



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Monday 12 September 2022

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

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[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 17:49]

Two Minutes' Silence

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Your Majesties, members, law officers and distinguished guests, it is with great sorrow that we gather today to mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

On behalf of all members of the Scottish Parliament, I would like to convey our sincere condolences to Your Majesty, to the Queen Consort and to all members of the royal family, who are not only leading our national mourning, but grieving for a much loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. The thoughts of this Parliament and of the people of Scotland are with the royal family at this time of grief.

Although we meet today at this time of sadness, this moment provides us, too, with an opportunity to reflect on Her Majesty's remarkable life and, in particular, her bond with this Parliament.

We are reminded of Her Majesty's commitment to and affection for this Parliament every time we sit. On our establishment in 1999, Her Majesty kindly gifted the Parliament the beautiful mace that sits in the well of the chamber. The words that are inscribed on it—integrity, compassion, wisdom and justice—have guided and inspired us and will continue to do so. Those values were clearly reflected throughout Her Majesty's life.

Her Majesty described this Parliament as being rightly anchored in the history of Scotland, and spoke of the "grit", "determination", "humour" and "forthrightness" of the people. Those are qualities that occupied a personal place in her own, and her family's, affections.

Generations of people here in Scotland reciprocated that affection, and although today is a day of sadness, reflection and expression of our sincere sympathy, it is also a day to recognise and be thankful for Her Majesty's long reign, her service to this country and her friendship to this Parliament. For in her, we have indeed had a true friend and supporter, with us at every step, from our first opening ceremony in 1999, to the opening of each subsequent session, and on our important anniversaries too.

The pandemic meant that our opening ceremony last year was delayed from its usual summer date to October, and Covid meant that precautions were in place, but Her Majesty was

determined to join us and demonstrated the importance of her relationship with the Parliament and the people. We 129 members each invited a community representative—a local hero—to be a guest at that ceremony, in recognition of their selfless service to those in need during the pandemic. Her Majesty stopped and spoke with every single local hero waiting for her, asking about their contribution and thanking them sincerely for their efforts. Young and old, from the length and breadth of Scotland, their delight and pride at receiving Her Majesty's time and interest was abundantly clear. That was a true demonstration of the time that Queen Elizabeth invested in the relationship with the Parliament and the people.

In my role representing the Parliament, I was privileged to enjoy two private audiences with Her Majesty following my appointment in 2021, and I very much valued her insight and wise counsel.

So, while we mourn today with the royal family and with the people of Scotland and others far beyond, we also give thanks, as a nation and as a Parliament, for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Scots, for her extraordinary life and work.

Before inviting the First Minister to move the motion of condolence, I ask you to join me in two minutes' silence. Please stand as you are able.

Motion of Condolence

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

Today's business is consideration of a motion of condolence in the name of Nicola Sturgeon. I call Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, to speak to and move the motion of condolence.

17:55

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Your Majesties, Presiding Officer, members of Parliament and honoured guests, it is my solemn duty, and my honour, to move the motion of condolence on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. For people across our country, this is a time of profound sorrow. While the nation's grief is for our Queen, the royal family's is for their beloved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Today, on behalf of the Parliament and people of Scotland, I offer my heartfelt condolences to Your Majesties, and to the Duke of Rothesay, the Princess Royal, the Earls of Inverness and Forfar, and to all members of Her Majesty's wider family.

When Queen Victoria died in 1901, Arthur Balfour led tributes in the House of Commons. He commented that the grief of the country was in part because they were marking the end of an epoch,

"the beginning of which stretches beyond the memory ... of any individual whom I am now addressing".—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 25 January 1901; Vol 89, c 19-20.]

Those words are just as true for us today. Most of us do not remember life without the Queen. When, as Princess Elizabeth, she gave a radio broadcast from South Africa on her 21st birthday, she was addressing an empire that still included India. When she became monarch, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister. In an ever-changing and often turbulent world, Her Majesty has been our constant. She has been the anchor of our nation.

Our personal recollections are often intertwined with memories of her reign. I was nine years old when I first saw the Queen. She visited Irvine, my home town, in July 1979 to open the Magnum leisure centre. With my mum, I was one of hundreds lining the streets. By luck, we ended up close to her car as it passed by. Nine-year-old me was absolutely convinced that I had caught her eye. That nine-year-old could not have imagined, more than 35 years later, being in the front passenger seat of another car, this time with the Queen at the wheel, driving through the Balmoral estate.

In recent days, other leaders have shared stories from Balmoral, of barbecues cooked by Prince Philip as the Queen laid the table. These

are memories that I treasure, too—special times in what was clearly their happy place. I did, however, experience one rather tense moment at Balmoral. My husband and I were with the Queen before dinner when the drawing room light started to flicker. To my great alarm—he was, after all, in the presence of Her Majesty—my husband suddenly leaped up and darted across the floor. Peter had spotted the cause of the flickering light: one of the Queen's young corgis, a beautiful pup called Sandy, was eating through a lamp switch. Thankfully, tragedy was averted and Sandy emerged unscathed, though not before a stern ticking off from his mistress.

Just like all my predecessors as First Minister and all Prime Ministers, I deeply valued the time that I spent alone with the Queen. Her words of wisdom, counsel and humour will stay in my heart for the rest of my life.

However, the memory that I cherish most is not from Balmoral or from audiences at Holyrood. It is from 2015, when the Queen opened the Borders railway. I spent the journey from Edinburgh to Tweedbank with just her and Prince Philip, enjoying their recollections of times spent in Scotland. That would have been special on any day; that it was also the day when the Queen became our longest-reigning monarch, allowing me to observe closely how quietly reflective she was about that historic milestone, made it much more so. It was one of the great privileges of my life.

What was obvious then—and on every occasion when she graced us with her presence—was the Queen's genuine love of Scotland. Indeed, her first official visit was here in Scotland when she opened the Aberdeen sailors home in October 1944. In the decades since, the Queen has been intrinsic to the story of modern Scotland. From the opening of the Forties oil pipeline to the Forth bridge and, later, the Queensferry crossing, the Borders railway and the hosting of three Commonwealth games, she was present at so many of our iconic moments.

She was also a true and steadfast friend of this Parliament. On the day when we reconvened in 1999, she allowed the title "Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Scots" to be used. She also presented us with our treasured mace. Its words—wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity—describe values that were personified by the Queen throughout her entire life. Even as her health declined, Her Majesty inspired us with an unfaltering dedication to public service.

In his address on Friday, the King recalled his mother's words on her 21st birthday:

"my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service".

For 75 years, Queen Elizabeth more than fulfilled that vow. She performed her duties with dedication, wisdom and a profound sense of service. She set an exceptional example to all of us.

Our nation is in mourning today for a Queen whose loss we have not yet begun to come to terms with. We are deeply honoured by the presence today of His Majesty King Charles III and the Queen Consort. Your Majesty, we stand ready to support you as you continue your own life of service and as you build on the extraordinary legacy of your beloved mother, our Queen. Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Scots. We are grateful for her life. May she now rest in peace.

I move,

That the Parliament expresses its deepest regret and grief at the death of Her Majesty The Queen; conveys its sincere condolences to His Majesty The King and other members of the Royal Family in their bereavement; affirms the great affection and esteem in which Her Majesty was held, and expresses gratitude for her life of exceptional public service and her long and close association with Scotland and the Scottish people.

The Presiding Officer: I call Douglas Ross, the leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party.

18:02

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Your Majesties and Presiding Officer, the news from Balmoral on Thursday evening rocked us to the core. Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a constant presence in our lives throughout her 70-year reign. For many of us, it is difficult to imagine our country without her. The Queen seemed as permanent as the stones of Edinburgh castle—a constant while her country around her changed.

When Queen Elizabeth II became monarch, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister, and she was served in that role by 15 political leaders, offering them a wealth of wise counsel from her long experience—she was the Queen who lived through the great depression and the great recession, the second world war and the second Gulf war. The length of the Queen's reign meant that she was an anchor to our history, ensuring that, whatever the changes to our country and how we lived our lives, we retained an enduring link to the generations that had come before.

She was a living reminder of the sacrifices that were made to build the country and the world that we live in today. What other leader could have reassured the nation in the darkest days of the Covid pandemic by drawing on their memories of children being separated from families during the blitz? Time and time again, Her Majesty gave us

certainty, stability, joy and happiness when we needed it most.

That is why the scenes that we saw on the final journey from Balmoral to Holyrood palace yesterday surprised no one. From the heart of Aberdeenshire to our capital city, young and old came together to pay their respects. Scotland's unique tributes saw tractors and horses interspersed with members of the public, who came in their tens of thousands to line the route because, although she was monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, we know that the late Queen held Scotland close to her heart, and we held her to ours.

Today, we feel the pain of her loss so strongly with our new King and the entire royal family. As they grieve on a personal level, we join them in mourning as a nation.

In her final speech to this chamber, the late Queen said:

"It is often said that it is the people that make a place, and there are few places where this is truer than in Scotland".

We can see that the Queen shaped modern Scotland during her 70-year reign. We know that the bonds and ties to Scotland that were developed and strengthened by the late monarch will be continued by King Charles III.

You, Sir, became the first sovereign to accede to the throne while on Scottish soil in more than 400 years. You have already served Scotland with great dedication as Duke of Rothesay, Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland. I know that people across the country will show you the same support and devotion as they did to your late mother.

Today, we do not just commemorate the reign of our Queen but celebrate the life of a woman who many in Scotland knew and loved, and who dedicated her life to her country, to duty and to serving others.

On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I am proud to support the motion of condolence today, to thank Queen Elizabeth II for her long, loyal and dignified service, and to offer our full support and loyalty to our new King.

May Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II rest in glorious and eternal peace. From all of us, Sir, God save the King.

The Presiding Officer: I call Anas Sarwar, the leader of the Scottish Labour Party.

18:06

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Your Majesty, I offer my sincerest condolences on the passing of

your beloved mother, and my thoughts remain with you, the Queen Consort, your sons, your grandchildren and all the royal family at this time of deep sadness.

First and foremost, the Queen was a mother, and I cannot imagine the intense feeling of personal loss that you are experiencing while fulfilling your devotion to public service as our King. I hope that it gives you and your family much comfort that we are all grieving the passing of someone who was so special, cherished and loved by us all.

Her Majesty was a constant in our lives. Many saw her as family, and many saw their family in her. She reminded me of my grandmother—her walk, her demeanour and even the way that she held her handbag.

Her Majesty touched generations. Last Thursday night, I returned home to a crying six-year-old, who said that he was sad because he will never get to meet the Queen.

Queen Elizabeth II was a constant reminder of the need for kindness and compassion in our society. So often in our politics, both today and throughout history, we focus on what divides us. However, from the blitz to the pandemic, the Queen brought our nation together. She was the great unifier of our country. She brought joy at times of national pride, she brought comfort at times of national tragedy, and she brought light at our nation's darkest moments.

We will never forget how Her Majesty the Queen found the words during the pandemic to remind us all that we would meet our loved ones again. Those words were more poignant than ever following the passing of her husband, Prince Philip, your father, who now rests at peace with his beloved Lilibet.

We know how much she loved Scotland, and we loved her back. She reminded this Parliament that, despite our political disagreements and arguments, all of us here are in the service of the Scottish people.

Her Majesty the Queen's influence was felt far beyond these shores, with the people of the Commonwealth and other nations united in grief at this time.

Our world changed beyond recognition during her reign, but her dedication to duty, integrity, warmth and service to others never wavered. Politicians here and round the world will look on enviously—in 70 years of service as our head of state, she always seemed to say and do the right thing at the right time.

I am confident that, as we enter a new era, we will cherish Your Majesty's leadership, as well as your wisdom, compassion, integrity and justice—

timeless values that were passed down to you by your mother but also gifted to us on our Parliament's mace.

We wish you a long and happy reign. God save the King.

The Presiding Officer: I call Patrick Harvie, the co-leader of the Scottish Green Party.

18:09

The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie): The experience of loss is universal. It comes into all our lives. It is a reminder that the reality of human life is rooted not in status or in title, but in the connections that we make—bonds of love and friendship, of family and of service to one another. People of all views can respect that, whatever else we may disagree about, so, in this moment, as we mark the death of the Queen, I offer my party's sincere condolences to her son, all his family and all those whose lives she touched.

For many people, a monarch stands as a symbol of the country. If that is true, this moment is more than one of personal loss for those whom we stand with in their grief; it is also a time to reflect on the change that the Queen witnessed during such a long reign.

When Princess Elizabeth of York became Queen Elizabeth II, the UK was still early in its recovery from a brutal world war, and it had begun laying the foundations of something extraordinary: a welfare state and a national health service to tackle the giant evils of the age. Nearly three decades of declining inequality followed.

At the previous coronation, the oath still referred to other countries as the possessions of an empire, and, here at home, human rights and equality were distant ideas, with racist discrimination remaining legal and people treated as criminals and outcasts because of their sexuality. Now, we can look back and celebrate extraordinary progressive change, even as we must continue to defend what has been achieved.

There are those for whom the long reign of Elizabeth II and, indeed, the institution of monarchy represent continuity, stability and permanence, but, in truth, the tide of progress cannot be halted. It feels slow as we live it day by day, but, in time, it is dramatic.

As Charles III begins his reign, let us hope and, indeed, redouble our determination that he will have the opportunity to witness change just as transformational—and more. It is still needed.

The Presiding Officer: I call Alex Cole-Hamilton, the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

18:12

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Presiding Officer and Your Majesties, we do not choose the life to which we are born, and seldom do we shape the events that define our times. We can only hope to move through life with humility and close regard for those around us and to conduct ourselves in the time that we are given with compassion, kindness and grace.

The life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a towering example of all those qualities manifest in a single human being. She always kept a special place for Scotland in her heart, as she, in turn, found ample room in ours. Her passing leaves a profound absence across our family of nations, and these islands are united in our grief.

Her Majesty came of age in the crucible of war—in a period of gravest danger for our country. That fostered in her a deep commitment to reconciliation and peace, and a common understanding among nations, so evident in her commitment to the Commonwealth. That is why she told the listening world from Cape Town on the occasion of her 21st birthday broadcast that, although she was 6,000 miles away from the country of her birth, she was never far from home.

Hence the grief that we feel today is shared across the world. From the blitz to the pandemic, through times of tempest and times of calm, sustained, as always, by the Duke of Edinburgh—her beloved “strength and stay”—she was the embodiment of constancy and forbearance in the face of remarkable change. She sat with presidents and hospital patients, key workers and veterans. She leapt from helicopters and dined with bears. She earned the widespread affection that has been so visible in these days of mourning.

In one Christmas broadcast, Her Majesty said:

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love”.

Presiding Officer and Your Majesties, the measure of her example inspired so many of us to fulfil the promise of those words.

On behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, I express our deepest condolences to His Majesty the King and the royal family, and I affirm our allegiance to both. God save the King.

The Presiding Officer: I now invite His Majesty the King to respond to the motion of condolence.

18:14

His Majesty the King: Presiding Officer, First Minister, party leaders and members of the Scottish Parliament, I know that the Scottish Parliament and the people of Scotland share with me a profound sense of grief at the death of my beloved mother.

Through all the years of her reign, the Queen, like so many generations of our family before her, found in the hills of this land and in the hearts of its people a haven and a home.

My mother felt, as I do, the greatest admiration for the Scottish people, for their magnificent achievements and their indomitable spirit, and it was the greatest comfort for her to know, in turn, the true affection in which she was held. The knowledge of that deep and abiding bond must be, to us, a solace as we mourn the end of a life of incomparable service.

If I might paraphrase the words of the great Robert Burns, my dear mother was

“The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like”

hers,

“with virtue warm’d,
Few heads with knowledge so inform’d”.

While still very young, the Queen pledged herself to serve her country and her people and to maintain the principles of constitutional government. As we now mark with gratitude a promise most faithfully fulfilled, I am determined—with God’s help and with yours—to follow that inspiring example.

The title of Duke of Rothesay and the other Scottish titles that I have had the honour to carry for so long I now pass to my elder son, William, who I know will be as proud as I have been to bear the symbols of this ancient kingdom.

I take up my new duties with thankfulness for all that Scotland has given me, with resolve to seek always the welfare of our country and its people, and with whole-hearted trust in your good will and good counsel as we take forward that task together.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Your Majesty.

I now close this meeting of the Parliament.

Meeting closed at 18:17.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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