



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 6 March 2024

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 6 March 2024

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

Portfolio Question Time

Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time and the first portfolio is wellbeing economy, net zero and energy. I remind members who wish to ask a supplementary question to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

Question 1 was not lodged.

GFG Alliance (Meetings)

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it plans to next meet with the sole director of the GFG Alliance. (S6O-03151)

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): The Scottish Government regularly meets senior executives of the GFG Alliance to discuss the group's business interests in Scotland. A meeting for me with the GFG Alliance's executive chairman is currently being arranged.

Richard Leonard: The cabinet secretary's predecessor was due to meet Sanjeev Gupta on 25 July last year, but Mr Gupta pulled out. This is a company that the Serious Fraud Office is now investigating for suspected fraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering. According to the Auditor General, this is a company that still does not have auditors, so it has not filed audited accounts with Companies House in recent years. The Auditor General told Parliament that these are "matters of concern" and said that, over the past 12 months, the Government's liability under the Lochaber guarantee and reimbursement agreement has increased by a further £21 million to £135 million.

Will the cabinet secretary make a full statement to Parliament on the Government's exposure to risk as a result of its arrangements with Sanjeev Gupta, on what has happened to the promise of downstream production and jobs and, in the interest of transparency—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No—cabinet secretary.

Richard Leonard: —will the Government finally publish in full—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary.

Màiri McAllan: It is not unusual for meetings that have been arranged to be postponed or rearranged. I have already confirmed that, with the change of portfolio, I am arranging to meet the company's executive chairman.

I cannot comment on any on-going live investigation, but I confirm that there is regular contact between officials and the GFG Alliance. As I said, I am arranging a meeting for early in my tenure.

I put it on record that it was absolutely right for the Scottish Government to intervene to save the Lochaber smelter. We will never apologise for taking access to safeguard and promote jobs in industry. I am looking to meet the executive chairman, and I shall be glad to update Mr Leonard on that meeting.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): We were promised 2,000 jobs at the Lochaber smelter, but hardly any has emerged. I am concerned that, although ground for the new aluminium billet plant was supposed to be broken last year, that work has not even started, and production is supposed to begin next year. Will the cabinet secretary tell us what on earth is going on?

Màiri McAllan: There is more than 90 years' worth of experience of aluminium making at Fort William; the site is a national strategic asset. That underlines the Government's involvement with it.

On the matter of jobs—which I agree is very important—GFG has created more than 40 new jobs in Lochaber since 2016, by increasing direct employment in the complex to 214 and supporting a valuable supply chain, with hundreds of associated jobs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 3 has been withdrawn.

Co-operatives, Social Enterprises and Employee-owned Businesses

4. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its review of how to increase the number of co-operatives, social enterprises and employee-owned businesses as part of the move to a wellbeing economy. (S6O-03153)

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): I am happy to do that. The independent review, which is focused on increasing the number of social enterprises, employee-owned businesses and co-operatives, is due for completion in spring.

The review group is being chaired by Neil McInroy, who is the global lead for community wealth building in the Democracy Collaborative and the chair of the Economic Development Association Scotland. The review process will ensure that expertise from across those business models will be considered. I look forward to receiving its findings.

Claire Baker: I look forward to the review, which has been delayed—we have been waiting for it for a wee while. We know that, to achieve the aim of 500 employee-owned businesses in Scotland by 2030, related activity needs to ramp up significantly.

The cabinet secretary will know that new co-operatives are more than twice as likely to survive as other start-ups are and that co-operatives are five times less likely to cease trading than other businesses, so what is the Scottish Government going to do to increase awareness of co-operative business models for potential new businesses? How is it encouraging existing businesses to consider adopting such models? Will the refreshed national strategy for economic transformation provide answers to those questions as well as the step change that we need?

Màiri McAllan: I agree absolutely with Claire Baker about the importance of ensuring that local people and businesses have a meaningful stake in relation to owning, producing and benefiting from the wealth that they create. As the wellbeing economy secretary, I absolutely support that and I have seen great examples of it in my constituency.

I will very much draw the actions that are to be taken from the review when it is complete. I hope to receive a wide spectrum of views as part of the review, and I will draw from it any actions that will support achievement of the target, which Claire Baker was right to mention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 has been withdrawn.

Windfall Tax (Oil and Gas Companies)

6. **Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding an increased windfall tax on the excess profits of large oil and gas companies, in light of reports that the income from any such tax could be used to support households struggling with the cost of living crisis, including in Scotland. (S6O-03155)

The Minister for Energy, Just Transition and Fair Work (Gillian Martin): Households across the country continue to face a serious cost of living crisis because of the UK Government's economic mismanagement. We support a simple, holistic and predictable windfall tax on oil and gas

company profits to help with that; Labour's plans to increase the current levy to pay for nuclear power plants in England are simply wrong.

I hope that Carol Mochan is perhaps in a position to outline how much additional revenue she predicts would come to Scotland in the next few years should Labour form the next UK Government. I am sure that she wants to be transparent with the people of Scotland and be held accountable should that investment not be forthcoming.

Carol Mochan: I think that it is the Government's responsibility to answer questions. *[Interruption.]* Does the minister think that it will be a disappointment for people, but possibly not a surprise, that the Scottish National Party and Green Government has placed itself firmly behind the oil and gas giants on the issue, rather than behind working people?

The policy could create funds to support households that are struggling with the cost of living, but the SNP would rather protect the eye-watering excess profits of those at the very top. Why does the minister think that her party is more aligned with Douglas Ross and the Scottish Conservatives on the issue than with the working people of Scotland?

Gillian Martin: First, Carol Mochan is asking me about a policy that is reserved to those in the party of government in the UK. Given that her party is hoping to potentially become the UK Government this year, it is fairly acceptable that I ask her what Labour's plans are with regard to a windfall tax and what, if any, ring-fenced funds might be deployed in Scotland as a result of that tax.

I reiterate that it is fair enough for anyone to ask anybody who wants to be an incumbent of number 10 what they want to do with the windfall tax and what they want to support. *[Interruption.]* If the answer is that they want to support nuclear power plants in England, I would say that the Scottish people will make a very clear judgment on that. *[Interruption.]* I would also say, in answer to the member's question, if I could hear myself, Presiding Officer—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, could you please resume your seat for a second? I say to members that there is far too much heckling going on while the answer is being provided. Let us have the courtesy of listening to the question and to the response.

Gillian Martin: A UK-wide energy profits levy has been in place since 2022 to tax the windfall profits of the oil and gas sector, which every party signed up to. We need to consider the level of that tax and consider, if it were increased, what the

unintended consequences might be for jobs, particularly where I come from in the north-east.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): While the Scottish Government continues to do what it can with its limited powers to ensure that folk receive the help that they need during this Tory cost of living crisis, what assessment has been made of the potential long-term impact on jobs and on folk's energy bills of Labour's aggressive windfall tax plans for the North Sea, coupled with Keir Starmer abandoning his £28 billion green investment pledge?

Gillian Martin: In my last answer to Carol Mochan, I put that very question to her, because the long-term impact on jobs and people's energy bills of Labour's plans has not been articulated.

The Scottish Government continues to do what it can to ensure that the people who need it most receive the help that they need during the cost crisis. Offshore Energies UK has made it clear that Labour's windfall tax proposals could cost tens of thousands of jobs and impact investment in the sector. We believe—as does the industry—that Labour's plans are shambolic, having been revised numerous times.

Jackie Dunbar made a good point that Labour's headline £28 billion investment pledge is being dropped entirely, which gives no certainty for the energy sector's transition. Net zero investment is the greatest economic opportunity that we have as a nation and it is critical for our climate and social justice ambitions. It is also critical for the future of the constituency that Jackie Dunbar represents. It is disappointing to see Labour equivocating at a time when investment is so needed.

New Deal for Business

7. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how outcomes from the new deal for business will be measured. (S6O-03156)

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): The new deal for business is about resetting the relationship between Government and business, aligning our objectives and working in partnership on policy goals to support a thriving wellbeing economy. The new deal for business metrics sub-group is developing a set of metrics on business sentiment, engagement and confidence, which will be used in conjunction with indicators to measure the outcomes from the new deal for business.

Murdo Fraser: When it was announced, the new deal for business was warmly welcomed as a change in direction from the Government, but it is fair to say that its members are now bitterly

disappointed that their voices have not been listened to across a range of issues.

There is a chance for the Government to redeem itself. Just this week, the Scottish Retail Consortium highlighted that the large business supplement that is payable in non-domestic rates is currently double the rate that is payable by businesses south of the border. That will cost Scottish businesses £125 million extra over the next two years. If the Government is serious about listening to business and delivering on the new deal, will it commit to reducing that Scotland-only surcharge?

Màiri McAllan: Early on in my appointment as economy secretary, I met my new deal for business group co-chair, and I will hold the first meeting of the group next week. I have already been clear that I want—and I know that the members want—focused, business-like agendas with measurable output.

On support for business, I am acutely aware of the pressures that have been bearing down on businesses in Scotland, not least from the extremely difficult financial circumstances, many of which were either created or exacerbated by Murdo Fraser's colleagues in the United Kingdom Government. In the most challenging budgetary settlement in the devolution era, we have had to make difficult choices in order to protect our public services, including our national health service. However, I remain absolutely committed to working with the business community, understanding what it would like to see and advocating for that.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Last month, it was announced that the UK went into recession in 2023. Can the cabinet secretary tell us whether the new deal for business, which is designed to support economic growth, has had an impact on the Scottish economy, helping it to continue to grow, or did we follow the UK into recession?

Màiri McAllan: I would characterise the situation as follows: the failing UK economic model saw the UK Government enter a technical recession at the end of 2023, with two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The Scottish economy is, of course, intrinsically bound to that failing model and is still battling against some extremely challenging circumstances, including a self-imposed Brexit and the self-imposed disastrous mini-budget. It is encouraging, however, that, unlike the UK, Scotland avoided a recession in 2023.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Metrics are vital to tracking progress on the new deal for business. What is the Government's response to yesterday's report from the

Confederation of British Industry and Fraser of Allander Institute showing that Scotland lags behind the UK average on 10 out of 13 productivity metrics? Is the Government going to use those metrics? When will we see improvement?

Màiri McAllan: Like Daniel Johnson, I paid close attention to the CBI's release. I thought that it was an interesting account of various opportunities and challenges that are currently bearing down on the Scottish economy, and I will continue to engage with the CBI on many of the points that it raises. I go back to the answer that I gave to the first question, which was about the importance of the new deal for business and the metrics that we are developing as part of how we measure its outputs. I will very closely foster those metrics with members of the group.

2030 Emissions Reduction Target

8. Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is on course to achieve its 2030 target for reducing emissions. (S6O-03157)

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): Scotland's emissions halved from 1990 to 2021, while our economy grew by 57 per cent, which is a fantastic example of how economic growth and decarbonisation are mutually inclusive and reinforcing.

Scotland's 2030 target, which every party in the chamber voted for, was always extremely stretching. Indeed, the Climate Change Committee was clear at the time that it went beyond what it would recommend. However, I will continue to push to meet our targets through direct action in Scotland and by working with the United Kingdom Government and pushing it to take action where that is needed.

Graham Simpson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, but she did not answer the original question, which was whether the Scottish Government is on course to achieve the target. It is a stretching target, and to achieve it would require an 8.9 per cent annual reduction in emissions from 2021 to 2030. Has the cabinet secretary had any discussions with the Climate Change Committee on that, and what does it say about whether Scotland is on course to meet that target?

Màiri McAllan: The Climate Change Committee is our statutory adviser on decarbonisation and the pathway to 2045, and I have had conversations with it on our near-term and mid-century targets. I am extremely proud of the progress that Scotland has made to date, but I am utterly clear-eyed about the challenges ahead, not least the very

near-term challenge up to 2030. I am considering all those matters very closely, particularly in respect of the need to produce a climate change plan, and I will update Parliament on any decisions that are made in due course.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a number of supplementary questions, and I will try to take them all.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): We here all acknowledge the fact that while Scotland is tied to the rest of the UK, the progress of our emissions targets will continue to be impacted by events at Westminster. Will the cabinet secretary therefore outline what impact UK Government policies such as rowing back on climate commitments and cutting Scotland's capital budget by almost 10 per cent have had, and may continue to have, on Scotland's emissions targets and journey to net zero?

Màiri McAllan: The UK Government's rowing back on various critical policies, including the Prime Minister's announcements last year, has the potential to have a devastating impact on our environment and, as was pointed out by many commentators at the time, demonstrates complete economic illiteracy. More than that, it has also inflicted a serious further blow to the UK's already diminished international reputation.

I have to mention the budgetary settlement that Scotland has been handed, in particular the UK Government's cut to our capital budget of almost 10 per cent over the next five years. All that taken together points to a Government that is completely unserious about the threat of the climate emergency.

Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Last year, it was revealed that in 2021, Scotland yet again missed its legally binding target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. I was glad to hear that the Scottish Government has accepted or partially accepted 98 out of 99 recommendations from the Climate Change Committee. Can the cabinet secretary outline exactly what progress the Scottish Government has made on implementing the recommendations for reaching the 2030 target?

Màiri McAllan: I mentioned in response to a previous question that I am proud of what this Government has achieved in respect of decarbonisation, whether that is Scotland planting 75 per cent of all new trees in the UK in recent years, investing £250 million in peatland restoration, placing 37 per cent of our waters in marine protected areas, developing four low-emission zones or completing the world's largest leasing round of floating offshore wind. All that has helped to contribute to the fact that we are now halfway to net zero. However, as I have also said,

I am very clear eyed about the challenges that are ahead, and I am considering all that in relation to the development of the climate change plan.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary accept that a lot of businesses in Scotland are very keen to help the Government meet the net zero target? One thing that they hate more than anything else is when targets are shifted, as they have been under the UK Government, which is more interested in winning elections than in securing net zero.

Màiri McAllan: Absolutely. With regard to the trajectory for net zero, as with most things, certainty and clarity on direction of travel is what business and investors seek most. I point to the coming together of the economy and net zero within the Scottish Government as something that ought to give business great comfort in that regard.

As far as I am concerned, the energy transition is the era-defining opportunity ahead of us—economically, as well as being an environmental imperative—and I will continue to pursue that.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): When will the 2013 household waste recycling target be met?

Màiri McAllan: As Mr Golden knows, the circular economy and waste route map is progressing through parliamentary committees. That work, which is led by my colleague Lorna Slater, looks to update a spectrum of commitments, some of which were made prior to the climate emergency. I know that Mr Golden is involved in the scrutiny of the route map but, given that he has not been able to ask those questions of my colleague Lorna Slater in committee, I will endeavour to have a written update provided to him.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Older interisland ferries, of which Shetland has several that are more than 40 years old, were not built with net zero targets in mind. Ferry emissions make up a large proportion of Shetland's emissions output. What assessment has the Scottish Government made of the impact of replacement vessels and short sub-sea tunnels to connect communities and reduce emissions?

Màiri McAllan: The suite of options for better connectivity for our islands is currently being considered as part of the islands connectivity plan, which is led by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Fiona Hyslop.

Beatrice Wishart is right to point out the need to decarbonise our ferry fleet. We have to recognise that there is a pace at which that can happen, which is line with the technologies that are coming on stream and becoming commercially available. I

am currently discussing that with my counterparts throughout the UK, with regard to the emissions trading scheme.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary has had discussions with the Climate Change Committee. Has it advised the Scottish Government that it will miss its 2030 emissions target—yes or no?

Màiri McAllan: It has always been the view of the Climate Change Committee that the 75 per cent target by 2030 was beyond what was achievable, and it advised the Scottish Parliament of that, prior to all members of this Parliament voting for it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on wellbeing economy, net zero and energy. There will be a brief pause to allow the front-bench teams to change positions before we move on to the next portfolio.

Finance and Parliamentary Business

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next portfolio is finance and parliamentary business. Members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

Income Tax

1. **Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the finance secretary has had with ministerial colleagues regarding the impact of its current income tax policy, in light of reports that higher taxes could deter experienced professionals from moving to Scotland. (S6O-03158)

The Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance (Tom Arthur): Matters relating to all Government policy are regularly discussed between and considered by members of the Scottish Government's Cabinet. That includes discussions regarding the 2024-25 Scottish budget.

It is important to remember that people base their decisions about where to live and work on a wide range of factors, not just the tax that they pay. Those people who call Scotland home enjoy a range of support that is not available elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That helps to explain why net migration to Scotland from the rest of the UK has been consistently positive since the Scottish income tax was introduced in 2017-18.

Alexander Burnett: The minister will be aware that the new tax rates will mean that the average doctor will now pay £5,000 more than their counterparts in the rest of the UK. Given that both the British Medical Association and the British

Dental Association have said that the tax hikes undermine efforts to recruit experienced staff and that rural communities are at an even greater disadvantage, can the minister say how much those hikes will reduce output in the health service?

Tom Arthur: One thing that I would note is that, broadly, across the Scottish public sector, we see examples of better remuneration than we see elsewhere in the UK. Of course, we take into account a range of factors and considerations in relation to matters that pertain to income tax policy, and we regularly engage with partners and colleagues to understand what the implications might be. Had we followed the prescription outlined by the Conservatives on income tax policy, that would have left us with some £1.5 billion less than we currently have to support public services, and that would have been particularly harmful, including for the national health service.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are a number of brief—I hope—supplementaries.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Can the minister confirm that the net migration figures of working-age people from the rest of the UK are positive; that housing costs and council taxes are lower in Scotland; that there is free personal and nursing care and there are no dental or eye test charges, tuition fees or prescription charges; that the national health service and the quality of life are better here; and that the people are welcoming? In short, who would not want to move here?

Tom Arthur: That is the case, and it has been that way every single year since the Scottish income tax was introduced in 2017-18. It is hardly surprising that we have those net migration figures when the benefits to people living in Scotland are so comprehensive, as the member has set out.

I will leave it to others to explain how slashing taxes and running public services into the ground would make Scotland a better place to live in. Those would be the consequences if we implemented the tax cuts that the Tories want to see.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Has the minister looked at the evidence with NHS consultants? Yesterday, Dr Alan Robertson, who is the chair of the BMA Scottish consultants committee, highlighted 436 gaps in the consultant workforce—the figure was up from last year—and he said that, with

“the new top rates of tax introduced in Scotland, the competitive disadvantage our consultants face is becoming increasingly clear.”

What evidence has the minister gathered about the impact of tax rates on consultant recruitment? That is important.

Tom Arthur: Willie Rennie has raised an important point about marginal rates. It is important that we continue to pay careful attention to that issue—I will not contest that. On a broader point, forecasting revenues and behaviour is something that the Scottish Fiscal Commission does.

I go back to the key point. Not using our income tax powers in the progressive way that we are would mean less funding for public services, including the NHS.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): My colleague Kenneth Gibson has already highlighted the important fact that significantly more working-age people move from England to Scotland every year than move in the opposite direction. As the minister has highlighted, they clearly value the additional public services that they receive here.

I understand that His Majesty's Revenue and Customs is collecting longitudinal data on the movement of tax per location between Scotland and the rest of the UK, and vice versa. Is the minister aware of when that data will be available and whether it will be separated by tax band?

Tom Arthur: I thank Mr McKee for his supplementary question. In answering it, I will supplement my answer to Mr Rennie's question.

The Scottish Government has contributed to, and has continued to work with stakeholders to expand, the evidence base on our taxpayer behaviour. HMRC is currently finalising publication of the new longitudinal data set, which is intended to be published later this year. The new data set will show taxpayer migration across the UK by tax band. That will provide a valuable addition to the evidence base, which I am sure that Opposition parties and members across the chamber will welcome.

Town Centres (Investment)

2. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to invest in and revitalise town centres in urban areas. (S6O-03159)

The Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning (Joe FitzPatrick): We are committed to supporting the vibrancy and vitality of our town and neighbourhood centres as we continue to implement the world-leading town centre first principle and support progress through delivery of the town centre action plan.

Support for town centre regeneration has been backed by our capital investment programmes,

including the place-based investment programme, the regeneration capital fund and the vacant and derelict land investment programme, all of which have helped to accelerate shared ambitions for town centre action. However, the United Kingdom Government's reduction in our capital budget will impact the support that we can provide in 2024-25.

Fulton MacGregor: High streets were always valuable community centres for urban areas. They provided an opportunity to shop locally and engage with neighbours, friends, family and the wider community. Urban centres, such as Coatbridge in my constituency, have suffered from a lack of footfall since the pandemic and before it, along with other issues such as fuel costs, labour shortages and inflation. What support can the Scottish Government give to current businesses that are struggling on our high streets because of high energy costs, labour shortages, Brexit and the impact of inflation on goods and services due to the current UK Government's maladministration of the economy?

Joe FitzPatrick: Fulton MacGregor has made strong points, particularly in relation to the impact of Brexit, which we did not vote for in Scotland, and in relation to inflationary pressures, which were made much worse by the disastrous Truss-Kwarteng budget, which was supported by Conservatives in the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish budget continues to support business and communities with a competitive non-domestic rates package. We have frozen the basic property rate that is levied on properties with a rateable value of up to £51,000, and delivered the lowest such rate in the United Kingdom for six consecutive years. That will save ratepayers an estimated £37 million in 2024-25, compared with an inflationary increase. We are also offering a package of reliefs in 2024-25 that are worth an estimated £685 million. That includes maintaining the small business bonus scheme, which I think remains the most generous scheme of its kind across the UK.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a number of supplementary questions. I will try to get all of them in, but the questions and responses will have to be brief.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): The recent announcement of the suspension of the regeneration capital grant fund has come as a blow, particularly to Springburn in Glasgow, which had hoped to get capital investment as a result of that funding award. Will the minister agree to meet me and, indeed, all colleagues who represent the area to look at how we can invest in Springburn? It sorely needs that capital investment.

Joe FitzPatrick: The challenges to the capital investment budget are genuine. A 10 per cent

reduction to our capital investment budget over the next five or so years is really challenging. Paul Sweeney will be aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will bring the issue of capital spending back to the chamber in order that that can be looked at properly.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Will the minister join me in commending South Lanarkshire Council for introducing ambitious town centre master plans for Hamilton and East Kilbride? Will the Government outline how it will support local authorities, which have seen a massive decline in the number of planning officers and other experts in local government? How can we get more resources and support for our planning departments?

Joe FitzPatrick: The Government welcomes all our work on regeneration with local authorities. My Convention of Scottish Local Authorities colleague Gail Macgregor is a Conservative. That is one of those issues on which we really try to work in collaboration across the parties to do what is right for the area.

The reduction in the capital budget is really challenging. Monica Lennon asked about planning resources. I am sure that she will be pleased to hear that we have just launched a consultation to consider how we can properly resource our planning system across Scotland. We are looking at a range of options for how we do our business and how planning regimes across Scotland can be properly and fully funded.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Paul O'Kane, who should be brief.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): The minister will recognise that, when large employers leave a town, the impact on the town centre can be substantial. Since the Inverclyde socioeconomic task force was formed, 1,200 jobs have been lost in the local economy, and the position will worsen if EE leaves the community.

The local council has invested £72 million in capital projects to regenerate the town centre. When will the Government come to the table, get involved with the socioeconomic task force, and make the impact that we are already seeing from the council—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Be as brief as possible, minister.

Paul O'Kane: —to keep jobs in Inverclyde and improve the town centre?

Joe FitzPatrick: That takes us slightly outwith my portfolio. Those important issues really matter to local people. Paul O'Kane will be aware that the Scottish Government is engaging closely with the task force.

Autumn and Spring Statements

3. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact on its financial planning process of the United Kingdom Government having autumn and spring statements, in light of reported calls for a multiyear budget approach. (S6O-03160)

The Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance (Tom Arthur): In short, that process does not have a positive impact. Due to the lateness of the autumn statement and the lack of any advanced sight of the impacts of the decisions that have been taken in the autumn statement, our budget process was later than we would have desired. Now, only a week on from stage 3 of our Budget (Scotland) (No 3) Bill being voted on in this Parliament, we have a UK spring budget, which will have an impact on our budget plans.

We recognise that greater certainty over the medium term would help organisations to plan ahead but, sadly, we are tied to the UK budget process, which is rendering it nearly impossible to deliver that meaningfully. After all, we are still in a position in which we have faced more negative consequentials to financial transactions in recent weeks. Therefore, even after our budgets have been set, they are still open to being impacted by UK Government actions.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the minister for that comprehensive reply.

It is clear that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's two UK Westminster budgets in less than four months, which are desperately aimed at holding on to a few extra seats, can only play havoc with Scotland's budgeting processes. Nevertheless, the Accounts Commission has long argued that, even in such circumstances, long-term budgeting will still bring efficiencies and better service delivery for local authorities. Is that not also the case with the Scottish Government?

Tom Arthur: Indeed. Given the disappointment of both the autumn budget statement and the spring budget statement, we are considering our resource spending outlook in light of further funding changes and the actions that are needed to deliver sustainable finances.

The Scottish Government continues to review and to seek to improve its financial planning processes, including by improving multiyear planning through spending reviews to support better planning overall. We also recognise that certainty over the medium term would help organisations to plan ahead.

It will take time to analyse the impacts of the chancellor's statement on Scotland and the people

of Scotland before we can set out next steps. We are considering the implications for the Scottish budget of what the chancellor has set out today, and we will take proposals to the Cabinet for consideration before the Deputy First Minister returns to Parliament in due course.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): On the multiyear theme, the Scottish Government said last year:

"wherever possible multi-year certainty will be provided to support strategic planning and investment"

for local authorities. What progress has been made on that?

Tom Arthur: As I touched on in my earlier remarks, we are seeking to do that and to engage with our partners. What makes this a challenge—as was discussed yesterday at the Finance and Public Administration Committee—is the uncertainty around our fiscal position with regard to the UK Government. We face that uncertainty throughout the year due to the rhythm of UK fiscal events.

We will continue to engage with partners to identify ways in which we can provide long-term certainty but, ultimately, if our budget is subject to long-term uncertainty because of actions of the UK Government, that makes it very difficult for us to provide certainty to partners.

National Care Service (Budget)

4. Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what spending it has allocated from its budget to date for its plans for a national care service. (S6O-03161)

The Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance (Tom Arthur): Up to the end of January, £8.6 million has been spent out of a total planned budget of £10 million from the 2023-24 budget.

Meghan Gallacher: Everyone agrees that we need to vastly improve people's experiences of accessing and delivering social care in Scotland. However, the Scottish National Party's plan to spend as much as £2.2 billion to stick the words "Scottish national" in front of our care service is not the answer. The reality is that councils cannot afford to take on the financial cost of implementing a national care service. They need fair funding from the Government, which it has refused to deliver year on year. As with the roll-out of free childcare, is the Scottish Government setting up our social care service to fail?

Tom Arthur: There are two points. We are engaging constructively with partners and a significant reduction in costs has been projected. We will continue to look at all opportunities to

lower costs and maximise finance and resource to the front line. However, no Conservative can come to the chamber and start criticising the Government on the fiscal settlement for local government. When the member wants to cut public spending by £1.5 billion through a tax cut that would disproportionately benefit the best-off in society, that is simply not a consistent position, and the people of Scotland can see right through it.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The latest financial memorandum for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill shows a cost range of up to 50 per cent. Given that we will vote on the bill in a matter of weeks, will we know the final cost before we vote?

Tom Arthur: As the member will appreciate, significant work on the bill has been undertaken by the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, and that work is continuing ahead of stage 2. The minister is committed to continuing to engage with members to provide as much information as possible to Parliament ahead of that consideration.

Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Meetings)

5. Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when the finance secretary last met the United Kingdom Government and what was discussed. (S6O-03162)

The Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance (Tom Arthur): The Deputy First Minister spoke to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury this morning, ahead of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement, and she reiterated the need to prioritise investment in public services and infrastructure over tax cuts. That followed a meeting in January at which she set out the Scottish Government's priorities for the UK budget. I wrote to the chief secretary last month, and the Deputy First Minister wrote to the chancellor, urging him to invest in public services and provide targeted support for people in light of the cost of living crisis.

We are examining today's UK budget in detail and what it means for the Scottish budget.

Collette Stevenson: The Tory Government's spring budget that was announced today will do little to improve capital investment and it has failed to match Scotland's lead on social security. There is no UK equivalent of the Scottish child payment and no essentials guarantee for people on universal credit. The budget will do nothing to lift people out of poverty.

I appreciate that the announcement has not long finished, but can the minister outline the potential consequences for people in Scotland of the UK

Government's statement? Can he confirm how the Scottish National Party, in government, is ensuring that we are investing to strengthen the social contract and lift people out of poverty?

Tom Arthur: Despite our calling on the chancellor to provide an essentials guarantee and to abolish damaging policies such as the two-child limit and the bedroom tax, the UK Government, in its budget, has failed to tackle poverty. We are carefully considering the implications of today's announcement for the Scottish budget, and the Deputy First Minister will report back to Parliament in due course.

Through the Scottish budget, we are mitigating as best we can the UK Government's actions. I am proud that, in 2024-25, we will invest £6.3 billion in social security benefits and that an estimated 100,000 fewer children will live in relative and absolute poverty as a result of our policies.

Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (Report)

6. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has received a final report from the Scottish local authorities remuneration committee. (S6O-03163)

The Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning (Joe FitzPatrick): The Scottish local authorities remuneration committee's recommendations report was published on the Scottish Government website on 16 February this year.

David Torrance: Increasing the diversity of councillors is a priority that is shared by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government. Does the minister agree that the recommendations in the report, including the suggestion that severance payments be introduced for councillors who lose office, would help to tackle existing barriers to recruitment and retention?

Joe FitzPatrick: It is worth putting on the record that, many years ago, when I ceased being a councillor before becoming an MSP, I received a severance payment.

Being a councillor can involve a significant amount of important work in local communities, and the terms and conditions should reflect that. It is important that remuneration does not act as a barrier to encouraging a diverse range of people to stand for elected office. We want to encourage people from across our communities to stand to be councillors in their local areas. The Scottish local authorities remuneration committee report makes a number of recommendations that require appropriate deliberation, which the Scottish Government will take forward in partnership with COSLA.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): The Scottish local authorities remuneration committee recommends that resettlement severance payments be introduced for councillors who lose office. That would be modelled on the system that is applied to MSPs and it would be in place for the next election cycle. Has the minister been made aware of any costings for such an arrangement? If so, can he explain what data has been used to inform the costings and will he provide the chamber with that?

Joe FitzPatrick: As I said in answer to Mr Torrance, there are 22 recommendations in the report, and it is important that we look at those in partnership with our local government colleagues and then bring back proposals for deliberation. If there are any changes, I am pretty sure that the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee will take an interest in that. We will come back to Parliament in the usual way with any actions that we intend to take.

This is probably a good point to thank the members of SLARC for their hard work. They took a broad approach to the issue and I hope that we can all get behind that piece of work. It is important that we take that forward in partnership with our local government colleagues.

Sheriffhall Roundabout (Budget)

7. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how much it will allocate through its budget to fund any potential cost increases related to improvements to the A720 city bypass grade separation of Sheriffhall roundabout. (S6O-03164)

The Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance (Tom Arthur): Despite the stark challenges that we face as a result of the United Kingdom Government budget settlement, the Scottish Government remains committed to delivering the grade separation of Sheriffhall roundabout as part of our £300 million commitment to the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal. Indeed, we continue to progress the proposed improvements through the statutory process so that we can deliver the scheme as soon as possible.

As with all projects, construction of the improvements can commence only if they are approved under the statutory authorisation process. Thereafter, a timetable for progress can be set, in line with the annual Scottish budget-setting process.

Miles Briggs: It has now been more than a year since the public inquiry into the matter closed. Why is it taking so long for that to report? What assessment have ministers made of potential cost increases for the project? Given that the Scottish

Government and the UK Government have committed £300 million to the project, it is clear that the huge delay—we are now in the middle of this session of Parliament—will have cost implications. What does that look like, and when will ministers make that information public?

Tom Arthur: I recognise Mr Briggs's long-standing interest in and campaigning on the matter. As he will appreciate, a statutory process is under way, and it is important that that process is respected. As he is aware, the independent reporter has submitted their conclusions and recommendations, which are under active consideration prior to a decision being made by Scottish ministers. As I stated in my original answer, I reassure Mr Briggs of the Scottish Government's commitment in the area, but I am sure that he appreciates and recognises that we need to observe and uphold the statutory process.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 8 was not lodged. That concludes portfolio question time.

Ending Violence in Schools

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-12389, in the name of Liam Kerr, on ending violence in Scottish schools.

14:47

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Presiding Officer,

“Assaulted when 5 months pregnant—resulted in a bleed and hospital visit”;

“I had a mild concussion last session, due to being struck with an object”;

“PSAs are being used as punching bags and their and teachers mental health is awful.”

Those are just three of the many terrifying quotes in the recent “Violence and Aggressive Behaviour” report by the Aberdeen local association of the Educational Institute of Scotland. The report says that one third of teachers have been attacked in class, that two thirds have experienced assaults in the past five years and that more than 40 per cent see a violent pupil every day. It is a harrowing and sobering read.

A similar survey from November last year shows that incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour, disengagement and serious disruptive behaviour are taking place and are increasing across the country.

Indeed, there is plenty of qualitative data out there. Data from last year shows that three teachers were hospitalised after attacks by former pupils; that a primary school teacher was left with a life-changing disability and in severe pain daily, unable to hold her baby daughter, after being attacked in the classroom; and that teachers are reporting being spat at, head-butted, punched and kicked, and having furniture, including chairs, thrown at them.

Quantitative data shows that nearly four in 10 teachers reported experiencing violence or physical abuse from pupils in the previous 12 months; that more than 27,000 teachers and school staff have been signed off with stress or poor mental health in the past five years; and that the proportion of secondary school support staff who have experienced violence between pupils has risen from fewer than one in five to almost one in two. In survey after survey, huge numbers of teachers report that they are seriously considering leaving the profession. That is truly terrifying.

Such behaviour lies at the root of so many of the issues that our education system faces today, but I get from my conversations with many stakeholders the sense that people see little practical action being taken and are rapidly losing faith in the

Government’s willingness or ability to solve the problem.

I cite as my authority the fact that, after last summer’s Conservative motion that demanded action on violence in schools, the Government called several behaviour summits that have yet to report. People need to know that the Education, Children and Young People Committee asked to have representatives at those summits, but the request was refused.

Shortly after that, Willie Rennie, Pam Duncan-Glancy and I jointly wrote to the Government and pleaded to be included. We explained that we wanted to put politics aside and help by bringing our own experiences and the testimony of our constituents to the table. Our request was refused. We learned in committee last week that one group that really understands the point about behaviour as communication and thus can really add value—the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists—has also not been engaged in the behaviour summits.

That sense of drift was reinforced in November. During a ministerial statement, it was suggested that the problem lies with teachers, in so far as they are not sufficiently well trained to deal with it. The statement set out plans to make an action plan. Months passed in which nothing meaningful happened until, on 20 February, the EIS published its report. The accompanying press release talked of teachers reporting broken bones and post-traumatic stress disorder.

I would have moved heaven and earth to get my hands on that report: indeed, I did—I have it here. However, six days later, the cabinet secretary confessed on live television that she had yet to read it. The following day, the First Minister confirmed that he had not got round to reading it, either.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth): Liam Kerr has raised a number of issues that I hope to come to in my speech, but it is worth putting on the record that the EIS in Aberdeen had not sent me a copy of the report on that day. We have been able to obtain a copy from Aberdeen City Council. It is important that I engage the local authority on the issue, which is why, on Friday of that week, I travelled to Aberdeen to engage with the local authority on the substantive matters in the report. I hope that the member recognises that point.

Liam Kerr: I do, but I also point out that I managed to get hold of the report. What concerned people was the cabinet secretary’s statement that said:

“I don’t oversee education locally. That’s a matter for the local authority”;

that

“The appropriate response here is a matter for Aberdeen City Council”;

and that the report was merely a local “snapshot”. We know that none of those is the right response. I suspect that, on reflection, the cabinet secretary agrees.

This is absolutely a Scottish Government issue, and there is no shortage of solutions. The solutions are actually set out in the EIS’s “Stand up for quality education” campaign and the Aberdeen EIS report that I referred to, in the NASUWT’s “Better deal for Scotland’s teachers” campaign, and in the representations that we are all getting from Scotland’s teachers and educationists, including Professor Lindsay Paterson, as well as YouthLink Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Throughout this afternoon, members will articulate those solutions and, no doubt, their own. However, I will set out my overall thoughts. The SNP Government must take responsibility—this is a devolved matter and the responsibility lies four square at this Government’s door. There must be proper national data collation by the Government, which will stem from trusted consistent reporting by teachers who have been given faith in the system—something that has been picked up in the Labour amendment, which we will vote for.

There must be a proper strategy in place. In Aberdeen alone, the majority of teachers believe that their schools lack effective strategies to address violence. The strategy must start with real boundaries and proper consequences, including the possibility of exclusion. We must empower headteachers, and the Government must finally honour its promises, which were made 17 years ago, on reducing class sizes.

Finally, the Government must look beyond its siloed thinking on education—my colleagues will talk more about that—because behaviour is often a function of issues that are generated and experienced outside, and are unrelated to, the school or the environment in which people are schooled.

The time for talking is over: actually, it was over years ago. The time for real action is right now. There must be no more behind-closed-doors discussion groups that never seem to report, no more slopey-shouldering to cash-strapped local authorities and putting the blame on teachers, and no more ignoring powerful reports. For every moment in which nothing is done, our kids and our teachers are being mentally and physically assaulted. Our parents despair because they are sending their children to school uncertain of their safety and uncertain about what is happening in their classrooms while they are trying to learn.

Parliament—vote for my motion. For the sake of all in our schools, let us get on with it.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that no pupil, teacher or member of school staff should suffer physical or verbal abuse and that every child and young person has the right to an uninterrupted school day, free from violence and disruption; notes the impact that the current escalation of violence in schools has had on the teaching profession, especially in relation to retention and mental health; further notes, with concern, the alarming reports of instances of violence and disruption, and calls on the Scottish Government to support parents, teachers and staff, assisting them in promoting acceptable behaviour and tackling instances of violence and disruption; calls on the Scottish Government to support children and young people impacted by violence and disruption in schools and to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow, and further calls on all Members of the Scottish Parliament to work together in tackling the seriousness of this issue, diligently and without delay.

14:55

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Jenny Gilruth): I am grateful to the Scottish Conservatives for securing this afternoon’s debate on ending violence in Scottish schools. The Government will agree to the Conservative motion, and it is in that spirit that I look forward to engaging with members throughout the debate. I have accepted the text of the Conservative motion because, in many ways, the parties that are represented across the chamber are not far apart on the issue. We are all striving for our schools and classrooms to be free from violence and disruption—for them to be places where our young people can learn and our teaching staff can work.

I am absolutely clear that our schools should be safe and consistent learning environments for all, and that no teacher or support assistant should face violence or abusive behaviour in their place of work. I also reiterate in the strongest possible terms my position on the need for more accurate recording of all incidents of inappropriate, abusive or violent behaviour in our schools, and I continue to encourage all schools to do that today.

It very much remains my view that we must continue to strengthen the evidence base that Liam Kerr spoke about in order to inform improvements at school and local authority level, even if that means that the number of reported incidents rises.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): Does Jenny Gilruth agree that there is a difference between the health and safety data on safety in schools and the data that she is talking about, which is the educationally environmental data, if I may use that phrase?

Jenny Gilruth: There is, indeed, an important differentiation to be made in relation to that data. I agree with the member on that point.

I wish to reflect on some of the key findings at national level. Mr Kerr spoke about some of this data in his speech, and it stems from the BISS research—“Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2023”—that was published at the end of last year. It is worth pointing out that the previous time when data was collected was 2016, so we expected to see a change in relation to behaviour patterns. The evidence demonstrates that most children and young people are well behaved in class and around the school. It is important that we do not lose sight of that fact, but low-level disruptive behaviour, disengagement and some forms of serious disruptive behaviour have increased since 2016, including increases in behaviour such as violence and abuse between pupils and towards staff. Of particular concern is the fact that we are for the first time seeing more regular displays of violent behaviours among our youngest children—for example, in primaries 1 to 3.

Colleagues will recall that, back in November last year, I set out a five-step plan to respond to the BISS research. I will today provide to Parliament an update on that work. First, I committed to a dedicated approach in responding to issues related to misogyny, given the concerning findings in BISSR and in other research that has been provided by our teaching unions. Data that was produced by the NASUWT back in November showed that female teachers experience double the level of verbal abuse that their male counterparts experience. Furthermore, according to a national EIS survey among its branches, 51 per cent of teachers believe that boys are much more likely to exhibit violence and aggressive behaviours towards women teachers than they are towards their male teachers.

Liam Kerr: I absolutely share the cabinet secretary’s concern about misogyny and its impacts. Regarding the response to that, I was really interested by the cabinet secretary’s remarks at the weekend that she would support a move away from restorative justice and would back teachers who are prepared to exclude the most violent and unruly pupils. Can she give us more details on that, and on when we might have standardised guidance for teachers?

Jenny Gilruth: It is important to say that restorative practices are part of a relational approach that has been proved to have an impact in respect of the preventative action that teachers can take. I say in response to Mr Kerr’s point that we also need a modern approach to consequences, which is what the national action plan will set out. In that regard, I give Mr Kerr the undertaking that the wider work in which the

Scottish advisory group on relationships and behaviour in schools—SAGRABIS—is involved, through the national action plan, will consider a review of the exclusions policy that is currently in place in our schools.

As is reflected in the BISSR report, concern has been focused on the increase in online personalities supporting forms of toxic masculinity that seek to degrade women. That shift in popular culture—normalising of abuse that was long thought to have been consigned to the past—should be viewed through the lens of understanding that teaching in Scotland continues to be a female-dominated workplace.

There is an inherent gendered aspect to behaviour shifts in the classroom, which I hope we will all reflect on this week. I was pleased, on Monday, to launch, with the First Minister, the action framework on gender-based violence in schools. The framework gives guidance to schools on preventing and responding to gender-based violence in our schools.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary explain why no gendered analysis of that framework was done?

Jenny Gilruth: I am happy to write to Pam Duncan-Glancy with more detail on that. Given the number of stakeholders—including Zero Tolerance and Rape Crisis Scotland—that we involved in work on the framework, I would be surprised if we had not taken a gendered approach to it, but I am more than happy to speak to officials and to write to the member with more detail.

Liam Kerr touched on funding; I will touch on it in relation to staff training. It is important to say that the reason why the Government committed a limited amount of funding to support staff training is that it was one of the key factors that the BISSR flagged up. It was a call from Scotland’s support staff, who are often less well paid than our teachers, but bear the brunt of some of the most challenging behaviour in our schools.

I turn to Liam Kerr’s points about the Aberdeen EIS report. That report directly references staff support and training. It suggests that we

“Provide more support and training for staff, especially in managing aggressive behaviour”.

I listen to reports such as that and reflect that there is more that we can do in that space, given that that is a direct request from the profession.

It is important to say that progress is being made on the national action plan. I hope to come back to that in my closing speech; it is not the end of the road. Responding to the post-Covid challenges in Scotland’s schools is not just about behaviour; it is also about strong parental engagement, attendance, lifting heads and raising

ambition for our young people. I look forward to contributions from members on the shared aspiration of us all to support our teachers and enable all our young people to flourish in their education.

I move amendment S6M-12389.2, to insert at end:

“, alongside local authorities, schools, teachers and young people themselves; recognises the work that is already underway to respond to these challenges, including the joint national action plan with COSLA, which will publish in the spring; welcomes the publication of the gender-based violence in schools framework, which it agrees is a necessary step in responding to the increase in misogynistic behaviours identified by the behaviour in Scottish schools research and reports by teaching unions, and reaffirms, in the week of International Women’s Day, the need to end misogyny in Scotland’s schools and wider society.”

15:02

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): I apologise for arriving a wee bit late to the debate, Deputy Presiding Officer.

Two weeks ago, the EIS survey of nearly 800 of its members in Aberdeen found that almost half had reported daily violence and more than a third had been physically assaulted. Those incidents are a warning that something has gone badly wrong in education at the hands of a Government that once said that it was its priority.

Back in December, the cabinet secretary came to the chamber to speak on the issue, and, during that exchange, I believed that the Government had finally recognised the scale of the challenge and I hoped that that was a signal that it was ready to act.

I have since come to realise that that hope was misplaced, because, since then, we have seen scant action. Teachers, school staff and pupils continue to be distressed. No guidance has been issued on consequences, data collection or support from senior management for staff who are affected. Despite questions from across the chamber, we have little detail of the national action plan that the Government promised other than that it is expected in the spring. By that point, we will be nearing the end of another academic year, and a whole year will have been wasted since we first debated the issue in the chamber. Worst of all, the Government has cut education and local authority budgets, leaving teachers facing job losses, support staff without much-needed additional resource and pupils without mentor programmes that help them to improve their life chances.

Last week’s report should have been the final jolt into action that was needed. However, the cabinet secretary not only said that she had not read it but tried to pass the buck to the council.

The situation in schools is not isolated to one area of Scotland. It is systemic, and I believe that the cabinet secretary knows that. This was a moment to show leadership, to wake up, to turn up and step up, and to give the generation of young people who are being failed the respect that they deserve. However, I am afraid that the Government turned away.

We have had three debates on the topic in the chamber, and not one of them has been led by the Government. Yet again, the answers have been left to the Opposition. I accept the cabinet secretary’s acknowledgment that the situation is difficult and will not be resolved overnight, but the hard reality is that, if the cabinet secretary does nothing, it will not be resolved at all. As a teacher who wrote in *Tes* at the weekend said, there will be no teachers or staff left to get it right for every child.

The stakes could not be higher. The future of our young people and their education is at risk. So, without the office of cabinet secretary or a civil service behind me, Scottish Labour has done the Government’s work again. We met pupils, parents, staff, teachers and unions. We listened and we showed leadership. We have made it clear that teachers must feel safe at work, that pupils must be able to go to school and feel safe to learn, and that parents must be able to leave their children at the school gate without worrying about their safety. We would take a zero-tolerance approach to violence and poor behaviour and to the impossible situation that the Government has created in schools, which leads to it.

Just as behaviour has consequences, so, too, do the Government’s cuts and actions. Its failure to deliver the promised non-contact time, to reduce class sizes, to end the burden of excessive workload and to implement the recommendations of the Morgan review have made things worse. The Government should start there. It should also gather national and anonymised data to create an inspection indicator for teacher wellbeing, so that we can properly understand the scale of the problem.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Pam Duncan-Glancy and I are on the Education, Children and Young People Committee, and she will understand—as I do—that behaviour is communication. What would a zero-tolerance approach look like to a dysregulated autistic pupil who was lashing out and hurting somebody? How would a zero-tolerance approach deal with that?

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I thank Ruth Maguire for her intervention. She is quite right. We heard only this morning that distressed behaviour is almost always a communication. We would have a zero-tolerance approach to a Government that keeps cutting things that would support pupils in that

environment. If a child needs to move from a classroom but there is nowhere to put them, meaning that support staff have to spend time with them under staircases and in cupboards, and if no class is available for them to learn in or there are no support staff available to support them, how can we possibly provide the environment that young people in Scotland need? I think that Ruth Maguire knows that.

We have to empower teachers to develop and set rules of engagement in their classrooms and, importantly, to enforce them with clear guidance about the consequences, not as a punishment—this speaks to the point that has just been made—but so that pupils know what is expected of them. We need to empower teachers to set boundaries that create the conditions for pupils to learn best, so that they know that we want them to be safe and to succeed in classrooms where nothing distracts from the opportunity to learn.

A zero-tolerance approach also means ensuring that teachers and school staff can report incidents in the knowledge that senior leaders will support them, that they have a right to a debrief and to consider next steps, and, crucially—this is the point that Ruth Maguire made—to pick up on issues that might have caused the behaviour in the first place. That cannot be overstated. All behaviour is a method of communication, and distressed behaviour is a sign that things are not okay.

We will not tolerate a system that is so stretched that the root causes of poor behaviour are never picked up and never addressed. I, too, was taken aback when the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists confirmed in committee that the Government has not engaged with it on that matter. Getting to the bottom of the situation needs proper multi-agency work and a whole-community approach, but the system has crumbled to such an extent that support has faded away. There is now only one educational psychologist to 600 pupils who need one. Child and adolescent mental health services waiting lists are so long that children's mental health is going unsupported, and only 0.2 per cent of pupils with additional support needs have access to a plan to address them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Ms Duncan-Glancy, I have to ask you to bring your remarks to a close, please.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: Support staff are providing help in corridors because there is nowhere to turn. Unions have solutions. Teachers have solutions. Scottish Labour has solutions. I hope that the Government will now act. If it does, I stand ready to support it.

15:08

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): This is a human rights issue. It is often perceived that, if someone wants action to deal with behaviour, distress, violence or whatever we call it, they are somehow in favour of punishment and against understanding. That is not where I am. The minister has heard me say previously that there has been great movement since I was at school. There was lots of punishment then and there is now a lot of understanding, but perhaps we understand a little bit too much. It is about getting the balance right. We need to provide a safe place in school for learning purposes, but we also need to understand the root causes of distress and the variety of different reasons why it is sometimes exhibited in violence and poor behaviour.

It is often said that we need to get it right for every child—that is the slogan and the brand—but some pupils, parents and teachers think that we get it right for the subject child but not for everyone else in the class. That needs to be taken into account when we devise policies.

There is an interconnection between additional support for learning and factors such as absence, distress and violent behaviour—they are all interlinked. I have had two of the sort of cases that Liam Kerr pointed out. The most striking recent example involved a mother of a daughter in Edinburgh. She did not have much money, but, because her daughter was going through hell at school, she decided that she would pay to put her into a private school. She could not afford it, but she thought that she had to do it for the sake of her child. If we are getting to a state in which a state school cannot provide a safe environment and families are having to put their children into private care to keep them safe, something has gone wrong.

I think that we have made progress in that there is now an open debate and there is no shame in teachers saying that they have had enough and speaking out. That is a good bit of progress. The minister's acknowledgement of the issue in her statement last year was also progress. Violence in schools is now recognised as an issue that we can openly debate and discuss.

The statement at the weekend about exclusions and the subsequent remarks today about consequences are a step in the right direction. The Government is sending signals to headteachers, education leaders, local authorities and teachers that the education secretary will have their back if they make a professional judgment that the right thing to do in certain circumstances is to remove a child from a school—to remove them not to nothing, but to other support. Exclusion should not be excluded but should be a consideration.

What is next? I think that we need to look at the nurture programme. If it is implemented badly, it results in an incentive for some people to behave badly. It should be more inclusive. It should not be seen to single out individuals who behave badly for special treatment. We need to look at that.

An interesting fact that came up at last week's Education, Children and Young People Committee evidence session on additional support for learning was that the design of new school buildings needs to be taken into account. Sometimes, those large, open-space buildings are not designed to deal with additional support for learning requirements.

The guidance needs to be updated, and we have had an indication from the minister that that will happen. It needs to set out boundaries and clear consequences. If we can get all those factors in place to send a clear signal to teachers, that will be a step in the right direction.

The one issue that we cannot ignore is that of resources, although it is tough to address it, especially in difficult financial times. We need to implement the reduction in contact time and give teachers more space. We need to give them the resources, the additional speech and language therapists and the additional specialist support that allows them to upskill to be able to deal with the behaviours in their class. If we can do all of those things, we might make some progress on the issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Back-bench speeches should be of up to four minutes.

15:12

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I want to take a bit of a different tack and look at the issue through a wider lens.

On Sunday, I had the great privilege of being at the world championship coaches club, where I got to speak to and listen to some of the best coaches in the world. We got on to the topic of the impact of sport on our society and the common issues that we face. Sometimes, we look at such problems as though we are the only ones who are facing them. They talked about the reduction in access to facilities, the ever-increasing screen time that our kids have and the influence of social media, all of which are impacting behaviour.

One of the top coaches sent me the following email from a parent who encourages her daughter to participate. I will read it out, because it encapsulates far better than I could the part that sport plays in our children's development. She said:

"People always asked 'Why do you pay so much money for your kid to do sports?' Well I have a confession to make; I don't pay for my kid to do sports. Personally, I couldn't care less about what sport she does.

So, if I am not paying for sports what am I paying for?

I pay for those moments when my kid becomes so tired she wants to quit but doesn't.

I pay for those days when my kid comes home from school and is 'too tired' to go to her training but she goes anyway.

I pay for my kid to learn to be disciplined, focused and dedicated.

I pay for my kid to learn to take care of her body and learn how to correctly fuel her body for success.

I pay for my kid to learn to work with others and to be a good team mate, gracious in defeat and humble in success.

I pay for my kid to learn to deal with disappointment, when they don't get that placing or title they'd hoped for, but still they go back week after week giving it their best shot.

I pay for my kid to learn to make and accomplish goals.

I pay for my kid to respect, not only themselves, but others, officials, judges and coaches.

I pay for my kid to learn that it takes hours and hours, years and years of hard work and practice to create a champion and that success does not happen overnight.

I pay for my kid to be proud of small achievements, and to work towards long term goals.

I pay for the opportunity my child has and will have to make life-long friendships, create lifelong memories, to be as proud of her achievements as I am.

I pay so that my child can be in the gym instead of in front of a screen ...

I pay for those rides home where we make precious memories talking about practice, both good and bad.

I pay so that my child can learn the importance of time management and balancing what is important like school and keeping grades up ... I could go on but, to be short, I don't pay for sports; I pay for the opportunities that sports provides my kid with to develop attributes that will serve her well throughout her life and give her the opportunity to bless the lives of others. From what I have seen so far I think it is a great investment!"

When we consider solutions to escalating school violence, we have to stop talking about it as if it is an issue in isolation. Our education cluster—which is led by my colleague Liam Kerr—has been discussing how we can tackle a combination of issues at school, such as poor behaviour, poor physical and mental health, lack of attainment, hunger and malnutrition. Malnutrition can be a very different issue from hunger. All of those issues are linked. I put forward the idea that we should offer activity prior to the traditional start of the school day. It does not matter what that activity is. It could be physical activity, music, art, drama or even software writing for video games—anything that captures pupils' imaginations. While

pupils are participating, we could tell them, “By the way, there’s breakfast over there.”

I ran that idea past the NASUWT union on Saturday, at a fringe event that was hosted by my colleague Liam Kerr, and it agreed that it would be a significant intervention. Would it cost money? Of course, it would cost money. Would doing it prevent many of the issues that we currently have to foot the bill for? Absolutely. It is time to get out of the silos and start thinking about long-term strategic solutions. I am afraid that, without appropriate nutrition, activity and interest, it will not matter what we do in the classroom—issues such as school violence will prevail. It is the school environment that needs to change, not the curriculum.

15:17

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): It is important to note that the majority of Scotland’s pupils are well behaved. However, there has undoubtedly been a marked increase in disruptive behaviour, and absolutely no teacher, member of staff or pupil should have to suffer abuse in our schools. All children and young people have a right to a learning environment in which they are protected and cared for and their rights and needs are respected. I welcome the opportunity to discuss and hear from colleagues about how we can achieve that.

My contribution in the previous debate on this topic focused on gender inequality and violence against women and girls in Scottish schools. I supported Zero Tolerance Scotland in its ask that the Scottish Government should recognise and prioritise violence against women and girls in all discussions about behaviour and violence in schools. I was not the only member to be horrified by the extent to which fear of violence was preventing girls from participating fully in education. It is therefore right that I welcome the Scottish Government publishing a dedicated approach for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in schools. The framework encompasses testimony from young people and staff and sets out how schools can use education, with an emphasis on compassion, to challenge societal views that normalise gender-based violence. Addressing gender inequality in education will tackle issues such as violence, bullying, attendance and attainment, and it will positively impact the experience of girls, teachers and boys in schools. The framework is a positive step towards that, and implementation of it will be key.

The Education, Children and Young People Committee is in the midst of an inquiry into additional support for learning in Scotland. Some of the evidence that we have recently taken can

provide helpful points of reflection for the debate. We all understand that behaviour is communication and that speech, language and communication are crucial for attachment, relationships and learning. A young person developing good communication skills and their communication needs being met can act as a protective factor against mental health issues and are important for attainment and behaviour. The committee heard from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists that, although demand has increased since prior to the pandemic, a focus on waiting lists alone could be unhelpful and that a way forward in addressing unmet communication need in school could be taking a whole-system approach.

We heard from an experienced teacher in the same evidence session that there are challenges to being able to participate in training, including being able to obtain cover for classes. She shared that speech therapists being embedded in schools or school communities and being able not just to deliver training but to coach and model ways of working had felt helpful. It seems logical that the approach of having specialists closer to the population could work for a number of interventions.

The issue of time and resource is consistently raised. We cannot expect teachers to be experts on everything or to solve all society’s ills and any training will be more valuable and more impactful where there is space and time for reflective practice. That point was reiterated in an informal committee session with teachers only this week. In our conversations with both pupils and teachers, we are hearing that the impact of reductions in additional support staff is something that makes supporting all children within schools more challenging.

Addressing the issue of behaviour is not just for teachers and it is not just for schools. Creating the environment and conditions where children are protected and cared for and where their rights are upheld and promoted is a job for all of us.

15:21

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Broken fingers, stitches, and significant knee damage—those are some of the injuries reported by Fife teachers to their local EIS branch. Across Fife last year, over 3,600 incidents of violence and aggression were reported in schools—those were physical incidents, violence, aggression and threat. We know that many more incidents of that type go unreported. Teachers are not reporting incidents of abuse as they do not believe that anything will be done about them. The people we trust to educate our children are at the point where

abuse has become part of their job, which is simply not acceptable.

Violence in our schools, of course, is not just directed at teachers; nor does it stop at the school gate. We have all seen the coverage of horrific assaults on school pupils that have been shared on social media, including an attack in a classroom at Waid academy, and a 12-year-old from Ladybank who was beaten up on a bus on her way home from school. Among support staff, a GMB report found that one in six were suffering violence on a daily basis—being punched, kicked and spat on as they did their job.

I am being contacted by constituents who are concerned about increasingly disrespectful, disruptive and violent behaviour across primary and secondary schools. I am hearing from families whose children have been victims of violence and from those who have witnessed incidents. Children are telling their parents about how their learning is interrupted on a daily basis; pupils, parents and carers are concerned that schools are not a safe place to be. That is part of the national picture that the Scottish Government has a responsibility to address. Whether in Aberdeen or Aberfeldy, each one of our schools is part of an education system that has seen violence and disruptive behaviour increase. The range of contributing factors is broad, as is the required response, which must be underpinned by proper resources.

The Labour amendment draws attention to some of the wider context, including the lack of support for pupils with additional support needs. Figures from last year on the number of pupils in schools with ASN show that they represent well over a third of the pupil population, and the number has almost doubled in the past decade. However, during that time, related support provision has not increased. There have been budgetary cuts and a lack of on-going support not just for those with ASN but for the school staff working with them.

The Government amendment wants us to recognise the action that is being taken, but plan after plan does not mean that the necessary support is being delivered. Acknowledging the scale of the problem is only the first step, and, although the summits are a positive move, they took too long to happen and it must be demonstrated that they are more than talking shops. The publication this week of the framework on gender-based violence is welcome, but it highlights the importance of addressing underlying causes as well as demonstrating that instances of violence and abuse are not tolerated and should not be seen as part of school life.

Local councils are seeking to take steps where they can but they are doing so within budgetary

constraints. In Fife, we have seen some positive action around increasing pupil support assistance time and through personal and social education on behaviours. The piloting of a model basing a social worker in secondary schools to work with young people who need extra support and plans to recruit more guidance staff are other examples of local action.

Peer work in schools is important. Although the publication of the framework on gender-based violence is welcome, we should recognise that the mentors in violence prevention programme has been working with young people to help them to challenge attitudes and behaviours safely in their schools and other parts of their lives. I know that many young people have found the programme valuable. In a recent meeting that I had with Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre in Kirkcaldy, it was very positive about the impact of the programme.

The steps that can be taken by local authorities and by schools need to be set within a national action plan. We need the creation of clear national guidance setting out that violent and abusive behaviour is simply not acceptable, that it will not be tolerated and that schools will be supported in dealing with those behaviours. We need to ensure that our schools are a safe place for learners and teachers to be and to thrive.

15:25

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): It is one of those rare days in the Parliament when we all agree on the fact that no people, teacher or member of school staff should have to suffer abuse in our schools. Indeed, I also find myself in broad agreement with elements of the Conservative motion. I can see a few eyes rolling at that. However, it is also important to put on record that the majority of schoolchildren are well behaved, diligent and hard working.

Last week, we debated the recommendations of the independent review of qualifications and assessment. The debate highlighted the fact that the hard work and dedication of pupils and teachers is producing positive results for Scotland's school leavers, with another record high for pupils who are moving on to positive destinations. In 2022-23, more than 95 per cent of school leavers were classed as having moved to positive destinations, which includes higher education, further education, employment, training, personal skills development and voluntary work. That figure is the highest since records began in 2009-10. I believe that it is important to acknowledge that achievement in the debate, not to distract from the importance of the impact of violence in schools but simply for balance and perspective.

The impact of any violence in schools on learners and teachers can, as the motion notes, have a huge impact on all those who are affected. I agree with the motion that parliamentarians and those in government must all work together to tackle the issue, which I believe that we are doing, because we all take it seriously. As we have already heard in response to the behavioural issues in Scotland's schools research, the Government has established a five-point plan to address the issue. First on the list is a national plan for action, developed in partnership with key stakeholders and informed by headteachers from across Scotland's schools.

Although I welcome that action and others in the Government's approach, last week's debate also highlighted the fact that Scotland's children and young people hold the biggest stake in our education system and, as such, they should be heard just as strongly across our reform programme. It is my understanding that the recent behaviour in Scottish schools report did not consult widely enough with children and young people, which is something that needs to be more in sync with the Government's overall approach to put the rights of the child at the centre of its decision making.

As the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recently recommended, we should

"adopt a child rights-based approach to addressing violence or other disturbances in schools, including by prohibiting the presence of police in schools and providing regular training for teachers and relevant guidance for addressing such disturbances in a child-sensitive manner."

What does that mean in practice? It means placing children's participation and their best interests at the heart of policy and practice. Children and young people, both those who are harmed by and those who are responsible for violence, must be involved in the solutions to youth violence, both locally and nationally.

I invite the cabinet secretary to expand on the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that the voice of Scotland's children is being heard and to commit to exploring ways to ensure future participation for everyone in our schools.

15:29

Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I declare an interest as a former councillor on Moray Council. I will look at the matter from that perspective.

I start by acknowledging the fact that many pupils in our schools are well behaved, which I agree with the cabinet secretary about. That is stated in the report "Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2023". Although I cannot ignore—and most of us

are not ignoring—the worrying rise in disruption across all areas surveyed in the report, we must remember that we have many exceptional young people across Scotland. I am glad that my colleague spoke about sport and the young people who are doing so well in it.

As others have said, the report highlights that low-level and more serious disruptive behaviours, including physical and violent aggression, are increasing in Scottish schools. That view is shared by people who I have spoken to in recent days in Moray and in Argyll and Bute.

The cabinet secretary held a number of summits on behaviour in schools, but the summary of those summits, which was sent as a guidance note to councils in January, does not fully correspond with the discussions that I hear on the ground across the Highlands and Islands, or with the worrying survey on violent and aggressive behaviour by the EIS's Aberdeen local association.

Let me be absolutely clear about what I am hearing now and what I encountered when I was chair of the children and young people's services committee on Moray Council. Teachers are feeling traumatised—many fear for their safety and many are scared to go to work. Although I accept Willie Rennie's point about the complexities of additional support needs and social and emotional behavioural needs, that does not take away from what teachers are experiencing on the ground every day. The sharp rise in disruptive behaviours since 2016 is deeply troubling, and a contact told me earlier this week that things are getting so bad that more and more emergency meetings of leadership groups are being triggered over the issue.

Turning briefly to the EIS Aberdeen local association report, it bothers me, as Liam Kerr said, that the cabinet secretary implied that it would be for Aberdeen City Council to respond, not the SNP Government. I can imagine the collective dismay—

Jenny Gilruth: The recommendations in the EIS Aberdeen report, which are really important, are all for the local authority. It is important that the national action plan sets out the responsibilities for the Government and, equally, the responsibilities for local authorities. That is not to not engage with the substantive points from the report, but it is important to say that local authorities have a role in the issue. I hope that the member understands that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Tim Eagle, I will give you the time back.

Tim Eagle: I was about to come to that point.

I accept that the Government and the local authority, and, for that matter, potentially the

community, need to work together on the issue, but there was an implication in the cabinet secretary's interview that it was being passed to Aberdeen City Council. I can imagine the collective dismay of teachers and education staff across the whole of the north-east—in fact, the whole of Scotland—at her remarks. Those were not great remarks to make. Although education delivery sits with local authorities, be in no doubt that the implications of the Scottish Government's policy decisions and budgets are exacerbating the on-going situation.

COSLA has said that council leaders want to protect education and

“improve the attainment and achievement of children and young people, whilst also retaining the teachers and support staff that are required to do this.”

I am sure that we can all get behind that, but, again, it is the decisions that we make here that are putting those aims at risk. It is neither right nor fair that the Government is passing the buck to local authorities. At the very least—and this is the cabinet secretary's point—it is a shared responsibility.

Exclusions are increasing across Scotland, which we do not want to happen. The number of teachers who are considering leaving the profession is increasing. No employee should feel scared in their workplace or be a victim of intimidation or physical abuse.

The cabinet secretary needs to address the concerns, and the Government needs to take responsibility and address these issues by working with local authorities and local communities and bringing forward meaningful solutions now, not tomorrow.

15:33

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I will use my time to focus on gender-based violence. Last summer, Zero Tolerance Scotland sent a report to all MSPs that illustrated how horrifyingly commonplace it is for young women and girls to be survivors of sexual violence at school. Two in three had experienced sexual harassment in school in the past year, a third knew another girl who had experienced rape or sexual assault and one in five did not feel safe in school. The most recent surveys from the NASUWT and the EIS show that staff also experience some levels of gender-based violence.

This by no means explains the whole issue, but one of the causes of violence against women and girls in schools is that generations of boys and young men have received some kind of sex and relationship education that did not focus on the principle of consent and, in many cases, did not include education on consent at all. The inquiry

that the Education and Skills Committee in the previous parliamentary session did on personal and social education in schools was the first piece of work that I proposed when I was elected. Our report concluded that it is clear that consent is not covered consistently in PSE across Scotland.

If we want to eradicate rape culture and gender-based violence from our schools, it is essential that every young person—especially young boys and men—learns about the principle of consent. I am glad that, in response to that report, the Government initiated its review and commissioned refreshed guidance for the delivery of relationships and sexual health education. That refreshed guidance is almost ready. The current guidance, which has been in use since 2014, makes only one minor reference to the importance of consent, whereas the first draft of the new guidance starts with a substantive section dedicated to the principle of consent, boundaries and healthy relationships. Age and stage-appropriate education for boys and young men is essential to tackling gender-based violence in schools.

A firm approach to violence in schools, especially gender-based and bigoted attacks, is not mutually exclusive from recognising that children and young people who are responsible for those attacks are often in desperate need of help. Too often, it is easy to use zero tolerance as a soundbite in the absence of policies that would address the cause of a pupil's violent behaviour. We know the link between adverse childhood experiences and social, emotional and behavioural issues. We recognise that precarious housing, living with adults who are suffering from addiction issues, poverty and plenty of other situations in childhood are adverse experiences.

Brian Whittle: Does Ross Greer agree that it is not just what we teach but how we teach it and the environment in which we teach it that is crucial?

Ross Greer: I am grateful for that intervention and I could not agree more. A lot of evidence about that is coming out in the Education, Children and Young People Committee's inquiry into additional support needs provision in our schools, and all members should look forward to that report.

However, it would be wrong to pretend that we can tackle the issue of violence in schools without tackling the wider challenges that many children face. Stronger punishments might be appropriate, especially in circumstances where the safety of other pupils and staff is a major concern, but they are not the whole solution.

Far too often in the debate about the issue, children and young people are being talked about rather than being given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and their ideas for solutions.

Although there is much in Liam Kerr's motion that I agree with, I am glad that the Government amendment calls on us all to work with young people.

One area in which I am glad that we are making progress—and that will have a positive knock-on effect—is in the provision of mental health support services in schools. We are by no means at a point where every child has equal access to those services, but the past three six-monthly reports have shown an increase of 10,000, 12,000 and 14,500 children and young people accessing those expanded services. However, we all need to look at relative levels of access. Although access has expanded nationally, it has not expanded evenly. That is an issue for Parliament, not just for local authorities.

There is not a simple solution to violence in schools, and we would do staff and pupils a disservice to pretend otherwise. However, constructive suggestions have been made over recent months, and I hope that this afternoon's relative consensus can last long enough for us to see those suggestions delivered and to make our schools a safer environment for every student and member of staff.

15:37

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Like colleagues, I believe that no pupil, teacher or member of school staff and no one else in the school environment should suffer physical or verbal abuse, and that every child and young person has the right to an uninterrupted school day that is free from violence and disruption. I commend colleagues for bringing the issue to the chamber for debate, because the welfare of our young people and their nurturing and education could not be a more important issue.

Like colleagues, I have concerning casework on the issue involving parents, carers and staff who work in schools. As colleagues have mentioned, the Education, Children and Young People Committee has taken evidence on the issue and it is undertaking an important inquiry into support for those with additional support needs and the many challenges in ensuring that those young people—and people around them—are appropriately supported.

Given the extent of the challenge and its importance, I was pleased to see the five-point plan and to hear the Government's reassurance that there will be targeted support for schools. The cabinet secretary and our colleagues and officials are focused on working with teachers, unions and stakeholders to make a meaningful difference. There is political unity as well.

In response to one of the five points, the whole-school framework on preventing and responding to gender-based violence was published this week, which is very welcome. I am pleased that there has been expert input from Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance, which I know, because it is based in my constituency, has been extremely concerned. Ross Greer mentioned the research and surveys that Zero Tolerance undertook. According to that research, 64 per cent of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 experienced sexual harassment at school in the past year. That gives an indication of the scale of the challenge.

Given those circumstances, I would be grateful if the cabinet secretary could touch on how implementation of the framework will be supported, if there is capacity for her to do that in this short debate. Can we, as MSPs, help the Government, local authorities and schools in our constituencies and regions to take that forward? On that and the other four points, can we engage other stakeholders in a way that is similar to the engagement with the expertise of Zero Tolerance and Rape Crisis Scotland? As Brian Whittle rightly highlighted, the power of sport can make a difference here. I have seen that in north Edinburgh in my constituency, where the Spartans Community Foundation makes a real impact in supporting schools and, in particular, the young people who are involved.

To state the obvious, the issue is not isolated to schools. We have previously discussed challenges on public transport and the wider issue of the effect of the pandemic on young people. We cannot put it all on our teachers and those who run our schools. We perhaps need to have a wider debate at some point on the wide-ranging challenge of the behaviour of young people. Tomorrow, when there are young people sitting just behind me in the chamber, perhaps we can ask ourselves whether we are setting the best example.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches.

15:42

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo Ben Macpherson's final words. What young people see starts them in the process of framing the society in which they live and what they deem to be acceptable. Only this week, there have been a number of examples from across the chamber of behaviour that would be better left in the past rather than emulated, and to which our highly skilled teachers and other adults who work with young people could draw their attention.

I thank the Scottish Conservatives for again bringing a debate on education to the chamber,

and for raising such an important matter. Although the consensus when we vote at the end of the day might not reflect the consensus on the incredible importance of the matter, it is right that we seek cross-party support in a proper way by allowing the doors to be opened and contributions from members across the chamber, irrespective of political party, to find their way in.

I thank the cabinet secretary for her opening speech. I intervened on her with regard to data because it is important to see the risk of violence in schools in the contexts of employment and health and safety, and it is important that there is accurate data recording. The reporting of violence sits in the culture of employment. The challenge comes in relation to violence that occurs in the education environment, including the challenge of giving adults who work around our young people the capacity and the bravery to report. We have seen in a number of papers the frequency with which they come up against a wall when they report.

It is interesting that a number of members have pointed out that, as a society, we are now more engaged and more open to talking about the issue. I think that a lot of adults and young people in our schools would like to feel that change of culture so that they can raise a complaint. It would be interesting to look at that aspect.

I am particularly grateful to GMB Scotland, which represents a significant number of other adults in the classroom, particularly the pupil support assistants. It reports that one in five staff are subjected to daily violence. That would be unacceptable in any other workplace. It reports that three in five say that incidents of violence are not recorded, which speaks to something that many members have identified today. It reports that three in four did not receive feedback from their employer after reporting an incident. If the support is not there afterwards, not only for adults but for young people, why would they report an incident in the future? Finally, it reports that only one in four said that their employer took violence seriously enough. Of all the horrendous statistics that it reports, the one that shows that employees do not feel confident about that is the one that sticks out for me.

I thank the General Teaching Council for Scotland for its work on the issue. It regulates and oversees how teachers go into education and it has an important role in determining whether teachers retain the ability to teach. In the patterns that arise in its fitness to teach casework, it has seen the issues to do with additional support needs that we have discussed today, and it has seen that resource is needed. It has identified challenges with restraint and handling, on which there is a lack of guidance and support; it has

identified that teachers have fears about whether they will be backed up in situations; and it has reported on the challenge for teachers' mental health. The GTCS figures are specifically about teachers, but inconsistent support and indeed an absence of support carry huge challenges for others, beyond just teachers.

In the short time that I have left—

Brian Whittle: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is concluding, I hope.

Martin Whitfield: I apologise to Mr Whittle, but time is against me.

My last point is about the whole-school framework. Where the Government has articulated a reporting and data process for one element of the framework, is it considering taking the same approach for all reporting? If it does not do that, we will end up with different reporting vehicles.

15:46

Jenny Gilruth: I thank members for their contributions to this afternoon's debate. Despite its content, which could have been extraordinarily challenging, it has been a worthwhile debate. I have been listening intently to contributions from all parties in the chamber. I reiterate that we are all working towards the same goal: to ensure that our schools are safe and consistent learning environments for all, and I remain committed to working on a cross-party basis to that end.

I listened to Liam Kerr's points about the behaviour summits. I think that members worked really well together during the Scottish Government debate on qualifications last week. In a similar vein, I propose to convene a cross-party session with Opposition spokespeople and my officials to ensure that the suggestions that we have gathered today are reflected in our new national approach to behaviour in Scotland's schools.

We must reflect that things have changed in our schools, and our approach to supporting teachers needs to change, too. This is not just about our older school pupils, though.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I was on a panel with the National Deaf Children's Society, which told me that deaf children are suffering due to the lack of teachers for the deaf. There needs to be more of them. If there was, that would help both teachers and deaf students, and it would ensure that the latter get the education that they deserve. Does the cabinet secretary agree that teachers for deaf children are of great importance? What can she do to help our deaf students?

Jenny Gilruth: They are of great importance. I very much agree with the member's point about teachers for the deaf. I worked with a number of them in my role before I came to the Parliament, and I taught a number of deaf pupils, with support, in my classroom. I very much recognise the point that the member makes and I look forward to engaging in the coming weeks with the stakeholder that he named in his contribution. I think that it is running a campaign currently. It is important that we have a holistic and inclusive education system, and the member recognised that in his contribution.

I want to talk about the challenge in different year groups across our schools.

Willie Rennie: While the cabinet secretary is talking about support, can we ensure that the new body that will replace Education Scotland will provide practical, tangible support for teachers in class? That would be really important for giving them confidence. Does the cabinet secretary agree?

Jenny Gilruth: I very much agree with the sentiment of Mr Rennie's question. Education Scotland is strong at providing guidance, but sometimes we need practical assistance in our classrooms. We heard that in members' contributions today. I look forward to working with the new body to that end.

I referenced some of our younger citizens in my opening speech. This morning, I visited Ayrshire College, where I heard directly from staff in the college sector about changes in the current generation—the Covid generation—and what that means for their learning and teaching. In that college, it means that the staff have completely transformed the way in which they support their young people. They provide wraparound services that have bucked the trend on retention. The curriculum is a motivating one with a focus on practical skills, and staff believe that that is imperative to driving motivation.

Colleagues will recall my decision to pause legislative reform last year. That decision was in part informed by changes in behaviour and relationships in our schools. Government has to respond to that context to fully support Scotland's teachers, who are responding to significant changes in the current generation.

I want to respond to some of the comments that were raised in the debate, and I am conscious that time is tight. Ruth Maguire spoke about the horrifying fear that affects many girls in Scotland's schools and prevents them from engaging in their education. She and others noted that all behaviour is communication, and I very much agree with that sentiment.

It was helpful to hear examples from Fife from Claire Baker, and we have heard examples from Aberdeen. It is important that those local examples are understood at the national level to inform our policy. Claire Baker named a number of events that have happened in her local area in recent times. I will not do that myself today—I am always cautious about naming specific incidents, as I am conscious that they involve our young people and our teachers.

On Liam Kerr's point about the behaviour summits, the reason why I did not open up the summits to other MSPs to attend was that I wanted to create a safe environment in which our members of staff were able to share their experiences. I am sure that the Education, Children and Young People Committee has been able to get better information from its private sessions when people did not feel that they were in an open arena. I look forward to engaging with the Opposition more substantively in the coming weeks.

Ms Baker also touched on reporting. She said that staff do not feel that there is a point in reporting because they do not think that anything is going to happen. I think that there was also something buried in the BISS research about a fear that staff have that reporting could have consequences for them. It is important that the Government understands that. It is also important that staff are encouraged to report and are supported by their employer to do so, to ensure that we have more adequate and reliable data. If we reflect on some of the data that we have gathered on bullying, we see that there is disparity across the country in reporting practices. That is why it is important that we have a national action plan—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, you need to conclude.

Jenny Gilruth: —that will set out the national parameters in relation to violence and behaviour in our schools.

Improving behaviour in schools is not just about our schools, as we have heard this afternoon. One of the strongest contributions to the debate was from Brian Whittle, on the role of sport.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, you need to conclude. Please conclude.

Jenny Gilruth: I very much look forward to engaging with the Opposition on behaviour in schools.

15:52

Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is an honour to close the debate—yet another debate on violence in our schools—on behalf of

the Scottish Conservatives. I reflect on the fact that it has taken another motion from this side of the chamber, 10 months on from our party's debate in May, for the topic to be raised here again.

While I was putting together some of the words for this afternoon's debate, I found myself reading the *Official Report* of that debate and returning to a contribution from my colleague Meghan Gallacher, in which she posed the question:

"How did things get so bad?"—[*Official Report*, 24 May 2023, c 73.]

Unfortunately, since then, things seem to have only gotten worse.

We have had reports of three teachers being hospitalised after an attack at Johnstone high school, of a schoolgirl being brutally attacked at Waid academy and of a primary school teacher being unable to hold their baby daughter after being attacked by a pupil in the classroom at a school in Edinburgh. That is to name but a few incidents, and they are all very shocking.

I understand the cabinet secretary's point that we are talking about real people, but I want to add another example to my contribution today. Earlier this week, it was brought to my attention that a pupil who attends a primary school in Fife left the premises, went home, and returned to school later with a hammer and proceeded to use it in a threatening manner. The school's response to the incident was—quite rightly—to remove the other children from the playground for their own safety. I applaud that move, and the staff worked exceptionally quickly, but they were powerless to deal with the pupil with the offensive weapon.

It is no wonder, therefore, that, over the past five years, more than 27,000 teachers and school staff have been signed off with stress and poor mental health.

It should surely be a fundamental right in 21st century Scotland that no pupil, teacher or member of school staff should suffer physical or verbal abuse. Every child and young person should have the right to an uninterrupted school day that is free from violence and disruption.

It has been interesting to listen to the debate. As always, I will highlight a couple of contributions from members that I think are particularly worth noting. I welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement that she hopes to have a cross-party session. That is excellent, and I appreciate it.

I must mention that, across the chamber, we agree on an awful lot. Ruth Maguire, Claire Baker, Pam Duncan-Glancy, Ross Greer and the cabinet secretary all welcomed the framework on gender-based violence, and I could not agree on that

more. However, I also agree with Ruth Maguire that the implementation of that will be important.

Bill Kidd, the cabinet secretary, Pam Duncan-Glancy, Willie Rennie and Tim Eagle all highlighted that the majority of our young people are very well behaved. I totally agree with that, but I highlight that it is their progress that is being affected by violence in our classrooms.

The cabinet secretary mentioned that she would like to strengthen the evidence base. Again, I agree, but I would ask about what happens on the ground in the meantime while we are building that evidence base. She talked about a modern approach to consequences, and I certainly look forward to seeing more detail on that. She mentioned training for staff. That is important but, if you keep doing what you do, you will keep getting what you have got. I stress that doing more training in the same vein will only give us the same results.

I want to highlight an excellent contribution from Brian Whittle on sport participation. I do not look like the greatest sportsman in the world—I played in goal at hockey, but I enjoyed it immensely and I have an awful lot of positive memories from it and a lot of life lessons were based on it.

My colleague Liam Kerr made the point well that the industry has the solutions. The EIS, the NASUWT, YouthLink Scotland and teachers and educationalists such as Professor Lindsay Paterson are all proposing solutions.

I thank the cabinet secretary for her comments. Again, I want to highlight and use this opportunity to welcome the Scottish Government's announcement of a dedicated approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in schools. The cabinet secretary is right that we all want schools to create cultures in which all members of the school community know that gender-based violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I agree that that is important. However, the framework on gender-based violence looks at only one segment of the problem and it does not go far enough.

I do not understand how the Scottish Government can act so swiftly and efficiently when it comes to tackling gender-based inequality but fail to come close to addressing the broader issues of violence in our schools. Surely, when pupils come to school with any sort of weapon—hammer or otherwise—they must be dealt with in the most stringent of manners, and consequences for those actions must apply to ensure that something like that never happens again.

I agree whole-heartedly that all members of Parliament must, as the motion states,

“work together in tackling the seriousness of this issue, diligently and without delay.”

It is simply not good enough that, 10 months on from when members on the Conservative benches first raised the issue and requested plans and guidelines to be put in place prior to the start of the academic year last August, in reality, there has been no change on the ground, no change in our schools and no change for the wellbeing of our students, teachers and all education staff. That is simply not good enough.

Oil and Gas Industry

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-12388, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on backing Scotland’s oil and gas sector.

15:59

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): The oil and gas sector continues to be one of the most important issues in Scottish politics today—and rightly so. Tens of thousands of jobs depend on it, thousands of communities rely on it, and hundreds of businesses are based in Scotland because of it. The Scottish Conservatives remain the only party that believes in the contribution that the sector makes to our economy and that has committed to supporting it for a long time to come.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Would Mr Lumsden care to comment on the extension of the windfall tax on the oil and gas industry, which will damage the north-east of Scotland? How will he respond to his Tory masters in London in order to get shot of it?

Douglas Lumsden: I will gladly respond to Kevin Stewart. Yes, I am disappointed that the windfall tax has been extended, but let us have a think about what the other parties would do. The Scottish National Party is in favour of a windfall tax but, more than that, it has a presumption against oil and gas exploration, which would devastate the oil and gas industry. Labour, with Red Ed, would have no new licences, would have a windfall tax on steroids, would ramp up the rate and would scrap the reinvestment allowance. At least the Greens are consistent—they would shut down the industry tomorrow.

I go back to the point that I was making. What I said does not mean that our green credentials are any less or that we are turning our backs on our ambition to reach net zero—far from it. We believe that the oil and gas sector has a huge role to play in our energy transition. We are committed to working with our workers, communities and businesses to ensure that, as we move forward towards our net zero targets and as we transition away from oil and gas and towards greener technologies, we do so in a way that protects jobs and livelihoods across Scotland, particularly in the north-east.

We are the only party that is committed to continuing to support oil and gas exploration while we still have demand in this country. Seventy-eight per cent of Scotland’s current energy needs are met by oil and gas. That figure rises to 92 per cent when we are talking about the percentage of heat demand that is provided by hydrocarbons. While

we still have demand for oil and gas, it is better for the environment, for our economy and for our jobs that we use our own resource, as opposed to relying on imports from elsewhere. Cutting off that supply, under the SNP's presumption against new oil and gas exploration, would leave us all worse off and throw thousands of livelihoods on the scrap heap.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

As Douglas Lumsden is so keen on economic growth, what does it say about his Government's performance that we have had seven quarters of decline in gross domestic product per head of population? Why was it that, in the latest auction round, no one competed for offshore wind contracts? What does that say about your economic record and your credibility on renewables?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members need to speak through the chair.

Douglas Lumsden: I am just about to talk about gross value added to highlight the importance of the oil and gas industry, which the Labour Party would turn its back on by turning off the taps. The oil and gas industry accounted for over £20 billion of Scotland's GVA in 2022-23. That was nearly 11 per cent of Scotland's total GVA.

The economic impact of losing the oil and gas sector should not be underestimated. The Scottish Government's own figures show that there would be a loss of £7 billion by 2050. Those jobs would not be replaced by green jobs, and they would be less well paid and would have a lower GVA than jobs in the oil and gas sector. Again, that is according to the Government's own figures. It is time for this devolved Government to be honest with people and tell us how that money will be replaced in the Scottish economy and how the gap will be filled.

On the SNP's presumption against oil and gas exploration, Reform Scotland stated:

"It would be a ridiculous position for Scotland to find itself in if it ends up having to import fossil fuels for a period while simultaneously boasting about a decline in domestic production, all the while losing skilled workers."

I agree that it would be "ridiculous"—it would be absolutely bonkers.

The loss of skilled workers is a huge concern. The energy sector workers survey found that there are too many barriers to oil and gas workers moving into green jobs. It also found that more information was needed and that the support and help for those in the industry who are looking for a new opportunity simply are not there yet.

The First Minister recently visited the north-east. Although he may have had soundbites on how

important the oil and gas industry is, we all know that words are cheap; it is actions that count. The First Minister is not pulling the wool over the eyes of anyone in the north-east. He was there not to try to save offshore workers' jobs but to try to save one job and one job only—that of Stephen Flynn.

The First Minister sits on the fence so often that his backside must be full of splinters. He masquerades as a friend of the oil and gas industry, but we all know that it is the grubby deal with the Greens that he values most. While the Bute house agreement exists, the oil and gas industry will always be demonised by this devolved Government, and that is driving away investment.

We know what the priorities of the SNP-Green devolved Government are, and they are not our priorities. While it is talking about independence, we are talking about jobs, prosperity, economic growth, investing in our industries, supporting our oil and gas industry, and investing in new technologies. The SNP is against Aberdeen being Europe's oil and gas capital. It is against Rosebank and the £8 billion of investment that it brings. It is against Cambo and against new licences in the north-east.

As our motion points out, the Labour Party is no better on the topic. Labour has also confirmed that it would block any requests for new licences. It has said that it would cut the oil and gas investment allowance. Offshore Energies UK said that that move would lead to 42,000 job losses and £26 billion of economic value being wiped out.

There is only one party in here that supports new oil and gas licences, and that is the Scottish Conservatives. There is only one party in here that understands the economic importance of the oil and gas industry, and that is the Scottish Conservatives. There is only one party in here that will stand up for thousands of workers in the oil and gas industry, and that is the Scottish Conservatives.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the vital role that oil and gas plays in Scotland's energy mix and in supporting tens of thousands of Scottish jobs, particularly in the north east, and in providing vital energy security; condemns the Scottish Government's "presumption against new exploration for oil and gas" as stated in its draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, as well as the Scottish National Party administration's failure to welcome new oil and gas developments such as Rosebank, which will boost UK energy security and the economy with a direct investment of over £8 billion as well as providing nearly 1,600 jobs; further condemns the Labour Party's intention to block any new oil and gas licences and its proposed extended windfall tax, which the OEUK has warned will lead to "42,000 job losses" and £26 billion of economic value being wiped out; acknowledges that there is a climate emergency and, therefore, welcomes that the UK has become the first major economy to halve emissions from

their peak; notes that a just transition is needed to meet net zero targets, but believes that this must not leave any industry or community behind and cannot be achieved without the investment, innovation and skills from the oil and gas sector, and calls on the Scottish Government and the Labour Party to end their reckless assault on North Sea oil and gas workers and Scotland's economy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Lumsden.

I call the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy, Màiri McAllan, to speak to and move amendment—

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): Presiding Officer, thank you—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, I had not quite finished. I need to read out the number of the amendment.

I call the cabinet secretary to speak to and move amendment S6M-12388.3. You have up to six minutes, cabinet secretary.

16:07

The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy (Màiri McAllan): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I am delighted to contribute to this important debate on the future of Scotland's oil and gas sector, which is a sector that is central to the Government's plans for a transition to a new and greener economy.

Let us start by dispensing with some of the myths that we have heard from Douglas Lumsden and focusing on simple facts.

First, oil and gas will remain part of Scotland's energy mix for some time to come. There is no transition to net zero that sees the immediate end of oil and gas, and we are clear that there is no route to net zero except in partnership with business—especially in respect of skills and investment.

Secondly, there is a global climate emergency, and there is unequivocal scientific evidence that there is an urgent need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Thirdly and finally, our North Sea oil and gas basin is geologically mature and will inevitably decline over the coming decades.

Those are not questions of politics but of science. In that context, the right approach—the approach of a responsible Government and the approach that the SNP has consistently taken—pursues the prosperity of our people, our economy and this planet. That means a just transition that is fair and in line with our climate commitments.

Douglas Lumsden: The cabinet secretary talks about prosperity. Does she support the award of a licence to the Rosebank oil field, the investment of over £8 billion that that will bring to Scotland, and the protection of thousands of jobs, many of which are in the north-east of Scotland?

Màiri McAllan: I have already been quite clear that I do not think that the decision that was taken on Rosebank was the right one. The Scottish Government has many concerns about, among other things, the proportion of Rosebank's oil and gas that will be exported overseas, which will not contribute to our energy security.

It is also abundantly clear that the Tories' approach to oil and gas licensing demonstrates that the UK Government is not serious about the climate crisis. As Douglas Lumsden speaks flippantly about a climate emergency, I wonder whether he truly appreciates what that means. Has he considered the plight of millions around the world who are already feeling its first and worst impacts and losing everything, up to and including their lives? Has he noticed that 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded? Closer to home, has he considered the destruction of our infrastructure and the disruption to our communities from our recent storm season?

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Can the cabinet secretary remind the Parliament how much more of our emissions, proportionately, come from imported oil and gas than from oil and gas sourced locally?

Màiri McAllan: I do not deny the importance of oil and gas to Scotland's energy mix; in fact, I opened my speech with an acknowledgement of their current importance. However, circa 80 per cent of what is extracted from the UK continental shelf is exported overseas, and it is therefore not necessarily contributing to energy security in the United Kingdom.

The Tories are utterly reckless on climate change, and that recklessness reminds us of what I think is an intolerable fact: that Scotland's North Sea oil and gas, its licensing and the associated regulatory and fiscal regimes remain reserved to a remote UK Government. Through our draft energy strategy and just transition plan, which we consulted on last year—

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Màiri McAllan: I am afraid that I do not have a great deal of time.

Through our plan, we have set out a responsible and balanced set of proposals for an approach to future licensing. We are currently finalising that strategy, and I hope that the UK Government will pay attention.

As part of that work, we have consulted on a presumption against licensing for entirely new oil and gas exploration activity. To be clear—and to return to my point about the importance of evidence-led policy development—we have never proposed no further North Sea licensing at all. That would be wrong: it could destroy the very skills and investment that we urgently need in order to transition to a low-carbon economy. Instead, our draft strategy consults on fields that are already identified but not yet in production being subject to a robust climate compatibility checkpoint.

The proposals in our strategy represent a focus on meeting Scotland's energy security needs, reducing emissions and ensuring a just transition for our oil and gas workforce. To be clear on the first of those, the North Sea will continue to provide Scotland with an important level of energy security over the coming years.

A key aspect of that—which is paramount in Scottish ministers' considerations—is the issue of skills. We need to harness our skills, talent and experience to support the build-out of low-carbon technologies in Scotland. The infrastructure of the North Sea and the associated skills and expertise are and will be a huge asset in helping us to achieve net zero and to become a world leader in renewables in areas such as offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture, use and storage, or CCUS.

Kevin Stewart: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary should be starting to conclude her remarks.

Màiri McAllan: I am afraid that I cannot give way.

It is worth noting before I conclude that the UK budget that was announced earlier today has extended the windfall tax regime for North Sea oil and gas. That demonstrates, among many other things that are pertinent to this debate, just how little influence the leader of the Scottish Tories has when it comes to his leadership in London. I understand that he made personal representations. He must be utterly embarrassed that he has been ignored.

In conclusion, the future of the North Sea and the future of the tens of thousands of jobs that rely on it are too important to be the subject of the misrepresentation and myth making in the Conservative motion. Instead, our approach will be governed by the science, Scotland's interests and a cast-iron guarantee to the workforce. That is what the Scottish Government proposes, and it is what we are working to deliver. I urge members to support our amendment.

I move amendment S6M-12388.3, to leave out from first "vital" to end and insert:

"important role that is played by oil and gas in the energy profile of Scotland, the tens of thousands of jobs in that sector, and the essential contribution that the sector's skilled workforce must make to Scotland's present and future energy security; understands the severity and urgency of the global climate emergency and the clear body of scientific evidence showing the need for a rapid shift away from current reliance on fossil fuels as part of the response to this; further understands that a just transition for Scotland's oil and gas sector is essential, given both the declining nature of the North Sea basin and Scotland's climate change commitments; supports a just transition approach for all sectors of Scotland's economy, in which emissions are reduced in line with climate goals, energy security is maintained, and workers and communities are supported as part of a genuine managed transition; acknowledges that the Scottish Government is in the process of finalising its Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, following the publication of analysis of consultation responses on the draft Strategy and Plan; recognises that licensing and regulation for offshore oil and gas, and the associated fiscal regime, are all matters that currently remain reserved to the UK Government; expresses frustration that the Scottish Government does not have all of the powers necessary to ensure that Scotland fully capitalises on its competitive advantages in the energy transition, including its world-leading and highly skilled offshore workforces; calls on the UK Government to deliver simple, holistic and predictable windfall taxes on excessive profits to address the cost of living crisis and to increase investment in the transition to net zero, and believes that revenues should not be used to fund new nuclear power."

16:14

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): When the Conservatives lodged the motion, last week, it was clear what they wanted. They wanted a big bust-up, a big debate and big dividing lines. Let me try to strike a note of consensus, however. I think that we can all agree on one thing this afternoon: Douglas Lumsden desperately needs Jeremy Hunt's phone number. One text message is all that it would have taken: "Should I lodge this motion? Is it a good idea?" That would have spared the blushes and the rather awkward argument that we heard in the debate's opening speech this afternoon. Of course, Douglas Ross does not need Jeremy Hunt's mobile phone number, as he communicates with the leadership via letters from the whip's office, if reports about him intending to vote against his own Government's budget are true.

Although Douglas Lumsden tries to talk about economic growth, the simple truth is that, through the mini-budget, which the Scottish Conservatives enthusiastically backed, we got market chaos, the pound tumbling, interest rates soaring, the biggest ever one-day drop in 30-year gilts and half of mortgage products pulled. It culminated in the Bank of England intervening to prevent the collapse of pension markets. Chaos and

incompetence are the true hallmarks of economic governance under the Conservative Government.

There have been 14 years of erratic economic decision making. Is it any wonder that the UK is blighted by low growth and high inequality? The Resolution Foundation describes the UK as a stagnation nation. The country has undergone 15 years of economic decline. Since the Conservatives entered Government, the UK's GDP growth has been in the bottom third of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. If the UK had grown at just the OECD average, our economy would be £140 billion bigger. That has real-world consequences. It is the equivalent of £5,000 per household every year. That is the real cost of economic chaos under the Conservative Government.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): That was a good rant, but I wonder what the member says to the fact that the Office for Budget Responsibility has said that, since 2010, Britain has had the highest GDP growth of all the G7 countries, including Japan, Germany and France.

Daniel Johnson: The OECD figures speak for themselves. We have had seven quarters of economic decline in GDP per head. If Mr Whittle wants to choose partial statistics, that is his decision. The reality is that we have flat growth, investment is down and tax is up. If Mr Whittle wants to call that a rant, that is fair enough, because working people are paying the price for that incompetence.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Is Daniel Johnson going to talk about all the stuff that he is talking about or the stuff in the motion? Is he going to talk about Labour's policy on oil and gas, or is he embarrassed about it? He should be.

Daniel Johnson: They are the same thing. The Conservatives want to base the debate on economic growth, and that is exactly what I am doing.

Let us come back to the motion. I am equally confused by the SNP. At least the Conservatives had the good grace to chop and change their position over the course of a week. In the space of a day, we have had Stephen Flynn arguing against a windfall tax only to have an amendment in front of us arguing for it. Which is it? The SNP has the unconscionable and unfathomable position that it opposes attacks against energy giants that are making billions of pounds of profit while it asks Scots who earn just £28,000 or more to pay more tax than the rest of the UK. We have the simple choice of helping Scots who are struggling with bills or helping energy giants.

The Minister for Energy, Just Transition and Fair Work (Gillian Martin): Daniel Johnson's

party colleagues have said that a windfall tax would support new nuclear in the rest of the UK. Does he agree that it should be diverted to support renewables growth in Scotland? Will he commit to that?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): You should be closing, Mr Johnson.

Daniel Johnson: I will explain. We will set up Great British energy, which will create 50,000 clean power jobs in Scotland, create investment in Grangemouth and in ports and be headquartered in Scotland. That investment will be ring fenced and the windfall tax time limited.

The simple reality is that we have had five Prime Ministers, seven Chancellors of the Exchequer, 11 economic growth plans and three different positions on a windfall tax from the Conservatives. It is time for change.

I move amendment S6M-12388.1, to leave out from "recognises" to end and insert:

"believes that if Scotland is to maintain its reputation for expertise in energy generation, there is a need to deliver a just transition to the clean energy industries of the future; recognises the huge contribution that oil and gas make to Scotland's energy mix and economy, supporting tens of thousands of well-paid jobs, and agrees that, as part of the energy transition, oil and gas production will continue in the North Sea for decades to come; condemns the economic incompetence of the UK Conservative administration and the Scottish National Party administration, which has exacerbated the cost of living crisis for households in Scotland; believes that the policies and instability of the UK Conservative administration are further undermining progress in delivering the energy jobs of the future and failing to improve energy security; notes that the Scottish National Party administration has chosen to side with energy giants over working people with its recent u-turn on a windfall tax on exorbitant profits of oil and gas companies, all while raising taxes on working people, and notes that the Labour Party's proposed windfall tax is time-limited, will sunset at the end of the next parliamentary session and will provide the revenue to deliver the Labour Party's Green Prosperity Plan, which will support 50,000 clean energy jobs in Scotland, create GB Energy as a publicly-owned energy company, bring down energy bills and deliver the just transition that Scotland's climate needs, and that workers in the north east deserve, so that no community is left behind."

16:19

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): It is safe to say that the debate has not panned out quite as Douglas Lumsden and Douglas Ross intended. I assume that Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak are now safely on the circulation list for the Scottish Conservatives' media grid and, indeed, Holyrood's *Business Bulletin*.

Notwithstanding the exquisite schadenfreude of watching the proposers of today's motion hoist by their own petard over windfall taxes, I start, as is customary, by thanking Douglas Lumsden for

allowing this brief debate. Of course, it is just the latest of many such debates this session to focus on the oil and gas sector, our future energy needs and how Scotland and the wider UK can make the just transition to a decarbonised energy system.

The motion rightly acknowledges the vital role that oil and gas play in Scotland's energy mix, as well as the jobs and economic benefit that it supports. It will continue to play that role going forward, but our reliance on oil and gas needs to come down for environmental and economic reasons. The OBR, which has been mentioned in the debate, concluded last year that the UK is

“one of the most gas-dependent economies in Europe”,

with 78 per cent of our energy needs being met through fossil fuels. That dependence has left us more exposed to fuel price shocks such as the one that followed Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, causing hardship and damage to households and businesses across the country. The UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee recently concluded:

“Accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels will enhance the UK's energy security and ... also help to protect households from volatile fossil fuel prices permanently”.

Talking about the costs of action ignores the even greater financial costs of inaction or inadequate action. Whatever the sound and fury of this short debate, the transition is inevitable. The North Sea basin is winding down. That is a matter of geology, not policy or politics. For all the grandstanding, as Chris Stark told a meeting of party leaders in Bute house recently—

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: Not at the moment.

Chris Stark said that the Tories and the Greens are arguing about whether North Sea production will decline by 95 or 97 per cent by 2050. How that transition happens matters to all of us, of course, but it matters particularly to those who are directly affected and who will make the transition. The transition will require both of Scotland's Governments to co-operate and collaborate—a consistent message from the UK Climate Change Committee.

We cannot afford bad-faith actors, either in Downing Street or in Bute house, with ministers hunting out division or grievance for political gain rather than acting in the interests of the country, our economy and the wider environment. We know that there is an appetite for transition in the oil and gas sector, but, as Douglas Lumsden fairly said, help is needed—, from advice to skills development and support to reorient business.

Substantial investment in infrastructure from grid to port is also needed to support the delivery of renewables projects and storage technologies.

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I will not. I apologise to Mr Whittle.

Resourcing is also needed in our planning and consenting regimes if the transition to cleaner energy is to take place within the challenging timeframes that we have set.

If it is to be a just transition, people and communities cannot be left behind, even if some activities and even businesses might inevitably be. That will require people and communities to be fully involved in, and at the heart of, the decisions that are being taken. None of that will be easy—all the easy stuff has already been done—but it will be made harder, costlier and more painful if we pretend that it does not need to happen or can be delayed.

Today's debate was not really supposed to be about how we make a just transition. It was not even about the interests of those in the oil and gas sector. It was an attempt to use climate change as a wedge issue. Although I do not have an awful lot to thank Jeremy Hunt for, I thank him for shooting Douglas Lumsden's fox.

16:23

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):

There is no denying that the past decade has been exceptionally challenging for the energy sector because of the downturn in oil and gas, the Covid-19 pandemic, Putin's war in Ukraine and the global energy crisis—not forgetting the massive supply chain disruption that was caused by the conflict. Many companies throughout the supply chain in Scotland have battled to stay afloat, and livelihoods have been lost.

Just as there was an upswing in the industry, more uncertainty struck. The North Sea became a bargaining chip in the disastrous Bute house agreement, with Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater castigating the industry and the thousands of people in my region who rely on it for work. Patrick Harvie ludicrously proclaimed that only those on the hard right support oil and gas extraction.

The SNP's draft energy strategy includes a presumption against new exploration for oil and gas. It does not want Cambo, Jackdaw or, as we have seen and as is being reinforced today, Rosebank. It does not care about the UK's energy security, workers in the north-east or the environmental impact of importing fossil fuels.

The Scottish Conservatives recognise the importance of a fair, careful and well-managed

move to renewables. We know that we need an energy supply that is more secure and more sustainable. The north-east, with its unrivalled technical knowledge and know-how, is perfectly placed to become a world leader on net zero. However, propped up by the Scottish Greens, the SNP wants to turn off the taps and go for the fastest possible just transition. It is a cliff edge, plain and simple.

The moment that Nicola Sturgeon signed on the dotted line with the Scottish Greens, she betrayed the north-east, because the SNP-Green Government values virtue signalling over 90,000 highly skilled jobs.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Gillian Martin: Will the member give way?

Tess White: I give way to Gillian Martin.

Gillian Martin: Does Tess White agree that we have an opportunity to have a second energy wave in the north-east? If we accept that the North Sea is a declining basin—everyone accepts that—and we prepare for the future by investing in renewables, that will protect jobs in the energy sector in the north-east.

Tess White: I agree with Gillian Martin on the importance of investment, and it is true that it is a declining basin. I worked in the energy sector for decades, and we both understand that. However, it needs to be a managed and programmed proper transition, not a rushed and forced transition, which is what the SNP Government wants us to have.

A rushed, premature transition serves no one, nor does it serve Scotland's economy. Offshore Energies UK has warned that the region will be £6 billion a year poorer by 2030 as a result of such a transition. I think that that matters to Gillian Martin's constituents as well.

Humza Yousaf, who announced last year that Scotland would stop being the oil and gas capital of Europe, has suddenly decided that he is the saviour of North Sea workers. There must be a general election on the horizon. What an insult to the intelligence of the thousands of people who rely on the North Sea for their livelihoods.

The SNP can pivot all that it wants, but the north-east has not forgotten the depth of the betrayal that was perpetrated by Nicola Sturgeon. I see Labour members laughing, but Daniel Johnson did not mention oil and gas even once in his speech—

Daniel Johnson: Will Tess White take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: Ms White is closing.

Tess White: I thought that I was in a different debate.

The Scottish Conservatives will stand up for our oil and gas industry. We support new oil and gas licences. We will not abandon the industry or the workers who rely on its continued survival, and we will not allow the industry to shut down.

16:27

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Scotland has been blessed with not one but two energy jackpots over our history. The oil and gas jackpot has transformed the north-east of Scotland over past decades, has made Aberdeen a global energy hub, has built Scottish businesses and has created jobs and wealth across our country. However, more than £300 billion of the revenues that have flowed into public coffers as a consequence have gone south, where they were used to subsidise the Thatcherite economic experiment and where they continue to bolster UK public finances to this day.

As we all know, oil and gas was always going to be a finite resource, and our modern understanding of climate change drivers makes it even more so. SNP members are clear in our understanding that, had we had the power to do what Norway has done since the 1970s, an independent Scotland would now be one of the richest countries in the world. We should remember that, in the 1960s, Norway was poorer than Scotland. Having made that mistake once, we now have the opportunity to do it right the second time around. Like someone who bought the winning lottery ticket, lost it and then bought the winning lottery ticket again the next week, we need to take advantage of the opportunity that we have been presented with.

The renewable energy revolution finds Scotland at its heart. As well as vast natural resources, Scotland has expertise in deepwater technology, a global reputation in energy and a highly skilled workforce, and the Government has invested in that technology to make sure that it is developed in order that we can maximise the opportunities for renewable energy development that exist in our country.

Liam Kerr: On that point about investment, how much of the £80 million that the Scottish Government promised to provide for the Acorn project has been invested in so far?

Ivan McKee: The Scottish Government is committed to a £500 million investment, as the member should know. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will give the member the latest data on exactly where we are with that, unlike the UK Government, which has not put its money where

its mouth is when it comes to supporting the just transition.

The Presiding Officer: Mr McKee, I must stop you for a moment. I am aware of colleagues having conversations back and forth across the chamber, and both colleagues know that that is inappropriate, so I would be grateful if they could resist any temptation.

Ivan McKee: The transition needs to move as fast as it can while recognising that investment, which is running into many tens of billions and beyond, is needed from the energy sector. The sector knows that its future viability relies on making the transition as quickly as possible to secure first-mover advantages. The future of energy in Scotland is renewables—everyone recognises that. However, there needs to be a just transition that balances the needs of workers, communities and local businesses.

During my time as a minister, I watched Scottish supply chain companies around the world making the transition. They went from 90 per cent supporting the oil and gas sector to 50 per cent or more supporting the renewables sector. Businesses—both the oil majors and the supply chain businesses—understand the need for the transition, and the Scottish Government continues to support it.

What it is most important to recognise is that the way to end fuel poverty in an energy-rich Scotland, to ensure that investment takes place in infrastructure and to ensure that the transition is just is not by making the same mistakes that we made in the 1970s but by ensuring that Scotland has the powers to deliver the benefit of its vast and enduring renewables potential. We should have the powers of a normal, independent country.

16:31

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to follow Ivan McKee, although I do not agree with all of his content. I point out to Mr McKee that before the oil there was the provision of coal in Scotland, and there were the tragedies that betook those communities that were affected by the Thatcherite closure of the coal mines.

History tells us time and again that the providers of energy sources are often given bad deals, which is why, rightly, in the chamber and elsewhere, there are discussions about why the transition—and it is an inevitable transition—to green, net zero energy manufacturing matters. It is right and understandable that the communities that support the offshore oil and gas industry are concerned, but I do not think that the language and the tone that are being used help us, as we

talk about absolute failure or absolute success, but people in those communities know of the need for transition. They look to their children and do not want them working off in the North Sea or in physically demanding and dangerous jobs. They want the skills and the technology to be put into the better, greener technologies that are available.

It is an obligation—not only on the Scottish Government but on the Scottish Parliament and on those in the UK—to ensure that there is a transition from one form of fuel to another. That transition is not going to take place instantaneously; it is going to take decades. It is going to have to be constantly revisited, renewed, looked at and supported to ensure that—for once in the history of Scotland, the UK and, possibly, the world—we can make a transition for our communities that will allow them to remain communities and allow their young people to be skilled and to work in an industry where they grew up, perhaps to see the next great bonus in Scotland from our renewables.

There has been an intervention on nuclear power. I am never one to let the opportunity to state the importance of that net zero energy to go by. There is also the very thorny question of how we ensure that the grid—both the current grid and, more important, the next generation of the grid—can be base-loaded and sustained so that we can draw on the new and not-so-new renewables technologies to keep the lights on in homes.

I welcome Tess White saying that she is looking forward to the general election; let us hope that it happens sooner rather than later. When we knock on the doors of constituents to speak to them, we find that it is still the case that they fear their fuel bills and wages that do not make it to the end of the week, let alone the end of the month. Young people are distressed by the fact that their parents are making challenging decisions.

That is why we need a new and improved idea about how we do it. The whole concept of GB energy—a state-owned, publicly owned energy company—is to allow for the imaginative and explosive ideas that we need to transition properly, to support our communities and, above all, to pay back to those communities that in the past have paid so dearly for such changes. We need a supply chain that is based here in Scotland and not around the world. Most importantly, we need reforms to the national grid so that we can support an energy policy and energy manufacturing that will allow the whole of the United Kingdom to benefit from the skills that we have developed.

16:35

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): As tempting as it is to dwell

on the Scottish Conservatives' embarrassment at the topic of windfall taxes, I am going to resist for the time being and concentrate on the Labour Party.

It takes some doing for me to still get surprised at the sheer hypocrisy of the UK Labour Party here at Holyrood. However, let me congratulate it—it has succeeded in surprising me. To use a debate on North Sea oil and gas to suggest that the SNP has exacerbated the UK's cost of living crisis is quite something, again letting the Tories off the hook. This is a UK Labour Party whose position on Scottish independence has seen Scotland left to the ravages of successive UK Governments over many years. It is a UK Labour Party that has been happy to see huge profits from North Sea oil and gas flow to a UK Treasury over decades, often to fund tax cuts for the very wealthy, particularly in London and the south-east.

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

Bob Doris: No, thank you, sir.

Since the 1970s, £300 billion has flowed to the UK Treasury from North Sea oil. What audacity Labour has. Labour links any further tax on North Sea oil and gas profits specifically to funding investment in nuclear energy in England. *[Interruption.]* That is a bare-faced cheek. Labour is the party that was U-turning on all kinds of social policy protections, citing costs, yet it has been happy to sign up to ending the cap on bankers' bonuses. Labour has no underlying principles and it has no credibility.

Michael Marra: Will the member take an intervention?

Bob Doris: No, thank you, sir.

More generally, I support windfall taxes as required—although, to be fair, it should not take a windfall tax to ensure that large, highly profitable companies are taxed appropriately. I would much rather that the levers over any taxation regime and tax incentives sat here in Holyrood. Additional revenue accruing from any excess profits from Scottish oil and gas could be used to support households through the cost of living crisis. It could be used to support our oil and gas sector, its workers and communities in Scotland, particularly in the north-east, through a just transition from fossil fuels, but not to prop up the nuclear industry in England. There also needs to be a wider debate more generally about ensuring that the taxation regime for highly profitable businesses is fit for purpose and that it offers them certainty, and that all sectors are considered, not just one.

I turn to the Conservative motion, which is one of blind opportunism—blind as far as the UK budget is concerned, as the Scottish

Conservatives had no Scooby what was coming up in that statement, and blind to the need to secure net zero and to see a meaningful just transition away from fossil fuels.

However, the Tories are at least consistent. They consistently seek to vote down any substantial measures that are suggested to tackle the climate emergency. One thing is clear with the Conservatives: they will continue to use North Sea oil and gas as a cash cow, irrespective of the climate impact. When that cash cow has stopped giving, they will see the community of the north-east decimated, in the same way that Scotland's coal-mining communities were decimated a few generations earlier.

As a Glasgow MSP, I say to communities in the north-east of Scotland: we have your back. We will not let that happen. Rather, we need a balanced, planned and managed approach to moving away from oil and gas, one that works with the sector in planning for a just transition and one that allows the highly impressive expertise of oil and gas companies and their highly skilled workforce to pivot towards the opportunities of that just transition. I firmly believe that that is what our Scottish Government is trying to achieve. It will not always be easy. Sometimes, it will mean taking actions that, although necessary, may not be popular. Whatever we do, it will prioritise a socially just approach to supporting our communities that are currently relying on the oil and gas sector.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Doris, you must conclude.

Bob Doris: We will not shirk away from the challenges that are presented by the climate emergency.

16:39

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I am proud to stand and support the motion in the name of Douglas Lumsden. I remind Bob Doris that, when it comes to embarrassment, he is representing the party that campaigned for two decades on the slogan "It's Scotland's oil". Now, it is embarrassed by the idea that we should have a thriving oil and gas sector. I say to Martin Whitfield that Labour closed more coal mines than Mrs Thatcher ever did, but Mrs Thatcher built more ferries than the SNP has ever done. Let us be clear: if it were left to the perpetrators of the Bute house agreement, there would be no future for North Sea oil and gas. Only recently, Humza Yousaf stated his ambition that Scotland should no longer be the oil and gas capital of Europe. What a signal to send to investors.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Kerr: I will, if the member is brief. I have no time.

Kevin Stewart: Humza Yousaf said at our Aberdeen conference that he wanted to make Aberdeen the global renewables capital, recognising that we require a just transition and that Aberdeen's skills are still up there. Does Mr Kerr recognise that Aberdeen should lead the way and that it should be the global renewables capital?

Stephen Kerr: I believe that our countries should be world leading in every respect: oil and gas and renewables. It is not a choice; we can have both. That may seem to the member to be cakeism, but I am all in favour of having your cake and eating it. We can have that in Scotland, because of our country's strategic strengths. For as long as the SNP goes on setting its programme for government by the strictures of the Bute house agreement, it cannot expect the oil and gas sector to take it seriously. The SNP is against new licensing, new activity and new investment.

Kevin Stewart: No.

Stephen Kerr: Someone is shouting no, but that is what we heard from the cabinet secretary. The SNP has reservations about everything to do with the development of oil and gas. Let us be frank: the SNP even voted against the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill at its second reading. Mind you, only 27 SNP members voted against it, because I presume that the rest were already taking Keith Brown's advice not to bother turning up for work. Truthfully, the SNP needs to ditch the Scottish Greens and end the Bute house agreement. There are wise heads in the SNP ranks who know that only too well—some of them may even be in the chamber right now.

Scottish Labour could not care less about the voters of the north-east of Scotland—it has given up on the north-east. Look at its policy on the oil and gas levy. Daniel Johnson did not want to talk about that, and I can understand why. Not only does Labour want the levy to be extended for the whole parliamentary session, unlike the Conservatives—of course, we are disappointed that it has been extended for a year; Labour also wants to remove the investment relief. Labour is also against new oil and gas licensing. If I have got that wrong—although it is in today's policy, it is the Labour Party, and we never know where it stands on anything—I am happy for Michael Marra to tell me. Is that the policy or not?

Michael Marra: There is impressive hyperbole from Mr Kerr on that point. I do not think that he has much ground to stand on about the change in policy. Is his point not fatally undermined by the fact that, for all the screaming and shouting from members on his benches, the Conservative

chancellor believes that having a windfall tax is the right thing to do? Why can he not agree with his own party on that?

The Presiding Officer: In conclusion, Stephen Kerr.

Stephen Kerr: Oh, that is a shame. *[Laughter.]* I am disappointed to be having to close and I am disappointed in that aspect of the budget, but take the budget as a whole: it is a great budget for the country, for workers and for growth and, I hope, it will be a great budget on which to re-elect a Conservative Government.

16:44

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): We are now more than two years on from the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26: a summit in which the world did not dare mention oil and gas, despite all the warning signs. It was the year when the International Energy Agency and the United Nations called for no new oil and gas fields to be developed in order to keep the 1.5°C target alive. Since then, we have seen why holding down every fraction of a degree of global warming is absolutely critical. The planet has burned and flooded, and we have stood by, helplessly counting the cost.

Finally, last year in Dubai, at a COP summit hosted by a petrostate, there was a breakthrough of sorts—the world added oil and gas into an agreement for the first time. The world is beginning a new consensus on oil and gas, and it is time for the UK Government to abandon its reckless “Drill, baby, drill” approach. The choice that is before the UK Government is to either enable every last drop of oil and gas to be extracted, leading the industry to a deferred cliff-edge collapse, or start managing the decline now and put in place a transition that leaves no workers behind.

It is an inconvenient truth that North Sea oil and gas is in decline, and everyone in the chamber knows it. That is why it is so important for the Scottish Government to move away from supporting maximum economic recovery and start the conversation about a presumption against new oil and gas development.

We need to be aware of bogus arguments and where they originate. In its production gap report, the United Nations warned us that private fossil fuel firms are

“highly politically organised, investing considerable resources into lobbying, campaign finance, public relations and think tank sponsorship”,

and that they exert influence through what the UN has described as

“a revolving door between business and Government.”

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Michael Marra: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Ruskell: I do not have time to take interventions.

I ask the whole chamber to call out bogus arguments for more oil to deliver energy security for the UK, when we know that 80 per cent of North Sea oil is exported to global markets. I ask members to recognise that exploration licences that are granted today may not even produce oil until 2050, which is five years beyond our net zero target date. I ask members, including Liam Kerr, to wise up about false comparisons between the climate impact of North Sea gas and that of imported liquefied natural gas, when we know that the lowest-carbon gas comes from our nearest neighbours in Norway.

Members need to consider critically the assertion that a 3 per cent increase in the windfall tax would suddenly lead to the collapse of an entire industry overnight, because it is a fact that the energy profits levy came with a supertanker-sized loophole—a tax relief of up to 91 per cent for investment in more oil and gas, which was investment that was most likely going to happen anyway. Closing that loophole could have brought in billions to solve a cost of living crisis that was destroying ordinary people’s lives.

The UK Government could have chosen to make those tax reliefs available for renewable investments in order to create the jobs of the future today, but it chose not to do that. Tax allowances and reduced tax rates have allowed the Treasury to give more money to oil companies than it takes from them. In 2020, Shell was paid £80 million in negative tax, while the chief executive officer pocketed £5.5 million and the shareholders received record dividends, and at the same time, Shell made redundant 330 of its workers in the North Sea. That is absolutely shameful—did the Tories in the north-east condemn that when it happened?

The real traitors will be the ones who understood perfectly well what needed to be done but wilfully stood by, did nothing and condemned future generations to climate chaos and an unjust transition. It is time for responsibility and action, and I look forward to the Scottish Government leading the way.

16:48

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I recognise the importance of these issues to colleagues who represent the north-east,

but I also recognise that they are significant to us all, nationally and internationally. It is important to acknowledge that the climate crisis is the most serious global problem that we have ever faced—it must be at the forefront of humanity’s agenda.

We must be honest and humble and recognise that Scotland and the UK cannot solve this problem alone, but we have the know-how, and substantial renewable resources that are not available to other countries, to make a significant contribution to addressing the global challenge. We have an obligation to humanity, including ourselves, to play an active part.

Nationally, as others have said, one of the most serious issues that we also face is energy security. That is an on-going consideration, but we must keep it in mind that energy involves global markets and that we have a declining basin in the North Sea.

The energy industry as a whole, including oil and gas, is one of the most significant sectors in our country. We should celebrate that, and I appreciate the points that have been made today in that space. The jobs are highly skilled and well paid, and we must keep that in consideration as we transition to net zero. I say for clarity that I have full admiration for those who work in the oil and gas industry—for their technical knowledge and for what they do week in and week out, particularly those who are on rigs in the North Sea. It is important that we put that on record.

From my brief time working in the renewables sector, I know how many people from the oil and gas sector are passionate about moving into the net zero space. In fact, most of our renewables companies are populated by those from the North Sea oil and gas industry, and they are making a huge contribution.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member take an intervention?

Ben Macpherson: I will take a brief intervention.

Kevin Stewart: To allow folk to make the shift from oil and gas into renewables, investment has to be made. That is why the Scottish Government has invested £500 million in the just transition fund. Does Mr Macpherson think that the UK Government should match that fund in order for us to get that just transition?

Ben Macpherson: It is important that there is public investment, as has just been stated. It is also important that we have consistency in policy making and direction. Investors are seeking to put money into net zero. Net zero is the future for social and economic benefit as well as for the global context of tackling climate change. The UK Government’s chopping and changing has

confused the considerations for investors, whereas the Scottish Government's commitment to renewables and net zero is realised and recognised, and that is important. The Scottish Government is finalising its energy strategy and just transition plan. That will be a crucial document, and I look forward to engaging around it at committee and here in the chamber.

In conclusion, I will touch on something that my colleague Ivan McKee rightly raised, which is the fact—to use his phrase again—that Scotland has hit the energy jackpot a number of times. As much as I enjoy being in the north-east when I am there, it is objectively fair to say that, given the oil and gas sector's success, the infrastructure investment that the north-east has had is not what it should have been. If we compare the north-east with Dubai, for example, the evidence is there to see.

We need to make the most of the opportunity in net zero. I am sure that we can come to a position, particularly with the Scottish Conservatives today, that, whatever the final destination of Scotland's constitutional future is, this Parliament should have powers over energy regulation and taxation.

The Presiding Officer: We move to winding-up speeches, and I call Michael Marra to speak for up to four minutes.

16:53

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour has absolutely recognised that our energy industry is utterly vital to the workers, their families and the wider economy—not just in the north-east but across the whole of Scotland. A genuine just transition that protects the livelihoods of workers in the North Sea must be provided. That is absolutely essential. We are absolutely clear that oil and gas will be part of our energy mix for decades to come. Government must work with the energy industry to manage the transition to clean energy in the coming years.

However, doing that job is not easy. It is a moral as well as an economic challenge, as various members have set out this afternoon. It will require careful analysis and reliance on the science, as the minister has highlighted, and a genuine partnership with industry. As Liam McArthur set out well, it will also require collaboration and co-operation between Governments across these islands, and that is in far too short supply.

However, we must have a full-scale rejection of the hyperbole that is on display from Conservative colleagues today, heroic and voluble though the attempts from Stephen Kerr, in particular, were on that point. Their leader, Douglas Ross, has been hung out to dry by the Chancellor of the Exchequer today.

Douglas Lumsden: I understand that Michael Marra might not want to listen to the members on these benches, but will he at least listen to companies such as OEUK, which has said that, under Labour's plans to remove the reinvestment allowance,

"42,000 jobs and £26 billion of economic value"

will be lost? Even former Labour councillors such as Barney Crockett in Aberdeen have disowned the Labour Party over that.

Michael Marra: I say to Mr Lumsden that we work as closely as we can with the oil and gas industry to talk about its concerns on that. Clearly, the process of getting from the current situation in oil and gas production to a clean energy system is challenging—that is what I am trying to set out. It is not an easy pathway, and it is one that we have to work on in collaboration and partnership to make happen. As part of that, we absolutely stand up—just as Mr Lumsden's chancellor did today—for a continued and improved windfall tax in the North Sea, to ensure that we can pay for the transition that has to happen.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member take an intervention?

Michael Marra: Not on that point. I will make some progress, sir.

With the SNP, what we have instead is tax cuts for energy giants and tax rises for ordinary working people—our nurses, teachers and police officers—during a cost of living crisis in which people are struggling to make ends meet.

Bob Doris asked what the windfall tax is designed to do. I can tell Mr Doris that it is designed to deliver 50,000 jobs and cheaper bills in Scotland; GB energy to be headquartered in Scotland; investment in Grangemouth, the Forth and the Tay; incentives to develop new energy products; and a revolutionised national grid.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member take an intervention?

Michael Marra: No, thank you.

In short, it is a plan to deliver that transition. Daniel Johnson was absolutely right to set out—

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member give way?

Michael Marra: No, sir, I will not. I am coming to my conclusion.

Daniel Johnson was absolutely right to tell the chamber that this was about economic reality—the one that the Tories do not want to face up to. The OBR told us today that GDP per person across the UK will be lower in 2028 than it is today. Every single person is poorer because of this Tory Government.

It is as a result of that that Labour's plan is now in front of us. The oil and gas sector is integral to the question, and the transition is vital to the future of our Scottish economy.

We must reject the hyperbole of the Tories, who have been holed below the waterline by their own party on those issues, and we must support the amendment in Daniel Johnson's name.

The Presiding Officer: I call Gillian Martin to speak for up to five minutes.

16:57

The Minister for Energy, Just Transition and Fair Work (Gillian Martin): I thank members for their contributions. I welcome the opportunity, as I always do, to stand up for energy workers—particularly those in the north-east, whom I represent—and future energy workers, too. If we harness the opportunities ahead of us, the prosperity that the north-east has been so fortunate to have had over many decades will be spread across Scotland, which is worth working towards.

The oil and gas sector has played, and will continue to play, a huge part in Scotland's energy future. That workforce and that supply chain are the envy of our European partners—as energy minister, I see that everywhere I go when I speak to partners outwith the UK—who realise that we are best placed to capitalise on our renewables future. That skills base and that supply chain will get us there, and we support them wholeheartedly.

We are committed to such a just transition, and we are working in partnership with industry to develop it.

Liam Kerr: Will the member give way on that point?

Gillian Martin: I will, in a second—I promise.

Even if there was not a climate emergency, we know that we need to plan for a future in which it will become more expensive and more difficult to extract oil and gas from the North Sea. Companies will make a business decision to go elsewhere in the world to extract oil and gas. We cannot put our heads in the sand on that; we would be foolish not to prepare for that inevitability. What is left in the North Sea will get harder and more expensive to recover, and we must replace those jobs with renewables jobs.

I will take Liam Kerr's intervention now.

Liam Kerr: Kevin Stewart said earlier that £500 million had been invested in the just transition fund. I had to force the First Minister to correct the record last time he misled the chamber to avoid embarrassment for Kevin Stewart. How much has

actually been invested in the just transition fund to date?

Gillian Martin: I am always here to spare any embarrassment for my colleagues. The total support for offshore wind in Scotland next year is £87 million, which is being committed as part of that £500 million.

Liam Kerr rose—

Gillian Martin: If Liam Kerr had taken my intervention, I would have been able to get that sorted out earlier.

In all my meetings with industry, I have had very positive conversations on the challenges that we have set—collectively, as a Government and as a society—for the North Sea operators on their just transition planning. They are making business decisions to invest in renewables. We just have to look at the collaborations that are coming together on the ScotWind licence options to see that oil and gas companies are working hand in hand with other energy producers to deliver on floating offshore wind projects.

The strategic investment of £15 million to anchor our supply chain has been mentioned. That supply chain, which has grown up with and supported oil and gas, is already pivoting to support renewables, and will pivot even more as that upward trajectory continues.

In the first two years of our just transition fund, we have committed £5.5 million to help energy workers to reskill and to build confidence in the potential of the just transition. I imagine that the industry would have been delighted had the UK Government matched our funding in its budget earlier today, so it is a shame that that did not happen.

I want to mention some members' contributions. I was very pleased when UK Labour said that it would invest £28 billion in green investment. I have to be honest—I was probably as disappointed as my Labour colleagues would have been when that was taken off the table. Dropping that commitment is a big mistake politically for Labour. I really hope that, should Labour be in government after the next general election, it will look at that again. That investment is owed to the people of Scotland in particular, notwithstanding some of the points that have been made by Labour colleagues today.

Liam McArthur spoke about the need for substantial investment in the grid. I fully agree with him. However, as Ivan McKee and Bob Doris pointed out, the elephant in the room is that successive UK Governments have wasted the revenue from the oil and gas sector in Scotland.

I feel slightly sorry for Douglas Lumsden today. At around midday, the wind must have fallen out of

his sails when he realised that he would be fronting up a debate on oil and gas after his London masters had decided to continue to use oil and gas as a cash cow while letting off the hook many other sectors and companies that are making obscene profits.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the minister give way?

The Presiding Officer: The minister must conclude.

Gillian Martin: Scotland funds the UK project once again, but, devastatingly, Douglas Lumsden is left in no doubt that the Scottish Conservatives have no influence with their UK leadership. I accept that the UK Conservatives ignore the Scottish Government—we are used to it. However, for them to ignore the Scottish Conservatives—my goodness! That must really sting.

17:02

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): As we have heard today, our oil and gas sector is one of Scotland's key economic engines. That point was made well by my colleagues Douglas Lumsden, who spoke about working for the workers; Tess White, who highlighted the need for energy security and a well-managed transition to renewables; and Stephen Kerr, who spoke vociferously, as ever, about the importance of investment.

Listening to the debate today, I believe that almost everyone understands how important oil and gas are to Scotland. We all agree that the North Sea is a mature basin and that there must be a transition to renewables, but that only makes it all the more difficult to understand the positions of the other parties. The SNP happily supports a presumption against new exploration, while Labour has come out and said that it will not grant new licences.

Daniel Johnson rose—

Maurice Golden: Perhaps Daniel Johnson can clarify that specific point.

Daniel Johnson: It is clear that we will honour existing licences. Furthermore, given that the UK Government is continuing with the windfall tax, would it not be better to use that money to fund a transition rather than a tax giveaway because the Conservatives are desperate and rather concerned about the next election?

Maurice Golden: We have heard today from the Labour Party that there will be no new licences. That is a dereliction of duty when it comes to the north-east and the rest of Scotland. Meanwhile, the Greens—ever the most extreme voices in Parliament—have boasted of wanting to end Scotland's oil and gas industry altogether.

What those parties do not seem to understand, or perhaps do not want to admit, is that those policies are based on a false proposition. We know from the Scottish Government's just transition review of the Scottish energy sector that North Sea production is declining faster than is required to keep global warming to 1.5°C, so new licences will have a minor—even a negligible—impact on our net zero efforts.

Yes, fossil fuels are the largest source of global carbon emissions, and, yes, we must tackle them if we are going to reach net zero. However, we cannot stick our heads in the sand and pretend that oil and gas will not be a key part of our economy for many years to come, especially given that the SNP and the Greens are nowhere near achieving their target of 50 per cent of energy consumption coming from renewables by 2030. Clearly, we need better effort to reduce long-term demand. While that is going on, we should also ensure that our supply is as low carbon as possible. As it happens, the carbon intensity of North Sea production is below the global average. In fact, natural gas from the UK continental shelf produces less than half the emissions of imported liquefied natural gas, so sourcing supply from the North Sea should be the first choice for Scotland.

Gillian Martin: Does the member recognise that we want to support existing production by the INTOG—innovation and targeted oil and gas—leasing round, which is helping to further decarbonise the current production of oil and gas?

Maurice Golden: There are lots of benefits to INTOG, but it has been held up by Scottish Government delays in planning. That needs to be looked at urgently to ensure that we build up the supply chain in advance of ScotWind.

The public agrees with the support for oil and gas. A poll last year found that the overwhelming majority of Scots—some 75 per cent—want demand to be met from domestic supply. The alternative is to increase imports, potentially from higher-emission sources, which, in turn, potentially will drive demand for those higher-emission basins.

Given that the SNP has failed to reach eight out of its last 12 legal emissions targets, you would think that it would want to avoid causing further environmental damage.

There is also an economic and social impact of demand reduction to consider—something that those of us who have the privilege of representing north-east communities are acutely aware of. A rapid shutdown, such as the Greens suggest, can only inflict unnecessary suffering on those communities, potentially costing everyone in Scotland as much as £1,100 each by 2030. Managing demand reduction over the long term

provides the opportunity to ensure a just transition for oil and gas workers.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I notice that the motion does not mention the increasing cost of extracting oil and gas, which the minister referred to in her contribution. What is the member's message to the sector that faces that situation?

The Presiding Officer: Maurice Golden—in conclusion, please.

Maurice Golden: Unlike Audrey Nicoll's message, my message to the sector and to the world is that the north-east and Scotland are open for business and we want your jobs and investment here.

Overall, what we need is a pragmatic approach to oil and gas—one that is rooted in the real world and is best placed to get us to net zero while protecting Scottish jobs and growing our economy. We can only hope that the Scottish Government pays heed instead of being dragged to further extremes by the Greens.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on backing Scotland's oil and gas sector.

Business Motions

17:09

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-12397, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 12 March 2024

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 13 March 2024

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands;
NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 14 March 2024

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Social Justice

followed by Social Justice and Social Security
Committee Debate: Addressing Child
Poverty Through Parental Employment

followed by Legislative Consent Motion:
Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Bill -
UK Legislation

followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 19 March 2024
 2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 20 March 2024
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture; Justice and Home Affairs
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 21 March 2024
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.15 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Questions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill
followed by Financial Resolution: Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 11 March 2024, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S6M-12398, on a stage 1 timetable for a bill, and S6M-12399, on a stage 2 timetable for a bill. I ask any member who wishes to speak against the motions to press their request-to-speak button. I call George Adam to move the motions on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Judicial Factors (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 27 September 2024.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Bankruptcy and Diligence (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 26 April 2024.—[George Adam]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:10

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of five Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-12400 and S6M-12401, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments; S6M-12402, on committee membership; S6M-12403, on committee substitutes; and S6M-12404, on the designation of a lead committee.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Food Commission (Appointment) Regulations 2024 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Order 2024 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Marie McNair be appointed to replace Fulton MacGregor as a member of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Evelyn Tweed be appointed as a member of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Gordon MacDonald be appointed to replace Marie McNair as a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and

Jackie Dunbar be appointed to replace Evelyn Tweed as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Kevin Stewart be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee;

Colin Beattie be appointed to replace Gordon MacDonald as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee;

Collette Stevenson be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee;

Bob Doris be appointed to replace Jackie Dunbar as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Economy and Fair Work Committee;

Karen Adam be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, and

David Torrance be appointed to replace James Dornan as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the supplementary legislative consent memorandum on the Automated Vehicles Bill.—
[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:10

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-12389.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, which seeks to amend motion S6M-12389, in the name of Liam Kerr, on ending violence in Scottish schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

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

17:11

Meeting suspended.

17:13

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-12389.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, be agreed to. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 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)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)

Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-12389.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, is: For 92, Against 20, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-12389.1, in the name of Pam Duncan-Glancy, which seeks to amend motion S6M-12389, in the name of Liam Kerr, on ending violence in Scottish schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect to the system. I would have voted no.

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

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 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)
 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)

McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-12389.1, in the name of Pam Duncan-Glancy, is: For 53, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-12389, in the name of Liam Kerr, on ending violence in Scottish schools, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am really quite disappointed in the system, because it bumped me out when I was already in it. I would have voted yes.

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

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Likewise, I was bumped out of the system. I also would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr McKee. 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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 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)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)

Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-12389, in the name of Liam Kerr, on ending violence in Scottish schools, as amended, is: For 94, Against 20, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that no pupil, teacher or member of school staff should suffer physical or verbal abuse and that every child and young person has the right to an uninterrupted school day, free from violence and disruption; notes the impact that the current escalation of violence in schools has had on the teaching profession, especially in relation to retention and mental health; further notes, with concern, the alarming reports of instances of violence and disruption, and calls on the Scottish Government to support parents, teachers and staff, assisting them in promoting acceptable behaviour and tackling instances of violence and disruption; calls on the Scottish Government to support children and young people impacted by violence and disruption in schools and to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow; further calls on all Members of the Scottish Parliament to work together in tackling the seriousness of this issue, diligently and without delay, alongside local authorities, schools, teachers and young people themselves; recognises the work that is already underway to respond to these challenges, including the joint national action plan with COSLA, which will publish in the spring; welcomes the publication of the gender-based violence in schools framework, which it agrees is a necessary step in responding to the increase in misogynistic behaviours identified by the behaviour in Scottish schools research and reports by teaching unions, and reaffirms, in the week of International Women's Day, the need to end misogyny in Scotland's schools and wider society.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-12388.3, in the name of Màiri McAllan, which seeks to amend motion S6M-12388, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on

backing Scotland's oil and gas sector, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 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)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-12388.3, in the name of Màiri McAllan, is: For 61, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-12388.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-12388, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on backing Scotland's oil and gas sector, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 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)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)

Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-12388.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 19, Against 95, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-12388, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on backing Scotland's oil and gas sector, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

The Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy (Christina McKelvie): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was booted out the system. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms McKelvie. 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)
 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)

White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Abstentions

Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (Alba)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-12388, in the name of Douglas Lumsden, on backing Scotland's oil and gas sector, as amended, is: For 62, Against 51, Abstentions 1.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the important role that is played by oil and gas in the energy profile of Scotland, the tens of thousands of jobs in that sector, and the essential

contribution that the sector's skilled workforce must make to Scotland's present and future energy security; understands the severity and urgency of the global climate emergency and the clear body of scientific evidence showing the need for a rapid shift away from current reliance on fossil fuels as part of the response to this; further understands that a just transition for Scotland's oil and gas sector is essential, given both the declining nature of the North Sea basin and Scotland's climate change commitments; supports a just transition approach for all sectors of Scotland's economy, in which emissions are reduced in line with climate goals, energy security is maintained, and workers and communities are supported as part of a genuine managed transition; acknowledges that the Scottish Government is in the process of finalising its Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, following the publication of analysis of consultation responses on the draft Strategy and Plan; recognises that licensing and regulation for offshore oil and gas, and the associated fiscal regime, are all matters that currently remain reserved to the UK Government; expresses frustration that the Scottish Government does not have all of the powers necessary to ensure that Scotland fully capitalises on its competitive advantages in the energy transition, including its world-leading and highly skilled offshore workforces; calls on the UK Government to deliver simple, holistic and predictable windfall taxes on excessive profits to address the cost of living crisis and to increase investment in the transition to net zero, and believes that revenues should not be used to fund new nuclear power.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the five Parliamentary Bureau motions.

As no member objects, the final question is, that motions S6M-12400 and S6M-12401, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, and motion S6M-12402, on committee membership, S6M-12403, on committee substitutes, and S6M-12404, on the designation of a lead committee, all in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Food Commission (Appointment) Regulations 2024 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Order 2024 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Marie McNair be appointed to replace Fulton MacGregor as a member of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Evelyn Tweed be appointed as a member of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee;

Gordon MacDonald be appointed to replace Marie McNair as a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and

Jackie Dunbar be appointed to replace Evelyn Tweed as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Kevin Stewart be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and

Culture Committee;

Colin Beattie be appointed to replace Gordon MacDonald as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee;

Collette Stevenson be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee;

Bob Doris be appointed to replace Jackie Dunbar as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Economy and Fair Work Committee;

Karen Adam be appointed as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, and

David Torrance be appointed to replace James Dornan as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the supplementary legislative consent memorandum on the Automated Vehicles Bill.—
[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. We will shortly move on to members' business.

Winning Students 100

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-12000, in the name of Keith Brown, on congratulating the University of Stirling on the launch of its winning students 100 programme. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to participate in the debate to press their request-to-speak button now.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates the University of Stirling, in the Clackmannanshire and Dunblane constituency, on the successful launch of its new Winning Students 100 programme; understands that this launch marks an important update to the existing Winning Students programme, initially established in 2008, which has awarded 1,700 scholarships since then, supporting gold medal Olympians and Paralympians, as well as European and world champions, in balancing their studies with high-performance and professional sports; commends the achievements of this scheme; understands that the scheme is made possible through cross-departmental support from the Scottish Funding Council, sportscotland, and the tertiary education sector, and looks forward to witnessing what it sees as the positive impact of this updated programme on the lives and careers of the participating student-athletes from across the network of universities and colleges that are involved.

17:28

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): I thank those members who signed the motion, allowing it to be debated today. I brought the debate to the chamber to celebrate a significant milestone for the University of Stirling, which is located in my constituency. That milestone is the launch of the winning students 100 programme, as a successor programme to the existing winning students programme, which supports athletes to balance the needs of their studies and the demands of competing in high-performance sport.

The University of Stirling has been Scotland's university for sporting excellence since 2008, around the same time that the initial winning students programme was launched. Since then, the programme has supported more than 1,700 scholarships, providing crucial assistance to gold-medal Olympians and Paralympians, and European and world champions, including Scottish long-distance runners Laura Muir and Eilish McColgan, and Alloa's own Olympic medal-winning swimmer, Duncan Scott.

The new winning students 100 programme is the latest development in that proud history. In its inaugural year, it will support 106 students, including Olympic gold medallist curler Hailey Duff; Commonwealth games gold medallist diver Grace Reid; and the under-23s European 10,000m track

record-holder Megan Keith, among others. Those others include not least Lewis Stewart, Commonwealth games 2022 gold medallist and Paralympics 2020 silver medallist, and Calum Douglas, Scottish hockey men's player and Great Britain under-23 champion, both of whom are, I believe, currently sat in the public gallery, along with members of staff from the university who are involved in supporting the winning students 100 programme.

With your indulgence, Presiding Officer, I think that it would be good if members who are present in the chamber showed their appreciation for the efforts of the staff and the students here. *[Applause.]*

The scholarship includes up to £3,000 in funding, academic flexibility for athletes and a hardship fund to provide additional support to athletes if it is needed. The University of Stirling has brought together a network of 28 sports institutions and 21 education institutions to support the delivery of the programme. Over the past 15 years, both winning students programmes have supported those exceptional individuals through their studies, thereby allowing them also to dedicate themselves to their respective sports.

The commendation for the success of those programmes, however, goes far beyond the University of Stirling. The initiative receives funding from the Scottish Funding Council and from sportscotland, along with other support from the tertiary education sector. That needs to be highlighted and commended as well.

Nevertheless, such programmes require a great deal of organisation and logistical management in the background, and the University of Stirling has been exemplary in its management and delivery of the winning students 100 programme, supported by an experienced advisory board and management group, comprising professionals from both the sports and education sectors, to ensure that the programme operates to extremely high standards.

It takes just a little imagination to realise how much pressure competing in a high-performance sport can put on somebody who is, at the same time, trying to complete their studies, and those students deserve remarkable praise for what they have done. I remember attending a reception at the University of Stirling around three or four years ago with a number of the swimming champions. At that time, the University of Stirling had won more medals than many countries had won at the previous championships. That just goes to show that there is something in the air at the University of Stirling that has led to that astonishing success. Indeed, a member said to me just now, "What is it about Stirling and the surrounding area that seems to be so effective in producing world-class

athletes?" It is about not just what those students have achieved in their sport, but the fact that they have done that at the same time as undertaking intensive study, for which they deserve our praise.

I do not wish to take up the full seven minutes, Presiding Officer, so I will conclude. The University of Stirling is the jewel in the crown of Scotland's sporting excellence and has rightly been recognised as such since the winning students programme was launched—as I mentioned—in 2008-09, supporting some of Scotland's top athletes behind the scenes since then. It is through those athletes that the winning students 100 programme will continue to elevate our sporting excellence as a country. I wish them all the best in their studies and in their sports. I also wish the University of Stirling all the best, as a remarkable institution that I am proud to represent, and I wish it every success in the pursuit of that goal in the future.

17:33

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I thank Keith Brown for bringing to the chamber this important debate to welcome the launch of the winning students 100 programme.

Scotland has long been a nation that has punched above its weight when it comes to sporting success. As well as having a rich pool of sporting talent, Scotland enjoys success that has been due in no small part to the support that athletes have received throughout their careers. Stirling university needs to be commended for, and congratulated on, its achievements.

For an example, we can look at the individuals who came from the previous winning students programme, which was launched back in 2008 and funded by the Scottish Funding Council. Some of the athletes who were supported by the programme are now, as we have heard, Olympic medallists and household names, such as Laura Muir and Duncan Scott.

The years that an athlete spends at university are an important opportunity for them to take part in their sport and take it to the next level. Those athletes face the challenge of combining their studies with their training and competitive programmes, so a balance needs to be struck. As we have heard, the winning students 100 programme provides students with grants of up to £3,000. However, the programme also provides much-needed academic flexibility for students, which allows them to train to the very best of their ability. The new winning students 100 programme has already awarded 106 scholarships across 28 different sports, including athletics, fencing, diving, hockey, rowing and triathlon.

As Scotland's university for sporting excellence, it is only appropriate that Stirling university manages that programme, and that is a real feather in its cap. As we have heard, Stirling university is the jewel in the crown, and I certainly second that.

In the current economic climate, such programmes have a major impact. We know that, while Scotland has first-class sporting facilities, some of those are at risk across local authorities, and that needs to be talked about. Of course, universities play an important role in providing high-quality sports facilities, and I welcome the fact that Stirling has a new £20 million sports centre, which was opened back in 2020. For many councils and communities, however, swimming pools, leisure centres and athletics tracks are at risk. In order for Scotland to keep its reputation as a leading sports nation, it is vitally important that young athletes have access to world-class facilities across the country. However, in the current climate, there are real difficulties in that respect.

The winning students programme 100 is, therefore, needed to provide support. As I said, I would be the first to congratulate and commend everyone who is involved in it, because it produces world-class athletes for Scotland. Scotland has long been a sporting nation with an excellent reputation, and such programmes are key to maintaining that reputation in the future. I have no doubt that the 500 scholarships that will be awarded through the programme up to 2028 will lead to countless amazing sporting achievements.

I thank all those from the University of Stirling who have dedicated their time, commitment and passion to supporting those young individuals in their programmes. I wish all those talented athletes the success that they deserve, and I am sure that they will see many benefits from the programme as they go forward in the years to come.

17:37

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North)
(SNP): I, too, thank my colleague Keith Brown for bringing the debate to the chamber. As a Stirling university economics graduate, I am delighted to participate in the celebration of my alma mater—a place that holds such fond memories for me. It seems only weeks ago that I was careering around the campus, and often venturing further afield, with my huge Art Garfunkel-style mane straggled by the wind, enjoying the spectacular scenery that Stirling and its surroundings have to offer.

Sadly, my career days are over and my curls are almost gone, but, as a former member of Stirling university athletics club, I share Keith Brown's pride in Stirling's rich sporting heritage, which continues to prosper with the expansion of the winning students 100 scholarship. The programme has supported 106 students in its first year, across 28 sports. Scholarship students will play a pivotal role in ensuring that we retain Scottish talent on our home turf, and—as we have heard—Stirling is Scotland's centre for sporting excellence.

The academic flexibility that the programme offers enables talented Scots to pursue sporting dual-career pathways in their home nation, bypassing the dubious allure of the American college system or opportunities down south. That is important in enabling them to remain close to support networks and to maintain a consistent training environment, which is crucial for higher-level athletic performance. The £20 million investment in new sporting facilities, which were opened in 2020, demonstrates the commitment to sport in Stirling for many years to come.

Moreover, keeping our top athletes at home contributes to the economy, boosts our national pride and reinforces our sporting identity. By investing in the dual careers of our athletes, we foster a generation of educated and disciplined sportspeople. Recipients of the scholarship, such as Abby Kane and Rory Dickson from my Cunninghame North constituency, serve as inspiring role models for their peers and for future generations.

That is significant in particular for low-income, female or disabled athletes, who remain underrepresented in sports. Through witnessing the success of our scholarship athletes, they will be more inclined to believe in their own ability to pursue a dual sporting career. However, the expansion of the scholarship is not only an investment in the future; it significantly improves the academic and athletic performance of our athletes today.

Indeed, there is a plethora of evidence that suggests that students who participate in sports at university are less likely to drop out and that, overall, they attain more qualifications than their peers. A similar correlation has been identified with on-field performance: athletes who are enrolled in further education demonstrate improved teamwork, discipline and self-regulation abilities.

The broadening of the programme will provide crucial assistance for athletes during their retirement and transition to life beyond sports. Public attention tends to focus solely on athletes when they are at the zenith of their careers, while scant regard is given to their wellbeing and the

intricacies of retiring from sports. Supporting athletes through university aids planning for the dark day when they must retire from competitive sport, facilitates adjustment to the labour market and enhances employment prospects. Beyond financial considerations, having accomplishments outside of sport means that athletes are less likely to encounter psychological challenges and identity crises upon retirement from competition.

I congratulate those who have been involved in the winning students 100 programme over the past 16 years. Their dedication and commitment has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in shaping the future of countless aspiring athletes. I emphasise to young Scots that pursuing a career in sport need not come at the expense of academic or personal growth. With determination and support, they can excel in both realms and contribute to the rich tapestry of Scottish sporting excellence. The University of Stirling's contribution to Scottish sport is the pride of our nation. I say well done to all who have been involved and best of luck to those who are still to pass through the university doors in the coming years.

17:41

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank Keith Brown for bringing the debate to the chamber. I am pleased to welcome the new funding for the new winning students 100 sport scholarship programme, to recognise the role of the University of Stirling in running the scheme and to celebrate the success of the programme since it was first established in 2008.

The partnership between the Scottish Funding Council, sportscotland and the education sector is welcome. Scotland's upcoming sporting heroes will see the benefit of the investment in them, and I hope that that support will have a significant impact on their sporting futures. It is also important to recognise that sporting excellence benefits Scotland as a whole by supporting our local and wider economies and Scotland's place on the international stage.

We are in an Olympic year and, this past weekend, we saw many top athletes at the world indoor championship in Glasgow. As spectators, we can enjoy the competition and the achievement that we see on those stages, but we recognise that behind it are many years of training, hard work and striving towards sporting excellence. However, that training and hard work often goes alongside a day job or, for younger participants, education. Being able to balance that is no mean feat, which is why the partnership between the Scottish Funding Council, sportscotland and the further and higher education sector should be recognised. The involvement of sportscotland is a positive addition that reflects the commitment of

the sporting and education bodies to working together to support our student athletes.

For students who look to balance their studies with sporting commitments, the programme not only provides financial support but, by working with colleges and universities, ensures that students are able to balance their training and competition with the demands of their courses. They make sure that additional support is in place, such as academic flexibility, which is key to allowing student athletes to pursue their dual interests. The funding from the programme can help in covering the cost of travel, not just for competitions but to and from training facilities. The additional funding that is available in the current round for athletes who come from areas of high deprivation is to be welcomed.

I am pleased to hear that the newly branded programme has already awarded 106 scholarships for 2023-24 encompassing Olympians, Paralympians and European and world champions. They include the current Olympic curling champion, Hailey Duff, who is a University of Stirling graduate. Members will be aware of my interest in protecting curling facilities at the Dewar centre in Perth and the centre's role in producing a number of medals for Scotland on the European and world stages. Those include the girls event at the European junior curling tour at the Dewar centre, which Scotland's junior championships team, led by Robyn Munro, won in January last year. That team included the former Perth academy student Holly Wilkie-Milne, who grew up training at the Perth rink. The importance of investment in competitions and the provision of facilities go hand in hand. The recent success of teams at the Perth masters—where curlers of all generations from new beginners to Olympians competed—helped to demonstrate that.

The original winning students programme awarded more than 1,700 scholarships during its first phase of funding, including to middle and long-distance runner Laura Muir, who was raised in Milnathort. She successfully balanced studying for a degree as a vet with the rigours of working towards her European title and Olympic silver. Laura competed in the recent world indoor championships at the Commonwealth arena in Glasgow, alongside Josh Kerr and Jemma Reekie. Her successes are a great example of what the programme supports and an inspiration to current participants.

I look forward to seeing the positive impacts of the updated programme on the lives and careers of the participating student athletes from my region of Mid Scotland and Fife and across Scotland. I want to express my best wishes for continued success to the young athletes who have benefited from the programme. I thank the network of

universities and colleges, stakeholders and organisations that are involved and I particularly recognise the huge contribution that has been made by the University of Stirling.

17:45

The Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans (Graeme Dey): Let me begin by thanking Keith Brown for bringing this motion to Parliament and members from across the chamber who have contributed. I especially thank Kenneth Gibson, who teased us with his contribution. I think that I speak for the chamber when I say that we would really enjoy sight of the photographs of that Art Garfunkel look that he sported during his time at the University of Stirling.

We often hear about the power of sport and the positive and valuable contribution that sport and physical activity make to personal, community and national wellbeing in Scotland. I know how much store I set by heading to the golf course, for example, for the benefit of my mental and physical health, although all too often that activity does very little for my blood pressure and does not fulfil a pledge that I made to cut down on my use of unparliamentary language outside this place.

To be serious, sport also has the power to unite, and that is particularly evident when we witness the passion that we Scots show as a nation when supporting our sporting superstars. Scotland continues to produce world-class athletes, who compete in many disciplines on the international stage. Whether it is the Commonwealth games, the Olympics, the Paralympics or international events such as the world indoor athletics championships, which took place in Glasgow last week, our athletes deliver outstanding performances.

Although we witness their success, it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge, as Claire Baker did, that those successes require years of dedication and sacrifice. The level of commitment that is required of young athletes in order to develop and progress in sport is so impressive, and it is essential that there is a positive pathway for individuals who wish to pursue sporting and academic excellence.

We are committed to ensuring that all students in Scotland have access to the best possible support and that those who need it most are supported. I want to ensure that we continue to do all that we can to give our athletes and young people the help that they need. That is why I am delighted to see the launch of the winning students 100 scholarship. The programme is a true cross-sector collaboration of Scotland's sport and higher education bodies, which will assist our young

athletes to find the right balance between training, their studies and other commitments.

The partnership between sportscotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the University of Stirling will build on the foundations and successes of the original winning students programme. With funding secured until 2028, the number of athletes who are supported will continue to grow.

As a sports fan, I have watched previous winning students scholarship recipients do amazing things on the world stage. I am thinking of athletes such as Duncan Scott who, in Tokyo, became the first team Great Britain athlete ever to win four medals in a single game, and Laura Muir who, as others have noted, is another former recipient and is now firmly established as one of the world's top middle-distance runners. While Laura was training to be a vet at the University of Glasgow, the winning students programme provided her with scholarship funding to help her to achieve her sporting and academic goals.

I am grateful to Keith Brown for reminding us that Eilish McColgan was also a beneficiary. Eilish was born and raised in Carnoustie in my Angus South constituency. The programme also gave para cyclist Karen Darke the opportunity to change her academic focus and get advice about the direction of her studies as a scholar and an athlete. As part of the programme, Karen was given flexibility with regard to studying and competing. I could mention so many other former recipients who have gone on to be successful in their sport and, in some cases, become world, Olympic or Commonwealth champions.

As Alexander Stewart noted, 106 scholarships have already been awarded for 2023-24 across 28 different sports, and I have no doubt that many of the current recipients will become our superstars of tomorrow. Those receiving scholarships include athletes such as Megan Keith, who is already setting European age-level records, and Grace Reid, Scotland's most decorated diver. Both are prime examples of world-class student athletes who are pursuing excellence in and out of the classroom.

We remain committed to the principle that access to education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. All students, no matter their background, should have an equal chance of entering and succeeding in higher education. I therefore particularly welcome the additional funding that is available to student athletes from areas of high deprivation. That can make a real difference, particularly given the flexibility for scholarship funding to be spent on a number of support services, from student accommodation to competition fees and sports equipment.

Sporting experiences in colleges and universities play a key role in the development of young people in their early sporting lives and are a vital part of building their competence and confidence in sport. Last year saw the successful launch of the college active campus network, which is a groundbreaking initiative that is aimed at promoting health and wellbeing among students in higher education. That exciting new partnership, which is delivered between sportscotland and Colleges Scotland, alongside Scottish Student Sport, will help to put sport and physical activity at the centre of college life by giving students across the country the opportunity to get active, significantly benefiting the physical and mental wellbeing of participants. I am sure that all this year's winning students recipients will be fantastic ambassadors for sport and will act as role models in colleges and universities, encouraging others to participate and be physically active.

The winning students programme has made a proven contribution to the performance sports system in Scotland, combining the power of education and sport in a truly distinctive way, as a key ingredient for success. I cannot wait to see and hear about all the sporting and academic achievements of future alumni of the winning students 100 programme.

Again, I thank Keith Brown for securing the debate, which has provided us with the opportunity to celebrate not only the launch of the winning students 100 programme but the achievements of Scotland's young athletes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. I think that we all look forward to seeing the photos of Kenneth Gibson, who, like Art Garfunkel, has dedicated his career to building bridges over troubled water.

With that, the debate is concluded, and I close this meeting of Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:51.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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