



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 26 September 2023

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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 26 September 2023*

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

## Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Helen Border, chairperson, Friends of Divine Mercy Scotland.

**Helen Border (Friends of Divine Mercy Scotland):** Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to share this time of reflection with you this afternoon.

When we took the mercy bus out on the streets of Scotland this year, it was so clear that there is such loneliness and heartache in our world today. I could speak about all the things that are going wrong in our society, but you know about that already. What I am going to speak about is love, hope and joy.

In Romans chapter 15, verse 7, St Paul tells us to

“Accept one another for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you.”

How hard it is sometimes for us to accept each other and to respect each other’s views. I ask you to look into your heart, and if there is anything you are holding against another person, please let it go and you will feel so much better. How can we expect the Lord to forgive us if we do not forgive each other? Forgiveness and mercy go hand in hand. The more we can forgive, the more we can offer mercy and love to others. What better way to show kindness and love than to smile at all we meet. A genuine smile from the heart can be so comforting to another person.

When visiting a shopping centre with the mercy bus, I offered a lady a miraculous medal and a Divine Mercy chaplet, and told her that the Lord loved her. She burst into tears and said, “That’s the kindest words that I’ve heard in years”. How sad it is that some people in our world are so upset, sad and lonely—and it is not just the elderly or isolated groups.

I do not have time to sing this to you, but, as the song says:

“Smile though your heart is aching ...  
If you smile through your fear and sorrow  
Smile and maybe tomorrow  
You’ll see the sun come shining through for you

Light up your face with gladness  
Hide every trace of sadness  
Although a tear may be ever so near

That’s the time you must keep on trying  
Smile, what’s the use of crying?  
You’ll find that life is still worthwhile  
If you just smile”.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## Topical Question Time

14:03

### Ovarian Cancer Treatment

**1. Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to recent reports that treatment for ovarian cancer is a postcode lottery and has left some women with no option but to pay for private healthcare. (S6T-01555)

**The Minister for Public Health and Women's Health (Jenni Minto):** Cancer quality performance indicator data that was published in May covering patients treated between October 2018 and September 2020 showed apparent variation in survival rates. Regional cancer networks have undertaken improvement work to reduce ovarian cancer surgery waits. The Scottish Government continues to monitor those activities and support progress in improving overall care for ovarian cancer patients.

The national health service continues to prioritise cancer care, and when there is an urgent suspicion of cancer, every effort is made to ensure that a patient is seen quickly, with median waiting times to treatment for those on our urgent pathways being four days.

**Carol Mochan:** I thank the minister for that answer, but I am dismayed to read the reports in the *Sunday Post* that clearly detail a two-tiered health system in which the wealthy can afford treatment and even those on average incomes have little choice but to spend most of their savings on surgery to keep them alive. If someone is poor, it seems as though their option is to hope against hope that they get surgery on the NHS before it is too late.

As we know, ovarian cancer is often detected very late and receiving treatment in a timely manner is imperative if patients are to have positive outcomes. Will the minister detail how that situation has come to pass, and what the Government will be doing for women who have had to spend so much money simply to save their own lives?

**Jenni Minto:** I read the same article that Carol Mochan referenced, and I absolutely understand the concern that is being caused. We have met clinical leads to understand current practice and how we can continue to improve outcomes. Improvement work has already started. The Scottish ovarian cancer clinic network has set out immediate and short-term actions, including increasing theatre capacity and mutual support between health boards.

**Carol Mochan:** It has been two years since the women's health plan was announced in an effort to tackle health inequality, but I put it to the minister that there has rarely been a time since the foundation of the NHS when it has been so dangerous to be a woman who is not well off in Scotland. Depending on where people live, the situation could be even worse. What immediate and urgent action will the Government take to stop the postcode lottery and restore confidence to people who are waiting for life-saving interventions?

**Jenni Minto:** As I outlined, we are doing immediate work with health boards. We should remember that the women's health plan is the first of its kind across the four nations of the United Kingdom. The start of the process was about creating the conditions for change and developing a sound foundation for ensuring that women's health needs will be considered in all future Government and NHS Scotland policies.

It is clear that the plan focuses on a specific set of objectives and priorities, which are based on evidence of inequalities and the improvements that women have told us are needed. I accept and recognise that ovarian cancer is not specifically mentioned in the current iteration of the plan. Future aims and priorities will be developed in collaboration with women and girls.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** The Scottish Government's new cancer strategy includes a clear focus on providing equitable access to treatment. Can the minister say any more about the work that the Government is undertaking to deliver that goal?

**Jenni Minto:** The Scottish Government has committed to providing health boards with £10.5 million by 2027 to improve the capacity of and access to systemic anti-cancer therapy. Last month, we published the monitoring and evaluation framework for the cancer strategy, which includes a commitment to evaluating the impact of our policy outcomes on health inequalities through the analysis of disaggregated and intersectional equality data whenever that is feasible. As I said, we are working with the Scottish cancer network to implement a national plan that will ensure that capacity and demand are aligned and that we establish a sustainable service model across Scotland.

### Degree Classifications

**2. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that students at Scottish universities receive their degree classifications. (S6T-01559)

**The Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans (Graeme Dey):** Following consultation with its membership, the University and College Union withdrew its marking and assessment boycott at universities across the United Kingdom, effective from 6 September. The impact of the boycott has varied across and within institutions. Now that the boycott has been withdrawn, it is my clear expectation that Scottish universities with backlogs work at pace to complete outstanding marking assessments in order to provide affected students with their final awards and degree classifications.

I take this opportunity to thank students who have been impacted for their resilience during what must have been an extremely difficult period for them. I also thank people across the sector who have worked hard to support those students and to put mitigations in place wherever possible.

**Liam Kerr:** The minister is right to thank students and those who support them. However, today, 1,670 students at Scottish universities await their degree, and 950 await a classification. As a result, job offers, further education offers and the joy of graduating have been lost. Does he agree that the underfunding of university teaching and research over many years is at the root of the situation? What does he propose to do about that?

**Graeme Dey:** Let me start with a point of agreement: the impact on students has been deeply regrettable.

During my 12 years as an MSP—let alone my time as a minister—I have never come across a sector that has been satisfied with its funding. Inevitably, we hear calls from across the chamber that more public money is the solution for everything, but, given that the Government finds itself in the most challenging of budget circumstances, it is not possible to deliver that. However, I point out gently to Mr Kerr that we continue to invest £2 billion a year in our colleges and universities and that our universities are undertaking much work to grow their income away from the principal public source.

**Liam Kerr:** The growing of income exposes the universities to a lot of international funding. Many of our universities are increasingly reliant on such funding and the marking situation could impact on the confidence of international students about coming here. What impact does the minister think such a reduction in international students could have on our universities' reputation and funding and how will he prepare for that?

**Graeme Dey:** The fantastic global reputation of our universities is such that I think it unlikely that the impact of the marking boycott that we have just had would be as Mr Kerr suggests. However, clearly, any impact on numbers of international

students would be an issue. Of course, he is right that, if such action became a feature going forward, there could be a reputational risk for the sector and the individual institutions concerned.

However, there is a willingness to reset relationships within the sector between institutions and the teaching staff so that they are more harmonious. There is an opportunity to do that and avoid such action happening again. Sitting right up there alongside the demand for a fair and affordable pay increase for lecturers—we should not forget the support staff as well—are the issues of insecure contracts and the gender pay gap. The principals to whom I speak tell me that they are up for addressing those issues. If we can make progress on them, we can go a long way towards bringing peace to the sector.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** The minister will be aware that there are still disputes in the sector and that, when challenged on such disputes, the Government blames university principals and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association. The minister is not a bystander or commentator; he is a minister. Ensuring that students in Scotland get the best education possible is his responsibility. Having degrees classified now and in the future is crucial for that. What is his plan to sort that out now and to ensure that the situation does not happen again?

**Graeme Dey:** It is absolutely the case that there is no direct role for ministers in the matter. Nevertheless, I have engaged with the union and the individual principals. As I just outlined, there are things happening behind the scenes that will get us into a better position not just so that we do not have a repeat of the situation but so that we have genuine harmony within the sector.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes topical questions. There will be a short pause while the front benches organise themselves.

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. By way of advisement, we are slightly earlier than the scheduled time for the commencement of the next debate and I understand that there are members who are still making their way to the chamber

**The Presiding Officer:** I am aware of that fact, Mr Whitfield. It is an opportune moment to remind members that almost every item of business in the Parliament is follow-on business and that all members should bear that in mind and ensure that they are available as required.

## Climate Emergency

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-10597, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action. I invite all members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

14:14

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition (Màiri McAllan):** The First Minister, representing Scotland to an international audience at New York climate week last week, set out very clearly how events at home and around the world this summer have been a stark reminder that climate change is not a far-off threat. The twin crises of climate change and the degradation of our natural world are affecting lives right now, and people are losing everything, up to and including their lives.

We have seen drought in Africa, wildfires in Europe and Canada, truly horrifying events in Hawaii and Libya, storm Freddy in Malawi and flooding in China, Pakistan, India and South Korea—the list goes on. Our thoughts and our heartfelt sympathies are with each and every person who has been affected. Of course, all that has been happening while biodiversity loss continues apace.

As the First Minister said, the global south has been

“paying the price for the impacts of climate change ... for decades.”

We were one of the first countries to declare a climate emergency, and our climate justice fund and funds for loss and damage are, right now, helping some of the poorest people in the global south to adapt and to prepare themselves against the impacts that cannot be adapted to.

At this critical juncture, all Governments need to ask themselves whether they are moving with the urgency that this crisis demands. The time for talking is over; what we need now is action. When times are challenging—as I absolutely admit that they are—Governments must not turn their backs; they must work harder, and that is what this Government will do.

In contrast, the Prime Minister’s decision last week to renege on the United Kingdom’s key net zero commitments is an unforgivable betrayal of future and current generations. The Climate Change Committee has been clear that action by the UK Government is interlinked with Scottish targets, just as action in Scotland is crucial to UK Government targets. Despite that, we were not consulted on last week’s announcement and, as

such, we will now require time to consider the very serious impacts that it is likely to have on our plans.

It is not just Governments that the Prime Minister has pulled the rug from beneath; it is the huge proportion of the public who, time and again in opinion polls, have expressed their concern about climate change, who want Governments to have plans that deal with it, and who are desperately crying out for climate leadership.

### **Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):**

In light of the Prime Minister’s announcement, is the cabinet secretary preparing to change the Scottish Government’s plans?

**Màiri McAllan:** Given that a week has not yet passed since plans of which we had no forewarning were announced, I am very much in the position of assessing their impact. That includes trying to get detail of what exactly the UK Government is planning to do. I will undertake that work before I look to see how that affects what Scotland will be doing.

### **Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Màiri McAllan:** I will make some progress now, but I will be happy to let Douglas Lumsden in later.

I have significant concerns about the lack of leadership and the risks that that poses to the once-in-a-generation opportunity to capitalise on Scotland’s renewable energy potential. If the UK Government takes us out of the global net zero race, the economic damage and lost opportunity will be catastrophic. Let us not forget that that is on top of the damage that the UK Government has already done, with a decade of austerity, the hardest of hard Brexits being pursued during a global pandemic and, of course, last year’s disastrous mini-budget, which people in this country are still suffering because of. It is all so familiar.

Preparing Scotland’s climate plan in the aftermath of the Tory U-turn last week is déjà vu from where we were last year, when we had to prepare the Scottish budget in the wake of Liz Truss’s reckless reign. Scotland deserves so much better than having to pick our way through policy disasters of the UK Tory party. After successive UK Governments—both Labour and Tory Governments—have squandered hundreds of billions of pounds of Scotland’s oil and gas revenues, investing only a fraction in Scotland, it seems that the UK Government is now intent on sabotaging our energy future.

**Douglas Lumsden:** I am trying to understand why the announcement last week made any difference to devolved matters such as

decarbonising buildings, which the Scottish Government should be getting on with already.

**Màiri McAllan:** Douglas Lumsden shows an incredible lack of understanding of how governance works in Scotland. I point him to funding, consequential, supply chains and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, which, of course, the Scottish Parliament rejected but which was foisted on us anyway. All those factors mean that the actions that the UK Government takes have a real implication for Scotland.

**John Swinney (Perthshire North) (SNP):** By way of illustration of the dilemma that Douglas Lumsden raised, does the cabinet secretary recall that, when the Conservatives argued against the deposit return scheme, they said that we in Scotland should wait for a United Kingdom scheme? Is it not clear from the statement that the Prime Minister made last week that there will be no United Kingdom Government scheme? Has Scotland been led up the garden path by the United Kingdom Prime Minister?

**Màiri McAllan:** The answer to Mr Swinney's observations is that, yet again, he is absolutely right.

With my colleagues in the Government, we are collectively responsible for rising to Scotland's climate ambitions, and I cannot pretend that they do not have an impact on us. As I said, we are now carefully considering the extent of that. The UK Government might be happy to turn its back on billions of pounds of investment in jobs, skills, research and development, but I want to put on the record today that Scotland's message to investors in a clean, green future is clear: we value them and welcome them, and we will do everything that we can to provide the stable, long-term and evidence-based environment in which they can flourish.

I hope that Parliament will agree that the Prime Minister must reconsider his ill-judged approach.

This week is Scotland's climate week. That initiative has been delivered annually by the Scottish Government since 2016 to celebrate action by national and local government, the public sector, businesses, communities, organisations, families and individuals. The focus this year will be on travel and heating, which are two of the areas in which change by individuals could collectively have the most impact and two of the areas that, ironically, the UK Prime Minister has reneged on in recent days.

I am looking forward to visiting and learning more about what is happening across Scotland, including with Keep Scotland Beautiful and Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust's heritage and climate action activities. I know that my colleagues across the Government are also

taking part, and I encourage members across the chamber to do likewise.

The theme of today's climate week debate is climate emergency: ambition and action. In the time that I have left, I will set out, with humility, what Scotland has delivered so far. I accept that we have not always met our climate targets but, in the past week, as we do all that we can and strain every sinew to deliver a just transition to net zero, it has been galling to have had to listen to some of the Conservatives, although some of them have seen sense and are not supporting Douglas Ross. It has been so hard to listen to some of them because Scotland has ambition, as is often rightly narrated, but we equally have action. I want to take us through that.

Our budgets have demonstrated our commitment. The 2023-24 budget alone includes more than £2.2 billion of investment. Under this Government, Scotland is becoming a renewables powerhouse. We have launched the world's largest floating offshore wind leasing round through ScotWind, which will deliver an initial £750 million in revenue. Beyond that, developers have committed to investing an average of £1.4 billion per project in Scotland, which equates to approximately £28 billion across the 20 projects.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Màiri McAllan:** I will take one more intervention. I must then make progress.

**Sarah Boyack:** I appreciate that, cabinet secretary.

Will the cabinet secretary commit to looking at green manufacturing? We have had opportunities at Burntisland Fabrications and Machrihanish lost, and we urgently need to see green manufacturing for our fantastic offshore wind, along with recycling and repurposing, being brought to Scotland. We are missing out on that opportunity.

**Màiri McAllan:** I agree with Sarah Boyack that green manufacturing is essential, and I am sure that much of the £28 billion investment in the supply chain will draw that out. We will certainly do everything that we can on that. Sarah Boyack is also right about recycling. I know that Renewable Parts and others are helping to lead that as an industry in and of itself.

In energy, we are also investing £100 million in renewable hydrogen projects during the current parliamentary session, and we have awarded an additional £15 million to support a hydrogen hub in Aberdeen.

In transport, since launching the young persons free bus pass in January last year—I see that the Tories are chatting among themselves; they might want to listen to some of what I am saying—we

have seen a new cardholder every minute. Along with similar schemes for older and disabled people, we are supporting more than a third of the population. With more than 3 million journeys every week, we are helping people to cut costs and make sustainable travel more attractive. In rail, the ScotRail peak fares removal pilot will make rail travel more affordable and accessible.

We know that poor air quality has a negative impact on the health of all of us. We also know that the very young, the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions are particularly vulnerable. The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to tackling air pollution, and our low-emission zones are one of the key ways in which we have done that. We have introduced them via just transition principles, with the previous provision of over £10 million through the LEZ support fund and a recent allocation of a further £5 million.

Scotland's LEZ taxi retrofit fund is the most generous per vehicle in the UK, and more than 300 taxis have taken up funding for retrofitting. I know that Labour keeps flip-flopping on low-emission zones, but I ask Labour members to reflect on why they think that it is appropriate to condemn the people of Glasgow to poor air quality in perpetuity.

We have record investment in active travel in the 2023-24 budget, with an allocation of £190 million, which we will invest in infrastructure projects, behaviour change initiatives and improving access to bikes—no doubt my colleague Patrick Harvie will wish to reflect on some of those points later.

We are investing at record levels in our natural world, with more than 75 per cent of all tree planting across the UK happening in Scotland.

I want to take a moment to look at heat in buildings. The Scottish Government already provides grants for clean heating systems at the level that the UK Government has increased to under its own scheme. Our home energy Scotland scheme provides higher grants for people in rural areas, as well as interest-free loans. By way of example, we have provided £37 million to the City of Edinburgh Council to help to deliver a major programme of energy efficiency improvements in Wester Hailes. Over the past two years, that funding has helped to upgrade more than 900 homes, both private and social rented, at a time when the UK Government is proposing to remove energy efficiency obligations on landlords. The new path to net zero by the Prime Minister's book is keeping tenants in cold, damp and draughty homes for longer, and that is unforgivable. We have always said that our ambitions in Scotland will need to consider the actions of the UK Government in that area. That, of course, includes

funding and the use of reserved powers. That is work that I am currently undertaking.

I want to take a moment to mention the just transition fund. We are not just talking the talk when it comes to our commitment to fairness; we are already acting through our £500 million 10-year just transition fund, which the UK Government has, regrettably, refused to match, but which I have had the real pleasure of being involved in with this portfolio, including on a visit last Friday to Aberdeen, where I saw how £5 million of that fund was invested in different projects that develop net zero skills in the north-east. There was so much enthusiasm for that work. That really was an antidote to the rather depressing backward steps that we were seeing displayed from the street outside number 10.

We are working with partners. I want to work with local authorities in particular on climate change, and our new partnership framework and climate intelligence service will help us to do that. I acknowledge the work of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee and its recommendations as regards a climate intelligence service, which is an excellent proposal that I will be glad to help to take forward.

We know that a just transition will require a truly national effort from all sectors of our economy, including significant private sector investment in net zero and climate resilience. The just transition plans that we have produced will help us to do that. I am receiving valuable feedback from our just transition plans and the discussion papers that have gone alongside them, and I will consider it my personal responsibility to ensure that fairness is at the heart of how we pursue net zero.

Unlike the UK Government, which, cynically, has presented its backward steps as somehow being in support of ordinary people—I find it hard to believe that that is the Prime Minister's primary objective—the Scottish Government will continue to get on with the challenging job of rising to what the climate emergency demands of us and doing that fairly. We will do that via the just transition commission and with others working across Scotland.

I encourage the UK Government to go back to the drawing board and join us in partnership on a four-nations basis. My colleagues in the Welsh Government and I will shortly write to the UK Government to ask it to respect the four nations of the UK, come together with us, and revise the approach to reaching net zero, because it is a collective mission in which we cannot fail.

I move,

That the Parliament reaffirms its commitment to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss; welcomes the action taken by people, communities,

workers, businesses and local and national government to take Scotland half way to net zero, but recognises that the hardest part of the journey lies ahead; acknowledges the necessity of ambition, leadership and consistency on that journey and that, given the limits of devolution, all nations of the UK must work in partnership to complete the journey; deeply regrets, therefore, the unilateral reversal of policies set out by the UK Government on 20 September 2023; urges the UK Government to listen to overwhelming feedback and rethink what is an unforgivable betrayal of current and future generations, and calls for a new, mutually respectful four-nations partnership in meeting one of the most significant challenges facing people and the planet in this century.

14:30

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Protecting the environment is a top priority for people up and down the UK, so it is crucial that we recognise the importance and understand the scale of the action that is needed on climate change. Central to that will be our journey to net zero and the tremendous amount of hard work that will be needed on our energy transition to get us there.

The debate on climate change has often been stuck between two extremes, but it is important to bring everyone with us as we forge ahead in achieving our net zero aims. At the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—we welcomed world leaders and industry to Glasgow to discuss that important matter. When the UK took on the COP26 presidency, only 30 per cent of the world was covered by net zero targets, but that figure is now at around 90 per cent.

The public want change; they want to do their bit to work towards net zero. Individuals and businesses are all thinking about the changes that can make their lives and businesses more sustainable. Governments should be working together to put in place the vision and ambition that is required. That is why our Prime Minister pledged again that the UK will be net zero by 2050.

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** I think that Douglas Lumsden will share my views that net zero is a huge opportunity for the Highlands and the north-east. However, last week, we heard multiple businesses say that moving the goalposts and reducing the ambition means that investment goes elsewhere. How does that serve our communities?

**Douglas Lumsden:** I will cover some of that in my speech. Yesterday, I was at Peterhead power station hearing about the carbon capture project. That is a huge investment and means lots of jobs for the north-east. That is exactly the investment that we are looking for and the UK Government is bringing to the table.

Governments should be working together to put in place the vision and ambition that is required.

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** Douglas Lumsden says repeatedly that Governments should be working together. The message that the UK Climate Change Committee gave us all—UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments—was that we needed to work together more effectively. We have tried that in the past and had the door closed in our faces. Just days after that meeting, the UK Government made its unilateral announcements, without any prior indication to us or the Welsh Government and without publishing any detail on them. Is that what working together looks like?

**Douglas Lumsden:** That is rather rich coming from Patrick Harvie. This Government so often forges ahead and does not involve anyone else.

The 2050 date is achievable in no small part because of the investment that we receive from the UK Government in our transition away from oil and gas towards renewables. The North Sea transition deal will invest up to £16 billion to reduce emissions and secure 40,000 vital jobs in the sector, yet that fund is often forgotten about by members of this Government.

As I said earlier, the Acorn carbon capture cluster project recently got the go-ahead, which is a huge boost for the north-east, with real investment in a project that will help us to meet our emissions targets while delivering jobs in the area.

I was up in Peterhead yesterday, as I said, learning more about how there could be a new power station in Peterhead that would send its carbon emissions to St Fergus to be stored deep underground. There would be no cliff edge and no switch to importing oil and gas from abroad, and it would support British business to provide British oil and gas to British businesses. Only the Scottish Conservatives understand the need for the oil and gas industry to be supported and for Government to work hand in hand with the industry to move towards net zero while protecting jobs and livelihoods in the north-east.

**Màiri McAllan:** If Douglas Lumsden is so sure that only the Scottish Conservatives understand how to approach net zero, how does he reconcile that with Save the Children calling the Prime Minister's decision

“a betrayal of children's futures”?

What does he say to Save the Children?

**Douglas Lumsden:** It is quite interesting that the cabinet secretary did not mention the businesses up in the north-east that see that this Government is turning its back on the oil and gas industry. We need that industry to make the

transition. If we kill off the oil and gas industry, there can be no transition.

Many of the people I speak to in the north-east would love to make the switch to an electric car but are concerned by the cost of replacing their current car and the lack of charging stations throughout the country. Scotland would be required to install 4,000 chargers per year to reach the Government's own target of 30,000 chargers by 2030. Latest reports note that Scotland currently has only 2,487 chargers and that charger accessibility falls further in rural areas. Quite simply, electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Scotland is a joke.

Last week, the Prime Minister brought us into line with the rest of Europe regarding the limits on the sale of petrol and diesel cars. That move was widely welcomed by many Scots, who want to do the right thing but also face pressure on their family budgets. I know that the SNP-Green focus is on the central belt, but many people in rural Scotland live off the gas grid and have oil-fired boilers. They would love to move away from that expensive fuel and on to a more renewable and eco-friendly solution, but the costs remain prohibitive and the technology does not yet match the conditions in which they live. More help will be required from this Government to find solutions for those older, off-grid properties.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** What about the United Kingdom Government's investment? The Treasury holds the purse strings and Douglas Lumsden is either being very naive or is ignoring the fact that Rishi Sunak's ripping up of climate change promises will have an impact on budgets here. Let us be truthful about the impact of that on Scotland as a whole and on our move towards net zero.

**Douglas Lumsden:** The promise of net zero by 2050 still remains and is a key promise. Once again, we are talking about the Scottish Government not getting its house in order and not putting its plans in place. This SNP-Green Government—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Please wait, Mr Lumsden. Members, please ensure that you treat other members with courtesy and respect and listen to whoever should be standing up and speaking, while they are doing so.

**Douglas Lumsden:** This SNP-Green Government, for all its climate credentials, seems to be completely forgetting the challenges that people in rural communities face when they heat their homes or travel by car to use services.

Throughout Scotland, we have seen rural bus services being withdrawn and councils unable to assist due to a lack of funding. School building plans have been scaled back due to the lack of a

reasonable funding model from the Scottish Government and garden waste uplifts have been stopped because councils cannot afford to do that any more.

People want to do the right thing, but the Government is failing them. There is a lack of funding, focus, support and ideas. This debate is titled "ambition and action", but this Government has failed on both counts. Of the 12 targets set by this devolved Government, eight have not been met. The oil and gas sector warns that jobs are at risk. There is a lack of funding for local government to increase recycling, improve public transport and build better buildings. The heat in buildings strategy is failing to meet its targets and Audit Scotland says that SNP climate governance arrangements lack some core elements. This SNP-Green Government is all talk and no action. It sets targets, has goals and strategies and hosts conferences, but it achieves very little.

The public want to do the right thing. They want to recycle more, use public transport, make their homes more efficient and work in smarter ways that reduce their impact on the environment and they want a Government that will work with them to achieve that. They do not want a Government that seeks to impose impossible targets, thought up by extremists. They do not want impossible or hugely expensive bans being imposed on households to meet unrealistic timescales, as happened in August when Patrick Harvie proposed downgrading the energy performance certificate rating of homes—a move that might have stopped people selling their homes in a few years' time.

Last week's announcements from the UK Prime Minister are a welcome step in recognising that Government, industry, families and households are all on a journey together. It is only by working together that we will achieve the aim of reaching net zero by 2045 in Scotland and in the rest of the UK by 2050. It is right that Scotland has ambitious plans and that we take action to achieve that ambition, but we cannot push forward without partnership. Simply imposing targets and sanctions will not achieve our goals. We need a realistic plan that people can buy into so that we can bring everyone with us.

The devolved Government's motion today predictably tries to knock the UK Government, so let us look at the UK's record. The UK has halved its carbon emissions since 1990 to only 1 per cent of the global emissions figure. We can compare that with the position of China, for example, which has seen its figure increase to 30 per cent of global emissions. Earlier this month, at the G20 leaders summit in New Delhi, the Prime Minister committed \$2 billion to the United Nations green climate fund—the single biggest commitment of

that kind that the UK has ever made. That fund was set up under the United Nations climate change negotiations to help to provide the finance that is needed by poorer countries to help them to reduce their carbon emissions, develop cleaner energy sources and adjust to a warming world.

In addition, the UK Government has committed £11.6 billion to its international climate finance programme from 2021 to 2026. I am encouraged by that programme. The UK is a world leader when it comes to tackling climate change and it is important that, as a country, we continue to take action to mitigate its effects at home and around the globe.

I am also encouraged that, by 2030, the UK is expected to produce enough offshore wind power to power every home, quadrupling how much we currently produce to 50GW and supporting up to 60,000 jobs. Oil and gas producers will contribute £20 billion-worth of investment to that by developing various offshore wind projects and investment that is equivalent to the building of 15 Queensferry crossings.

The public want to do their bit, so the devolved Government must really start being honest with them. It needs to be honest about when comprehensive electric charging infrastructure will be in place. It needs to be honest about where the £33 billion will come from to decarbonise our buildings. It needs to be honest about how someone in a tenement flat will heat their home when they cannot buy a gas boiler. It needs to be honest with local government about where the funding will come from for its decarbonisation projects. It needs to be honest with rail passengers about when Scotland's railway will be decarbonised.

The journey to net zero has to be made. On that we can all agree, but there will be an impact on people's lives and an impact on people's wallets. It is time for this devolved Government to have an honest conversation with the people of Scotland because, as our Prime Minister said, we

"don't reach net zero simply by wishing it."

I move amendment S6M-10597.1, to leave out from "ambition" to end and insert:

"practical consideration, international co-operation, fairness to consumers and consistent achievement of targets to realistically fulfil net zero and biodiversity ambitions; recognises that policies aimed at reaching net zero goals must be affordable and should not impose expensive costs on households and businesses; welcomes, therefore, the new net zero policy announcements from the UK Government, which provide extensive household upgrade support with more scope for consumer freedom, bring the UK petrol and diesel car sales timelines in line with the European Union's and demonstrate a commitment to realistic achievement of ambitious environmental goals without alienating households, and deeply regrets the Scottish Government's hostility to these announcements,

which only makes tackling climate change and biodiversity loss a more divisive issue."

14:42

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I welcome today's debate. We agree with the Scottish Government's motion that we need "ambition, leadership and consistency", but we also need investment, not just from Governments but from businesses, too.

The Tory roll-back last week came from nowhere and it was incredibly badly timed given the global climate talks that were on-going. It has rightly been condemned by businesses that had invested on the basis of targets that have now been unceremoniously dumped. It has also been condemned by environmental campaigners—some of whom are Conservative MPs—who know that it is the wrong message to send to other countries and that it undermines the political commitment that we all need to agree to.

The climate crisis is a now issue and not something to address in a decade. It will be too late then. As the cabinet secretary said in her opening remarks, we are already seeing communities across the world being devastated. Even in Scotland, there have been unprecedented levels of forest fires and more land and communities are vulnerable to flooding.

However, notwithstanding the warm words in the Scottish Government's motion, it has also failed to deliver. It is not enough to talk the talk. We also have to walk the walk, which, critically, requires joined-up thinking, co-ordination and investment. The Scottish Government's motion does not acknowledge its failures to date or the missed opportunities. It fails to reference the insufficient progress on homes and buildings, transport, and land, all of which have been mentioned by the UK Climate Change Committee.

Crucially, the motion also underplays the significant powers that the Scottish Government already has but which it is simply not using. I agree that we need our Governments to work together, but it is not just about the UK and Scottish Governments. We also need our local councils to be central to the action. They need to be empowered and funded to enable them to do the key work in our communities to support our constituents and businesses and deliver the just transition that we need in every community in Scotland.

We need more joined-up thinking—

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

**Sarah Boyack:** Briefly.

**Brian Whittle:** I am grateful to the member for giving way. I was at a business meeting this morning and one of the key messages that came across was that just transition has to be demand led. Does she agree that the Scottish Government has got this the wrong way round and that we need to create the marketplace so that business can service that marketplace?

**Sarah Boyack:** I agree that we need to create the marketplace. That is a role for Government, and both the UK and Scottish Governments should be leading on it. That means using procurement, influencing supply chains and giving confidence to the EV sector in the UK, for example. We can also do much more in Scotland. It is critical that Government and business work in partnership.

**John Swinney:** Will Sarah Boyack take an intervention?

**Sarah Boyack:** No, as I have just taken one.

We need action on key issues now. For example, the reduction in hundreds of bus services has cut people off from access to jobs and vital services. We also have horrendous levels of fuel poverty. An estimated 38 per cent of our households live in fuel poverty. Today, the Fraser of Allander Institute has published research that highlights that the Scottish Government has not included in the analysis on the impact of the transition to net zero the need for action to tackle the situation of low-income workers, who must not lose their jobs—that is not acceptable. We need to raise salaries, create jobs and have a fully joined-up just transition.

Scottish Labour has been constructive in the Parliament. We have worked with local authorities to deliver benefits to our constituents. My colleague Alex Rowley has been promoting the need for Passivhaus standards in all new-build housing, which are essential to lowering people's fuel bills. That builds on the amendment that I secured in the passage of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to require all new homes to include some form of renewable energy.

Twenty years ago, the then Labour Aberdeen City Council was ahead of the game when it established Aberdeen Heat & Power which, today, delivers affordable heat to more than 50 tower blocks. The Edinburgh Community Solar Co-Operative delivers solar panels across schools and council buildings. This summer, I saw the partnership work that has been done in Clydebank to deliver a low-carbon heat network that will lower bills.

We need more of all sorts of such initiatives, across every local authority in Scotland. That needs support, funding for our councils and investment for them directly to share best practice.

When we amended the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, we made sure to give the councils powers to increase the number of bus services to serve our constituents. However, disappointingly, that has not happened; the SNP Government has not yet delivered on it.

My proposed wellbeing and sustainable development commissioner bill, backed up by legal definitions and public duties, would give us co-ordinated action and work to support the heavy lifting across Government to get innovation and the better use of procurement. We need to make progress now.

Insulation is a key issue, and it is unacceptable that the Scottish Government failed to deliver the £133 million that it budgeted last year to retrofit people's homes.

**Màiri McAllan:** Will the member give way?

**Patrick Harvie** *rose*—

**Sarah Boyack:** No, I will not take an intervention. I have spoken to the small businesses, which said that they did not get support from the Scottish Government. We do not have businesses across the whole country. We need capacity now.

We would do so much more if we were in government. We would work on our green prosperity plan and implement our local power plan. We would establish Great British Energy in Scotland and give the communities the support that they need now to access local energy production.

We need leadership, certainty and commitment to maximise the benefits of the next generation of renewables and to support the oil and gas sector to transition. Crucially, we need to deliver a circular economy, not just talk about it. We need certainty. Supply chains, green investment and green manufacturing need to be developed now. Businesses need that confidence so that nobody loses out and new jobs are created right across our communities.

Real action is required now. We need ambition, not excuses, from the Scottish Government. We need to use the powers of the Parliament to the max, to work with the UK Parliament—and I hope that we will get a UK Government that will work with us in supporting our councils to deliver. We need that change now. Right across the world, climate change is not an issue for the future. It is a crisis now, and we need to address it.

I move, as an amendment to motion S6M-10597, to insert at end:

“; acknowledges that setting ambitious targets is only part of the job, and that action must be taken to meet those targets; believes that the Scottish Government is not utilising all the powers that it already has to the benefit of

tackling the climate crisis, and regrets, therefore, the Scottish Government repeatedly missing its own targets and underspending in its climate and net zero budgets.”

**The Presiding Officer:** Members will be interested to know that there is time in hand. I call Beatrice Wishart to speak to and move amendment S5M-10597.2.

14:48

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** There is no doubt that we are in a climate emergency, and that we must all work together. At the beginning of the debate, I was struck by the fact that young people are sitting in the public gallery. That is a strong indication of how important it is that we all work together to make progress.

My amendment calls for an emergency national insulation programme, which would help us to cut household costs, reduce emissions and lower energy demand. At the moment, we lack a qualified workforce that has the skills and accreditation to realise that call and to support other energy efficiency measures. The Scottish Government must do more to ensure that there are enough skilled workers who are able to work across Scotland, including in rural and island areas, to help to decarbonise buildings.

Just as the Scottish Government motion calls for UK-wide co-operation, my amendment calls for better collaboration between the Scottish Government and local authorities. We need to reverse the continued underfunding of local authorities. Reporting in December 2022, the Climate Change Committee said that the lack of a co-ordinated approach and the lack of strong direction from the Scottish Government were holding back efforts to reduce emissions.

We can agree with Labour's motion, which presses the Scottish Government to take more action to ensure that our targets are met, but Scottish Liberal Democrats will not support the Conservative Party's amendment.

We must be ambitious and act swiftly to tackle the climate emergency and reverse biodiversity loss, which is why the UK Government's announcement last week was deeply disappointing. The UK Government claimed that the purpose of the reversal is to reduce the burden of costs on households that are facing the cost of living crisis. I will say a little bit more about that shortly.

**John Swinney:** Does Beatrice Wishart consider that the approach that was taken by the Prime Minister last week was a good or bad example of intergovernmental working between the Administrations of the United Kingdom? I think that it has been agreed across the board that there

needs, at the heart of the debate, to be collaboration across Governments. Does Beatrice Wishart consider that last week's intervention from the Prime Minister helped or hindered the climate change journey?

**Beatrice Wishart:** I think that we can agree that his intervention did anything but help.

The Prime Minister pushed back the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in the UK from 2030 to 2035, despite his expectation that by 2030 the vast majority of cars will be electric because of improving technology. That is not leadership from Rishi Sunak. Nissan is filling the void by announcing that it will push harder to produce only electric vehicles by 2030. The Prime Minister risks putting the UK at the back of the queue, as the rest of the world races to embrace the industries of tomorrow.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Will the member give way?

**Beatrice Wishart:** No. I want to make some progress.

That is not the politics of long-term grown-up thinking; it is more about papering over the cracks of internal Conservative Party politics. As one of my Westminster colleagues put it,

“It is setting this country up for another round of absolute chaos that we cannot afford.”

UK politics is not the arena in which to play out internal Conservative Party disagreements, as we have seen continually since before the 2016 European Union referendum. Rather, it is a space to empower lives, to protect our environment and to plan for the future.

The Prime Minister made his announcement with the cost of living crisis being his main consideration. That cost of living crisis should not be downplayed. However, it is the Prime Minister's party that has contributed to inflation and price rises through creating more barriers to trade with the European Union and through the disaster of Truss's mini-budget last year. Households across Scotland and the UK have been severely impacted, and we have seen the resilience of the public through people making tough decisions for themselves and their families.

We have also seen increased installation of solar panels and consideration of new and more efficient technologies to replace old household items. The crisis is driving up innovation, and firm targets and deadlines for the car industry would have ensured certainty in the sector and for households about when it would be best for them to change from a carbon-emitting vehicle to an electric one.

There is more that the Scottish Government can do with the powers that it has. The Scottish

Government was already failing to meet its climate targets, and the Prime Minister's decision has certainly made that task more difficult. Local communities want to cut emissions and to do what is best for our environment. Our councils should be best equipped to realise that.

I move amendment S6M-10597, to insert at end:

“; believes that the Scottish Government must launch an emergency national insulation programme to reduce emissions and help households with the cost of living crisis; agrees that, just as collaboration with the UK Government and other devolved governments is required, far greater partnership is also essential between the Scottish Government and local authorities, in light of the Climate Change Committee reporting in December 2022 regarding a lack of a coordinated approach, local powers and funding, and believes that continued systematic underfunding of local authorities will hold back their efforts to reduce emissions.”

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate.

14:53

**Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** In preparation for today's debate, I spoke to my children. After all, the world—and all its fragile beauty—is what our generation will pass on to the next. As elected representatives, we have a moral obligation to do our utmost to ensure that the world that we pass on to them is peaceful, inclusive, healthy and full of life. I would like to think that my parents and grandparents had that wish for us, too, with the knowledge that they had in their time. It is an obligation that we should all take extremely seriously, with the science and knowledge that we have today.

I asked my children what inaction on climate change means to them. The consensus was quite clear: there is distrust of politicians—should I say that, given that they are my children?—and of businesses, when it comes to doing anything with the urgency that they sincerely feel, or with true intent to change the course of the climate disaster, which they will face to a much greater extent than we will. They do not have much hope that, overall, we have a grasp of the situation—they are my greatest critics. They are fearful, and they need assurances that we are doing all that we can.

However, like many people around the world—even some Conservative members—I was truly dispirited by the Prime Minister's statement last week. His betrayal of the current generations of my children and grandchildren, and of generations to come, is truly unforgivable. He should hang his head in shame, as should anyone who dares to defend the indefensible or who stays silent when our climate and environment are crying out for help.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Does Karen Adam feel that the Scottish Government is betraying our children, given that it is not meeting any of the targets that it has set itself?

**Karen Adam:** The cabinet secretary clearly set out at the beginning of her speech the targets that Douglas Lumsden is asking about. The next part of my speech might be valuable to him.

Not every Scottish Conservative kept quiet in response to the Prime Minister's statement. It is not often that I say this, but Maurice Golden was right: the Prime Minister's decision last week was indeed

“a regressive move that isn't only damaging environmentally but economically and socially too. It drags net zero into the territory of culture wars.”

What a shame that the leader of the Scottish Tories cannot bring himself to say the same.

In the words of my son, who is in his 20s,

“it's extremely shortsighted and indicative of Tory politicians' inability to see past the end of their terms, they don't care about the consequences because, by the time they come around, they'll be long gone and have pocketed the gains already.”

The latest move is another glaring example of the Tories' lack of urgency in the fight for our planet. It took more than a decade for the UK Government finally to announce support for the Scottish Cluster's Acorn carbon capture project in my constituency. That came only after the project missed out on the track 1 funding back in 2021, which the Tories instead granted to two projects in the north of England—which was a purely political decision. We should make no mistake about it: along with Rishi Sunak's roll-back of climate objectives, that shows a clear pattern of behaviour, by virtue of his having thrown responsibilities to our planet under the bus for some cheap votes.

**Douglas Lumsden:** I thank Karen Adam for taking another intervention. Would she agree that the Scottish Government, which put £80 million into its budget for carbon capture but then took it out again, was, by removing that funding, showing a complete disregard for the north-east of Scotland?

**Karen Adam:** Douglas Lumsden really likes to move the goalposts. I remind him of the fact that the Acorn project still does not have the green light—it has an amber light. If he were to meet Scottish Carbon Capture and Storage, he might realise that that is delaying our intention to capture carbon, which means that we are not competitive in the global market. It is not unlike the Tories to pull back Scotland.

During my two and a half years as a parliamentarian, I have taken a keen interest in

food security, both as a member of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs and Islands Committee and as a proud representative of a coastal and rural constituency, so I know about the essential roles that fisheries and agriculture play—not only in our economy and our culture, but in the availability and secure supply of sufficient safe and nutritious food. It is clear that the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss pose an undeniable threat to the security of our food and nutrition. Around the world, we are already witnessing slowing agricultural activity as a result of the effects of climate change. That, along with Russia's war in Ukraine, is stoking further food insecurity.

We do not need to tell our farmers and fishers any of that—they know at first hand the impact that those crises are having on the land and the sea. Their expertise and involvement have been, and will continue to be, vital as we deliver on our climate pledges. After all, food systems are responsible for up to a third of the global greenhouse gas emissions that are caused by humans, and are the leading cause of biodiversity loss.

I am grateful that the Scottish Government has a strategic vision, with provision of the right support and a commitment to bringing lived experience to the policy-making table. Without that, we risk driving more food insecurity. The climate emergency is the most serious challenge of our lifetimes; only by working with our fishers, farmers and crofters will we succeed in our ambitious efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

I am proud of the climate action efforts of the Scottish Government, led by the SNP. For decades, we have led the charge on demanding investment in carbon capture and storage in the north-east and further investment in renewables.

The essential role that my constituency and the wider north-east will play in achieving a just transition cannot be emphasised enough. With the carbon capture project and the Moray East and Moray West offshore wind farms, Banffshire and Buchan Coast is certainly punching above its weight in Scotland's efforts on industrial decarbonisation, renewables and carbon capture and storage.

I implore all members who are in the chamber today and all elected representatives across the UK to take our responsibility for climate action as seriously as they do the future of our children and grandchildren, whom we hold dear.

15:00

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I will start by speaking plainly. I do not agree with

the Prime Minister's decision to scale back net zero policies. If we are to succeed in limiting the damage that is caused by climate change, we must be ambitious and show the sort of ambition that was shown when the UK became the first major economy to set achieving net zero in law.

Seeing the pathway to that ambition watered down is deeply disappointing, but watching the First Minister launch hypocritical attacks on the UK Government is just as disappointing. He says that we need climate leaders, while seeming to ignore the fact that the SNP has missed its legal emissions targets in eight out of the past 12 years.

Let us look at the SNP's record on meeting targets. On biodiversity—fail. On peatland restoration—fail. On woodland creation—fail. On renewable heat—fail. On community and locally owned energy production—fail. On green jobs—fail. On cycling—fail. Humza Yousaf wants to be on the right side of history, but his party cannot even get on the right side of its own targets.

The missed targets are a symptom of a more fundamental failure to build a sustainable economy—a circular economy. According to the circularity gap report, Scotland's economy is just 1.3 per cent circular. That is not only far below the overall UK score of 7.4 per cent but the worst figure of any country that was surveyed. It means that almost 99 per cent of what we consume is from virgin resources. That is simply not sustainable, especially with a growing global middle class all clamouring for goods and services, not to mention the appalling conditions that workers, including children, often face around the world in extracting the resources that we use or, for that matter, the environmental damage that extraction can cause, such as deforestation, flooding and drought.

Adopting circular economy policies could cut our resource consumption by almost half and reduce our emissions by 43 per cent, according to the circularity gap report. As it happens, I delivered a lecture on the circular economy to postgraduate students at the University of Edinburgh today. Every student in that room understood the value that a circular economy would bring to Scotland. They got it, but the SNP Government does not. Its Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill is only now being introduced, 16 years after the SNP came to power, and it remains to be seen whether it will deliver the change that we need.

**Graham Simpson:** Does Maurice Golden have the confidence that he should be able to have in the bill? Will it deliver the changes that he wants to see?

**Maurice Golden:** It is a framework bill. We may consider how a cynic would look at the SNP's approach. In 2019, the SNP announced a circular

economy bill, then it delayed the bill, then it promised me in this chamber that the bill would be delivered by 2021, and then it worked out that it needed to hold another consultation. We are now in 2023 and we had still not seen the bill. Even then, it is a framework and an enabling bill. It strikes me that someone would employ such a policy direction only if they did not want to take any action on the circular economy.

**Patrick Harvie:** Will the member give way?

**Maurice Golden:** I need to make a little bit of progress, but I would be happy to give way later.

We all want to see recycling improve. It is ridiculous to think that ministers are still trying to meet their 2013 household recycling target a decade later. If they cannot do that, they can forget about net zero.

The issue is about more than just recycling; we also need to promote reuse. That is because recycled material ultimately goes into producing new products, which is a process that requires energy inputs, produces waste and creates new cost. In turn, that means emissions and environmental impact.

**Màiri McAllan:** On the subject of recycling, although I welcome Maurice Golden's condemnation of the Prime Minister's actions, will he extend that condemnation to the Prime Minister's seemingly ridiculous position of claiming to have scrapped a policy of seven recycling bins when it is not readily clear that there ever was such a policy? More importantly, will he be voting against his party at decision time?

**Maurice Golden:** I have actually got six recycling bins. I am very concerned about the framing of some of the bullet points in the social media clip that Màiri McAllan refers to—in fact, I used that clip this morning when I was talking to the circular economy students. It is deeply disappointing that the climate change debate is being framed in that manner because, during the previous session of Parliament, we had a consensus around climate change across parties and across the Government, and it would be worrying if that consensus were to break down.

On the point about which way I will be voting, I will let the cabinet secretary wait to see the decision time results come through rather than advise her in advance.

**John Swinney:** Will the member give way?

**Maurice Golden:** I need to make some progress.

Reuse requires better product and system design. Ultimately, the SNP and Greens might try to make excuses, but we can encourage research, support designers and identify emerging talent.

The circular economy design academy that I proposed six years ago would help to do that and, according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with the right policies, a circular economy could be worth up to £3 billion to Scotland and would help to re-energise industries and communities.

The bioeconomy is a great example of that: using anaerobic digestion, we could be providing businesses across Scotland with self-generated heat, fuel or feedstock for agriculture. On textiles, wool is a fantastic and sustainable natural resource, but the Scottish Government does not even know how much Scottish wool is used in textile manufacturing. That attitude needs to change. Supporting farmers to provide native fibres would help lower-impact textile manufacturing and would help to diversify rural economies.

Ministers could implement many of those policies right now if they wanted to. A great first step would be to embed the principles of the circular economy in their decision making across departments. If they did that, they might find that they finally had some success to report.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** I call Kevin Stewart, to be followed by Alex Rowley. You have a generous six minutes, Mr Stewart.

15:08

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Prime Minister's announcement last week that the Tory UK Government is set to rip up its climate change targets is not only unforgivable but is a complete betrayal of current and future generations. Instead of showing leadership on climate change like Humza Yousaf, Rishi Sunak is acting like a climate change denier—[*Interruption.*]

I hear laughter from the Tories. Mr Lumsden talked about honesty in his speech. The honest fact is that, by ripping up what few policies it had, there is no way that the UK is going to reach net zero, and I am afraid that that puts impediments in our path, too. Beatrice Wishart was absolutely spot on in her speech: Rishi Sunak's announcements were designed to pander to the Tory back benches, which are ridden with divisions at this moment in time, and to bolster the Tories' core vote, because they are obviously panicking about the next election. However, his announcements will do nothing to help future generations. I hope that Rishi Sunak has a change of heart, or he will go down in history as the worst Prime Minister ever, which would be very difficult, considering that he succeeded Liz Truss.

Scotland has made real progress on delivering on our climate pledges. Our country's greenhouse gas emissions are down dramatically against the 1990 baseline. Scotland is on the journey to reaching net zero emissions by 2045, but it is not an easy journey and the UK Government is trying to blow us off course with its recent announcements.

As it stands, the Scottish Government's climate change plan update contains nearly 150 policies and sets a pathway to meeting our ambitious emissions target over the period to 2032, including a 75 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Maurice Golden provided a list of failures by the Scottish Government. Those failures were happening long before Rishi Sunak made a statement last week. Does Kevin Stewart agree that the Scottish Government's failures are totally embarrassing?

**Kevin Stewart:** I say to Mr Lumsden that all members of this Parliament signed up to those very ambitious climate change targets. I recognise that we have not met some of those targets and must go further.

**Douglas Lumsden:** You are missing them.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Stewart, please resume your seat. There is plenty of time in hand in the debate, and members will be recompensed for taking interventions. That should underscore the need to avoid front-bench and back-bench members contributing from a sedentary position.

Please resume, Mr Stewart. You will be recompensed for that time.

**Kevin Stewart:** I agree that we must go further, but let us be honest—it was you who talked about honesty, Mr Lumsden. I am sorry, Presiding Officer—I should speak through the chair. In all honesty, all of Rishi Sunak's announcements make all of that much more difficult as we go forward.

Let us look at some of our achievements over the past while. In 2020, the equivalent of almost 100 per cent of Scotland's gross electricity consumption was generated from renewable resources. Since 2009, the Scottish Government has allocated more than £1 billion to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency. In my neck of the woods, the Scottish Government has put in place the just transition fund, which is a £500 million 10-year investment to support a fair transition to net zero and diversify the north-east economy. There is also the £75 million energy transition fund, which has committed more than £26 million to an energy transition zone in Aberdeen, £6.5 million of funding towards a global underwater hub, £16.7 million to the net zero

technology transition partnerships and £15.2 million of funding for the Aberdeen hydrogen hub.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I presume that Kevin Stewart also acknowledges and welcomes the £16 billion North Sea transition deal funded by the UK Government.

**Kevin Stewart:** The north-east of Scotland has been a cash cow for the Treasury for decades, but the UK Government has not invested enough in the north-east to allow for a just transition. I will come back to that as I progress.

We can deliver a just transition only if we have the resources that are required, and we cannot deliver a just transition if we are the last to do it. Once again, Scotland is being held back on not only its environmental ambitions but its economic ambitions.

Oil and gas will remain important for years to come, but we know—industry knows—that there needs to be dialogue, diversification and decarbonisation. Unfortunately, the Tories have done little on those issues, and on issues such as carbon capture, they have deferred, dithered and delayed, as they are now doing on climate change as a whole. That wrecks business confidence.

As for Labour, it seems to have forgotten all about the need for a just transition. It has been reported that it would block all new oil and gas development, which has been heavily criticised by workers and unions such as the GMB and Unite, given the impact on jobs. The former Labour leader of Aberdeen City Council and Lord Provost of Aberdeen, Barney Crockett, resigned from the party over its policy. He said:

"Margaret Thatcher never delivered a more brutal put-down of an industry than that delivered by Keir Starmer".

The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to a just transition and to ensuring that we take workers with us on our journey to net zero. That is why the Scottish Government is investing half a billion pounds to deliver that just transition, which both Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer have failed to commit to match.

For decades, the UK Treasury has milked the north-east of Scotland and successive UK Governments have squandered Scotland's oil and gas revenues. It is time for the Treasury to invest in that just transition, to support the diversification of supply chains and to ensure high-quality jobs for the future. I say to Jeremy Hunt and the UK Government: get your hands in your pooches and pay back the north-east of Scotland now.

15:16

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I begin by apologising to you, Presiding Officer, and

to the cabinet secretary for being late for the start of the debate.

Looking at the extreme weather events that have happened across the world over the past few years, I believed them to be evidence enough of the incredible impact that climate change is having on our environment, on our way of life and on the ability of people around the world to live safely in the places where they have lived all their lives. However, I think that I would be forgiven for questioning that belief when I heard the most recent announcement on the UK Government's approach to green policy, which appeared to be taken straight from the Truss manifesto for taking the United Kingdom backwards. Delays were announced on ending the sales of new petrol and diesel cars, on phasing out oil boilers, on rolling back requirements for rental properties to be energy efficient and on investing the levels of investment that we need to tackle climate change.

The bottom line is that the Prime Minister's speech was bad news for anyone in the UK who wants Government action on climate change. The Tory amendment today is a masterclass in deflection, accusing others of trying to stoke division on the issue when the main purpose of the UK Government's announcements is to do exactly that in a desperate attempt to avoid being comprehensively defeated at the next general election.

I agree with the cabinet secretary's characterisation of the Prime Minister's decision as

"an unforgivable betrayal of current and future generations",—[*Official Report*, 21 September 2023; c 99.]

and I, too, call on the UK Government to rethink its proposals.

As is outlined in an article on the Prime Minister's speech in Carbon Brief, the vast majority of cuts to carbon emissions so far have come from

"phasing out coal and scaling up gas and renewables in the power system."

That has meant that there has been a huge amount of progress in a relatively short time. However, to be clear, the hardest part of our journey to net zero still lies ahead. I believe that today's Labour amendment makes a fair point in that regard. We want both Governments to increase their actions with the powers that they have.

Two areas that we must focus on in the next phase of decarbonisation are transport and buildings, which are two of the highest-emitting sectors. We have the powers to do so—both Governments have the powers to do so. As Scottish Labour's transport spokesperson, and

having recently had my member's bill to increase building energy efficiency targets in line with Passivhaus standards adopted by the Scottish Government, I certainly have an interest in both areas.

It is clear from the statistics on the roll-out of electric vehicle infrastructure that there is still some way to go. We must ask ourselves whether we can do better. We must do better if we are to achieve the transition to electric vehicles that is needed to decarbonise transport on a grand scale.

**Kevin Stewart:** I agree that we need to do more, even though there are more charging points per head of population in Scotland than there are anywhere else other than London. Does Mr Rowley agree that Rishi Sunak's announcements last week are unlikely to lead to new investment in such infrastructure, because companies will be cautious about how they spend their resources?

**Alex Rowley:** Since the announcements, companies have certainly said that they will be far more cautious, and I agree that we need stability in future planning.

I am pleased that Mr Stewart agrees that we need to do more. For example, in my village of Kelty, there are zero public chargers for the almost 7,000 people who live there. Across Fife, there are only 160 vehicle chargers, of which only 26 are rapid chargers, for the 3,303 electric vehicles that are registered with people living in Fife. That is fewer than seven rapid chargers per 100,000 people, whereas there is a total of 705 electric vehicles per 100,000 people, so we must do more. I suggest that the Government can and must do better.

The Liberal Democrat amendment suggests that there should be greater partnership with local government. I agree, but such partnership should not be just with local councils. We need joined-up partnerships with employers and industry, with local communities leading on ensuring that infrastructure for electric vehicles is put in place.

However, our transport climate targets will not be met simply by replacing every vehicle in the driveway with an electric equivalent. We must do more to encourage the use of public transport, and we can do that only by ensuring that public transport is affordable, accessible and reliable.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Does Alex Rowley agree that it is important that councils, including Fife Council, use the new powers that are coming in relation to municipal ownership of bus companies and franchising in order to bring public transport into public ownership and under public control, and that the Government's recently announced community bus fund provides a mechanism for

councils to develop that vision and move towards that goal?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you the time back for both interventions, Mr Rowley.

**Alex Rowley:** Thank you.

I will come on to that point, but councils have been starved of cash over the past decade. Their budgets have been cut disproportionately, and councils' ability to use powers without any resources is very limited. We need to be realistic. If we want councils to have such powers, we need to provide resources and follow things through so that the powers become meaningful.

As I said, we must do more to encourage the use of public transport, and we can do that only by ensuring that public transport is affordable, accessible and reliable. The introduction of the bus pass for under-22s is a welcome move, as is the adoption of the recommendation of the rail unions to end peak fares, which are a tax on workers. Just as ScotRail has been brought under public control, we must now look at greater regulation and public control of the bus network across Scotland.

There has been progress, but much more must be done. The Scottish Government has rightly set ambitious targets to fight the climate crisis, but those targets mean very little if they are not achieved. As Al Gore put it recently, fossil fuel companies are

"far more effective at capturing politicians than they are at capturing emissions."

Judging by the UK Government's most recent actions, Mr Gore might well be correct. We cannot allow the UK Government's poor decisions to sway Scotland from our net zero goal. We must redouble our efforts to meet our rightly ambitious climate targets in order to secure the future that our planet and future generations need.

15:24

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** The challenge that climate change and biodiversity loss pose to our planet is immense, so I am pleased that the Parliament is debating that incredibly important issue. Climate change is not something that is coming down the line or will happen if we do not buck up our ideas; it is already here and is causing devastation across the world.

Scotland and, in particular, my constituents in Aberdeen Donside have benefited from employment in the oil and gas industry over the decades. We are a resource-rich nation and have all felt the benefits of that. However, now, we need to push forward a just transition and use the skills and expertise in the oil and gas sector to ensure

that we become the renewables capital of Europe or even the world.

The just aspect of the transition is important. It refers to ensuring that nobody is left behind as we move away from fossil fuels in the years to come. The key is that the folk in the north-east of Scotland who currently work in that industry will be essential in the shift to renewables. We need to unlock their potential. We have the potential; we just need to fully unlock it.

**Liam Kerr:** I do not disagree with what Jackie Dunbar said about the importance of the workforce in the north-east, but does she, like me, worry that, if we have a draft energy strategy that suggests that the North Sea might be shut down, we create a narrative that, as the North Sea declines, people will move away from the north-east and not be able to contribute to that just transition?

**Jackie Dunbar:** The oil and gas companies with which I have been in discussion are already transferring to renewables. They tell me to ask the Conservatives to stop talking them down. It is having an impact on their ability to attract young folk into their energy companies. The culture is changing.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jackie Dunbar:** I thank Mr Lumsden, but I am still trying to respond to Mr Kerr's intervention.

The culture is changing and it is only the Tories who will not change. That is what I am being told in my constituency.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jackie Dunbar:** I will take an intervention from Mr Lumsden. It does not look like I will get my speech done.

**Douglas Lumsden:** We talk about politicians talking the north-east down. What are Jackie Dunbar's thoughts on the headline that Humza Yousaf does not want Aberdeen to be the oil and gas capital any more?

**Jackie Dunbar:** Humza Yousaf wants the north-east to be the energy capital of Europe and the world.

I shall try again.

I have had the privilege of visiting a number of businesses in the oil and gas sector, as well as in the supply chain. They are all playing their part in the national journey to net zero. That work has started, but we need to act on climate change because it is already having a devastating impact on our day-to-day lives, economy, businesses and communities. The worst impact has yet to come. Climate change impacts our daily lives directly or

indirectly, whether we ignore it or not. We simply cannot spend years in a state of denial, waiting for the impacts to become so obvious that they cannot be ignored any longer.

If we, as a nation, are serious about tackling climate change and want to be seen as credible on the international stage, we must step up to the plate and take further action. We must take further action to prevent further damage to our planet. That is not just about doing something now to protect our future generations' futures; it is about everyone here and now taking responsibility for the actions that they perform day to day and the impact that they have on others. If we take responsibility for what we do now, we can change the future for not only our bairns but their bairns and their bairns efter that.

On that note, it is important to acknowledge all those who are playing a part in our journey to net zero, whether that is workers, businesses or local and national Government, and who have got us to where we are now—halfway to net zero, as is highlighted in the motion. However, we all have so much more to do.

Let us take a look at how climate change is affecting Scotland. Since 2000, Scotland has had nine of the 10 warmest years on record—that is nine out of 10 since records began. That is not something to be proud of; instead, it is extremely worrying. The future is likely to hold warmer and wetter summers, with more storms, flooding and periods of drought, and winters will be milder. That will have a devastating toll on industry.

According to a WWF study, in 2017-18, the impacts on the farming sector included sheep farmers suffering losses of approximately £45 million—the biggest losses among farmers that year—when the beast from the east hit during their lambing season. Beef producers saw a huge increase of approximately £28 million in the cost of feed as cattle were kept inside for longer during the bad weather and grass growth was low during the dry summer. Cereal crops were also significantly impacted, with total production and yields down in 2018 due to the poor weather conditions at key points in the growing season, at a cost to farmers of approximately £34 million. At a UK level, wholesale prices of staples such as carrots, lettuce and onions rose by up to 80 per cent.

Such extreme events are likely to become more frequent and severe as our climate continues to change. I do not need to spell it out that that will have a huge impact on the cost of living, with staple food products suddenly becoming too expensive for those who can least afford it. A difference of just a few degrees in winter temperatures has a devastating effect across the sectors and our services.

As I bring my remarks to a close, it is important to reflect on the devastating impact that the Prime Minister's U-turn will have on our net zero journey. The delay in the banning of fossil fuel cars by five years and the watering down of the phasing out of gas boilers will all impact on the 2050 target. What does that say to the world and to businesses that are looking to invest in the UK? It says that the UK Government is not credible and that it will not stick to its plans or targets, particularly when an election is looming. The Prime Minister has claimed that it is all to support those who are most affected by the cost of living crisis when, in reality, it was all just a ploy to provide assurances to climate-denying Tories that they will not have seven recycling bins, be taxed on meat products or— heaven forbid—be forced to car share. That is Westminster once again holding Scotland back.

15:32

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife (Green)):** This year's climate week marks a tipping point in the climate emergency, because 2023 is the year when the climate emergency arrived on the doorstep of so many communities across the world and when fire and flood have taken the lives and livelihoods of so many people. It has been impossible to ignore. This is the first year when I have looked at my own children and felt fearful for what the decades ahead will be like for them to actually live through.

We must also not forget the impact that climate change is having on the natural world. Increasing temperatures, extreme weather and invasive species are threatening ecosystems with collapse. This year has been one in which videos of climate protesters slowing cars have been watched alongside videos of cars being swept away by flash floods. We are at a tipping point in public consciousness, but it is also a dangerous time—a time when those who feel powerless or disbelieving can turn to dangerous conspiracies and denialism about climate and even about democracy itself.

We need honest leadership about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, free from the agendas of vested interests who wish to slow or reverse change. The reason why many people felt disillusioned by the Prime Minister's climate climbdown last week was because there was not a shred of honest leadership in that announcement. Standing at a plinth that read

"Long-term Decisions for a Brighter Future",

he announced short-term decisions that will destroy the future. He described the need for change, and for a second I almost felt quite hopeful, but then he cancelled or delayed the programmes that are delivering the change that is

necessary—the very policies that he was elected to deliver. Policies that had been extensively consulted on for years were cancelled or delayed. He then, incredibly, scrapped a range of policies, from compulsory car sharing to meat taxes, that do not even exist. It was a level of doublethink that has not been seen since “1984”.

The Government’s motion today rightly acknowledges that Scotland is halfway towards net zero, but the hardest part is still to come. Achieving net zero will need a level of political ambition, collaboration and leadership across the UK that we have not yet seen. There are genuine challenges, particularly as Governments look to scale up delivery in areas such as EV charging, peatland restoration and heat in buildings. Supply chains and finance need to be built up quickly.

The push of strong regulation needs to be matched with the pull of new markets. Opposition members are right to ask searching questions of ministers and the Government, but the quickest way to deter investment is to send the signal that a target, however stretching, can be summarily ditched.

Last week, Ford called for “ambition, commitment and consistency” from Government. Rishi Sunak did exactly the opposite. He lowered ambition, showed that his Government has no commitment, and created inconsistency and uncertainty. His announcement was bad for the planet and for the economic growth of key sectors that are critical for the transition to real zero.

It was not just the car industry. Vattenfall, the energy company, said that the announcement was a backwards step and that it damages supply chains at a time when skills for developing green heat need to be ramped up massively.

The Prime Minister’s comments on energy concerned me the most. Telling people that energy efficiency is an expensive luxury that they cannot afford is clearly absurd. The cheapest energy is the energy that we do not use.

**Sarah Boyack:** I have to agree with much of what Mark Ruskell has said today. On that point about energy efficiency, however, could he say how we ramp up the need to make energy efficiency a top priority? Before we do that, even shifting our fuel use will still be hugely expensive. Should that not be a top priority for the UK Government?

**Mark Ruskell:** It should be, and it is. The heat in buildings strategy will lay out how we can bring together energy efficiency with heat decarbonisation. However, it will take time to build up a supply chain that was decimated by the policies of the Tory Government 10 years ago. When David Cameron talked about cutting the “green crap”, he stripped out the investment from

that industry. People moved out of it completely and the supply chain was shut down. It is this Government that is now trying to build it back up to the point at which budgets can be spent and real change can start to happen.

Perhaps Rishi Sunak was thinking about the costs to private landlords of improving the efficiency of properties that they own but do not pay energy bills on. Housing is a human right and locking people into energy-inefficient, cold and unhealthy housing is a violation of those rights. His comments about the cost of heat pumps were alarmist. Householders will see cheaper costs as the supply chain develops, but many houses are ready for heat pumps today and Scottish Government grants are the most generous in the UK.

**Liam Kerr:** The cost of delivering the heat in buildings strategy has been estimated to be £33 billion, and that was approximately two years ago, so it will be more than that now. Of that, £1.8 billion will come from the Scottish Government, so where will the rest come from?

**Mark Ruskell:** I point Mr Kerr to where investment in our home energy and other energy systems comes from at the moment: it is a mixture of predominantly private finance, personal finance, and investment through mortgages and housing. It will also come through public finance. That is the blend of investment that will deliver the £33 billion. I agree that it is challenging and the Government has to face that challenge, but it will lay out that pathway.

Labour has said that it will not reverse Sunak’s weakening of targets for household heating, should it form the next UK Government. That would condemn another generation to growing up in fuel poverty. I warn Labour about not jumping on to false solutions, such as hydrogen for home heating, in an attempt to surf the waves of uncertainty that have been created by the Tories. Studies have shown that hydrogen would be two to three times more expensive than heat pumps, and it would not be ready for more than a decade. That would worsen fuel poverty and it is one of the reasons why the Scottish Government is focusing the deployment of hydrogen on hard-to-abate industries instead of homes.

**Sarah Boyack:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mark Ruskell:** Let me make some progress; I have already taken one intervention from the member.

The announcement by the Prime Minister will have serious ramifications for Scotland’s next climate change plan. The cabinet secretary is right to seek urgent, updated advice from the UK Climate Change Committee—I am sure that that

advice will be treated with respect, unlike the disgraceful way that senior UK Government ministers misinterpreted and then rubbished their own advisers' work in public over the past week.

We need that leadership and consistency from a next Westminster Government that works with the devolved Administrations to keep ambition high while supporting everybody through the transition, with all the challenges and opportunities that come with it. A genuine four-nations approach is needed to deliver what the cabinet secretary talked about at the beginning of the debate: a collective mission, with all Administrations coming together to work with the UK Climate Change Committee to find a pathway to real zero. The solutions are there—this is not rocket science—but only a lack of political will can hold us back.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I understand that a number of members were not present at the beginning of the debate. In such circumstances, it is expected that members offer an apology to the chair and to the chamber as a whole. With that, I call John Swinney.

15:41

**John Swinney (Perthshire North) (SNP):** After that introduction, Presiding Officer, I want to make it clear that I was here bang on 2 o'clock for the whole experience. I do not want any members to feel that I have been singled out for a reprimand, which, on this occasion, I do not merit, although I certainly do on other occasions.

It is the absolute core of the debate that there has to be deep understanding and acceptance of the gravity and seriousness of the threat that we face from climate change—Mr Ruskell made that point. For me, the comments by United Nations secretary general António Guterres on 27 July illustrated that point. He said:

"Humanity is in the hot seat ... According to the data released today, July has already seen the hottest three-week period ever recorded; the three hottest days on record; and the highest-ever ocean temperatures for this time of year. The consequences are clear and they are tragic: children swept away by monsoon rains; families running from the flames; workers collapsing in scorching heat. For vast parts of North America, Asia, Africa and Europe—it is a cruel summer. For the entire planet, it is a disaster. And for scientists, it is unequivocal—humans are to blame. All this is entirely consistent with predictions and repeated warnings. The only surprise is the speed of the change."

Those are the UN secretary general's words, which I put on the record because we—and the whole political debate in Scotland and the United Kingdom—are always in danger of being distracted by running off on tangents, with suggestions that an easier or quicker way to meet those challenges exists or that, perhaps, the

challenge is not as grave as it is. However, the challenge is very grave.

What has served Scotland very well over many years has been the unanimity of opinion that this crisis has to be confronted. I go back to the climate change legislation that was taken through Parliament in 2009—I remember Sarah Boyack pushing the Scottish Government to go further in that legislation, and, as a minority Government at that time, we had to go further to reach agreement with other political parties. The same sentiment lay at the heart of The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which everyone in Parliament supported with the exception of my colleagues and friends in the Scottish Green Party, who did not believe that it went far enough. We have been well served by that unity of purpose. However, it is fraying now. The Conservative amendment is deeply disappointing and frays that sentiment, because the Tories are choosing to stand behind the Prime Minister, who abruptly changed direction last week.

Why does a change in direction on this issue serve us ill? It serves us ill because we need policy certainty on such questions. Why has Scotland largely decarbonised our electricity networks within about 15 years? We have done so because of policy certainty, which was not created by—

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Will John Swinney give way?

**John Swinney:** I will, if Mr Carson allows me to develop my point.

That policy certainty was not created by the Government of which I had the privilege of being a member; it was initiated by our predecessors in the Labour-Liberal Scottish Executive coalition. Ministers and, might I say it, special advisers contributed formidably to creating the policy certainty that electricity had to be decarbonised, and, over the course of about 15 years, with the combination of policy certainty and vast private investment by our power companies, Scotland's energy has largely been decarbonised. That marriage of private and public activity—private investment and public policy—delivered through policy certainty, has given Scotland a great advantage on electricity decarbonisation.

**Finlay Carson:** On policy certainty, it is not long since Chris Stark of the Climate Change Committee said that Scotland's targets were

"in danger of becoming meaningless".

He has said that he is worried that we are seeing the collective impact of what we might call "magical thinking" by the Scottish Government.

We have heard lots of tit for tat, which he has also warned against. He said that we need to

“stop this nonsense of tit for tat, blaming the UK government for this and that. Get on with being ambitious—that is what the Act is there for.”

Does John Swinney agree?

**John Swinney:** I understand the point that Chris Stark was making. He wants the Scottish Government to get on with it and do more. I accept that. I am not going to stand here and say that everything is perfect. However, I am also not going to put myself in the ludicrous position that Mr Carson finds himself in. He is pressing me to do more on climate change, when his Prime Minister has just pulled the rug right out from underneath him and all his colleagues.

That brings me to my second necessity, which is common purpose. For those who study intergovernmental relations, last week was a classic example of what is wrong with the United Kingdom. All Administrations of the UK had been working in this space in quite a collaborative way, until last week, when, to suit the supposed electoral advantage of the Conservative and Unionist Party, the UK Government decided to make a volte-face. There had been no consultation with the Scottish Government, none with the Welsh Government and none with the mayor of London. Everybody has just been thrown asunder because the UK Prime Minister has decided that he knows better. There will be suffering as a result of that folly of decision making that the Prime Minister has undertaken.

I know that the Scottish Government gets attacked for not being co-operative and that that suits everybody's narratives—I was the butt of all those criticisms in the past. However, on this occasion, the UK Government has acted menacingly and unilaterally, and it will be the children of the developing countries of the world and our children who will suffer as a consequence.

In this Parliament, we need to recover some of the sentiment of the driving sense of achieving our climate change objectives. We need to spend a lot less time on the, frankly, pretty trivial political conflict stuff. I remember being told that the world would come to an end when the carrier bag charge was introduced in Scotland. However, what did people do? They did what my granny did in the 1960s: they went to the shops with a bag, they went to the shops the following day with a bag and they did not use plastic bags in supermarkets. Similarly, what a disgrace the nonsense about deposit return has been! This Parliament legislated for a perfectly good deposit return scheme, yet it was sabotaged by foolishness and menace from the UK Government. We need to move on from those things and to realise that the small incremental activities and actions that we

take will help towards achieving the big picture. However, we have to get on with it now.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Swinney. I can confirm that my earlier reprimand was not directed at you, although I am sure that it was a timely reminder in any event.

15:49

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** I am keen to focus my remarks on the experience, contribution and interests of communities across Scotland. Over the summer, when I, like many colleagues, was engaged on a tour of my constituency, one issue, above all others, dominated my meetings. That issue was the question of community empowerment in the context of moving to net zero.

In the Highlands, we are blessed with many of the resources, skills and communities that will make net zero a reality. We produce and generate renewable energy and in the 1950s and 1960s we pioneered much of the hydro power that still forms the bedrock of Scotland's success on renewable energy. We also have extensive peatlands and forests, both of which are essential in capturing carbon. Our communities and people have traditionally played a critical role in supporting the energy industry and our coastline is seeing much of the decommissioning activity that we need to move to net zero.

However, all that sits alongside another crisis—the crisis of depopulation. At the moment, the forecast is for a net loss of people over the same decades that will see us move to net zero on greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, we must ensure that the process of moving to net zero also deals with the depopulation crisis.

The way to do that is to ensure that communities are driving the policies to get to net zero and that the social, economic and environmental benefits of getting there remain within communities and are not offshored to shareholders. There is a palpable fear that the Highlands might disproportionately bear the burden of transitioning to net zero without having anything to show for it locally, but that is not inevitable.

**Finlay Carson:** In my constituency, the hands off our hills campaign has managed to attract 1,000 members in less than a week, in response to plans to build a huge wind farm right in the middle of one of our most scenic areas. Does the member agree that the new SNP-Green national planning framework 4 appears to give carte blanche to wind farm developers and to override the views of communities?

**Kate Forbes:** On the contrary, the national planning framework introduced new powers and rights for communities to ensure that development would be locally planned and delivered, which captures some of the principles that we must embed in our approach to a just transition.

**Patrick Harvie:** I am grateful for the opportunity to offer a counter suggestion to the intervention that we heard a moment ago. Does Kate Forbes agree that, if the UK Government, instead of making the announcement that it did, had come forward with detail about how it would break the artificial link between gas and electricity prices, that would mean that people here in Scotland, where we regenerate cheap, abundant, clean, green and renewable electricity, would see the benefit in their bills? Does she agree that that is one thing that we could do to build public support for more renewables?

**Kate Forbes:** I could not agree more. I was going to come to this: it is an absolute disgrace that the very communities and households who see, outside their front doors, the infrastructure that is carrying the bulk of electricity generation to the majority of consumers, are paying far too much for energy. Not only that, those people also know that their neighbour, a pensioner, cannot afford fuel; that the family next door cannot afford to put the heating on; and that the family down the street cannot afford to pay to use their car in the first place.

That is the disgraceful reality of the situation for households in rural Scotland. This is not a question of insufficient interest, or of a lack of investment in moving to renewables; it is about the fact that a just transition depends not only on the destination but on the process that is used to get there. The just transition must enshrine justice at its heart if we are to celebrate both reaching net zero and finding a sustainable future for our rural communities, particularly those in the Highlands.

I want to touch on two examples of where we need to ensure that the just transition reduces inequalities and does not exacerbate them, that it builds a sustainable economy and does not shrink it, and that it invests in the future of the Highlands and does not just exploit its resources.

We need to see greater progress on enshrining community empowerment when it comes to renewables. Although the Scottish Government has made great strides on land reform, we must remember that the advantage of land reform is that it puts communities in the driving seat and allows them to determine their future. If that is true for the natural asset of land, it is also true for the natural assets of wind, water and our coastline. We need to see greater progress on ensuring that all natural assets are in the hands of communities.

I use the example of Skye, where there is concern about the cumulative impact of multiple planning applications for wind farms that are owned by international corporates. We need to ensure that we see more of what is happening in the Western Isles, where it is communities that own the turbine, according to a community agreement, and where the sustainable income that is generated from that is reinvested in the community in order to boost the local economy. The same goes for the investment in upgrading the grid and the infrastructure. I have already commented on the fact that communities should retain the benefit of those investments.

If the destination is net zero for greenhouse gases, it must also mean net gain for communities. That will be the true success of a just transition.

15:56

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Deputy Presiding Officer, the rebuke that you delivered just before Mr Swinney spoke was obviously directed at me. I therefore find myself in the uncomfortable position of being in the same boat as Alex Rowley. Although I am sure that he will welcome me, I apologise to the chair and to the cabinet secretary, before she leaves the chamber, for being slightly late.

I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a farmer and a landlord.

I do not believe that anyone in the chamber denies that climate change is a real threat to our future. Reducing global warming is an absolute imperative, but to achieve the changes that we need we have to take the public with us. Hitting the public in the pocket and making the changes overly expensive is not helping. Overriding local decisions, be they on wind farms or electric lines, does not help either.

**Patrick Harvie:** Will the member give way?

**Edward Mountain:** I will in a minute.

I believe that making the public feel that they are leading the way and not being dragged by a Government is the way that we should do it. We should do it by encouragement, not by force.

I give way to Mr Harvie.

**Patrick Harvie:** I am grateful. I agree that we need to take the debate forward in a way that brings people with us. Does Edward Mountain think that the use of language such as "eco-zealots" and "extremists" helps to achieve that or undermines it?

**Edward Mountain:** I say to Mr Harvie that that is not language that I use and I am sure that it is not language that he would use, either. I am sure

that there are times—[*Interruption.*] I am sorry, but if Mr Harvie wants to interrupt again, he should get to his feet and ask for an intervention. He does not—okay. It is not language that I would use, so I am not even going to comment on it.

One thing that we need to get from the Scottish Government today is agreement that it will publish its climate change plan by Christmas, as it said it would. It should not delay it any further, because it will give us some direction. This Government makes lots of big announcements, including in areas that I possibly know quite a lot about such as the growing of trees and agriculture, but it is not delivering on them. In some areas, the Scottish Government has failed to have a plan. We have a plan on trees, but the Scottish Government has not reached the targets. When it comes to agriculture, we are still waiting for a plan, despite the Climate Change Committee saying that one should have been in place more than a year ago.

The Government needs to be careful.

**Mark Ruskell:** Will the member give way?

**Edward Mountain:** I will in a minute.

I say to the Government that leading the way comes with a risk, because cutting-edge technology is often not mature enough and needs to be further enhanced. Enhancement then needs replacement, which leads to additional cost. The questions that we are pondering in the committee that I am in are about electrification or use of hydrogen; solar power or wind power; and onshore or offshore wind farms. All those have to be put into the melting pot. I have come to the conclusion that all of them play a part, as do some of our other energy generation schemes such as nuclear power, which seem to have been discounted.

I will give way to Mr Ruskell if I can have some extra time, Presiding Officer.

**Mark Ruskell:** To go back to Edward Mountain's point about the climate change plan, we are less than three months away from Christmas. Does he really expect the UK Climate Change Committee to provide its in-depth analysis for the Scottish Government to work with in order to come up with a plan by December? Does he recognise the impossibility of that and the difficulty that we will have in the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee to scrutinise that as well as the UK Climate Change Committee's assessment of the Prime Minister's announcement last week?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will give Edward Mountain the time back for both interventions.

**Edward Mountain:** You can do an awful lot in three months, if you set your mind to it—trust me. Certainly, when I was a soldier, we did not often

have three months in which to make big decisions and get on with things. That is all that I am asking the Scottish Government to do.

I want to drill into a point that has been mentioned today—including by Mark Ruskell, I think—which is the issue of EPCs. We need to be honest with people. I speak not as a landlord but as somebody who wants heating costs in houses to be reduced. Do we really know what EPCs mean? Do we really know how those figures are come up with? We do not—because a survey is put into a computer.

Mr Harvie, you look perplexed. Let me explain it to you.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Speak through the chair, Mr Mountain.

**Edward Mountain:** I am sorry. I will speak through the chair, Presiding Officer.

The computer comes up with the figures. To insulate a property, the existing walls have to be taken off and reframed, and Kingspan insulation has to be put in, which means that the electric points have to be moved, which means that the radiators have to be moved. To insulate the floor, the floor has to be lifted, if possible—if there is space underneath.

When it comes to insulating the roof, many houses that predate 1950 have coombed ceilings, which means that the roof cannot be insulated without putting Kingspan in. That reduces the height of the ceilings, which might make rooms that cannot be lived in. New lighting has to be put in and, obviously, new windows and, let us be honest, those cost £1,000 a window, or perhaps £2,500 if it is a bay window. The boiler must be replaced, too, costing £7,500; probably, with all the pipework, the cost is closer to £10,000.

In my opinion, given some 15 years behind me as a surveyor, for most houses all that work is going to cost about £40,000. Where are we going to get that money from? Six thousand public sector houses in the Highland region have an EPC rating lower than C. Simple maths tells me that we would need £252 million to pay for them to get to EPC rating C.

That is not realistic. I am asking for a realistic assessment of how we can get there. It is fine to smile and to say, "Let's scrap fossil fuel boilers by 2032," but why throw away something that works? Why throw away something that delivers heat in a house, and which is probably cost effective, just to reach a target? Fergus Ewing, I think, said that it might not be just the boilers that get scrapped; it might be the Government, if it fights that policy through.

In summary, Presiding Officer, we need to come up with fair and equitable plans that give the public

the chance to own those plans. If they are given the chance to own a plan, they will take it forward. My real concern is that there is a cost to relying on being at the cutting edge of everything. That may mean that, in years to come, we have to repeat the whole process because that “cutting-edge” technology is no longer up to date.

16:04

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** It is almost inexplicable that there are still global warming deniers. Who better to quote, perhaps, than the Donald Trumps of the world? “The Donald” claimed:

“I listen to people talk about global warming that the ocean will rise in the next 300 years by 1/8th of an inch—and they talk about this is our problem ... The environmentalists talk about all this nonsense”.

Talking in another podcast interview about the figure of one eighth of an inch over 300 years, he said:

“When I see those people talking about global warming, I see that the ocean will rise by 1/100 of an inch over the next 350 years”.

He is not even consistent in his idiocy. Of course, he represents the Mad Maxes in society. The reality is that the federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has said that the global sea level is currently rising by about one eighth of an inch per year. In other words, the sea-level rise that Trump claimed will happen over 300 years is actually happening annually. I refer to John Swinney’s contribution in that regard.

We do not even need NOAA pronouncements. From the raging global fires, droughts and floods across the world, to the disappearing arctic ice, to the very weird seasons in my own tiny garden, global warming is here. It is accelerating and it is very scary. If it is not scary to people, it should be. It is time to put the foot on the metaphorical accelerator, not on the brakes.

Each nation, Government and community, and every one of us, has to do our bit. Governments must not backslide—least of all for short-term electoral gain—so, although others have addressed the matter, it makes me despair that global commitments can be cast aside so cheaply by Labour and the Tories.

Terms such as “net zero” and “zero emissions” are sometimes not understood. They become overworked and, therefore, undervalued, and familiarity can be guilty of breeding contempt. Folk hear about the need for all new cars to be electric within a timescale, and about the need for heat pumps, but when they look at the cost of the weekly shop and the cost of heating by conventional means, they understandably feel that

the urgency for those is not as great for them as their immediate financial urgencies. We must work with that, but we must also take the lead.

Let us start where differences can be made now. Let those differences be seen, while we work on the medium and longer terms, and let us take people with us.

I will focus first on planning law, the role of local authorities and their opportunities—which some have taken and some have missed. I will illustrate that with some examples. I was happy to attend a briefing on a new-build private scheme in Lauder. The homes will be energy efficient, but the heating systems will be gas boilers. Those homes are still to be built.

Across Midlothian, there is an eruption of new builds in the private and social sectors, but compliance with reducing carbon emissions is a mixed bag. In Penicuik, for example, the Scottish Government has supported a new-build development with over £3.9 million. That has enabled the Wheatley Group, working with Cala Homes, to deliver 57 high-quality energy-efficient affordable homes there. Of course, high-quality affordable housing helps to eradicate fuel poverty and homelessness, and ensures that everyone has access to green space and essential services, as well as contributing to a reduction in emissions. All those properties in Penicuik are energy efficient, having achieved a minimum EPC rating B, as well as having electrical vehicle charging points.

New builds in other private developments, such as one in Gorebridge, have solar panels, but others do not. None of them, to the best of my knowledge, have heat pumps. Some have electric charge points for vehicles and some do not. Those are relatively new builds.

Some of those planning consents with conditions will be years old, but why are planning departments not now including in consents mandatory carbon reduction, together with clean energy efficiency? If planning law needs to be amended to make those mandatory, let us examine that.

I will stay with housing. Aside from local government’s role, is there a role for mortgage companies and banks, as lenders? For example, there could be more favourable borrowing terms. If the house that is being purchased meets specific energy efficiency levels and reduces carbon emissions, that will help with not just the property’s current value, but its resale value.

**Patrick Harvie:** Christine Grahame has made some very important points. We are seeing some willingness in the financial services sector to innovate—to develop green mortgages and a range of other products under that umbrella term.

Does the member agree, however, that the measures that the UK Government has announced will again undermine investment by and the willingness of industry to innovate and put on the market financial products that will enable people to make those investments?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you the time back, Ms Grahame.

**Christine Grahame:** I agree with Patrick Harvie. I appreciate that the financial sector is a reserved matter, but I put that suggestion up for debate, because we must look at all agents in the system to see whether we can join the dots.

Transport is also key, as other members have mentioned. Some time ago, I had a to-and-fro with a developer because they had built houses without including simple things—for example, there was no bus shelter, so people were standing in the pouring rain in order to access the bus. The developers eventually included a shelter, but why was a simple thing like a bus shelter not part of the original development?

There is also the business of council developers liaising with bus companies about providing services. In Auchendinny in my constituency, where hundreds of houses are to be built, there is an opportunity to provide more than the current threadbare bus service. There is no point in people having concessionary bus passes if there is not a bus, but as I travel to my constituency I see many developments where the presumption, in building the estates, is for car travel, not bus travel.

I acknowledge that there are developments that are people friendly, in which there is no through road—no rat run—but there are safe roads for bicycling, instead. Let us see more building of cycle/walk paths in developments.

In the Borders—I congratulate the local councillors for this—cycle paths run along the Tweed from Peebles to Innerleithen, linking up with the Eddleston cycle footpath. That takes people away from a dangerous main road, especially at commuting times. We will have people using these routes if they are safe. They are good for local people, for tourists and for the environment. As another member said, it is not rocket science—more folks will get on their bikes.

Those are small incremental steps, but we need bigger steps. Unfortunately, however, Scotland, and this devolved Parliament and this Government, are caught up in the electoral vagaries of the Tories and Labour, as Rishi Sunak panders to the right in order to compensate for Sir Keir Starmer moving, in the footsteps of Tony Blair, into what was previously Tory electoral territory. Until we are independent, big steps are not ours to take.

16:12

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** As the world burned over the summer, our world leaders continued to fiddle. Instead of keeping the 1.5°C target alive, decisions that are being made around the globe mean that we are still heading for a devastating 2.7°C rise in temperatures.

However, as we lack climate leadership abroad, we lack such leadership from Governments here at home. It really was an understatement by the cabinet secretary when she said that the Government does not always meet its climate targets.

Every single independent report card from the Climate Change Committee to Audit Scotland shows that the Scottish Government's current plans will not deliver net zero by 2045, nor will they deliver the—arguably even more challenging—75 per cent reduction by 2030. The damning verdict of the Climate Change Committee in December was that progress on cutting emissions has “largely stalled”. The committee concluded that seven of 11 of our “increasingly at risk” legal targets were missed—targets that it said were

“in danger of becoming meaningless”.

**Patrick Harvie:** I am grateful to Colin Smyth for giving way, and I take very seriously the challenge that he has made. I am in this job so that I can contribute to a climate plan that is capable of getting us back. However, I hope that Colin Smith will recognise that, on the last target, the gap was the smallest it has been since 2011. We have been closing the gap and catching up to where we should be. We need to continue to do that, but the announcement last week will make our job 10 times harder.

**Colin Smyth:** I will come to the UK Government's announcement. However, if the Scottish Government recognises that we are not making the progress that we should make, why does the motion that it has lodged for debate fail even to acknowledge that? It talks merely about welcoming progress; it does not even acknowledge the fact that the Government has not met its own climate targets in eight of the past 12 years. That is not good enough, but it does not even merit a mention from the Government in its motion.

What concerns me most is that the more we miss our targets, the less likely it is that any transition will be a genuinely just transition. It is not enough for the cabinet secretary to say in the debate that the Government has a just transition fund—little of which has actually been allocated—because action to deliver a just transition needs to run through every single action of Government. We have not seen that in issues such as the

mishandling of highly protected marine areas and the deposit return scheme.

This year's climate change week asks us to focus on the areas that have the most impact. If we do that, we see the lack of a just transition. Let us take transport, which is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions—it is responsible for more than a third of them. This week, Labour mayor Andy Burnham brought bus services in Manchester under public control. That means that there will be proper regulation of the services, whose fares have also been capped. What a contrast that is to what happens in Scotland. Under the SNP, and now the Greens, bus fares have rocketed while services have been dismantled route by route. Since the SNP took power in 2007, 1,200 routes have been axed, including 160 in the past year alone.

Nearly four years since the Parliament passed the timid Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, the Scottish Government still has not properly implemented the powers that I secured in the bill by giving councils the resources that they need in order to deliver publicly owned local buses so that we can put passengers, not profits, first.

I support free travel for young people and I support an end to peak-time rail fares, but people cannot use a bus pass if there is no bus and they cannot pay a rail fare if there are no trains. It is not a just transition if we tell people to stop using their car but do not provide a public transport alternative.

What about the second-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases—agriculture, which is responsible for a fifth of emissions? It is not a just transition if, in the seven years since the referendum on the EU, all that farmers and crofters have had is dither and delay from the Government on future agricultural support, when they need detail and direction in order to properly plan and make changes that will bring down emissions.

The third biggest emitter is heating in our buildings. It is not a just transition to make people rip out their gas boilers or heating oil tanks and replace them with heat pumps at a big cost if the heat that they produce is flowing out through the walls and windows of their homes.

If we want to bring down energy use and the shameful levels of fuel poverty, we need a proper programme to insulate our homes. We need to learn from effective retrofit schemes across Europe, where a one-stop-shop approach is used to manage the installation process for the home owner—from access to information on options to getting quotes and engaging contractors.

Even when there has been progress—I recognise it—in reducing emissions, as in energy

production, the Government has failed to deliver a jobs-led just transition. We all remember Alex Salmond telling us in 2010 that Scotland would be “the Saudi Arabia of renewables”

and that we would have 130,000 green jobs by 2020. A decade on from 2010, fewer than a fifth of those jobs had been created.

Now the Scottish Government is leasing Scotland's sea beds on the cheap for offshore wind, almost entirely to overseas-owned firms, which means offshoring not just of Scotland's wind but of billions of pounds in profits and many of the jobs that flow from it. When Labour proposed a publicly owned energy firm that would be headquartered here in Scotland to invest in and generate energy, instead of backing the plan, the cabinet secretary dismissed it as

“a brass plaque on an office somewhere in Scotland”.—  
[*Official Report*, 7 September 2023; c 138.]

I have no doubt that the current failure to ensure our transition to net zero is one of the reasons why Rishi Sunak is trying to appeal to and exploit genuine fears. We should not dismiss them, but Rishi Sunak's abandonment of net zero commitments last week was not just bad for the environment; it was bad for jobs, household bills and energy security.

Leadership and large-scale investment in delivering our net zero targets would open up huge growth opportunities for British firms and innovators to create products and services to meet growing global demand. Backtracking on the phasing out of sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles will mean that, instead of having opportunities to move forward, British businesses will miss out on those opportunities. Green Alliance has calculated that phasing out diesel and petrol cars could deliver two thirds of the emissions cuts that we need over the coming decade. What a missed opportunity that is. I am pleased that the next Labour Government will reinstate the 2030 target and—crucially—will do so across the UK, because the market is UK wide.

We badly need new Governments that understand that net zero targets are not the barrier to economic growth but the very pathway to it. We need Governments that recognise that in the global race for the jobs of the future all roads lead to investing in making our energy cleaner and greener.

To be frank, I say that the next general election really cannot come soon enough.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The time in hand has pretty much been exhausted, so I encourage members to stick to the time limits. Ben Macpherson is the final speaker in the open debate.

16:19

**Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP):** First of all, I apologise to all the Presiding Officers, the chamber more widely and the cabinet secretary for my absence at the beginning of the debate.

All of my life, we have faced the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. However, in recent years, the seriousness of the global challenge has been even more evident. We can all see the need for us to save ourselves; in the shorter to medium term—the way that time passes—it is not our planet that is at risk but, in essence, it is ourselves. In order to save ourselves, so much action is required. For years, that need has compelled individual action—by me and many, many people around the world—as well as organisational activism and some corporate leadership. After decades of too much apathy and inaction from too many Governments in too many places in too many ways, it has been motivating and uplifting to see Governments taking more of the action that is needed.

That absolutely happened here in Scotland. There is hope, and we have helped to provide it through the 2009 act and many of the initiatives and investments that have stemmed from it. To be fair, we saw action at the Westminster level as well: David Cameron's Government's approach was a step change from the Conservative Party. We seemed to have a consensus that we needed to step up as a major player on the global stage.

Do not get me wrong: it is important to recognise, with humility and honesty, that Scotland alone cannot stop climate change. We need others in other places to play their parts, too. The UK cannot stop it either, but we can be, should be and have been leaders in all the different ways possible, and that must continue.

We may not meet the challenge as a global community, but people look to the UK to give them motivation, inspiration and innovation to do what they need to do, to retain hope, and to provoke action elsewhere. People look to the UK because our economy is one of the most advanced and biggest economies internationally and, historically, we have been the fifth-biggest emitter in the world. We have a responsibility from generations past because we started the burning of fossil fuels. We were the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

Scotland can make our contribution. We have done so already, not just in reducing emissions and making huge progress on that, but in developing new technologies, as Nova Innovation, which is a tidal development firm in my constituency, has done. We can collaborate with others, as we did at COP26 in Glasgow just a few years ago. We can do what we can to nurture and

restore nature and enhance our biodiversity, as we have done in the Forth estuary, which the cabinet secretary has marked in recent weeks. In time, we can start to take more carbon out of the atmosphere.

We have a particular advantage in Scotland, given our natural resources. We have huge opportunities. I pay tribute to everyone who has been part of that—local communities, individuals, businesses and workers. However, Government and law have been key, as have public finance investments and policy direction. They have helped to provide markets with incentives and the impetus to push social change and shifts in consciousness. That political direction, ambition and leadership, and the consistency of that on the journey, has been so important in obtaining the momentum that we have had.

What is so disappointing, out of touch and wrongheaded about the UK Government's announcements last week is that they will likely stall some of that progress by creating a wedge issue for electoral purposes. That sort of short-term thinking is everything that we do not need in tackling the challenge. It also dwells on the negatives when we should be focusing on the opportunities of the action that we need to take.

Whenever I receive letters from young people in my constituency, they are always about things to do with climate. They are convinced, so we need to match their expectations. Emphasising the local benefits of taking action on the climate emergency for our wider quality of life, as well as the need to reduce emissions, is important. Taking action will bring greater health benefits from less pollution for children and other people walking through our streets. Walking, cycling and wheeling will create greater opportunities for exercise. Eating less meat, fish and dairy products will mean a better and healthier diet for many people. Evidence that was produced by the University of Oxford in the summer suggests that that could have the impact of taking the equivalent of 8 million cars off the road in the UK.

Warmer homes will have a significant impact on costs, as will the action that is being taken to ensure that landlords meet expected standards in their dwellings. That will help people. I ask the minister in his summing up to touch on the challenges for tenement properties, because misinformation has been spread on those issues. That is a big issue in Edinburgh Northern and Leith, as it is for other members' constituencies. It would be great to have some clarity on those issues.

There are many opportunities. We often focus on the economic opportunities of net zero, but the social and health benefits cannot be overestimated or overemphasised. However, I

give a warning: we have missed opportunities in the past. The onshore wind farms that we put up in Scotland and across the UK were developed in Germany and Denmark. The UK had a comparative advantage in that technology, but it did not act on it. Now other countries are building those and benefiting from that employment.

Let us not lose those opportunities. Let us meet the challenge, and let us have a debate that is based on our shared collective interest. If we cannot meet the challenge of climate change, how will we deal with the potential challenges of adaptation? We must have courage, and we cannot dwell and wait.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** We move to winding-up speeches.

16:26

**Beatrice Wishart:** We can agree that there have been some excellent contributions in an interesting debate.

I agree with Sarah Boyack that setting targets is only the start of making change. For many years, the Scottish Government has missed its own targets.

Maurice Golden highlighted the 2013 recycling targets, as well as underspending in climate and net zero budgets. With greater collaboration with and greater funding to local authorities, communities could contribute more widely to cutting emissions and energy demand.

Sarah Boyack also mentioned the importance of offshore wind, renewable energy and the supply chain. There is a skilled workforce in the oil and gas sector that is ready to transition.

Karen Adam spoke about our moral obligation to future generations, and Jackie Dunbar and others reminded us that we all have to take action, individually and collectively.

Alex Rowley spoke about the investment that is needed to reach net zero, and he highlighted the work on the transition to high buildings standards, such as Passivhaus.

Mark Ruskell spoke about the honest leadership that is needed now more than ever, and he said that the hardest part of reaching net zero is yet to come.

I want to talk a little about my Shetland constituency, which is keen to do all that it can to help to tackle the climate emergency. It is at the centre of the energy-rich North Sea; it was ahead of its time with a district heating scheme over 20 years ago; and it is more than ready to play its part in a just transition. However, we have extremely high levels of fuel poverty.

Earlier in the debate, I stated that we need to be ambitious and act swiftly. As we have heard, transport is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Ferry emissions in Shetland raise our carbon footprint greatly compared with mainland-based local authority areas. Council-run interisland ferries contribute to emissions. The technology for more sustainable ferries using green power is developing, but procurement and construction will keep the fleet reliant on emitting ferries in the meantime.

Many people in Shetland share a vision of transformational change. Short subsea tunnels are the next step in the evolution of interisland transport. Unst and Yell tunnel action groups and other island communities are pressing for tunnels, which would help to reduce ferry emissions. Shetland Islands Council is working hard to secure support and funding for such projects from the Scottish Government and the UK Government, and interest is growing.

A reduction in emissions, a reversal of depopulation—Kate Forbes highlighted that issue—and connection to healthcare and cultural outlets would be of local and national advantage. Shetland punches above its weight in fishing and aquaculture export, and short subsea tunnels between islands would help to speed up distribution and cut emissions. We are talking about national infrastructure that would lower the contribution to national emissions.

There is another national opportunity there. Tunnel construction could become a new industry for Scotland that would help to cut emissions and travel times in other island and rural areas, not just in Shetland.

Councils ensure that power is at a close level to communities, and they must be adequately funded to realise the ambitions of the local people whom they serve. The adage “Think global, act local” springs to mind.

16:30

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I apologise to you, Presiding Officer, and to members for being late to the start of the debate.

Although there have been points of consensus in today’s debate, I find it hard to believe that, overall, it is anything more than an annual box-ticking exercise for the Scottish Government. I do not doubt the cabinet secretary’s concern about the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss—she has always spoken with passion on this subject—and today’s motion rightly calls out the UK Government’s unilateral reversal of its net zero policies.

Yet where is the acknowledgement of the Scottish Government's mistakes, the missed targets, the underspends and the reckless pursuit of private finance initiatives? That is the crux of the problem with this Government—not its targets but its submission to vested interests. Crises of the scale that we are facing require Government-backed, industrial-scale change of the kind that this Government has repeatedly covered away from.

Take the Scottish Government's approach to funding nature restoration. Last week, Parliament heard how the Government consistently promoted the use of private finance initiatives that are based on an uncritical acceptance of the so-called funding gap identified by the banker-led Green Finance Institute, an organisation whose credibility is now under significant doubt. Rather than hearing the Government acknowledge that the way in which it accepted those now discredited figures was irresponsible, Parliament instead heard it deny, deflect and double down.

It is clear that the Government is not serious about protecting our nature for generations to come. Rather, its priority is to outsource responsibility to meet our—rightly—ambitious net zero targets. Nowhere is that clearer than in the Government's response to our energy transition.

The Scottish Government regularly pleads powerlessness, but when it comes to areas where it could be doing more, it readily shirks its responsibility. Let us take the offshore training passport as just one example. The passport would provide a route to alignment and recognition of training standards across energy industries, to make it easier for workers to do what Governments repeatedly tell them to do—to transition away from oil and gas into renewables. The passport has the support of workers, their trade unions, the industry, OPITO—the offshore petroleum industry training organisation—and, supposedly, this Government. The Government is quick to claim credit for the passport, with frequent references to the funding that it has provided.

However, when I asked the minister in 2022 to provide regular updates in Parliament on the progress of that publicly funded work, I was told that she did not consider it appropriate or necessary, given that it is an industry-led process. Now we are four days away from the promised launch of the already six-month-delayed passport and what news? The Global Wind Organisation, GWO, is reportedly still creating barriers to the passport, with offshore trade unions urging the Government to intervene. Our energy transition is too important and the need for co-operation is too great to allow barriers to transition to go unchecked. The Scottish Government cannot be content to be silent partners in our transition.

Ministers must find their voice and bring all parties back round the table for the sake of offshore workers, the north-east economy and our planet.

For too long, we have allowed our precious environment to be degraded for short-term private profit. That is acutely apparent in the way in which successive Governments have allowed our land to be amassed, in ever greater concentration, in the hands of so few. Let us take Trump International Golf Links in Aberdeenshire. The site has long faced opposition from local residents who are concerned about the environmental impact of the development, but the Scottish Government's proposals for land reform would do little to address those concerns.

My proposal for land justice would empower people to challenge existing holdings that are not working for our communities, and it would make sites such as Trump International Golf Links, which is more than 500 hectares, subject to a public interest test. In contrast, the Scottish Government's proposals for land reform are far too timid. They will apply only to land of more than 3,000 hectares—that is almost six times the size of Trump International Golf Links—and they will not apply to existing holdings such as his. The consultation on my proposal closes at midnight tonight, and I urge all members to highlight it to their constituents, whatever their views.

We can tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss only if we recognise the failings of the capitalist economic system that brought us here. The short-sighted pursuit of limitless profit has led to carbon-intensive practices, the proliferation of single-use plastics, the destruction of biodiversity-rich habitats and the pollution of our environment. If our transition is truly to be just, the Government must now shift its ideology away from the pursuit of private finance initiatives and towards community wealth building, so that, as we restore nature and meet our climate targets, it is the people of Scotland, not multinational corporations, who see the benefits.

16:37

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** It is fair to say that this has been a mixed debate. I was interested to hear John Swinney strike a conciliatory tone during his contribution. He appealed for consensus. Well, there has been some consensus. We all want to get to net zero. I would like to get to net zero by 2050, and so would the Prime Minister. That has not changed, but the debate has been used by some as an excuse to simply bash Rishi Sunak. It could have been a more positive debate.

Douglas Lumsden was right: the SNP has no reason to crow about the issue, because its record

is appalling. To date, it has failed to achieve eight out of 12 of its emissions targets.

**Kate Forbes:** I recognise why the Tories might want to criticise the SNP—that is their *raison d'être*—but does Graham Simpson recognise that it is communities and businesses that have ensured that we have made the progress that we have made, and that they should be commended for what they have done over the past few decades?

**Graham Simpson:** I was going to come on to Ms Forbes's excellent contribution earlier. It was one of the more positive contributions from the SNP. She was quite right to say that we need to bring communities with us. That is spot on; I completely agree with her.

However, I go back to those missed targets. The Climate Change Committee said:

“Despite the scale of the challenge in the 2020s, Scotland is still not delivering on key milestones such as energy efficiency in homes and peatland restoration.”

It further noted that the

“trend of failure will continue without urgent and strong action to deliver emissions reductions”.

**Màiri McAllan:** How does Graham Simpson reconcile what he just said about targets with his party's wreckage of the DRS and refusal to back low-emission zones? What kind of contribution has that made to Scotland's targets?

**Graham Simpson:** I did not hear most of that, but the language was not helpful.

Audit Scotland has said that the SNP's

“climate change governance arrangements”

are missing

“core elements”.

It did a report on how well the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals and noted:

“we have found that some key elements of good governance are missing from the Scottish Government's climate change governance arrangements or are used irregularly and inconsistently.”

The Scottish Government's heat in buildings strategy will fail to meet its 2030 climate target. The Scottish Government itself admitted last week to “falling short” of its own climate change laws by failing to set out how its emissions-cutting targets are compatible with infrastructure investment. It has not published an assessment showing how those investments will impact targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

To me, the Prime Minister's recent announcements were a dose of realism. We are still committed to hitting net zero by 2050, but

Rishi Sunak wants to give the public a little more time.

The SNP says that it is in lockstep with the EU. It loves the EU and everything that it does, so why the outcry over bringing our own ban on the sale of petrol and diesel cars into line with Europe's? What is that about? You would have thought that SNP members would be happy about that. The move to push back to 2035 the date by which a new boiler has to be replaced by a heat pump, if appropriate, is also just common sense.

Speaking of being in line with Europe, I note that in July the EU passed a law that requires fast recharging stations for cars and vans every 60km—that is 37 miles in real money—along its main transport corridors by 2025. How about we fall into line with Europe on that? People would be falling over themselves to buy electric vehicles if we did that.

There have been some interesting contributions. In some cases, they were more heat than light. That was not so with Maurice Golden, the award-winning green giant who makes a lot of sense on environmental matters, although I do not agree with him on everything.

Mr Golden spelled out the long list of SNP failures: biodiversity, peatland restoration, woodland creation and renewable heat—I could go on and he did. He also reminded us that those missed targets are a symptom of failing to build a circular economy. We used to call that “reusing things”. There is nothing new in the circular economy; we have just forgotten how to do it. Whether a Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill will make any difference remains to be seen. Alongside Mr Golden, I have my doubts.

We heard from that strident defender of the North Sea oil and gas sector Douglas Lumsden, who reminded us that we need that sector to be strong because we do not want to have to rely on imported oil and gas. That is about energy security.

Mr Lumsden and I visited a couple of power stations recently. We were in Peterhead yesterday, where there are plans to build a power plant that will store its own carbon emissions before sending them off to St Fergus. Peterhead power station, which can produce enough power for everything north of Dundee, is the only non-nuclear power station north of Leeds. Scotland is pulling its weight in wind power and hydro, but we could do a lot more in helping towards the base-load.

We have yet to see a plan from the SNP to hit another of its targets: cutting car miles by 20 per cent by 2030. That must involve dramatically improving public transport, as Alex Rowley said, and making it cheaper so that people have

alternatives to the car. We keep being promised a road map, but we have yet to see it. When the minister makes his closing speech, perhaps he will tell us what will be in that road map. I do not think that he will, but we will wait and see.

Scotland added just 169 electric vehicle chargers between October 2022 and August 2023, which is nowhere near enough—we are not getting there.

I have not even touched on homes, but that issue was mentioned by Kate Forbes and Edward Mountain. Improving a home's energy efficiency is a good thing, but it can be ruinously expensive.

The UK actually has a good story to tell when it comes to cutting our carbon emissions, and we should celebrate that. Instead of creating division, the Scottish Government should seize the opportunity that has been presented by the Prime Minister to set more realistic goals that bring people with us.

**Patrick Harvie:** So we should slow down.

**The Presiding Officer:** Minister.

**Graham Simpson:** Pointless fights and made-up gripes will not save the planet. Pragmatic politics might.

16:45

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** I thank the many members who have spoken in the debate—although perhaps slightly less the member who gave that piece of absurdist performance art that we just heard.

The debate has, of course, marked climate week. Perhaps this year more than ever it has felt that every week is climate week, with the news media full of frequent vivid reminders of the climate breakdown that is already happening, such as floods, wildfires, land destroyed and species pushed to the brink. John Swinney painted that picture extremely powerfully, and Mark Ruskell said that we are reaching a tipping point for the climate emergency. In relation to Mr Ruskell's reflection on how he feels looking at his children and thinking about their future, I would say that anyone who is not fearful of what young people's future will look like is simply not paying attention.

Climate week feels different this year for another reason, too. Just as we are at the point where the signs of breakdown are at their most stark and the need for action has never been greater, we find ourselves at a political pivot point in our recent history. The UN global stocktake recently told us very clearly that we need a systemic transformation of every aspect of our society, and we need it fast. Inevitably, almost every member

who has spoken today has responded to the Prime Minister's extraordinary announcement last week. The response has been both to the content of the announcement and the way that it was announced, with no detail attached and no prior discussion or co-operation with the other Governments in these islands.

We are now faced with two scenarios. One is where leadership prevails and Governments respond with urgency and give stability for businesses and investment while ensuring fairness and support for households and communities to cope with the rapid change that is needed. The other scenario is characterised by policy reversals and an approach whereby the next general election is the only horizon in sight.

**Douglas Lumsden:** In the press today, the SNP member Fergus Ewing—I presume that he is still an SNP member—warned that the Government's boiler policies were “damaging and utterly unaffordable”. Does the minister agree with that point of view?

**Patrick Harvie:** No, I do not—[*Interruption.*] Mr Lumsden is laughing away. His party cheer most of Mr Ewing's announcements to the rafters, which is one of the reasons why I take them with a pinch of salt.

The Prime Minister's announcement last week signalled a clear intention to choose the latter scenario, in which short-termism is the order of the day. It took some gall for the Prime Minister to stand behind a podium with the slogan

“Long-term Decisions for a Brighter Future”

while reading a speech that amounted to a betrayal of current and future generations.

**Brian Whittle:** Will the minister give way?

**John Swinney:** Will the minister give way?

**Patrick Harvie:** I will give way to Mr Swinney.

**John Swinney:** Does the minister accept that the necessity in all this activity, whatever the intervention is—whether it is the boiler policy on which Mr Lumsden rather rudely interrupted and laughed at the minister after he had intervened, or any of the other issues—is policy certainty? Is not the lesson from the Prime Minister's actions last week that it has undermined the entire United Kingdom's efforts and crashed political certainty on the issues?

**Patrick Harvie:** It certainly does that—Mr Swinney makes that point well. The Prime Minister's announcement, if it has created any unity at all, has created unity between the car industry and Greenpeace on the lack of certainty and clarity that is created.

**Brian Whittle:** Will the minister give way?

**Patrick Harvie:** No, thank you.

The Prime Minister spoke about being honest with the public, then proceeded to knock down straw men in his hunger to generate a climate culture war. As I was listening to that speech, I lost count of the number of entirely non-existent policies that he reeled off before saying, “I have scrapped it.” What he scrapped was any shred of credibility that he had on climate. Not only did he betray our future and break his own manifesto pledges, he debased the office that he holds.

There are some on the right who are sincere in their belief that free-market economics can solve this crisis, even though it has been the cause of it. I profoundly disagree with them, but at least they acknowledge the reality of the climate emergency and they want to respond to it, even if they are misguided in how they should do that. The Prime Minister could have listened to the likes Alok Sharma, for example, who is a Conservative colleague who chaired COP26 and said that he was

“Concerned about fracturing of UK political consensus on climate action ... Chopping and changing policies creates uncertainty for businesses and the public ... Ultimately this makes it more difficult to attract investment and pushes up costs for consumers”.

Instead of working with that sort of agenda, Rishi Sunak’s cheerleaders are the likes of Liz Truss and Jacob Rees-Mogg. And, as Christine Grahame reminded us, the notorious climate denier Donald Trump has also weighed in to support the Prime Minister. That is no surprise from a Government whose political motivation is made explicit when it denounces anyone who is seeking credible climate policy as eco zealots or extremists—language that has been repeated by the Conservatives here, in the chamber, today—and seeks ever more draconian laws to arrest campaigners.

**Brian Whittle:** Does the minister not accept that coming into the chamber and giving us the fantastical ambitions of the Scottish Government also requires the Scottish Government to come to the Parliament with a route map? Every part of the community says that we cannot achieve the retrofitting of 1 million homes. Is it not time that the Scottish Government was honest about its climate change ambitions?

**Patrick Harvie:** The member knows very well that we will complete work on the climate plan and we will consult on a heat in buildings strategy. When the results of that come out, he will see that it is a hell of a lot more ambitious than the backtracking that we are seeing from the UK Government.

It seems very clear that the Conservative members at Holyrood are firmly behind their Prime

Minister watering down and delaying action. Those are the same people who, exactly a year ago, were urging Scotland to copy Liz Truss’s economic policies, which crashed the economy, and they are now urging Scotland to follow Rishi Sunak’s policies, which will do the same to our global life-support system. With a very few exceptions, there are simply no lessons learned, no reflection and no backbone from the Conservatives.

**Sarah Boyack:** I appreciate the minister giving way, because he has spent seven years attacking the easy target. On the retrofitting of homes, what lessons did he learn from last year’s failure of the spending of £133 billion, and what difference will it make, particularly to people who live in flats and tenements, where decarbonisation is more of a challenge but hugely important?

**Patrick Harvie:** We have discussed this before, so I know that Sarah Boyack is aware that demand-led grant and loan schemes were vulnerable to low take-up during the past few extraordinary years that we have all been living through. That is one of the reasons why we have committed to consulting on a supplier-led model, which we think might be less vulnerable to that kind of external shock.

It will not come as a surprise to anyone in the chamber that I disagree with the Conservatives and their Prime Minister. It is clear that most of the public do not trust them on the issue either. It is also clear that this is not just about policy differences but about the role of this Parliament. What the UK chooses to do has a significant impact on what we are able to do in Scotland. It could not be otherwise within the limits of the devolution settlement, which is being undermined year on year by the UK Government. When the climate targets were set, of course we did not agree with the UK Government on details of policy delivery—there were reasonable disagreements of that nature—but there was at least some reason to think that the UK would have a hope of a Government that was vaguely rational and that was willing to communicate and co-operate despite our differences.

That need for co-operation was set out clearly by the UKCCC recently in telling all the UK Governments in the UK that we had to try harder to work together, and we agree. However, within days came that wrecking ball through climate policy without a word of communication either with us or with the Welsh Government. Of course, the UK Government has form. This is the same Government that, a few months ago, deliberately sabotaged the deposit return scheme, for which this Parliament voted, by insisting that our scheme had to align with its scheme—a scheme that did

not exist and, as is increasingly clear, will never exist under this UK Government—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Members!

**Patrick Harvie:** That was as cynical an act of political vandalism as I have seen, not just to our green ambitions but also to this Parliament's ability to legislate.

The direct harm that the change of policy has done will be bad enough, but there is also a huge missed opportunity in the positive steps that could have been taken instead. Let us take the heat in buildings agenda. We can do important things with the powers that we have, which is why we will have a new build heat standard from next April, well ahead of the rest of the UK, which will ensure that new buildings will have a climate-friendly heating system from the outset. We want all homes to reach good levels of energy efficiency, and we know that private tenants need that improvement urgently. Ben Macpherson was right to mention that different challenges exist in relation to our historic tenement stock—I declare an interest as a resident of one—and the heat in buildings consultation will give us more to say on that point.

That is why we are making good progress towards improving energy standards in new homes, towards a Passivhaus equivalent—with the support of Alex Rowley, who spoke very well and challenged us constructively, not opportunistically—and it is why we have the most generous grants and loans for heating and energy efficiency works in the UK, including rural uplifts, which Mr Lumsden seemed unaware of when he spoke.

When we have the levers, we match ambition with action. However, we do not have control over the capacity of the grid to match the increasing electrification of heat and transport, which is controlled at a UK level. We do not control the difference in the unit prices of gas and electricity, which the UK Government has repeatedly promised to put right but has failed to deliver—that is perhaps the biggest step that could make the heat transition more affordable for people, and it would go some way to addressing the concerns about a just transition, which Kate Forbes raised.

We do not have levers over the regulation of products and installers, which is used as one of the main routes to heat transition in other European countries and is needed to give that clear signal to industry to guide investment. Mr Whittle and various other Conservatives said that we needed to create markets and certainty; well, the UK Government's announcements undermine and cloud the clarity and certainty that the Scottish Government is trying to provide.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the minister give way?

**Patrick Harvie:** Do I have time for one more, Presiding Officer?

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Kevin Stewart.

**Kevin Stewart:** There is definitely an undermining of business confidence, but there is also an undermining of the confidence of people. I was at Daikin sustainable homes in Aberdeen on Friday, and a guy there was pontificating about the big change that he made with a heat pump, which had made a real difference and had helped to make real savings. As well as ripping that confidence out of business, Mr Sunak has done the same with people. Does the minister agree?

**Patrick Harvie:** Completely. The language and the anti-environment rhetoric that the UK Government uses is undermining people's belief that we can move forward on this together.

We also do not control large-scale insulation programmes such as ECO4 and the warm homes discount, which has now been re-badged as the great British insulation scheme. We repeated requests for well over a year for the UK Government to link them more effectively with our schemes. Those requests were not even turned down but were simply ignored.

All of Parliament should support the ambition that we are bringing to this agenda, not just on heat in buildings but on developing our renewables, on record investment in active travel, and on leading the fightback for nature with the nature restoration fund, a five-year delivery plan and a natural environment bill. As Christine Grahame told us, it is time to hit the accelerator and not the brakes.

Mr Sunak spoke about being

"brave in the decisions we make"

and said that people

"wonder why in the face of the facts as they have them, choices are made as they are".

I am afraid that I do not wonder why he has done this. He has done it to create a new partisan dividing line when our politics needs united determination. He has done it because he sees political opportunity from making climate a new front in his culture war.

Climate week might be an annual event, but, this year, more than ever before, we need to recapture the shared sense of urgency that shaped the first climate change act—the Climate Change Act 2008—and led all political parties to work to strengthen it. Across the political spectrum, there are those who know that we need to act with urgency, and there are others who would prefer to downgrade, delay and dilute climate action. We need to have the courage of our convictions and ensure that the next climate

plan not only delivers but recreates that sense of unity.

## Business Motion

17:00

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

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-10621, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a change to the business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 27 September 2023—

delete

6.00 pm                      Decision Time

and insert

6.30 pm                      Decision Time—[George Adam.]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-10597.1, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, which seeks to amend motion S6M-10597, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action, 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 digital voting.

17:01

*Meeting suspended.*

17:04

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We will now proceed with the vote on amendment S6M-10597.1, in the name of Douglas Lumsden. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I think that the wi-fi dropped. I was not able to connect, but I would have voted no.

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

**The Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade (Richard Lochhead):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Likewise, I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Lochhead.

**John Swinney (Perthshire North) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had the same connection issue, and I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you.

**Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had no connection, but I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I have just been asked to do this at a pace that enables recording.

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Thomson; we will ensure that that is recorded.

**Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. There is something wrong with the wi-fi in this corner of the chamber. I would have voted no.

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

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had the same issue, and I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Harper.

**Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had the same issue, and I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr MacDonald.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had the same issue, and I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The app is saying that I have voted no, but it has not gone down to zero, so I do not know whether my vote has gone through. I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Brown, I can assure you that your vote was recorded.

**Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Unfortunately, my device did not connect. I would have voted yes.

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

### For

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)  
 Doney, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (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)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)

McAllan, Mairi (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 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)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-10597.1, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, is: For 28, Against 88, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-10597.3, in the name of Sarah Boyack, which seeks to amend motion S6M-10597, in the name of Mairi McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is closed.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am still having issues. I would have voted yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

**Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app did not refresh. I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

### For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)

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)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 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, 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)  
 Dorman, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)

Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-10597.3, in the name of Sarah Boyack, is: For 51, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-10597.2, in the name of Beatrice Wishart, which seeks to amend motion S6M-10597, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is closed.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Apologies—I am still struggling. I would have voted yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

#### For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 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, 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-10597.2, in the name of Beatrice Wishart, is: For 52, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S6M-10597, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is closed.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Apologies—I have had on-going issues. I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will ensure that that is recorded.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 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)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**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)  
 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)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 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-10597, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the climate emergency: ambition and action, is: For 86, Against 29, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament reaffirms its commitment to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss;

welcomes the action taken by people, communities, workers, businesses and local and national government to take Scotland half way to net zero, but recognises that the hardest part of the journey lies ahead; acknowledges the necessity of ambition, leadership and consistency on that journey and that, given the limits of devolution, all nations of the UK must work in partnership to complete the journey; deeply regrets, therefore, the unilateral reversal of policies set out by the UK Government on 20 September 2023; urges the UK Government to listen to overwhelming feedback and rethink what is an unforgivable betrayal of current and future generations, and calls for a new, mutually respectful four-nations partnership in meeting one of the most significant challenges facing people and the planet in this century.

## Devolution of Employment Law

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-10491, in the name of Keith Brown, on devolution of employment law. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament considers that anti-trade union legislation, such as the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, poses a significant risk to workers' rights, including in the Clackmannanshire and Dunblane constituency; believes that a progressive approach to industrial relations along with greater, not fewer, protections for workers is at the heart of a fairer and stronger economy; further believes that trade unions are key social partners in delivering economic and social aspiration, and that they are vital for ensuring that the voices of workers are heard; welcomes that the TUC has recently backed a motion calling for the devolution of employment law to Scotland and a repeal of all current anti-trade union legislation; considers that devolution of employment law is supported by the majority of current MSPs; notes the calls on the UK Government not to further erode what it sees as the hard-won rights of workers; further notes its commitment to working in partnership to entrench and build on these rights, and notes the calls for employment law to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament immediately.

17:17

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** I rise to speak to the motion. It calls for the devolution of employment law, which is something that aligns with the Scottish Government's commitment to a fairer and stronger Scotland, with the right to fair work at its heart. However, the motion is important for all of Scotland, especially those areas where the history of industrial action runs deep, such as my constituency of Clackmannanshire and Dunblane.

Clackmannanshire holds a significant place in the history of industrial action in Scotland, as one of the focal points of the miners strikes of the 1970s and 1980s. We must never forget those who, in their fight for fairer wages and safer working conditions, all too often found themselves the victims of the actions of particularly callous and uncaring United Kingdom Governments. The memory of the Clackmannanshire strike serves as a stark reminder of the challenges that workers endured before the creation of this Scottish Parliament, and I know that that history will resonate with many members in the chamber, and with many communities across Scotland.

For too long, successive UK Governments have legislated against the right of Scottish workers to take industrial action. The motion highlights two pieces of legislation: the Conduct of Employment

Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022 and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, both of which pose “a significant risk” to the rights of workers in Scotland and across the UK. Those regulations represent yet another attempt by the UK Government to curtail the right of workers to take industrial action to protect the dignity of their labour.

Trade unions are an essential part of our democracy, and are absolutely necessary in ensuring that the voice of working people is heard. Having served as a trade union representative myself, I will always speak up for the right of workers to engage in industrial action. Scotland’s history is filled with examples of successful collective action, such as the upper Clyde shipyard work-ins, led by the indomitable Jimmy Reid. Such instances continue to stand as testament to the power of industrial action not only in Scotland but around the world.

The creation of a Scottish Parliament has allowed Scotland to right some of the historical wrongs that were perpetrated on working people by the UK Government, by implementing measures such as pardoning those who were convicted during the miners strike. I was very proud to take that legislation through this Parliament, and proud that the measure had relatively unanimous support.

The Scottish Government’s record in collaborating with trade unions rather than working against them speaks for itself. The notable absence of any national health service strikes in Scotland over the past year, unlike in other UK nations, should not be dismissed. It is a clear indication that the Scottish Government’s approach of actively engaging with trade unions works.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** Does the member characterise the relationships with the Educational Institute of Scotland, Unison and the GMB and other trade unions in schools and in further and higher education in the same way as he has just characterised the relationship in other areas?

**Keith Brown:** I am sorry—I did not hear the first part of what Pam Duncan-Glancy said. She mentioned a number of trade unions working together. I am happy to come back to that if she wants to come back in.

As I have said, the Scottish Government works collaboratively with trade unions; that has been my experience during the days when I was in—  
[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Brown, can you please resume your seat for a second? Mr

Marra, please do not do that across the floor—thank you.

Mr Brown, please continue.

**Keith Brown:** The devolution of employment law, which the motion calls for, would allow us to take that constructive approach even further. It is for that reason that an increasing number of trade unions across the UK now back the devolution of employment law. I am pleased to say that the UK-wide Trades Union Congress recently followed the Scottish Trades Union Congress in calling for employment law to be devolved to Scotland, as well as calling for the repeal of all anti-trade union legislation—two measures that the Scottish Government supports but which it does not currently have the power to deliver.

Given that both the STUC and the UK TUC stand behind the devolution of employment law in their support for workers and for devolution, I would like to make known my feelings of utter disappointment and dismay at the recent announcement from the deputy leader of the UK Labour Party that the party has now scrapped its previous commitment to devolving employment law.

I have with me a printed copy of Scottish Labour’s 2021 manifesto, on which the 22 Labour MSPs were elected. On page 30, it states in no uncertain terms:

“We support further devolution of powers to”

Scotland,

“including borrowing and employment rights”.

Members can imagine my shock, therefore, when the *Daily Record* broke the news last week that an email had been sent around all the Labour MSPs, advising them not to sign the motion for today’s debate, a motion that might or might not in fact support one of their own policies. Why would they not want to support something that absolutely reflects their own policies, unless it is the case that they do not mean it at all?

It reminded me of something that happened a long time ago, when I was a councillor in Alloa. I put up a motion that congratulated Alloa Athletic on winning promotion to a higher division. It was opposed by the Labour Party—when I asked the Labour councillors afterwards why, they said, “Well, it was the SNP that proposed it.” They went back at a future meeting and agreed the motion, having changed one word of it.

It was what became known as the Bain principle, which is, “If the SNP proposes it, you cannot accept it.” In doing the same here, however, Labour members are, in this case, flying in the face of the rights of employees and the need for better employment law in Scotland.

Just days before a crucial by-election in Rutherglen and Hamilton West, the Scottish Labour Party is back-peddalling on yet another of its fundamental principles, just to abide by the diktats of Keir Starmer's UK Labour Party.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Keith Brown mentioned the TUC motion. Would he also acknowledge that a formal reservation was lodged, saying that a floor across the UK needed to be created before employment law could be devolved? That continues to be the Scottish Labour Party's position, and it is a very important caveat. Does the member acknowledge that?

**Keith Brown:** Over the past number of years, I have listened to a number of Labour MSPs stating explicitly that they wanted to see employment law devolved to the Scottish Parliament. They now have caveats, and they are unwilling to support a straightforward motion that would help defend the rights of workers and trade unions in Scotland.

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Keith Brown:** No—I do not have much time left, and I have given way twice in relation to this matter. That said, I am happy to give way again if the member can give me a compelling reason why he cannot support the terms of the motion in front of him, given that there is nothing in there that conflicts with Labour policy. If he is going to do that, I will give way.

**Michael Marra:** I certainly am.

The motion refers to the immediate devolution of employment law. As Mr Johnson has just set out, the Scottish Labour Party's position is that there has to be a floor created across the UK, and then devolution, which is actually the TUC's position—*[Interruption.]* It is the position of the TUC.

**Keith Brown:** I do not know whether the member thinks that those in trade unions and workers across Scotland will, in hearing those weasel words, give any credence to the Labour Party's position, or see any reason not to support the motion, just because it is from the SNP. The motion

"calls on the UK Government not to further erode ... the hard-won rights of"

Scottish

"workers."

What we are stating is that those rights are not just for the benefit of workers, but for the betterment of society and our economy. Across the chamber, we can reaffirm this Parliament's commitment to working in partnership with trade unions and to entrenching and building on those rights. Our workers deserve nothing less, and it is high time that we took control.

There is nothing in this that is contentious for the Labour Party—it has stated for a number of years now that that is what it wants to do. We can take control of our own destiny and craft a country where workers' rights are valued; where fairness is the norm; and where the Scottish Parliament works in partnership with trade unions, rather than against them, to build a fairer, more just and prosperous Scotland. What we are getting from the Labour Party is an indication that it will support nothing. If it cannot do it in Opposition, it will certainly not do it in Government.

I ask the Parliament to support the motion in my name.

17:25

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue today, and I pay tribute to Mr Brown for bringing the debate to the chamber. I certainly do not pay tribute to the Labour Party for its stance on the matter, and for failing to sign a motion that I would have thought it would have been running to sign.

It seems that, today, we have heard of a flip-flop from Labour on the devolution of employment law. In this chamber not so long ago, in an exchange with Pauline McNeill, she said that they would devolve it now. That is exactly what Mr Brown is calling for in his motion.

There was no word then—and today is the first that I have heard of it—about the creation of a floor before employment law can be devolved. I think that it is yet another Starmer flip-flop to which Scottish Labour has decided to kowtow. Scottish Labour members have taken their orders from Keir, which are: "Don't rock the boat, and we will deal with this later."

**Michael Marra:** Does the member not recognise, in lauding—rightly—the TUC's position, that the TUC has made clear the caveat that there has to be an agreement across the UK to create such a floor, so that, as we believe, devolution can then further secure those rights in the long term?

**Kevin Stewart:** I have not heard about any caveats from the STUC, and this is the first time that I have heard of that caveat from Labour—

**Michael Marra:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Kevin Stewart:** No—I have taken Mr Marra's intervention, and I do not want to hear any further flip-flopping from him.

With draconian legislation such as the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 and the anti-strike bill passed by the UK Parliament earlier this year, it is clear that protecting workers' rights is more important than ever. Tory

crackdowns on worker protections and the rights of unions have seen the UK's global rating on workers' rights fall. In the latest International Trade Union Confederation annual report on workers' rights, the "2023 ITUC Global Rights Index", the UK has dropped from a rating of 3, for countries where the ITUC considers there to be "Regular violations of rights", to level 4, where it says that there are "Systematic violations". It means that the UK has joined countries with a level 4 rating, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam—despotic regimes where, as we know, freedoms are not as great as they should be. We are now in the same league as such countries.

Scotland is already missing out on Europe's enhancement of workers rights, thanks to Westminster's hard Brexit. The same UK Government has ensured that the UK's rate of sick pay is one of the worst in Europe. Workers have been subjected to years of neglect by the Tories, and it seems to me—and what we have heard today confirms my belief—that Labour offers no difference whatsoever. The only way to protect workers in Scotland is to devolve employment law to this Parliament. Indeed, the devolution of workers' rights is backed by some of the biggest trade unions in the country, and by the STUC.

It is astonishing that not one Labour MSP has agreed with a motion that calls out Westminster's anti-trade union legislation and the fact that it is agin workers' rights. It is time for that devolution to take place; for us to treat our workers much more fairly; and for us to rise up those world rankings once again.

17:29

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I begin by saying that I am sad to take part in another highly politicised members' business debate. I am not aiming that at any individual, because I know that all parties have done this in the past; I just think that such debates are regrettable and not in the spirit of this chamber. Members' business debates should provide a rare moment of consensus building, and I feel that those opportunities are being eroded.

On the substance of Keith Brown's motion, I want to make some specific points. The politics of this debate are quite clear. The debate is about the differences between the Scottish National Party and Labour on the limits of devolution, with a by-election coming up next week. However, I should say that I spent much of my professional career as an employment lawyer—I should refer at this point to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am an advocate—in Scottish employment tribunals in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh, representing workers, employers and trade unions in cases of

dismissal, redundancy and discrimination. It is, therefore, an area that I know a little about, and I have seen what happens at the sharp end when disputes, sadly, end up in litigation.

During that time, I learned one thing above all: the importance of a UK-wide system of employment law and a corresponding UK-wide tribunal structure to support and police it. What has been lost in this debate so far and needs restating today is the rationale behind why employment law has not been devolved, and why Conservative members support the status quo. The reason for that is, essentially, economic.

**Keith Brown:** Is Donald Cameron aware that the one part of employment law that has been agreed to be devolved under the Smith convention deals with employment tribunals?

**Donald Cameron:** I am aware of that, and I am aware of the upgrade to the employment system involving the upper and lower tribunals that has taken place in the past 10 years.

Returning to my point, I was saying that the reason for Conservative members supporting the status quo is, essentially, an economic one. It is clear that having two separate systems of employment law in Scotland and England would create a headache for workers and businesses that operate on a cross-border basis, particularly small and medium-sized businesses. For example, there could be two different contracts of employment for those working between Scotland and England; businesses would have to monitor different sets of laws; and employees would have to adhere to different systems of regulation. That would lead to costs; logistical difficulties and complexity for workers and businesses and the suppression of the free flow of labour between Scotland and England.

Just as we need a UK-wide approach to the goods and services market, so, too, do we need a UK-wide approach to employment. As the former UK minister for labour markets, Jane Hunt, said:

"Office for National Statistics data from 2019 estimates that around 68,000 people work in Scotland and live in England, or vice versa. Devolving employment rights could therefore be highly disruptive for workers who work across the border."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 6 September 2022; Vol 719, c 50.]

Creating that divergence from existing UK-wide employment law would have significant ramifications, and stating those points does not mean that the rights of workers are somehow diminished by maintaining the status quo. We can still support fair work, the right to strike and equality rights; we can still pass legislation such as the pardoning of striking miners; we can still respect and support all of Scotland's workers; and we can still ensure that, when any dispute arises

over pay and conditions, Government engages with workers and their representatives to ensure that a fair deal is struck.

Conservative members support the rights of all Scotland's workers. We want to continue to see a UK-wide approach to the labour market; we want to ensure that there can continue to be that free flow of labour; and, unlike others in this chamber, we will always work with business and employees to achieve that, rather than work against them.

17:34

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I thank Keith Brown for bringing the debate to the chamber. It is fair to say that the situation that is faced by workers up and down the UK today is quite bleak. For most people, wage increases are struggling to make up for the massive decrease in the value of the money in their bank accounts, and the role that trade unions can play is under attack. Meanwhile, practices such as unpaid work trials and exploitative zero-hours contracts remain the norm in some sectors.

Thirteen years of Tory policy making has certainly made a difference, and I do not think that anyone would claim that that difference has been for the better. Where the situation remains bleak is with the Labour Party. Keir Starmer might be the Prime Minister in waiting, but what difference does it make? The past few months have shown Labour's hand and revealed that the party is engaged in a race to the bottom on issues such as immigration, welfare and Brexit.

**Daniel Johnson:** Is the member aware that Labour has promised to legislate within 100 days on a new deal for working people, which would, in the words of the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, transform workers' rights up and down the UK?

**Kaukab Stewart:** I am aware that Labour makes many policy suggestions on which it regularly goes on to flip-flop and U-turn. There is still no suggestion that Labour would hold true to any of the promises that it makes on improving the lives and conditions of workers across the UK. However, the question whether Scotland should have the ability to take different decisions when it comes to employment is what we are discussing today.

I would like to bring members' attention to one specific area in which I take a deep interest: the ability of asylum seekers to work while they are applying to remain in the UK. That cuts across the two reserved areas of employment and immigration. Flatly speaking, asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the UK while their applications are being processed. As members are likely aware, the process is long, with most

applications taking more than six months. There are very limited circumstances in which the Home Office says that asylum seekers can seek employment. For example, if a person has been waiting for more than 12 months for a decision and the Home Office deems that the delay is not the applicant's fault, they can seek employment, but only from the UK Government's restrictive shortage occupation list. That said, the Home Office will not provide data on the number of asylum seekers who have been granted permission to work, so there is no way for us to scrutinise that. The system makes no sense.

The financial support that is given to asylum seekers by the UK Government is extremely low—less than £50 a week. If they were able to work, they would be able to pay taxes. It is easy to conclude, therefore, that the reason why the system exists must be down to ideology, not pragmatism. To be clear, it was Labour that, in 2002, restricted asylum seekers' ability to apply for work. The ability to apply to work after 12 months was introduced in 2005, but only to comply with European Union law. Thereafter, in 2010, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats further restricted what work asylum seekers could do by limiting it to those jobs on the shortage occupation list.

UK Governments of every hue have let down asylum seekers and the communities that they reside in. These are people from a range of backgrounds and professions, and they want to be able to contribute. Their inability to do so is to our detriment as much as it is to theirs. Sadly, we are living with a UK system that imposes a hostile environment on those who come here—a hostile environment that was actually introduced by the Labour Government under Tony Blair in 2007 and was then continued and enhanced by the Conservatives.

Asylum seekers just want to provide for their families. They just want a bit of dignity as they navigate an often demoralising and elongated application system. They deserve to do that safe in the knowledge that they will be treated equally and in compliance with fair work principles.

The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, which I convene, recently concluded an inquiry into the lived experience of asylum seekers in Scotland. The report will be published soon, and it would be inappropriate for me to speculate on its contents, but I hope that the committee's work on the issue will help to inform Government policy on asylum seekers and their ability to integrate and contribute.

The current system provides a perpetual stream of missed opportunities. I have no doubt that an independent Scotland would make better choices

on employment, on how we treat workers and on how we treat those who come here.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Stewart, could you conclude, please? You are quite over your time, and we have a number of speakers in this debate.

**Kaukab Stewart:** Short of independence, the UK should devolve to Scotland our ability to make policy in those areas.

17:39

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Let me begin with where we absolutely unequivocally agree. I agree that we strengthen the economy by improving workers' rights, and that is exactly what a Labour Government would seek to do for the whole of the UK, not just for parts of the UK. Labour's new deal for working people, which is a commitment to legislate within 100 days, would do the following things. It would ban compulsory zero-hours contracts, outlaw fire and rehire, give workers day 1 rights on sick pay, parental leave and protection from unfair dismissal, and provide workers' status for people, regardless of the type of employment, tackling directly the many issues that people face when they are working in the gig economy. Perhaps most important, we would raise the minimum wage so that it was a real living wage. That is exactly why Paul Nowak, the Trades Union Congress general secretary, said that the new deal for working people represents the

"biggest upgrade in workers' rights in a generation."

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** Does the member accept that workers in Scotland could have had all that nine years ago?

**Daniel Johnson:** Let me be clear. What we need to do is to ensure that we have high standards for all workers throughout the UK. What we do not want to do is to create a situation in which there is a race to the bottom—

**Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Daniel Johnson:** In a moment, Mr McKee. That is precisely why, when we have made our calls for devolution of employment law, it has been very clear that that would be within a regime that creates a floor, or a minimum set of standards. We said that in 2019 and in 2021. What is more—I am sorry that Mr Brown thinks that these are weasel words—Roz Foyer from the STUC said that

"A guaranteed minimum floor of workers' rights across the UK is a prudent first step"

towards achieving devolution of employment law. Those are her words, not mine, and they were

issued in September as a direct result of the TUC motion.

I am happy to give way to Ivan McKee.

**Ivan McKee:** Does Daniel Johnson think that having higher standards and higher employment rights in Scotland makes it more or less likely that standards will increase across the rest of the UK?

**Daniel Johnson:** What is important is that we have guaranteed minimum standards across the UK. If we had an open framework, which immediate devolution would create, we would create a race to the bottom, which is absolutely not in anyone's interest, and certainly not in workers' interests.

Let us be clear. Every time that Labour has been in government, we have made a difference to workers' rights, whether it be protection from unfair dismissal, health and safety at work, equal pay legislation, the minimum wage or the Equality Act 2010. Every single Labour Government has not only made changes, it has made changes that no Government has been able to reverse. No Government has dared to unpick them. That is the difference that a Labour Government has made in the past, and it is the difference that a Labour Government will make again.

In closing, I want to reflect on something that Donald Cameron said. It is something of a sorry sight to see the SNP deputy party leader reduced to using a members' debate to make such naked party-political attacks. However, it is also clear that that is a sign of the SNP's desperation. It is scared of what an improved and strengthening Labour Party represents, because it prefers the status quo. It prefers having a Tory Government, so rather than fighting a Tory Government, it prefers to attack Labour. Rather than delivering, it prefers the politics of division. However, we are here to deliver for the whole of the UK rather than to create division, which is all that the SNP is ultimately interested in.

17:43

**Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP):** I think back to the Leith dockers strike in 1913, when campaigners, individuals and trade unionists took to the streets of Leith and pushed for better conditions for workers. They lived in a time of deep income inequality, as we do now. Today, I want to speak on behalf of my constituents, too many of whom are living in in-work poverty.

In 2017, we as a Parliament committed to addressing child poverty. During the period 2019 to 2022, 21 per cent of working-age adults were living in poverty after housing costs were accounted for. In that group, 69 per cent of

children who were living in poverty were also living in working households. In addition, 24 per cent of children were living in relative poverty after housing costs were accounted for. That should concern us all.

Parliament and devolved Government have the capacity to make changes to public sector wage differentials and have done so, which is why we have successfully avoided strike action in a number of areas and provided a situation where public sector workers are better paid in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, which makes an impact on reducing poverty. However, for the four fifths of the working population who are in the private sector, although the Scottish Government can do a lot of persuasion and pushing of employers to do the right thing—and the drive towards the real living wage has made an important difference—it is binding a real living wage in the law that makes sure that private employers pay enough. That is the problem with the situation that we have in Scotland. Many of my constituents who come to me in real difficulty are in households where the working age adults work in the private sector.

We are absolutely right to push for those powers over fair work, in particular, to come to the Parliament. Whatever people's thoughts are on the final destination of Scotland's constitution and this institution, it is clear that, if Parliament is to protect our people from decisions that are made elsewhere in the UK, that have a negative impact in Scotland and are against the social democratic governance that Scotland has voted for consistently throughout my lifetime, employment powers, along with more financial and social security powers, need to come to this Parliament to deliver social justice.

It is not enough for Labour Party colleagues to say that, if and when we get a UK Labour Government, it will be able to do X, Y and Z. What about the years in between when our constituents are suffering from a lack of good working conditions and fair pay? That is not acceptable to me,

and it should not be acceptable to any of us on the centre left. We need employment powers to come to this Parliament. Yes, cross-border issues will need to be considered carefully. Any Scottish Government with the powers over employment law will need to exercise them thoughtfully and responsibly, but it is absolutely right that control over employment law should come to the Scottish Parliament, and any UK Government should be forthcoming in bringing a Scotland act during the forthcoming UK parliamentary session that delivers that. It is the right thing for social justice and for making sure that this Parliament has the suite of powers that we need to protect our constituents who, too often and in too many

numbers, have been living in in-work poverty. It is not right and it needs to change.

17:48

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Keith Brown for affording Parliament the chance to have this debate on enhancing workers' rights. I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests as a lifelong trade unionist and member of the Community trade union and the GMB.

There are two principal means by which the lives of ordinary Scots have improved since the start of the 20th century. First, we have had organised trade unionism, based on collective solidarity and the struggle for our fundamental human right to withhold our labour.

Secondly, there have been the Labour Governments that have been committed to a more equal country by investing in public services and in the public protection, through the law, of trade union rights as well as, crucially, their enhancement.

The next Labour Government will introduce legislation on a new deal for working people within its first 100 days in office. As cited by Mr Brown, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress has described Labour's plans as "transformative" and

"the biggest upgrade of workers' rights in a generation."

**Keith Brown:** Under the most recent Labour Government, £4 billion was pillaged from the miners' pension fund; no pardons were given to miners; and there was no end to blacklisting. Crucially, in 2015, 2017 and 2019, we were told that those things must wait until a Labour Government was elected. If we do not devolve employment law and Labour does not win the election, Scottish workers will continue to wait and will continue to be deprived of the enhanced rights that they could possibly get.

**Michael Marra:** I entirely agree with Mr Brown's call that we need to defeat the Tory Government and get it out, and there is one way to deliver that. However, I am not entirely sure that I follow his logic with regard to how he sees those powers being devolved, given the Conservative Party's position on the matter. The best way for the SNP to act—and, as deputy leader, Mr Brown could take this forward—is to do so in concert and in co-operation with the Labour Party to deliver those powers to Scotland, once we establish that floor across the UK.

Labour's new deal for working people will repeal the Trade Union Act 2016, the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 and other strike-breaking legislation; overhaul the laws that have restricted

the fair operation of trade unions for working people in the UK; ban zero-hour contracts; outlaw fire and rehire; guarantee day 1 rights to sick pay, parental leave and protection from unfair dismissal; and ensure that the minimum wage is a liveable wage.

When did the last transformative upgrade in workers' rights in a generation, to which the general secretary of the TUC refers, come? It came, of course, under the Labour Government, elected in 1997, which started by guaranteeing the legal right to join a trade union, service rights, holiday rights and paternity rights. It moved to outlaw much of the blacklisting across the UK and introduced a minimum wage for the first time in the history of these nations. That is not just a matter of history; all those rights are measures that are improving the lives of Scots today, and every single day. It is on that record that we stand, and it tells us that the new deal for working people will be delivered by a Labour Government.

Once the new common basis for rights is in place, Scottish Labour will seek to secure it against future Tory attacks through the devolution of employment law, with the maintenance of that UK-wide floor, so that it cannot be removed. Devolution will act as protection for progress and will ensure that we do not see the sort of race to the bottom on employment rights that has been seen by so many people in countries across the world.

I will close by talking about the conspicuous absence from Mr Brown's motion of zero-hours contracts. Scotland has the highest rate of zero-hours contracts among people in employment in any part of the UK—and, worse still, a zero-hours contract is counted in SNP Scotland as a positive destination for school leavers. The SNP could do something about that today. After all, on what planet is insecure, precarious work a positive destination? Only last week, it was reported that the SNP was using workers on zero-hours contracts to distribute leaflets for the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election. It does not even have a zero-tolerance policy in its own party, let alone for the country. While the SNP equivocates and prevaricates, Labour is clear that we will end that scourge and deliver on our new deal for working people.

17:52

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** I thank Keith Brown for securing this important debate on an issue in which I have taken a keen interest for many years. I am an active trade unionist, and I refer colleagues to my entry in the register of members' interests as a member of Unite the union.

Back in 2014, devolution of employment legislation was something that featured regularly in debates and discussions on the kind of future that Scotland's people wanted to see. I and many others argued that, although we did not necessarily need independence to progress workers' rights, improve their conditions and secure better democracy in our workplaces, it would certainly make those things easier. In the 13 years of a UK Labour Government, there was no overturning in its entirety of the anti-trade union legislation that Thatcher had brought in decades before, and we were certainly not going to get progress under successive Tory Governments—but I digress.

The Smith commission conversations were interesting. I learned a lot about a range of things in those concentrated, sometimes heated, meetings. I learned how different people did politics; I learned about political negotiation; and I learned about tribalism. I learned about the intransigence that tribalism breeds, and I learned about the lowest common denominator politics that, it seemed, the Labour representatives on that commission were willing to promote.

When we—the Greens and the SNP members of that commission—proposed the devolution of employment law, the Labour representatives simply said no. No arguments were made about solidarity across borders, even though they had been made before the referendum vote itself. It was just no—no discussion, no nothing. It was almost saying no as a punishment—as a punishment of Scotland for daring to suggest that we could do better, a punishment of all of us who dared to imagine a better world and a punishment of hope. As time has moved on, it really does seem like it was a punishment of hope. Despite calls from the trade union movement and others on the left for something better, aligning with a Conservative Government and putting the fate of our workers in its hands seemed to be more appealing than working to create something better.

We know that there is no intrinsic reason why employment law cannot be devolved. Yes, it might be complicated, but, as Northern Ireland has shown, it is possible; after all, there is considerable divergence between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Regressive changes in Great Britain have not been mirrored in the north of Ireland. That might be of interest to those who have been going on about a UK-wide system, given that such a system does not exist at the moment.

If Labour had not vetoed the devolution of employment law by collaborating with the Tories, we could now have had a real living wage, a total ban on zero-hours contracts and fire and rehire practices and the reinstatement of the employment

and trade union rights that have been removed by the Tories. Those powers would make our efforts to bring children out of poverty, and our efforts to ensure a just transition so that communities are sustainable in every sense, so much easier. Stronger trade unions could be at the forefront of creating cohesive, co-operative societies and of standing up against exploitation. The vague possibility that a new Labour Government in London might repeal the worst of Tory anti-worker legislation is not a good enough reason to oppose the devolution of powers over employment law now, and it is certainly not—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member should probably bring her remarks to a close.

**Maggie Chapman:** I am.

It is certainly not a good enough prospect for our workers and communities. Let us remember that we are governed by a Tory Government whose employment regulations last year were quashed by a court that found the secretary of state's failure to carry out mandatory consultation to be

"so unfair as to be unlawful and, indeed, irrational."

Our workers and communities are paying a heavy price for the tribal, lowest common denominator politics that sought, nine years ago, to punish hope. I wish that, instead, we had the option of building on that hope. That day cannot come soon enough.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call the next speaker, I advise members that, due to the number of members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3 of standing orders, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Keith Brown to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[Keith Brown]

*Motion agreed to.*

17:57

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I start by referring to my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am a member of Unite, the GMB and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers parliamentary group and that I am convener of the Scottish Labour trade union group.

I thank Keith Brown for bringing this debate to the chamber. It is good to see so many members taking an interest in the subject, because we can agree that anti-trade union legislation is harmful to workers in Keith Brown's constituency, in my Central Scotland region and right across the UK. Points have been made about the scourge of in-

work poverty, too. I believe that most members in the chamber care about those issues.

The Labour movement, of course, believes in more protection for workers. Indeed, that is what informed my political thinking. Growing up in Blantyre, in Lanarkshire, as the daughter of a health and safety officer, I was shaped by what was happening to working-class communities such as mine, and those issues relating to the wellbeing of workers were what shaped my early political thinking.

Today, those issues matter more than ever. We have heard from members across the chamber about the epidemic of fire and rehire practices, zero-hours contracts and precarious work. People in my neighbourhood are working three jobs—and often more—just to make ends meet.

I listened carefully to Keith Brown, who spoke passionately about the industrial history of his Clackmannanshire and Dunblane constituency and his important work in pardoning miners, which brought people together across the chamber. It brought Neil Findlay and Richard Leonard from Labour together with Mr Brown and Michael Matheson, to name just a few, from the SNP. What is uncomfortable about this debate for some people is that, actually, there is more agreement here than many of us want to admit. I see a majority in this Parliament for repealing the anti-trade union law that is letting people down. It maybe sticks in the throats of some members to recognise that what Labour is trying to do at a UK level, with the new deal for working people, is about being transformative and progressive.

Of course, we are not at the election yet and we do not know what the outcome will be, but let us focus on the things that we do agree on. Scottish Labour has been very clear: Anas Sarwar has said that it is about a race to the top, not a race to the bottom.

**Keith Brown:** I acknowledge the sincerity with which Monica Lennon speaks on these issues, as she has done in the past. In fact, in 2021, she was explicit in saying that Scottish Labour was supportive of the devolution of employment law, so we do agree on that.

However, I put together the terms of my motion explicitly to crystallise that agreement. There is nothing in my motion that should dissuade Monica Lennon, who has a proud track record in relation to the issue, from supporting it. Why has she not done so? Does she believe that workers in Scotland should always wait on something happening elsewhere before they can get access to full employment rights?

**Monica Lennon:** I do not know how much extra time I can get, but it is a very important question. I am speaking in the debate, because I care deeply

about the issues. I have not signed the motion, but I have not signed the amendment either, because I wanted to stand aside from some of the politicking that is going on. Mr Brown's motion is a very good one, but I have underlined the word "immediately" at the very end of it, because I am not sure what it means. The fact is that there is no big button that we can press today to devolve employment law "immediately".

Of course, the manifesto that Scottish Labour stood on in 2021 sets out a clear position, and that has been reinforced by the Scottish leader Anas Sarwar. There is no bit of paper between what we are saying with regard to the STUC, and the TUC, which represents 5.5 million workers across the UK. There is a lot of agreement there.

I have eaten into a lot of my time but, in response to Kevin Stewart, I would say yes, let us rise up the world rankings. However, as we have heard, Scotland is the zero-hours capital of the UK, so let us do something about that, too.

I started today on a picket line at Royal Mile primary school and, tomorrow, I will be on a picket line in Hamilton near where I live, with Unison workers. As Pam Duncan-Glancy has alluded to, people who work in higher and further education might hear about fair work, but they do not feel that it is happening for them. Indeed, people at City of Glasgow College have been made redundant under the guise of fair work.

Let us therefore work together to get a just transition and justice for all workers. We can have all of these debates during by-election campaigns just to make points but, actually, that sort of thing backfires on all of us. I will continue to find common agreement and cause, because workers right now do not need debates like this. What they need is money in their bank accounts.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Lennon, please conclude.

**Monica Lennon:** I thank Keith Brown for the debate. If we can have such debates more often, that will be great, but let us not do it as a stunt. Let us do it because we actually believe in progressive politics.

**Daniel Johnson:** On a point of order, Deputy Presiding Officer. I apologise for the fact that I neglected to refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a member of the Community trade union and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** On a point of order, Deputy Presiding Officer. I also neglected to refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a member of the Community trade union, GMB and Unison.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Both points of order will now be on the record.

18:03

**Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP):** I thank Keith Brown for bringing this important motion for debate this evening. It highlights the key issues of workers' rights, fair pay and fair work, which we mostly agree on around the chamber, as well as the important aspects of devolution and the drawing of lines between those who believe that Scotland should have the right to legislate in that area and protect and enhance the rights of Scottish workers, and those who clearly do not.

I will start by addressing the Labour position. It has been described as flip-flopping, which it absolutely is. To present a position that says that we allegedly need a floor across the rest of the UK is misguided in a number of ways. [*Interruption.*]

I will finish my point in relation to the question that I asked Daniel Johnson. If we have the ability to raise standards in Scotland, how does that constitute a race to the bottom?

As Monica Lennon rightly said, it would constitute a race to the top, as it would allow Scotland to set the standard for the rest of the UK to follow. Scottish Labour should welcome that. As Keith Brown said, we have seen tonight Labour's desire to have a go at the SNP's position and to differentiate itself in some way from the SNP, and it puts that ahead of its concern for workers' rights in Scotland and its support of the devolution settlement.

**Michael Marra:** Does Ivan McKee not recognise that the TUC and the STUC have said that the right approach is to ensure that there is a common floor across the UK, after which we can devolve employment law to ensure that we lock that in for the long term?

**Ivan McKee:** The reality is that, if Scotland has the ability to raise standards, it will drag the rest of the UK upwards, not the opposite. That is the important point to recognise and it is absolutely clear for anyone to see. That intervention shows not just the inability of Labour to grasp and support those ideas but, frankly, its inability to grasp basic economic principles.

Many aspects of this issue are important, but in the brief time that I have, I will focus on the minimum wage. Having the ability that we should have in Scotland to legislate on that is hugely important to tackling poverty and creating good jobs, and it is central to the vision of the wellbeing economy, with fair work at its heart.

We have seen a gradual reduction in the percentage of people earning less than the real living wage in Scotland, but that has been the

result of hard work that has required pulling all kinds of unrelated levers that have a secondary impact through conditionality and other aspects that are being deployed. That is inefficient and is not the most effective way to do it. Allowing the Scottish Parliament to make decisions and legislate on the minimum wage and raise it at least to the level of the real living wage, is essential to helping us to raise workers' standards and is central to tackling the poverty challenge that we face. Social security and other such measures will not, on their own, deliver what needs to be delivered to lift people in Scotland out of poverty.

**Monica Lennon:** I understand why political parties would critique the words and promises of other political parties, but there is an important issue about zero-hour contracts, because we can do more in Scotland right now. I am looking at a quote from Neil Gray, the wellbeing economy secretary, who, on 15 August this year, said:

"The Scottish Government firmly opposes the inappropriate use of zero-hour contracts."

Do we not need more clarity around the position in Scotland? As well—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I think that you have posed the question to Mr McKee.

**Monica Lennon:** —as devolving the powers, we need to make sure that—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr McKee has got the question, and he can now respond to it.

**Ivan McKee:** The cabinet secretary, Neil Gray, has been very clear that we oppose the inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts.

Using those levers to drive up wages and to increase standards is part of our vision for Scotland's wellbeing economy. We want a high-wage, highly technological and high-innovation economy that is good not just for workers and tackling poverty in Scotland, but for Scotland's economy and businesses. That is why Keith Brown's motion is hugely important and why everybody in the chamber should support it.

18:08

**Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests relating to my involvement in the trade union movement.

I congratulate Keith Brown on securing the debate and welcome the opportunity to discuss the devolution of employment law powers. It might be that Keith Brown wishes to devolve employment law as a matter of principle. Whether devolution of employment law is likely to lead to stronger rights for workers will be, for many, a

strategic issue. We know that many of the employment protections that were created in the UK, such as equal pay protections, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 and discrimination law, were derived from European legislation, the social chapter and our membership of the European Union, which embedded and entrenched those rights in domestic law. I therefore welcome the mention in Keith Brown's motion of how we "entrench and build on" rights in a Scottish context.

Daniel Johnson and Michael Marra spoke about Labour's new deal for working people and the transformational potential that it has to strengthen rights at work and to make work pay.

As Michael Marra said, a UK Labour Government has committed to repealing the anti-trade union and anti-worker legislation, introducing legislation to ban zero-hours contracts, outlawing fire and rehire, strengthening sick pay and parental leave rights, creating unfair dismissal rights from day 1 of employment, and introducing a living wage as the national minimum wage within the first 100 days of government. All members who are in the chamber would agree that that would represent a fundamental shift in power to working people and positively impact on the lives of millions of people across the UK.

Scottish Labour has supported the devolution of employment rights and a UK-wide floor that cannot be removed. We support the UK new deal for working people and recognise that it is unlikely that the current UK Tory Government will devolve any aspect of employment law. Donald Cameron's speech confirmed that.

There is a very important debate to be had about the devolution of employment law and what rights could make a difference. A discussion is already being had about sectoral collective bargaining in relation to the creation of the national care service, and that discussion could be extended to other services and sectors.

Keith Brown rightly pointed to the pardon for miners as a good example of how the Parliament can make a difference. I understand that, with effect from 1 July, the cabinet secretary made it a requirement that all organisations that seek public sector grants pay the living wage, and I believe that that is already having an impact. The Parliament needs to be kept updated on the impact of such measures.

We have to recognise that, despite the fact that the Scottish Government, in effect, banned zero-hours contracts five years ago, it was recently brought to light that zero-hours contracts are operating in the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. I suspect that no politician was aware of

that, but it shows that Parliament has a role in vigilance.

We know that employment law and equality law are highly technical. In some ways, I regret the political knockabout that is involved in this debate because we need to have a very important discussion in all the political parties. This is a debate about the devolution of employment law, not about independence. We need to find ways to get the strongest possible employment protections for workers in Scotland and, ideally, across the UK, and that we find mechanisms to embed those so that they cannot be taken away.

18:13

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a member of the Unison trade union.

I congratulate Keith Brown on securing the debate and acknowledge his long-standing commitment to workers' rights and fair employment policy.

The devolution of employment law would give the Scottish Parliament the ability to protect workers' rights, increase the living wage, end statutory living wage age discrimination, give us the powers to act on companies that use fire-and-rehire policies, tackle the gender pay gap, support parental leave and better trade union recognition policies, and much more.

The Tories' anti-trade union policies, which were never repealed by the Labour Party, have undermined workers' rights and allowed for an employment landscape in which the needs of workers can be placed last. The Trade Union Act 2016 and Brexit legislation show that the Tories care only about continuing in the same direction. Scotland needs a different path, and that will be helped by the full devolution of employment law.

The Labour Party arrogantly claims to be the party of trade unions, but it turns up here showing that it does not care about the opinions of trade unions that are clear that they want employment law to be devolved. Roz Foyer of the STUC is clear that devolution gives

“the chance to draw a line in the sand and ensure no worker in Scotland could ever be subject to any pernicious attack again from a Tory government hell-bent on undermining working people.”

However, despite the views of all trade unions, the TUC and the Labour Party, it has dropped the ball in another screeching U-turn in policy. The Campaign for Socialism, which some of the lapsed Corbynistas purport to be members of, said:

“This move would put the SPLP at odds with the STUC, TUC and Scottish Labour members ... MSPs must pick a side & abide by their manifesto commitment.”

We can see what side they have picked. Effectively, their memberships have lapsed.

Instead, we are expected to trust Westminster Labour to deliver, even though its record on keeping promises is shoddy. The party that now backs Brexit and the rape clause cannot be trusted on workers' rights. Professor Keith Ewing of King's College London has pointed out that the recent omission by Sir Keir Starmer to commit to a “single status of ‘worker’”

“would render completely pointless the commitments relating to zero-hours contracts, hire and rehire, and flexible working arrangements.”

On fire and rehire, Labour has questionable principles. When it comes to its own staff, *The Independent* alleged that Labour used fire and rehire, with one senior MP saying:

“To learn that our party are now using what can only be described as ‘fire and rehire tactics’ appals me. It's everything we as a party should be aggressively opposing. Sacking individuals and hiring others with worse wages, terms and conditions are the actions of the worst of the very worst employers.”

When asked to rebut that, a Labour Party spokesman said:

“We don't comment on staffing.”

We also know about the Labour Party's shameful record on equal pay, so we will not trust Labour on workers' rights. Instead, I stand with the trade unions and call for the full devolution of employment law to give this Parliament the means to provide fair work and decent pay and conditions.

**Michael Marra:** Will Marie McNair give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms McNair should be concluding very soon, Mr Marra.

**Marie McNair:** Let us have the ambition to go further to support workers, with independence. Powers over health and safety law will mean that we can do much more to keep our workplaces safe. Power over social security policies will mean that we can do much more to support low-paid workers.

Crumbs from Westminster's table are not for us. They are not enough for Scottish workers. A better path is an independent Scotland.

18:17

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests: I am a proud trade unionist.

I requested to speak in the debate for three reasons: first, I support the devolution of

employment law to Scotland; secondly, the Scottish Trades Union Congress supports the devolution of employment law to Scotland; and thirdly, my party—the Scottish Labour Party—supports the devolution of employment law to Scotland.

Unlike Keith Brown and his party, I do not believe in Scottish exceptionalism; I believe in the common endeavour of the people, who, united in purpose, can remake our economic system to work in favour of us all. My support for the devolution of employment law stems from my principles of democratic socialism: that power should be held as close as possible to the people that it serves, be used in the interests of those people and be accountable to those people. I therefore welcome, as did Keith Brown, the Trades Union Congress's backing of a motion calling for the devolution of employment law to Scotland, as well as the repeal of all current anti-trade union legislation.

The call comes from workers themselves, but that is not all that workers call for. That is why the next Labour Government has committed to a new deal for workers: no more zero-hours contracts; no more fire and rehire; employment rights from day 1; union rights to access the workplace; new fair pay agreements; and the repeal of the attack on the right to strike. Where is the SNP's new deal for workers? What does the SNP offer workers other than zero-hour contracts?

Keith Brown will not be surprised to hear that the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress has called Labour's new deal for working people the

"biggest expansion of workers' rights in a generation".

That is not all. He also said:

"That will be the choice at the next election. We want that first one hundred days Employment Bill through in one piece, onto the statute books and into the workplaces. And that's why when the time comes I will tell anyone who asks: vote for working people, vote for change, vote for the party we named for our movement—vote Labour."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I now call on the minister, Richard Lochhead, to respond to the debate.

18:20

**The Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade (Richard Lochhead):** I am grateful to Keith Brown for proposing the debate and bringing this important matter before Parliament. There have been many heartfelt contributions from across most of the chamber and many speakers have participated, which I think shows the importance that members attach to workers' rights in Scotland and the debate on who exercises responsibility for legislation in

relation to those rights—the UK Government or the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Government's vision is for a fairer, more sustainable and growing economy, but it is also for a country that offers a decent future for all workers, their families and communities, underpinned by strong labour markets. For workers, that means better job quality, better pay, economic security, a better work-life balance, an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect.

As we have been debating, employment rights and duties are reserved to the UK Parliament under the Scotland Act 1998. The Scottish Parliament has no say over the minimum wage for workers in Scotland, their rights and protections or the conduct of industrial relations. This Parliament cannot legislate to shape a labour market that meets the interests of workers and employers alike to respond to the current and future needs of our economy. That is despite the enduring support of the STUC, as mentioned by many members, and the support of others, particularly during the formative years of the campaign for a Scottish Parliament, and including in the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

Nevertheless, through fair work, the Scottish Government is doing what it can within devolved competence to drive forward change. As a result of the action that we have taken, there are proportionally five times as many accredited real-living wage employers in Scotland as there are in the rest of the UK, and 91 per cent of workers in Scotland earn at least the real living wage. That is to give just a couple of examples of what we are doing in response to the challenges from members on the Labour benches, who do not seem to be aware of the progress that the Parliament has made. We also have the fair work first criteria, which have been applied to more than £4 billion in public funding since 2019.

**Monica Lennon:** As an example, what can the Scottish Government do to hear the cries of the workers at City of Glasgow College, who are emailing MSPs tonight to tell us about cuts to teaching time, increasing workloads, ending of fixed-term contracts, targeted voluntary severance and compulsory redundancies? Is that fair work?

**Richard Lochhead:** To deliver good workers' rights in this country, we need employment law to be devolved. To escape some of the really tough times that the country is experiencing, we also need economic levers to be devolved to this Parliament so that we can create a prosperous Scotland and address some of the fundamental issues that are affecting our society. We do not have the powers to address those properly, but we would if the Scottish Parliament was independent

or—as is the subject of today’s debate—had more powers devolved to us through devolution.

Our distinct approach, unlike that of the UK Government, is based on partnership working, as demonstrated through the establishment of the Fair Work Convention and our endorsement of the fair work framework. Trade unions are key to that partnership, and a progressive approach to industrial relations is at the heart of a fair and successful economy.

Keith Brown spoke about the history of strikes in Clackmannanshire. Scotland has, of course, played a prominent international role in the evolution of the trade union movement and in promoting and defending workers’ rights. In 1787, the Calton weavers fought for better wages and conditions in Scotland’s first major industrial dispute—that was 50 years before the Tolpuddle martyrs in England were sentenced to transportation for forming a union. More recently, as Keith Brown mentioned, the upper Clyde shipbuilders, led by Jimmy Reid and Jimmy Airlie, captured the attention and imagination of people around the world.

However, recent UK Government labour market policies have pushed in the opposite direction, eroding rights and protections and undermining progressive industrial relations. Perhaps the greatest immediate threat to our hard-won employment rights is the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023, which allows the UK Government to rewrite the employment protections that we gained as members of the European Union.

**Katy Clark:** When I spoke, I referred to the requirement for all organisations that are seeking public sector grants to pay the living wage, and I strongly support that the Scottish Government took that step. Is it looking at what further measures can be used through procurement and the award of grants to ensure that other ethical practices are adhered to, including trade union membership?

**Richard Lochhead:** We are always looking to advance the fair work agenda. That is why we work closely with the Fair Work Convention and MSPs to ensure that we can identify next steps to help workers in this country.

I could list a lot of the issues that we think are at risk from the REUL act at Westminster. We have had many benefits through the European Union, from the maximum working week and the right to rest breaks, to paid annual leave, protection during pregnancy and for new parents, protections for agency, fixed-term and part-time workers, and so on. The uncertainty from Westminster is open ended for workers and for employers.

As well as putting rights and protections at risk, the UK Government is set on undermining trade unions. The Trade Union Act 2016 was the first step. Other members have mentioned the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which made it permissible for employment agencies to supply temporary workers to employers facing industrial action. There is also the infamous Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, under which regulations will set levels of service to be maintained during strikes. That is directly aimed at taking the teeth out of industrial action and circumventing dialogue.

I hope that we all believe that strike busting is no substitute for partnership and negotiation with workers and their representatives. Given what we have seen, the Scottish Government could, with full control over employment law, make far better choices on the labour market. That is why the STUC, the TUC, the Scottish Government and many people in Scotland believe in the devolution of employment law to the Scottish Parliament.

I will take a final intervention.

**Michael Marra:** I thank the minister for giving way. As a Government minister, I know that he would want to ensure that the STUC is quoted fully. Does he recognise the words of Roz Foyer, who said:

“A guaranteed minimum floor of workers’ rights across the UK is a prudent first step”?

**Richard Lochhead:** I welcome the support from the TUC, the STUC and the people of Scotland for the devolution of employment law to this Parliament.

Many people listening to members on the Labour benches today will be confused. On the one hand, the Labour spokespeople have been saying that the election of a UK Labour Government will solve everything, echoing the spokespeople for the UK Labour Party, who say that we do not need devolution because it will all be sorted out at UK level. On the other hand, today, Scottish Labour was arguing that we need devolution for Scotland—[*Interruption.*]

The Labour Party cannot have it both ways; we need to know that the issue is a priority for any incoming Labour Government—it was Labour policy until today.

**Daniel Johnson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Johnson, I do not think the minister has time to take an intervention.

**Richard Lochhead:** In “A Stronger Economy with Independence”, which was published in

October last year, the Scottish Government proposed specific measures, such as establishing a fair national minimum wage, stronger access to flexible working, tackling precarious work, and legislating to ban fire and rehire. However, the big prize will be that there will also be better partnership working and stronger institutions. There are many benefits.

I agree with Ivan McKee and others who say that we should not go at the UK's pace. We should set the pace, get on with it and get the powers devolved to this Parliament as soon as possible. We urge the Labour Party to give that commitment to the people of Scotland—to stop prevaricating and stick to its promise to devolve employment law to the Scottish Parliament.

*Meeting closed at 18:29.*

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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