-making process that is currently proposed is not adequate. However, if we reach an agreement as a result of the good work that is being done in the House of Lords, I hope that the Government will come back and recognise that things have changed, so that we can give legislative consent to an amended bill, because we need to try to work together.

The Subsidy Control Bill is very important, because it will bring into sharp focus the Scottish Government's failure on industrial intervention, which I have previously rehearsed with the minister in relation to Burntisland Fabrications, which collapsed, and the Lochaber plant, where we were promised 2,000 additional jobs, which have not materialised.

This will be the start of a wider debate, which I am sure that the minister will engage in. We need to have a proper arrangement across the UK. We cannot afford to have a race to the bottom. We need to have effective subsidy control, such that, as Daniel Johnson said, subsidy is provided in a way that means that we get the best out of it for the benefit of our economy and our people.

The current at-loggerheads approach of the Conservative and SNP Governments does not serve people well; they deserve better. I hope that we can come back with better arrangements in future, preferably with a federalist solution, which, as we have argued for some time, is the best way forward for the United Kingdom.

15:20

Ivan McKee: I thank members for their contributions to a short, welcome and interesting debate. I will touch briefly on those contributions in the limited time that I have.

Jamie Halcro Johnston recognises the chilling effect that the lack of certainty in the bill has on investment scenarios. We have already seen examples of that in Scotland, so I am glad that he recognises that and is critical of that aspect of the bill. We have called for prior appraisal of awards to be made part of the process. The UK Government has refused to do that. He also recognises the asymmetry that is inherent in the bill, why we are where we are regarding the challenges to devolution and our reasons for withholding consent.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I advise the minister that I was referring to the chilling effect of uncertainty as being a reason why we must get the bill through and sorted.

Ivan McKee: The uncertainty comes from businesses and award makers and not having prior approval of awards. That is one of the key functional aspects of the bill and it is one reason why we are refusing to give consent to it.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): In response to Fiona Hyslop's question, Jamie Halcro Johnston said that he did not agree with her assertions. NFU Scotland's response to the Subsidy Control Bill says:

"Given the difference in approach regarding future funding already set out by the UK and Scottish Governments, this bill is a risk to future rural policy development in Scotland. The oversight and controls already in place provide protection to the UK Internal Market Act against distortions. The Subsidy Control Bill, together with the UK Internal Market Act, has the potential to seriously undermine Scottish agriculture, which is the turnkey for our thriving rural communities."

That is a direct quote from NFU Scotland—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Fairlie, I think that the minister has got the gist.

Please resume, minister.

Ivan McKee: Mr Fairlie is, as always, an expert on this subject. It is great that he is raising those very important issues from NFU Scotland's perspective. That is hugely important.

Jamie Halcro Johnston recognises the problems with the bill and the asymmetry that it contains, as does Daniel Johnson, whose comments I welcome. He is right that this is an important matter that must be taken forward. He is also absolutely right that it further demonstrates that the UK Government does not understand or care about devolution. That will be its undoing in the end.

I thank Willie Rennie for his comments. We are glad that he supports our position on the bill. It is entertaining to watch him continuing to try to breathe life into the corpse of federalism, but the reality is that that ship has long ago sailed. We have a choice between a UK Government that is determined to remove the powers of the Scottish Parliament and reduce devolution, and our agenda, which is to ensure that Scotland is a normal, independent country. Muscular unionism has had its day. It tried to do what it could, but it has not succeeded.

The disconnect lies within the UK Government. There are UK Government ministers who are very comfortable with and completely understand our position on this. However, they are being told what to do by others in the UK Government who are determined to continue creating fights where there need be none and a bill that contains challenges and problems that even Conservative MSPs recognise.

I ask Parliament to back the motion and refuse legislative consent to the bill as it stands. I also ask Parliament to back our request that the UK Government table suitable amendments, as the bill progresses, so that it provides equivalent powers to the Scottish ministers, removes agriculture from its scope and requires the UK Government to seek the consent of the Scottish ministers if measures impinge on devolved areas. I do not think that that is too much to ask. I do not think that Willie Rennie would ask for more, were he standing in my shoes. It is up to the UK Government to take that forward, and then we will see where we are.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on the Subsidy Control Bill, which is UK legislation. There will be a short pause before we move to the next item of business.

Active Travel

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-03650, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on delivering on active travel commitments.

15:25

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

I am genuinely delighted to speak to the motion. This is the first opportunity for us to debate active travel in the current session of Parliament, and the first opportunity for me to set out my priorities since I became the minister for active travel. I want to highlight three themes: choice, delivery and leadership.

Over the past couple of years, many more people in Scotland have chosen to walk, wheel or cycle. They have discovered new ways to see their neighbourhoods and interact with other people around them. They have discovered the social, health and wellbeing benefits of making those choices, and they have discovered joy in experiencing less congestion, quieter streets and cleaner air.

However, the political choices that have been made over the past 60 years do not make it easy for them. Choices that were made in past decades about the location of shops and services, the layout of streets and the design of footways and junctions, along with the sheer volume of traffic that we have generated and the car-centred culture that we have allowed to develop, all conspire to make the choice to walk, wheel or cycle—which should be the natural first choice for many more people—feel at times like a choice in the face of adversity.

For every person who has told me how much they have relished the freedom to walk, wheel or cycle more, someone else has said that they feel apprehensive about doing so—as I did when I moved back to Glasgow. I had been a regular cyclist as a student in Manchester, with Europe's busiest bus route as my daily commute, but even compared with that, my home city did not feel safe to cycle in. Then there are people who tell me that they need their car for certain trips but they would happily leave it behind in favour of active travel or public transport for the majority of their travel. Active travel choices are not binary choices.

My job and, I believe, our job as a Parliament is to make the political choices and the personal choices come together. That is why I am very pleased to be overseeing the biggest-ever budget for active travel in Scotland's history—£150 million next year, which represents a big step on the way to our commitment to allocate £320 million or 10

per cent of Scotland's transport budget to walking, wheeling and cycling by 2024-25. It is a level of investment that equates to £58 per person in Scotland, which is far above the £10 per head in England and the £23 per head in Wales.

In two years' time, our commitment will also outstrip the per capita spend of the Netherlands. Admittedly, our Dutch friends have been at it for rather longer than we have, which illustrates the importance of sustained investment over a long period and that investment in active travel needs to be part of a much bigger picture of how we plan and design our streets, towns and cities.

However, this is about more than just money. Dutch levels of walking, wheeling and cycling did not get to where they are simply through the allocation of budget. How the money is spent also counts, so over this year I have set in motion a full review of how we deliver such a rapidly growing programme. I want to ensure that our delivery model for active travel makes the most of the scale of the investment that we are putting in.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Patrick Harvie: I am not sure who I heard first. It was possibly Mr Whittle.

Brian Whittle: I thank Patrick Harvie for taking the intervention, and my colleague Jeremy Balfour for letting me intervene.

The minister talked about budget. I want to highlight something that I have mentioned to him before. Over the past year, Cycle Station, which is a third sector organisation in my area, has recycled and sold 650 affordable bikes at a cost of nothing to the Scottish Government. Is that not showing us where our money should be, how we should invest, and how we should actually deliver on active travel?

Patrick Harvie: There is a huge amount of community leadership right across Scotland, and we will get the greatest benefit from supporting that community leadership through Scottish Government policies and spending.

I want to maximise the role of active travel in the wider transition to a sustainable transport system, with fewer unnecessary journeys. There is no time to wait. I am pleased to announce more than £300,000 to develop a national dashcam safety portal with Police Scotland. With more of us using cameras, not just on dashboards but on handlebars and even on our clothing, it will be easier to report crimes that put people, particularly cyclists and pedestrians, in danger. That is why we are also sustaining our headline places for everyone programme and more than doubling

investment in the national cycle network next year. Those programmes will deliver the connected network that is so important, so that we can talk just as meaningfully about a path and cycleway network as we do about the road or rail network.

Much of that delivery will happen in partnership with local authorities, which is why we are increasing the capital funding programme for cycling, walking and safer routes, which goes directly to local authorities, from £24 million to £35 million next year. That means that, over a period of four years, direct local authority funding will have increased fourfold. I look forward to working with the newly mandated councils from May onwards on turning those pounds into projects.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I am sure that the minister will acknowledge the point made by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that local authority budgets have been cut by £100 million in the Government budget. How can they be expected to deliver on what we all want them to do?

Patrick Harvie: The member knows that we will always continue to debate local authority funding, and I do not agree with the way in which the Conservatives interpret the figures. However, we are now seeing examples across the country—albeit not everywhere—of local authorities giving real leadership. They are clearly capable of doing so, and our increased funding to them will support them.

I want to pick out a few specific strands of our programme. The first, which I am announcing today, is the new Ian Findlay paths fund, managed by Paths for All and named in memory of the Paths for All chief officer, who very sadly passed away suddenly last year and who was a passionate and hugely respected advocate for active travel. The new £1.5 million fund will support small, local projects to make improvements to existing path infrastructure and make connections where there are gaps in the network. It will demonstrate that transformation is not just about big city or town centre changes; it is as much about connecting remote communities and making our neighbourhoods better places to live in, move around and relax in. I hope that Ian, who would have turned 61 today, would have approved.

Turning to the second aspect of the programme that I want to pick out, I highlight the point that active travel is inclusive travel. Walking, wheeling and cycling should be choices for the maximum number of people. Through our development and roll-out of street design guidance and through the projects that we fund, I want to see active travel being a choice for everyone.

Jeremy Balfour: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I need to make some progress.

I was pleased to announce a further £825,000 to support 36 innovative e-bike projects across Scotland through the eBike grant fund, which includes support for non-standard and adapted bikes.

The third delivery arm that I want to pick out today is the work that we are doing with children and young people. The impact of the under-22 free bus travel policy that has been implemented this year will be even greater alongside the work that we are doing to make it easier for young people to walk, wheel and cycle. In the past year we have invested £1.3 million in bikeability training for schools in 31 local authorities, thus supporting 47 per cent of schools to deliver on-road training. Next year we will more than double our grant funding to Living Streets Scotland to more than £500,000 for programmes including walk once a week, involving more than 100,000 primary school children and their families in 26 local authority areas to encourage them to walk to school.

I know just how passionately young people care about the climate emergency and the future of our world. They challenge us to respond to that passion. Our job is to give them the choices over sustainable travel to rise to that challenge, and it is the full package that will make the difference.

Supporting active travel choices and delivering projects also come down to leadership, at every level. I do not doubt that over the next hour and a half we will hear sincere and powerful arguments in favour of active travel. All political parties in this chamber went into the last election with significant commitments on active travel in their manifestos. I hope that we will have a debate that echoes that sincerity and significance.

Sadly, however, too often that support, at both national and local levels, can disappear when it comes to projects on the ground. It is not enough to support active travel in principle and then to stand in the way of project after project happening. Too often, what we see is delay, dilution and disruption, and even sometimes the opportunism of those who complain about an imaginary war on motorists.

Clear and consistent leadership is so important. In order to ensure that people can choose to walk, wheel and cycle more often, we also have to choose. We make the choices on who gets priority for finite road space, choices on speed versus safety, choices about changing our car culture and achieving a sustained reduction in traffic levels, and choices about what we want our future places to look and feel like.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I am just closing.

This is about choice, delivery and leadership. Scotland can be a nation where walking, wheeling and cycling are the first and natural choice for so many more people. We can deliver transformed paths, roads, streets and communities more swiftly and more inclusively. Over the next 90 minutes, let us demonstrate that we have the vision and the leadership to make that happen.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government's record investment in active travel in 2022-23, which includes new funding for footpaths, significantly increased funding for local authorities and more than doubling the funding to the National Cycle Network; recognises the unprecedented ambition of the Co-operation Agreement commitment to invest at least £320 million, or 10% of the transport budget, for active travel by 2024-25 as a means of improving health and wellbeing, enhancing the quality of neighbourhoods, promoting social inclusion and tackling the climate emergency; further welcomes the commitment by Police Scotland to take forward the National Dashcam Safety Portal Initiative; agrees that prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and reducing private car trips will be essential to cutting transport emissions and achieving Scotland's climate targets; acknowledges the leadership shown to date by local and community partners, and hopes that all future local authority administrations will recommit to this leadership and achieve rapid delivery of active travel schemes on the ground.

The Presiding Officer: I call Graham Simpson to speak to and move amendment S6M-03650.3.

15:36

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): This is the first transport debate that Patrick Harvie has led since he was elevated to the heights of becoming a Government minister, so it was with eager anticipation that I prepared for it. I imagined that the de facto Deputy First Minister would be spelling out a list of his achievements and laying out specific actions to come, with delivery dates and costings. We would expect that the new kind of politics that was promised by Mr Harvie and Ms Slater would usher in a waffle-free era in which vagueness is banished to the dustbin—or the incinerator, for this is a Scottish National Party-Green Scotland where there is still no moratorium on those.

It is with some exasperation, therefore, that I discover that Mr Harvie has very quickly settled into his new role by reading the SNP ministerial rulebook. Rule 1 is "Turn up to photo calls for projects that you have had no hand in and take the credit anyway"—we had that at Bowline. Rule 2 is "Talk big, but don't deliver". Rule 3 is

"Consultations and buzz words, please, but no promises—the electors won't notice". Then we have Mr Harvie's own personal rules. Harvie rule 1 is "Don't change how you act now you're a minister". Actually, that is it. We saw that when he refused to wear a helmet when turning up for a ministerial photo shoot for a bikeability event.

I have listened to the minister speak, and I have to say that I am disappointed. He and I share the same ambitions on active travel, but let us be clear: there is a huge gap between what the Government says is its ambition and the actual delivery on the ground, and that has been the case for years.

Mr Harvie might wish to take credit for getting the SNP to agree with our position that 10 per cent of the transport budget should be spent on active travel. However, he is now responsible for making sure that it happens. I wish him every success, and he might wish to work with other parties to achieve that. If he wants to reach out to me, I am all ears. I reach out to him now—let us work together on this one area of policy where we agree.

Travel of all forms—as you know, Presiding Officer—is interlinked, so I will not talk just about active travel. The Scottish Government wants to see a 20 per cent reduction in car miles by 2030. It wants to see us all, within eight years, using cars a fifth less than we do now. How that is going to happen we do not know. I do not think that anyone in Transport Scotland knows, and I suspect that the minister does not know either.

Stephen Kerr: The minister said that his party is not responsible—although it is worth making the point that there is no one from his party here except him. He says that he is not conducting a war on motorists, but he has actively supported the Glasgow Greens who wish to ban all drive-throughs in Glasgow. Is that not a war on motorists?

Graham Simpson: I think that a war on motorists is going on and that the Government wants to make it so difficult to own and drive a car that people just give up.

What the Government does not have is a plan to make the alternatives to cars better. Councils will finally get the powers to run bus services, but the regulations will not be through until next year. It is not clear whether councils will get financial help—we must assume not—so it will be some years before anything worth while happens, if at all.

On active travel—walking, cycling and wheeling—we have to pin our hopes on speedy delivery. Where better to turn than the second strategic transport projects review, still in its draft stage. It talks about "active freeways", which is an American word. Active freeways are described as

segregated active travel routes on main travel corridors. It all sounds good, but no one I talked to seems to know what that means and where the first one, earmarked for 2025, will be.

By 2025, at least £320 million, or 10 per cent of the total transport budget, should be allocated to active travel, which is a major increase in a very short space of time. I welcome that, but it will be councils that deliver on it, and, apart from Glasgow and Edinburgh, councils do not have the resources to deliver at scale. This is a serious issue, and I ask the minister what he intends to do about it.

As the minister acknowledged, we can see good and bad schemes across the country. In my view, some of the infrastructure that has been put in in Glasgow is very good. Edinburgh, which Jeremy Balfour will talk about, has been less impressive. Edinburgh has steamrolled schemes through, bypassing troublesome councillors and communities, and making, frankly, a right pig's ear of it on some things.

In my town of East Kilbride, I have seen spaces for people money spent on a particular short route that took months and is a confusing dog's breakfast of weird lines and colours. Nobody can work out what it is about. We need sensible national standards that people can work to. Where councils do not have the staff, time or money, we should help them out. That is what needs to happen.

Our amendment talks about the need to train children how to ride bikes, which is where bikeability, which I mentioned earlier, comes in. There are still too many schools—more than half—that do not offer on-road training. We need to do better. As a former councillor who has taken part in bikeability sessions, I know that, sometimes, it is teachers who need the training to deliver the schemes.

Electric bikes are becoming more and more popular, but, just like electric cars, they need to be charged. There is currently no network for that, if someone is out and about and doing a longer journey. I suggest that the minister looks at that.

STPR2 is a typically woolly document. We do not really know what it means, but it needs to align with other policies, for instance on planning.

The cross-party group on sustainable transport, which I chair, is doing a piece of work on what the Government needs to do to achieve its ambitions. Our conclusions, when they are made, could be challenging for us all. However, I will share them with the minister, and it would be good if I could bring them to the chamber. My conclusion is that we need less navel gazing and word spin, and more wheel spin. We need substance and we need it fast.

I move amendment S6M-03650.3, to leave out from “the Scottish” to end and insert:

“increased spending on active travel as called for by the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party and others; believes that cycling, walking and wheeling can contribute to people's health and wellbeing; further believes that every schoolchild should have the opportunity to benefit from cycle training; welcomes moves to encourage people to travel, particularly short distances, without the use of a motor vehicle, but accepts that for many people the car is essential; believes that increasing rates of active travel can help to fight climate change, but calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that local authorities have the necessary resources to improve their active travel infrastructure, and further believes that failing to do so will run the risk that there will be a postcode lottery of exemplar projects in Scotland.”

15:43

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): The phrase “war on motorists” has been used in the debate. There is a war happening at the moment in Ukraine, in mainland Europe, so members really need to reflect on the language that they are using.

All parties today agree on the principle that at least 10 per cent of the transport budget should be invested in active travel. That investment represents an opportunity to help more Scots to live active, healthier and longer lives. As Sustrans has told us, physical inactivity contributes to nearly 2,500 deaths a year in Scotland, while only 39 per cent of adults do 30 minutes of moderate activity five days a week.

It is barely six months since the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—and active travel must be a part of our move to net zero. On the principle of spending 10 per cent of the transport budget on active travel, the Government will find no disagreement on these benches.

However, there are serious questions about the best use of that money. We need to channel funds effectively and ensure that money is spent in a way that is joined up and thought through and that it is spent not on just any projects but on the right ones. Otherwise, we end up with situations such as the one in Johnstone, where a newly installed cycle lane has had to be removed due to serious safety concerns from the public.

Local authorities need time to plan sensibly. Short windows for funding do not contribute to the best decision making. It appears that, too often, rushed decisions are made so that time-limited funding can be accessed. That is an issue not only in Renfrewshire but in other parts of Scotland. I ask the minister to consider that going forward and help councils with long-term planning and funding.

Consultation is also vital to better decision making. Faraway planners cannot have a

simplistic build-it-and-they-will-come mentality. We should ask people what would make the biggest difference to their communities and invest accordingly.

As Liam Kerr said, this takes place against the backdrop of long-term cuts to council budgets from the Government. The Accounts Commission confirmed last week that, once emergency Covid funding is accounted for, local authorities have faced a 4.2 per cent reduction in funding. Local government has been hit harder than any other devolved spending area. Even accounting for movement in the budget for the coming year, councils face £251 million of core funding cuts.

Cuts have consequences. Scottish Labour revealed at the weekend that there is a local roads repair backlog of at least £1.7 billion. That is of concern not only for motorists but for cyclists. In fact, potholes are likely of greater concern to a cyclist than to a driver and are unquestionably a factor in the levels of cycling.

There is also a serious issue of transport poverty. Not everyone can afford to buy and maintain a decent bicycle. Wonderful charities such as Own Yer Bike in Ferguslie Park in Paisley in my region do much to help. Own Yer Bike offers free classes to kids on bicycle maintenance and repair and a range of services for more mature cyclists, too.

Before the election, the SNP and Greens promised free bikes for all children of school age who cannot afford them. The question is: where are those bikes? Last month, only 1,000 had been given out as part of a pilot scheme. However, 145,000 families in Scotland are entitled to a school uniform grant.

Stephen Kerr: Not only do we know how few bicycles have been given out, we know that they cost £1,000 each.

Neil Bibby: Only 1,000 bikes have been given so far and 145,000 families in Scotland are entitled to a school uniform grant, so there is clearly a big gap in provision. It is a big test for the Government. Is it still committed to that policy? If so, when will it be delivered or will it be another broken promise?

Patrick Harvie: I hope that Neil Bibby welcomes the fact that the Scottish Government is continuing with the policy. It would have been wrong just to crash ahead without designing it properly. That is why we have a pilot phase. Many different approaches are being taken, including those that do not necessarily lead to ownership of a bike but provide access to one and the ability to change bikes. That range of pilots will be evaluated by the autumn and we will continue to roll out the national programme as a result of what we learn from conducting them.

Neil Bibby: I absolutely agree with the minister that it is right to evaluate the pilot projects. However, on the timescale, the Scottish Greens previously said that grants for schoolchildren's bikes should have happened by August 2020. If they are truly committed to the policy, surely they will implement it by the end of the year after the pilot schemes come to an end.

There has been a lack of meaningful consultation with pedestrians and disability groups. Active travel is about walking and wheeling as much as it is about cycling. We must always ensure that we get the balance right. There should be good, safe, clean, well-lit and secure places where all people, especially women as well as young people, can feel safe to walk.

The £1.7 billion repair backlog that I referred to earlier does not include footways, many of which are a disgrace after years of council cuts. Our walkways, footpaths and pavements need serious investment to turn active travel into a reality, but that will not happen until we start to restore the funding that councils have lost in successive budgets.

Sustainable journeys are often multimodal journeys. Our active travel network should be integrated with our public transport network. I say again to the Scottish Government that it must stop the cuts to one in 10 ScotRail services. It cannot reduce car dependency in Scotland while simultaneously shrinking ScotRail timetables and cutting services.

We welcome investment in active travel. If we invest wisely, we can make Scotland greener and healthier. However, we cannot view active travel in isolation. Promoting sustainable and active travel requires co-ordination. It means following through on the commitments that have been given and investing in walking and wheeling—not just cycling. It means that multimodal journeys on our transport network should be easier to make.

For those reasons, I move amendment S6M-03650.1, to insert at end:

“; notes the cross-party support for 10% of the transport budget being allocated to active travel; recognises that wider cuts to local authority budgets hamper active travel, including safety concerns from a lack of adequate lighting; notes the important link between public transport and active travel and recognises that cutting train services will not encourage a reduction in car use; considers that improvements to roads and pavements are necessary to improve levels of active and sustainable travel, and further considers that, if the Scottish Government is serious about promoting active travel, it should fulfil its commitment to provide access to bikes for every child who cannot afford one by the end of 2022.”

15:50

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Had my amendment been picked this afternoon, the Scottish Government would have been asked for an update on how many schools currently offer cycle training. That would have followed up a Scottish Liberal Democrat amendment that was agreed to in the chamber in the previous session, which said:

“every schoolchild should have the opportunity to benefit from cycle training.”

When I asked for the recent figures on that in a written question, I was informed:

“The Scottish Government does not hold that information. Annual school cycle training performance figures for 2021-22, including delivery data from all participating local authorities, will be available in September 2022.”—[*Written Answers*, 15 November 2021; S6W-04051.]

I note that the bikeability Scotland briefing states that 37 per cent of primary schools were offered on-road training in 2020-21, despite national school closures, local restrictions on external instructors, and staff and pupil absences through illness or isolation. It would be good if the Scottish Government could confirm that figure. I also note that the latest Sustrans data for 2020 shows that 3.8 per cent of pupils cycle to school. That figure is down slightly from 2019.

Investing in cycle training for young people is an investment for all our futures. If we can get the conditions right, we will have a generation of cyclists who would sooner walk, wheel or cycle for short journeys than hop into a private car.

Our infrastructure needs to be upgraded to tackle the obstacles that breed a reluctance to cycle on roads alongside cars. Cyclists need to be safe on our roads and to feel as safe as possible. Research by Sustrans and the City of Edinburgh Council in 2015 found that just 62 per cent of city residents felt safe riding a bike during the day and that that figure fell to 34 per cent at night. The figures for driving a car were up towards 90 per cent.

Potholes add further safety concerns. Should a person swerve to avoid a pothole? Should they move toward the car or the pedestrians? Meanwhile, we have cuts to council budgets on their way and £1.7 billion of potholes to fix.

As many more of us return to work in office blocks, we should do what we can to make an active travel commute possible and comfortable, and a safe endeavour. We have called for funding to be made available to help businesses and others to install showers and changing rooms in workplaces and community facilities.

We need a new vision on cycleway planning. We need to ensure that routes take commuters where they need to go, keep up the maintenance of paths and provide signage along them. Further work is needed to join up existing cycle paths and ensure that they do not end abruptly.

There are significant challenges to improving active travel in rural, remote and island areas, where natural barriers, sheer distance and inclement weather make active journeys difficult. For those locations, the Scottish Government needs to do more to ensure that public transport is a realistic alternative to private cars. I hope that the Government will take on board our plan for buses, empower local communities to have a significant voice on routes and not allow routes to go only where profits lead.

For some in Scotland—particularly those in island and rural communities—cars are the only option for travelling. We need to support those people to transition to the most sustainable private cars available.

Active travel is, and should be, a key plank of plans to net zero targets. Like other plans, those plans require significant investment.

15:53

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I thank the minister for bringing forward the debate. Following the Scottish Government and Green Party co-operation agreement, I commend the Scottish Government for the record investment in active travel over the next year. As we have heard, the £320 million dedicated to active travel by 2024-25 will bring us even closer to reaching our net zero targets.

The near tripling of the active travel budget equates to £58 per head of population in Scotland. As the minister said, that compares with £10 in England, £20 in Wales and £30 in leading countries, including the Netherlands. As he said, we have a little bit of catching up to do with them.

That funding will help us to move towards the transformational shift that is needed to help to meet the 20 per cent car kilometre reduction target, while protecting our climate from damaging transport emissions. The key aim of providing free bus travel to under-22s has now been delivered. There were some teething problems, but it was a statement of intent.

The beautiful landscape of East Lothian in my constituency makes an incredible place to walk and cycle. We have the coastal towns of Dunbar and North Berwick, the Lammermuir hills and the surrounding villages and towns. The pandemic saw residents and visitors truly appreciating East Lothian's hills and coast.

I want to talk about a specific project in East Lothian. In my constituency, discussions have been on-going for more than a decade on a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly route between Drem and Gullane. A survey that was conducted during lockdown by the Drem-Gullane path campaign reported that 40 per cent of residents were cycling more and 77 per cent were walking more, alongside a drop in car use. In addition, 89 per cent of respondents believed that East Lothian Council should significantly increase investment in cycling and walking infrastructure.

Recently, in the East Lothian Council budget round, it was confirmed that £30,000 would be ring fenced to help the creation of a path for locals. In partnership, Sustrans Scotland has awarded East Lothian Council £30,000 for the first section of the path, and that work is now under way. A spokesman for the Drem-Gullane path campaign—

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way?

Paul McLennan: If I can get the time back. I have only four minutes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Yes, you can get the time back, Mr McLennan.

Brian Whittle: I am grateful to the member for giving way. Would he recognise that there is an inequality in people's ability to access cycling between areas that are ranked higher and those that are ranked lower in the Scottish index of multiple deprivation, and that it is important that we tackle that inequality?

Paul McLennan: I thank the member for the intervention—I will touch on that in a second.

A spokesman for the Drem-Gullane path campaign was delighted with the increased investment, and said:

"Investing in active travel infrastructure is vital to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe and to encourage healthier and greener journeys."

In East Lothian, the council is also looking to pilot active transport hubs in each of our main towns. I hope that, with the increased national investment, that will become the norm as part of the local planning processes.

Walking, cycling and bus and train links must be as interlinked as possible if we are to achieve our target of reducing car journeys by 20 per cent. Mr Whittle mentioned an important point in that regard. We also need to continue our investment in public transport, such as the new railway station that is currently being constructed in East Lothian in my constituency.

The Scottish Government commitment to investment in the Sustrans 30-year national cycle

network plan and in a new cycling framework for active travel is also very welcome. Each local authority needs to do the same locally. East Lothian, like many other constituencies, is a mix of rural and urban towns and villages, so connectivity between villages and towns as well as within them must be considered.

Demand-responsive transport must be part of the solution for our towns and villages. We need that not only to reduce emissions but to help our local villages sustain their local schools, and to help villages thrive. Partnership between the Scottish Government, local authorities, Sustrans and other active transport groups is key in local delivery.

As a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, I believe that national planning framework 4 and local development plans must ensure that any new developments are an integral part of an existing settlement and that active transport links are a condition of any grant of consent. That must be part of any formal consultation processes and beyond. To come back to the point that Neil Bibby made, the designs for those links have to be co-produced with local groups.

The Scottish Government's commitment to active travel is very welcome. In the future, I hope to see councils increase their commitments to active travel and support projects like the Drem-Gullane path campaign.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I advise members that we have a bit of time in hand, so if any member wants to take an intervention, they will be recompensed for the time.

15:58

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Active travel is a great thing. It is functional and healthy, and it allows us to experience the physical and mental benefits of exercise while going about our daily lives. One of the small benefits of the past two years was the opportunity that I had during lockdown to spend more time walking and enjoying the countryside around me.

Active travel should be promoted and prioritised. However, the Scottish Government's record on it seems flimsy and slapdash at best. That record involves either not following through on policies or implementing policies that have often been counter-productive in respect of actually helping people to engage in active travel. A prime example is the spaces for people initiative and the way that it has been implemented in the capital city. It has wreaked havoc for those on whom it has been imposed.

This year, I sent out a survey with my annual report. It asked people to list the three biggest issues for them in the whole of Lothian. What came back as the number 1 issue, by miles, was the need to get rid of the spaces for people scheme. Not only had it affected cars and people, but, ultimately, and even worse, it had affected health.

The school that my daughters go to is on a main road. Normally, the traffic is heavy but it keeps moving. When the spaces for people scheme was put in, it took literally 10 minutes to go 20 yards. Buses, cars and everything came to a standstill because of the scheme. The pollution that occurred outside a major primary school, affecting children's health, was a direct result of the implementation of that policy by the SNP-Labour administration in Edinburgh.

Patrick Harvie: I am quite sure that the member was actively advocating for better active travel rather than simply reacting against it as some people do. However, he said that he was criticising Scottish Government policy, but he is giving an example of a local implementation by a council, which he objects to. Does he recognise that that is one of the tensions that we need to openly and honestly debate? Do we allow local decision making and fund it from central Government, or do we take control and have a top-down approach? Surely the Conservatives want to achieve the kind of fostered local leadership that will get active travel infrastructure right, instead of merely reacting against it.

Jeremy Balfour: Absolutely, and that is why we need to get rid of the SNP-Labour administration in the May elections and have a Conservative-led administration in the city that will implement the policy properly. Nevertheless, the minister makes a fair point. The policy that Labour and SNP councillors implemented in Edinburgh was a direct result of legislation that was passed in this Parliament. The two are not separated.

What has been worst about the spaces for people scheme is that it has caused massive problems for the most vulnerable people in our city. There was no consultation on the implementation of the scheme. When older people, disabled people and mums with prams pointed out the dangers of the scheme, they were ignored completely.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jeremy Balfour: I am going to carry on for the moment.

With fewer parking spaces in town for people who have low mobility, the scheme, in effect, excludes many disabled people from town centres

and high streets. That is not to mention the barriers that have been erected, which create further obstacles to street crossing and other activities for people with visual impairment or other physical impairments.

Spaces for people was supposed to create room for more active travel, but for disabled people in Edinburgh it has served to do nothing more than alienate them and cause stress. Once again, ideologically and dogmatically driven policies from the Government have come at the cost of detriment to the disabled community in Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland.

Audrey Nicoll: I thank the member for giving way. I would like to point out, and hear his comments on, the fact that the Labour-Tory administration in Aberdeen City Council has equally made what I can only describe as a bit of a mess of the spaces for people interventions in the city centre. The people of Aberdeen are still living with those interventions because the administration will not remove part of them. That has excluded people with disabilities, who have been strongly represented by the local disability partnership.

Jeremy Balfour: I am sure that Liam Kerr will address that point in his closing statement, but I absolutely agree that, where disabled people are affected, proper consultation is needed before the schemes are brought in, rather than afterwards. That has not happened in Edinburgh. I have no doubt that the scheme was started with noble intentions, but the reality is that it has failed. It needs to be scrapped and started again.

Even worse than that, cycle lanes have been imposed where there is one already in place. A few weeks ago, Mr Harvie turned up at Roseburn Terrace to look at the new cycle lane that has been put in there. That cycle lane has been hotly contested—I know that because I was a local councillor for the area for many years—but they have now decided to close down the shops and we are seeing the economic impact of that.

There was a cycle path 20 yards away that was already being used. That cycle path may have needed slight upgrading, and there may have needed to be a slightly better way to reach it, but the path was already there and being used by cyclists. The City of Edinburgh Council's dogma was, "Let's make it more difficult for shop owners. Let's make it more difficult for local people to shop. Let's stop older and disabled people from getting to nearby shops by putting up more barriers, having more road works and causing more problems." That is a ridiculous policy.

When the minister sums up, I would be interested in hearing him clarify two points. First, how many disabled charities has he met to

discuss active travel? Secondly, can he confirm that the access bikes scheme, which was launched in September 2021 to provide loans to allow people to purchase their own bike, has not had anyone sign up for it yet?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I welcome the fact that members have embraced the invitation to intervene. However, I would encourage the interventions to be slightly briefer. I call Stephanie Callaghan, to be followed by Carol Mochan. Ms Callaghan joins us remotely.

16:06

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. You will not need to worry about interventions, as I am contributing remotely.

I thank Patrick Harvie for bringing the motion to the chamber. Simply put, active travel involves using your body to make the journey. It is an important part of leading a healthier lifestyle, and it will potentially help to decarbonise transport systems in our towns and cities, too. As we recover and build back from Covid-19, implement plans to achieve net zero and face an accelerating cost of living crisis, we are at a critical juncture for transport and travel. There is a great opportunity to reprioritise and put communities and families, health and wellbeing and our environment right at the forefront. With crisis comes opportunity.

Transform Scotland highlighted that walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure across Scotland remains unacceptably poor and often dangerous, which we must turn the tide on. It was great to hear the minister highlighting young people. Earlier this week, I hosted my first sustainability forum with four schools across the Uddingston and Bellshill constituency, to listen to students' views and priorities. Travel was right at the top of all of their lists. Students wanted to see fewer vehicles in the school car parks and expressed concerns about the negative impact of the school run on the environment and their health. Pupils suggested limiting parking capacity, encouraging drop-off zones and a walk to school week. They were keen to raise awareness about school-run emissions and to encourage both students and their parents to embrace the benefits of active travel.

We must learn from our young people. Their appetite for reducing emissions and living a healthier lifestyle through active travel is clear. It is now our job to deliver by making active travel routes safe, practical and widespread across our towns and cities.

In Scotland, it is paramount that we place communities at the heart of active travel policy. Young people, parents, the elderly, those living in

rural Scotland and commuters all have distinct needs and concerns. Although there is much to be learned from cities such as Amsterdam, Seville and Copenhagen, Scotland has its own unique needs. We can use knowledge from elsewhere to build policies that deliver for everyone across Scotland.

Active travel is also a question of equality. If our kids are walking or cycling to school, they need to have the right waterproofs and safety equipment, as well as opportunities to learn to cycle safely. Those things will be needed to ensure a cultural shift in Scotland that has equality at its core. I warmly welcome the 12-month pilot project to deliver free bikes to school-age children who cannot afford them, and I would like to see that rolled out more widely.

As is highlighted in the motion and as has already been said, the commitment to invest at least £320 million—10 per cent of the transport budget—in active travel by 2024-25 will be transformational. Equity must be at the core of distributing that funding. New funding for footpaths, significantly increased funding for local authorities and a doubling of the funding for the national cycle network should all be warmly welcomed in the chamber. The Scottish Government's funding initiatives are encouraging, and I am keen to see local plans for new cycling facilities at Strathclyde park in my constituency become a reality. North Lanarkshire Council will involve community groups in planning the learn to ride areas, and there will be excellent links to the surrounding area by foot and by wheels. That is a great example of the joined-up and participative community partnerships that we need to see if we are to become a more active nation.

The long-term vision is in place and I am confident that, by focusing on strategic investment, listening to communities and placing equality and accessibility at the core of the policy, we can deliver an active travel commitment, boost health and propel ourselves towards net zero.

Let us all go forward with ambition and determination to level the route map and make a successful journey to Scotland's active travel destination.

16:10

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): We all know that the benefits of active travel are wide ranging, from its environmental benefits to those for the health and wellbeing of the population. We should place significant focus on encouraging and facilitating active travel, which is why I reiterate that the Scottish Labour's amendment calls for 10 per cent of the transport budget to be allocated to it.

We do not make that request without reason. Today's debate has recognised the progress that we have made, but we must focus on what more there is still to do. Isolation, poor housing, health inequalities and poor transport links impact the poorest and most vulnerable in our society more than anyone else. It is therefore crucial that any active travel plan has the livelihood and opportunities of those in our most-deprived areas at its core.

Yes, we can welcome investments in e-bikes, cycling and walking paths, and more. However, those investments do little to improve the health outcomes for those who are most in need if we do not bring them closer to our communities and make it as feasible as possible for people to use active travel routes.

Equitable access to active travel is a factor in tackling health inequalities, which must be a priority for Parliament. We know that health inequalities create some of the biggest challenges that Scottish society faces. As my colleague Neil Bibby mentioned, for active travel to become a successful reality, it is crucial that the Scottish Government improves its performance in two areas where it has failed recently.

First, the SNP must stop cutting local government services. With political will and pressure from SNP back benchers, the Government could create high-quality, well-funded, accessible and affordable services, including active travel services, up and down the country. To cut the budgets of councils—thus cutting their ability to provide solid travel infrastructure—and then come to the chamber today with a self-congratulatory motion should shame SNP and Green MSPs, who stood on a manifesto of investment but have presided over horrific cuts to the services on which our communities rely.

Further, cutting train services and increasing the costs of train travel amid a cost-of-living crisis puts a strain on the pockets of millions and will not encourage people to choose active travel. It is vital that more people choose to walk, cycle or use public transport instead of a car, for the sake of future generations and our planet. However, we must make that choice a clear and easy one to make. The Scottish Government has failed in that regard.

Active travel is a worthwhile cause to pursue, so I am glad that we are having this debate. I had the privilege of joining Paths for All at Kilmarnock train station in my constituency. I walked through one of the newly installed active travel routes there, and it was clear to me how beneficial those routes could be if they were rolled out properly and more widely.

However, we have to get the basics right. We have to take a gendered approach to those routes, to ensure that they are accessible to women and that women feel safe on them, and they must be accessible to other vulnerable groups, such as the young, the elderly and the disabled. We have to invest in rail and bus services to keep them frequent and close to communities, with low fares. We have to ensure that active travel routes serve those whom health inequalities impact the most.

In doing so, we will take steps towards improving the health and lifestyle outcomes of those who have been worst impacted by the cuts of the Scottish and UK Governments in recent years, and we will give the active travel plan for Scotland the best chance of being successful. Therefore, I urge colleagues to back the Scottish Labour amendment this evening.

Stephen Kerr: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Earlier in the debate, I intervened on Neil Bibby about the cost of the free bicycles that have been made available to children who cannot afford one. I might have inadvertently misled the Parliament, so I put on record the fact that the number of bicycles that were distributed under the scheme by February is 988, at a total cost of £935,797. I said that the bicycles cost £1,000 each; in fact, they cost £947.16 each. It is important to be straight about the cost.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Kerr. Detail is always important, and I appreciate the point of order.

I call Stuart McMillan, who joins us remotely.

16:15

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. Active travel is a topic that I have been discussing at local level for some time, and I have highlighted my support for active travel in my submissions to the—[Inaudible.]—consultation—[Inaudible.]

My constituency, Greenock and Inverclyde, has some of the most stunning scenery anywhere in the country. Before the pandemic, I had the opportunity to visit the Greenock cut and go for a cycle along the then newly installed cycle trails with David Hill of the Clyde Muirshiel regional park. The historic Greenock cut is an outstanding location to visit, which John Mason will support, as he has visited it in the past. Crucially, the cut links up parts of the constituency.

We all have a decision to make about how we get from A to B. Often, we choose the easiest and quickest option and, as the Tories indicated in their amendment to the motion, for some communities, there is sometimes only one option:

the car. However, we must all consider our travel arrangements if we are serious about the climate emergency.

The end of the Tory amendment speaks about resources for local authorities and a “postcode lottery”. I will touch on three points in that regard. First, the postcode lottery will always happen, because each community engages in active travel investment from a different starting point. Secondly, the topography of our communities is different. As anyone who has had the pleasure of campaigning in Inverclyde will acknowledge, it is nowhere near as flat as Amsterdam or Copenhagen. Thirdly, decisions on local investment are taken by local councillors, who will have a wide range of opinions.

Last year, right outside my constituency office, Inverclyde Council installed a cycle lane that runs from Battery park to Greenock town centre. Views on it have been mixed. It was advertised by the council before installation, but I believe that many local people were a bit too focused on the pandemic and its impact to fully pick up on what was being proposed.

I support cycle lanes and have no issue with them being installed where there is room, if the design is sound. I want people to be able to hop on a bike and cycle from A to B if they so desire, and installing cycle lanes makes that a safer option.

I will contrast two approaches that were taken by local councillors to the cycle lanes that are outside my constituency office: one from a Tory and the other from an SNP councillor. Local Tory councillor Graeme Brooks recently lodged a motion in Inverclyde Council to remove the cycle lanes. Thankfully, it was rejected. In the Greenock Telegraph, he said that he had seen only four cyclists use the lanes since they were installed last year. He said:

“It’s very clear from constituents that the cycle lane was never requested, it’s not wanted and it’s not needed.”

That certainly contradicts a lot of the comments that we have heard from Tory MSPs in the debate.

Contrast that with the view of SNP councillor Chris Curley, who uses a bike and is a local champion of active travel. He said:

“If you want to try and encourage people to use things, you need to have them there for a period of time. Are we really thinking that the future of travel in Inverclyde is everybody in a car? It isn’t—you’ve got to give people options.”

I whole-heartedly agree with Councillor Curley. We must be bold in our aspirations. I am confident that, over time, the cycle lanes will be used more and more by locals, and they will open up Inverclyde to more tourists.

In effect, the Scottish Tories in the chamber are calling for something that their council colleagues are voting against. The rank hypocrisy of the Scottish Tories on the issue is there for everyone to see.

Active travel benefits our country in many ways. The reduction in our carbon footprint and the obvious health benefits that are associated with being active make active travel something that we should all be supporting and improving. So much positive work is happening, so let us reject the Tory negativity and hypocrisy and support active travel.

16:19

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I am pleased to take part in today’s Scottish Government debate on delivering on active travel commitments and recognising the important investment that our Government is making in our communities and the benefit that it will have to our constituents.

It is the Scottish Government’s aspiration to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030, so as we move towards net zero, we need to get people out of their cars and considering other forms of transport. That will need a number of folk to consider active travel for the first time as a serious option for getting around. Increased active travel will also improve people’s wellbeing, and it will contribute to safer, cleaner and healthier communities.

Active travel helps to build healthy habits, which helps to improve the health of our population and reduce the burden on our NHS. Physical inactivity contributes to almost 2,500 deaths in Scotland each year, as Mr Bibby said earlier.

With that in mind, as we move forward, we need to increase the number of adults who follow physical activity guidelines and do 30 minutes of moderate activity five times a week. If we can get more folk to cycle or walk regularly, it will potentially reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, improve mental health, and tackle asthma.

Achieving our ambitious carbon reduction targets will require serious investment. It is therefore welcome that the Scottish Government is committed to investing in public transport by spending 10 per cent of the transport budget on active travel by the end of 2024-25.

Recently, I was pleased to attend a walkabout with Sustrans in my constituency of Aberdeen Donside, where we discussed the active travel networks in the city and the difficulties that face local authorities while they are challenging the

behaviours of drivers and getting people out of their cars.

It is key that we change habits, and the best way to do that is by ensuring that our young people participate in active travel, as it is then more likely that they will continue to do so into their adult life. The Scottish Government's commitment to providing free bikes for all children of school age who cannot afford them will make such a difference to so many of my constituents. The benefit of increasing access to bikes for children are obvious. It ensures equality of opportunity in building life skills, confidence and independence, and it can embed healthy and sustainable travel choices into everyday life. Affordable travel will also increase their options in education, work or further training, and ensure that they continue on a journey to a positive destination.

At this point, I want to give a shout-out to a project that is local to me—the Middlefield Community Project. It gives out bikes on long-term loans and it helps the children with the servicing and fixing of those bikes. The project does an awful lot more in my community, but I just want to give it a wee shout-out for that.

We have a long way to go to reach our net zero emissions targets, but if we continue to invest in active travel and in our young people, we can change habits for the better and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Dunbar. I now call Maggie Chapman, to be followed by Fiona Hyslop.

Jeremy Balfour: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I always look forward to Ms Chapman's speeches, but my understanding is that members are meant to be in the chamber for opening speeches if they are taking part in the debate, and I do not think that Maggie Chapman was here for any of the opening speeches. I wonder whether that is a problem with regard to hearing her today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Balfour. Your understanding of standing orders is correct. Ms Chapman had advised the Presiding Officers that she had prior commitments that she was bound to attend, and she had permission from the Presiding Officers to be absent at the start of the debate. However, your point about standing orders is well made, and I take the opportunity to reinforce it.

With that, Maggie Chapman, you have a generous four minutes.

16:24

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I welcome the Scottish Government

debate on active travel. I also offer my apologies to members for arriving late and my thanks to the Presiding Officer for giving me dispensation to do so. I am standing in for my colleague Mark Ruskell, who is absent from the Parliament for a while.

With Greens in the Government, Scotland's world-leading commitments to radically transform our transport system in line with our net zero ambitions have finally been backed up by significant long-term investment in active travel. Our vision for integrated, safe and inclusive local active travel infrastructure that prioritises walking, cycling and wheeling for everyone can finally become a reality.

For far too long, our transport systems have been cast in the image of car users. Our cities and towns have been designed for cars first and people second. People who rely on public or active transport have often been ignored, leaving too many of us—often women, children, disabled people and marginalised communities—poorly served by transport networks.

As a woman who cycles, I have spent many hours planning out the safest routes ahead of commuting, balancing safety and condition of the route—I hate cobbles—with time, distance and hills. I have experienced at first hand the feeling of terror when passed closely or overrun by reckless drivers on vehicle-heavy roads, and at times I have been discouraged from commuting altogether.

Sadly, I am not alone. That is the experience of many women and girls. A recent Sustrans survey found 79 per cent of women and girls to be in favour of more protected cycle routes. The scale of the challenge of providing safe, green and accessible local infrastructure is significant, but the prize of safer roads, reduced air pollution, increased physical and mental health, and tighter-knit neighbourhoods is worth the blood, sweat and tears that such a modal shift will require.

Our communities already know that, which is why they have been coming together to collectively showcase the safe and accessible environment for walking, cycling and wheeling that Scotland can lead the way on. In Edinburgh, the #OurStreetsOurNights campaign that is led by the InfraSisters is advocating for safe and inclusive night-time infrastructure for women and girls. In Glasgow, the Hijabi riders group has been working hard to tackle the common barriers that prevent Muslim women from cycling, which include safety concerns, lack of confidence and the costs associated with buying a bike, as well as religious barriers, by organising group cycling events across the city and teaching members how to carry out their own bike repairs.

In my region, in addition to the activity that Jackie Dunbar mentioned, cycling groups such as Belles on Bikes are promoting a community of care. By creating a welcoming and safe environment in cycling for women, those groups are proving the point that active travel, rather than being only for able-bodied men in Lycra, is for everyone.

The need for safety for women and girls is echoed across our transport system, with Transport Focus discovering that 85 per cent of women and girls forward plan their journeys in an effort to identify the safest possible public transport routes. I welcome the new Minister for Transport's efforts to address the gender gap in transport through the upcoming consultation and to embed the element of safety in the Scottish Government's plans for an all-inclusive national conversation.

After May, our newly elected councils will have an opportunity to utilise their new powers under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and recent investments in public transport, such as the community bus fund, to deliver truly integrated local transport networks that link public transport with active travel. In order to ensure that active travel networks are designed with safety in mind, they must be delivered in tandem with national ambitions for a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres and 20mph by default.

The time has come to finally take back our streets and transition away from a driver-heavy culture towards integrated, safe and inclusive local infrastructure that prioritises walking, cycling and wheeling for all of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Fiona Hyslop, who will be the final speaker in the open debate.

16:28

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I will shape my remarks around the local, the hyperlocal, the national, the global and the international.

It is striking that the Scottish Government has committed to spending at least £320 million, or 10 per cent of the total transport budget, on active travel by 2024-25. That represents an increase of £39 million since 2017-18. That means that the active travel budget will equate to £58 per head of the population in Scotland, as compared with £10 per head in England, £20 per head in Wales and £30 per head in leading European countries. They, too, may choose to spend money on active travel and those figures may change, but that paints a very striking picture.

The debate has shown that everyone's circumstances are different. There are city, rural

and town experiences. I will reflect on the town experience in West Lothian. We have had some very positive developments and I commend Sustrans for its work in helping to develop our networks. The Armadale to Whitburn cycle path has made a difference and also provides access to trains. We should encourage people to make active travel part of commuting by enabling them to walk, wheel or cycle to a bus or a train. That will have an impact on wider transport issues such as affordability, accessibility and the provision of public transport and will be key to the step change towards people making less use of their cars.

We are beginning to see that prospect. That will lead to a hub and—dare I use the term—spoke approach to active travel in my constituency and many others across the central belt. We have many former mining towns and villages. They are very long, with lots of pavement and road space and have interesting routes by which people could travel to transport hubs or to work. Winchburgh, a growing town in my community, has worked with Scottish Canals to ensure a cycle network and a fantastic link into Edinburgh. I am not sure how many people cycle commute to Edinburgh from West Lothian—that might take a while—but we already see people using our canals as walkways to work in my constituency.

E-bike provision will be hugely important. If we want more people to take part—not just men in Lycra; I will come back to men in Lycra—then e-bike provision will be really important.

We also need practical, commonsense steps.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I am not sure whether the member is a man in Lycra, but I am happy to take his intervention.

Brian Whittle: I am a man who long ago left Lycra behind. Does Fiona Hyslop agree that it is important to increase the number of bike racks on trains to create connectivity between cycling and getting to work?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes. In a former capacity I encouraged the provision of bike racks for tourism, but we also need them for commuting. It is also important for cyclists to know that their bicycles are safe, so we need lighting and cameras around stations and those are important for women walking to work or to a transport hub. Some of the issues will be very practical.

That brings me to the hyperlocal. It should not have taken an MSP—me—to sort a tiny piece of road in Linlithgow called Capstan Walk. It is actually a path, not even a road, and the ownership is in question. We managed to work with Sustrans and fix the potholes. I pulled

everyone together, we got it sorted and that has allowed people to use walking, cycling or wheeling to get from one part of town to another by linking up provision.

Sometimes, common sense is needed. I spoke yesterday to Network Rail about how we can get more people walking or cycling from the massive site at Wester Inch to Bathgate station.

I will finish with a global point. In 2023, Scotland will see a historic moment in cycling. The 2023 UCI cycling world championships are coming to Scotland. I helped to secure that when I was a minister. The various cycling world championship events usually happen in different countries and in different months of the year. In August 2023, all the events are coming here. We want to ensure that that is not just about elite sports people. That year should give us all the ambition to show that cycling is for everyone. That is why the Linlithgow cycling circuit, which will be built in my constituency, is hugely important. It is about people learning or relearning how to ride a bike. It will create accessibility and ensure cycling for all.

Let us be ambitious with our budget and with our vision of what we can do. I encourage everyone to get excited about the 2023 UCI cycling world championships in Glasgow and Scotland. I have enjoyed the debate. Let us be ambitious and exciting. We need less grumbling and more action.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Hyslop. I was finding the full-frontal assault on men in Lycra deeply uncomfortable.

We move to the closing speeches.

16:34

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The debate has shown that there is a real cross-party recognition of—or, indeed, a consensus on—the importance of active travel. That is not surprising, as most parties, including Labour, made commitments in their manifestos last year to increase investment in active travel to at least 10 per cent of the overall transport budget. I hope that we will reach at least the promised level of dedicated funding—£320 million per year—sooner rather than later.

However, it is disappointing that, in this debate, there has been a failure by SNP and Green MSPs to acknowledge that, for every £1 that is allocated to active travel in this year's Scottish budget, Scotland's local authorities will have to find more than £10 just to tackle the backlog of repairs to the roads. In my home region of Dumfries and Galloway, the current bill to deal with the plague of potholes that is carpeting our roads and making life miserable for cyclists is £217 million. That is

more than £50 million higher than the Government's entire active transport budget for the forthcoming year.

As Neil Bibby highlighted, the backlog bill across Scotland is at least £1.7 billion. If Mr Harvie and his Green Party colleagues continue to back the type of budgets that they have backed over the past six years, which have seen real-terms cuts to council funding year on year, that bill will get higher and higher and the potholes, to be frank, will soon become canyons. As we increase investment in active travel interventions, there is an opportunity to have, for example, more dedicated cycle routes, but the increasingly crumbling footpaths and public roads will continue to be a barrier for those who want to walk, wheel or cycle, unless we have a change of direction from the Government.

When we invest in active travel interventions, we must do so wisely. A number of members rightly highlighted concerns about that. I understand why, during the pandemic, the Government moved its focus from the places for everyone initiative to the spaces for people initiative in order to enable people to travel safely. There were a lot of good interventions as a result of that. However, we must recognise that the Government's spaces for people initiative led to a number of projects that alienated local communities. The redirection of almost all the funding away from the permanent schemes that we had towards the temporary measures has in many ways set back the move towards permanent schemes. Crucially, it also led to a lack of consultation with communities because of the real drive to deliver in a short time.

The allocation of more than half of the funding to our two biggest cities also highlighted the disproportionate way that Government invests in active travel. Carol Mochan rightly raised the very real fear that we do not have equitable access to active travel in many of our communities. We know the communities that lobby the loudest. I wonder whether the Government has carried out a proper mapping exercise to see exactly where investment is being made in active travel interventions. I suspect that, once again, deprived communities are missing out.

Communities must be at the heart of all our investment. I spent a great deal of time as a local councillor and chair of Dumfries and Galloway Council's economy, environment and infrastructure committee pressing the case for investment in active travel, and the most successful projects that I was involved in were those that involved the community and were part of wider regeneration. For example, the partnership in the Queen Street area of Dumfries town centre between Sustrans, Dumfries and

Galloway Council, local housing associations and most importantly—

Graham Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Colin Smyth: I certainly will.

Graham Simpson: During the debate, we heard about some excellent projects around the country. Does Colin Smyth agree that the best projects are the ones where councils bring communities with them rather than imposing on communities projects that do not particularly work because they have not been thought out properly?

Colin Smyth: I entirely agree with that point. We have all seen that. As a councillor and committee chair, I saw that there was not always 100 per cent support for active travel. The best projects are the ones where we take the community with us.

I highlight as an example the project that I started talking about, which is in the Queen Street area of Dumfries and Galloway. It is a partnership between agencies but, crucially, it is also a partnership with local residents. It is an example of how we can really lift a community and not only make our streets safer for walkers, wheelers and cyclists, but actually regenerate the community. We need to understand that active travel is about more than just investment in cycle paths for commuters that bypass communities. It is about investment in communities.

That project included the redesign of roads that had in effect become rat runs for motorists, but it also included new housing, regenerated housing and investment in street art, and all of that was actively and extensively shaped by community engagement. It is a fantastic project. It was a very intensive one and it took a lot of work and a lot of discussion with communities. Sadly, there are simply not enough of those projects across Scotland.

We might be forgiven for thinking, from today's SNP-Green motion, that the solution is simply to lecture local government about its responsibilities, rather than taking a step back, with the Scottish Government also taking its responsibilities seriously. I will give one quick example. Today of all days, with the devastating news about ferry job losses at Cairnryan as a result of the shameful decision by P&O Ferries, we are again drawn to the lack of investment in infrastructure in the south-west. That includes active travel. For someone who arrives at Cairnryan by ferry with their cycle, their route to the nearest town, Stranraer, is along the A77 trunk road, together with 40-tonne lorries coming off the ferry. The utter failure of the Government to extend the national cycle route to Scotland's largest ferry terminal presents a danger for people who want to cycle

when they arrive in Scotland. Welcome to active travel Scotland. If Mr Harvie wants to discuss a lack of leadership, he need look no further than that example and his own Government's transport agency, Transport Scotland, which has shown no leadership in tackling that problem.

If the Government believes, as its motion says, that public transport should be a priority, as well as active travel, Mr Harvie will hopefully agree, in his closing comments, with my colleague Neil Bibby and will say that he now opposes the cuts to train services, the cuts to ticket offices, the massive hike in rail fares and the dismantling of our bus routes that we are seeing right across Scotland.

Let us all get behind the need to grow our investment in active travel to at least 10 per cent of the transport budget, but let us also unite behind ending the cuts to local councils, ending the cuts to rail and bus services and ensuring that we have an equitable share of infrastructure investment in active travel for every community, including the most deprived and rural communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Liam Kerr has a generous eight minutes.

16:41

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The key point in the debate was made right at the outset by Graham Simpson, when he said, in reference to the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights:

"He and I share the same ambitions on active travel".

It is clear from the Labour amendment—which we can support—that there is a broad consensus in this area.

A number of members talked about the benefits of active travel. Neil Bibby reminded us that physical inactivity contributes to nearly 2,500 deaths in Scotland each year. Sustrans says that regular walking or cycling can reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, and it can improve mental health and tackle asthma. Living Streets Scotland suggests—crucially, as we come out of the pandemic—that walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by up to 30 per cent.

If we are all persuaded of the case, people will wonder why, as Stephanie Callaghan put it, Scotland's walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure remains so poor and often dangerous. This is where I will diverge from the consensus. The Government's motion gives us the answer. As Carol Mochan said, the Government shows an incredible capacity for self-congratulation. Self-awareness and an acknowledgement of reality? Not so much.

While the minister and his motion proudly trumpet the investment in active travel, the motion fails to remind the Parliament that the Scottish Conservatives were the first to call for 10 per cent of the travel budget to go to active travel. It was in our manifesto. Paul McLennan spoke about the use of public transport and active travel, but he failed to point out that, between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of commuters using public transport or participating in active travel in Scotland actually fell. Jackie Dunbar described the drive to cut car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030, but she omitted to mention that the distance travelled by motor vehicles increased by 8 per cent between 2015 and 2020.

We have heard a great deal about cycling but strangely less about the promise that, by 2020, 10 per cent of everyday journeys would be made by bike—which, I guess, is not surprising when we consider that, at the current rate of progress, it will take nearly 300 years for the SNP to meet its target. Beatrice Wishart even suggested that there are fewer children cycling to school at the moment. We should remember that the minister lauded electric bikes. As Graham Simpson pointed out, however, there is no recharging network.

Only if we recognise the challenges and stop the spin can we seek solutions. Graham Simpson pointed out that the Government's motion wants to see a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030 but that it made that announcement without having the faintest idea of how to deliver it.

It is a Government that chases positive headlines. For example, it announced an access to bikes scheme but failed to hand out a single loan in the first three months of its operation, despite the scheme costing nearly £500,000. It promised free bikes to children, but, as Stephen Kerr a couple of times reminded us, it had given out fewer than 1,000 by the end of last month, at a cost of around £1 million, while failing to learn from the truly circular economy scheme that Brian Whittle flagged in his intervention. The motion talks about public transport and reducing private car trips being essential to cutting emissions, yet the Government fails to acknowledge that cutting 250 rail services and having a £640 million black hole in funding for decarbonising buses is not going to get us there.

A crucial point is made by Transform Scotland in its briefing, when it picks up on the motion's expression of hope that local authorities will deliver active travel. Transform Scotland says that that "is entirely inadequate", and on that point it is unquestionably correct. Look at the context in which the Government "hopes" that local authorities will achieve that. The motion lauds "significantly increased funding for local authorities",

yet COSLA says that £100 million was cut from local authorities' budgets this year. What was the minister's response to my intervention on that point? "COSLA is wrong."

It is a Government that hopes that local authorities can do that, and the minister's earlier intervention suggests that he wants to see local leadership; yet, as Sustrans puts it,

"Local authorities have been under significant budgetary pressure for two decades, leading to significant shortfalls in the numbers of council officers available to coordinate and deliver measures to support active travel."

Cycling UK agrees.

Graham Simpson: I can hear the minister chuntering where he is seated. Does Liam Kerr agree with me that the challenge is not so much about giving councils large amounts of money as about whether those councils have the resources to deliver once they have that money? A lot of councils have been hollowed out in terms of their staffing and they do not have specialists in this area.

Liam Kerr: I agree, and very strongly. That is exactly the point that Sustrans was seeking to make.

Cycling UK takes that point forward. In the submissions that it provided to us, it said that councils need to be able to see the direction of travel and to be able to plan their budgets over a long period of time—which, of course, they cannot do with the funding settlements that are coming from this Government.

It is not acceptable for the Government to just hope. The minister said that we need leadership. Well, it is long past time that this Government showed some, starting, perhaps, with the mapping exercise that Colin Smyth rightly called for in his contribution.

The final, crucial points that I want to pick up were made by Jeremy Balfour and, especially, Maggie Chapman. It is hugely important that we ensure, as our manifesto calls for, that active travel schemes are suitable for all, including buggy users, wheelchair users, older people and so on. I thought that Maggie Chapman laid out the issues particularly well. It was such a complete analysis that, instead of trying to summarise it, I will simply commend the *Official Report* of her contribution to members who did not hear it—it was a very good summary. Yes, Maggie—you will not hear me say that too often, I am sure, but I will on this point, certainly.

Jeremy Balfour said that schemes that are brought in must not exclude disabled people and those with visual impairments. He posed a question for the minister in his closing speech, which I will remind the minister of, just to make

sure that he picks it up. Jeremy Balfour asked how many disabled charities the minister has met to discuss active travel. I hope that the minister will cover that in his closing speech.

To sum up, I would like to return to comments that were made by Graham Simpson in opening the debate. He said:

“let us work together on this one area of policy where we agree.”

He is right. That means working also with the likes of Sustrans, Transform Scotland and Cycling UK, among others who submitted several excellent suggestions to guide us in the debate, as well as local organisations of the sort mentioned by Jackie Dunbar and Brian Whittle. However, it also means less of the spin, more acknowledgement of reality and more substance in the proposals and action—as Fiona Hyslop put it, “less grumbling and more action”. All of that is called for in the amendment in Mr Simpson’s name, which is why I shall vote for it at decision time tonight.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call the minister to wind up the debate. If you could take us to just before 5 o’clock, minister, I would be very grateful.

16:50

Patrick Harvie: I was very much hoping for a wholly positive debate, which was perhaps setting my expectations just a fraction too high. However, many members made very positive contributions. There were speeches that focused on the public health and climate imperative—our combined imperative to achieve a sustainable transport system, and the role of active travel within it. Paul McLennan and Carol Mochan placed great emphasis on that.

A number of members, including Stephanie Callaghan and Beatrice Wishart, commented on partnership with the third sector. In response to Beatrice Wishart’s comments, I would say that more than a third of a million children have been trained via bikeability since 2010, and we are committed to continuing to build on that positive track record.

The role of local leadership—not just by local authorities but at community level—was touched on by a number of members, including Brian Whittle, Paul McLennan and Jackie Dunbar. Fiona Hyslop set herself the aspiration of covering everything from the global to the hyper local in her speech. It was clear in everything that she said that her intention was to ask, “How can we make this better?” I wish that everybody had taken the same constructive approach to the issue.

I would contrast, as Liam Kerr did a moment ago, two speeches in particular. Those speeches

focused on the issue of inclusion and trying to ensure that our approach to active travel is inclusive, and respectful of the diversity of our society. Maggie Chapman’s speech and Jeremy Balfour’s speech both focused very clearly and, I am sure, equally sincerely on inclusion, but the contrast in tone between them was really clear to me. Maggie Chapman’s speech celebrated examples where inclusion is done well and constructively challenged us to do better, whereas Jeremy Balfour seemed to want policies, and indeed projects, to be scrapped. That was very much the tone that came across.

Jeremy Balfour: Will the minister give way?

Patrick Harvie: I will do so in a moment.

On one of Jeremy Balfour’s points, I have met the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, which was one of the Government’s main advisers on these issues. I know that other organisations such as The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association work very constructively with the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland and other organisations to try to ensure that our guidance and advice to local authorities respects the need to be inclusive.

However, the challenge must be that disability access and disability equality issues do not conflict with our approach to active travel. I know, from sadly-growing personal experience, because I have grudgingly come to know arthritis over the past few years—members will have seen me walking with a stick sometimes—that there are many people who are disabled for whom active travel, and using a bike, is a mobility aid. I have days when cycling is much easier than walking.

We also need to ensure that there is access to adaptive bikes and the wide range of bikes that can enable a great many people with different kinds of disabilities to travel actively. This must be about how we do both; we should not see the two issues as being in conflict with each other.

Jeremy Balfour: Does the minister understand that there is genuine anger in the disability community when things are imposed without any consultation, as has happened here in Edinburgh? How can the disability community be heard? It wants to play a constructive role, but it is simply not being listened to, or being asked its opinion. Can he suggest to me and other disabled people why councils do not engage before schemes are imposed?

Patrick Harvie: I have given an example of how The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, MACS and SCOTS work together with Sustrans to produce guidance. I value that kind of constructive contribution more than some of the wholly negative comments that have been made.

That brings me to the Conservative opening and closing speeches, some of which wholly lived down to my expectations. Graham Simpson clearly wrote his opening paragraphs bemoaning the lack of detail about funding and specific projects. Therefore, he must have been disappointed that my opening speech mentioned so many clear, specific examples—specific figures for funding increases and specific projects that we are working with. He said that he wanted us to develop national standards. He must not have been listening to my opening speech when I talked about the cycling by design guidance that has been updated. He wanted us to provide more money at local level. He must not have been listening when I talked about the additional funding, including the funding that is going directly to local councils to deliver the work.

Mr Simpson fully lived down to my expectations when he used part of his speech to yell “Wear a helmet!” at me. Like every other Government in the United Kingdom, the Scottish Government does not make wearing helmets mandatory because the evidence would not support that. Like every cyclist, I make a decision for myself about whether I wish to wear a helmet and, like every other cyclist, I have angry drivers yelling “Wear a helmet!” at me out of their windows when they should be paying attention to their responsibilities on the road. I deeply regret that Mr Simpson thinks that it is appropriate to bring that same energy into the chamber.

The Labour amendment brought some much more credible and substantive arguments into the debate. Mr Bibby knows that there are aspects of it that we cannot support, but he raised some significant issues, particularly on the motivation for what is being done. The climate and public health imperative was acknowledged and, indeed, Mr Bibby criticised some specific local projects but did so more constructively. However, one of the fundamental arguments that Labour is making is that none of the work can be done properly because we have an honest disagreement about wider local government funding.

The reality is that the leadership that is being shown on active travel at local level around the country is patchy. There are some great examples now. Glasgow is one. I would not have said that 10 years ago and might not have said it five years ago. I might well have been scathing about the level of respect that is given to active travel in Glasgow all those years ago but, now, very clearly and not only because of the support and funding that the Scottish Government gives but because the political will exists there at a local level, Glasgow not only has—

Liam Kerr: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Patrick Harvie: I will continue to engage with the Labour arguments for the time being.

Not only because of that support from the Scottish Government but because of political leadership at a local level, Glasgow City Council has invested in specific infrastructure and has a long-term plan to continue to do so. As she is not standing again in the coming election, I pay tribute to Anna Richardson for the work that she has done on that.

Liam Kerr: Will the minister give way?

Graham Simpson: Will the minister gave way?

Colin Smyth: Will the minister gave way?

Patrick Harvie: I have less than a minute left.

Over the coming year, we will engage in a transformation project in relation to the delivery model. There are substantive issues that we all need to grapple with, particularly on the role of local leadership.

Some members used the debate to unleash their inner Nigel Farage and call for cycle lanes to be ripped up or to condemn particular councils for not ripping them up or for building them in the first place. If we wanted to, the Scottish Government could simply allocate that £320 million by 2024-25 purely according to where we think the maximum benefit would be for transforming modal shift. That would not give a fair crack at the whip to every part of Scotland. We could simply split that funding up by local authority and we would not foster the kind of local leadership that we see from some local authorities but not others.

We need to respond to some of the constructive challenges that have been put by the Transform Scotland briefing. It is clear that Transform Scotland welcomes what we are doing and is constructively challenging us to go further. Rather than simply complaining that there are specific examples that people do not like in their own neighbourhood, that is the kind of engagement that will make the Scottish Government’s programme on delivering active travel better.

If we want to get it right and be a nation in which everybody, inclusively, can choose to travel actively and sees that as a first natural choice, we need to change a great deal about how we deliver active travel, and not just spend money. Every political party across the chamber has a responsibility to foster local leadership and ensure that we are advocating for making it better rather than railing against projects, as, I am afraid, too many have done in this debate.

Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of motion S6M-03612, in the name of Neil Gray, on a legislative consent motion on the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 18 June 2021, relating to culture and protection of cultural objects, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament and alter the executive competence of Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Neil Gray*]

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

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-03677, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill. I call George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees, for the purposes of its consideration at stage 1 of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, under Rule 9.6.3A of the Standing Orders, that the Parliament shall consider the general principles of the Bill on the third sitting day after publication of the lead committee report.—[*George Adam*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-03678, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/53) be approved.—[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S6M-03647, in the name of Ivan McKee, on the Subsidy Control Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, 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.

17:02

Meeting suspended.

17:05

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the division on motion S6M-03647, in the name of Ivan McKee. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is now closed.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (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)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (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)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (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)
 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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-03647, in the name of Ivan McKee, on the Subsidy Control Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, is: For 86, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the legislative consent memorandum lodged by the Scottish Government on 25 October 2021; agrees not to give consent to the Subsidy Control Bill, as recommended in the report by the Economy and Fair Work Committee of 9 February 2022, and calls on the UK Government to amend the Subsidy Control Bill to remove agriculture from its scope, to provide equivalent powers to ministers in devolved administrations to those proposed for UK ministers, and to make it a requirement for it to seek the consent of the Scottish Ministers if it plans legislation that would impinge on devolved areas, to properly respect devolved responsibilities.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-03650.3, in the name of Graham Simpson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-03650, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on delivering on active travel commitments, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

For

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

Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

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)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (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)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (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)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-03650.3, in the name of Graham Simpson, is: For 47, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-03650.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-03650, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on delivering on active travel commitments, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes, but my phone crashed.

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

For

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

Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (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)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (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)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (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)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 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-03650.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, is: For 49, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-03650, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on delivering on active travel commitments, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote has now closed.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (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)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (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)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (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)
 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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-03650, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on delivering on active travel commitments, is: For 86, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government's record investment in active travel in 2022-23, which includes new funding for footpaths, significantly increased funding for local authorities and more than doubling the funding to the National Cycle Network; recognises the unprecedented ambition of the Co-operation Agreement commitment to invest at least £320 million, or 10% of the transport budget, for active travel by 2024-25 as a means of improving health and wellbeing, enhancing the quality of neighbourhoods, promoting social inclusion and tackling the climate emergency; further welcomes the commitment by Police Scotland to take forward the National Dashcam Safety Portal Initiative; agrees that prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and reducing private car trips will be essential to cutting transport emissions and achieving Scotland's climate targets; acknowledges the leadership shown to date by local and community partners, and hopes that all future local authority administrations will recommit to this leadership and achieve rapid delivery of active travel schemes on the ground.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-03612, in the name of Neil Gray, on a legislative consent motion on the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 18 June 2021, relating to culture and protection of cultural objects, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament and alter the executive competence of Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-03678, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/53) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 17:15.

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