



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Tuesday 8 January 2019**

**Session 5**



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 8 January 2019*

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

## Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Good afternoon, and welcome back to everybody. Our first item of business is time for reflection, and our leader is the Rev Colin Sinclair, who is the minister at Palmerston Place Church in Edinburgh.

**The Rev Colin Sinclair (Minister, Palmerston Place Church, Edinburgh):** Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. As this is the first time for reflection in 2019, let me begin by wishing you all a happy new year.

We live, as the Chinese say, in interesting times. The month of January gets its name from the Roman god Janus. He is depicted as a two-faced man. One face looks towards the past and the other towards the future. Perhaps looking back is what prompts us to make new year's resolutions for the future. Some of you may have already given up on resolutions, taking the same attitude as the characters in the cartoon "Calvin and Hobbes". As Calvin once said:

"God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I'm so far behind I'll never die."

Most of us have little idea of how this year is going to turn out. It is more unpredictable than many in recent times. We may have drawn up plans and contingency plans. We may have scoped out various alternative scenarios. But forecasting is an inexact science and can leave us looking very foolish. In our family, my wife, Ruth, is often heard to say, "When life seems out of control, control the things you can." For the children, that may be as simple as getting up and dressed, eating properly, and going with well-established routines until life becomes clearer.

In the Old Testament, when the nation was being dominated by forces outside its control, the people were reminded to hold on to what really matters. As Martin Luther once said, faith is taking God seriously. What does that mean? Micah put it this way:

"What does the Lord require of you? To seek justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly before your God."

For Christians, it is an invitation to embark on the adventure of faith, responding to the call of Jesus who said simply, "Follow me".

In this year 2019, I suggest that that will take tenacious, winsome courage from all of us. "Tenacious" means we keep believing when it would be easier to give up. "Winsome" means we face life with active love and a smile, not hatred and a scowl. "Courage" means we do what needs to be done without complaining.

Our prayers are with you for whatever lies ahead in 2019.

## Business Motion

14:04

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-15278, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a revised business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for:

(a) Tuesday 8 January 2019—

after

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles

insert

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Conclusion of Judicial Review

(b) Thursday 10 January 2019—

delete

2.30 pm Scottish Government Debate: Future Rural Policy and Support in Scotland

and insert

2.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Implications of the White Paper on Immigration and the Population of Scotland

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Future Rural Policy and Support in Scotland

(c) Wednesday 16 January 2019—

delete

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Rural Economy

and insert

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Protecting Scotland's Interests: Response to the Outcome of the Meaningful Vote in Westminster

*followed by* Portfolio Questions: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Rural Economy

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.15 pm Decision Time—[*Graeme Dey*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Topical Question Time

14:04

### ScotRail (Delays and Cancellations)

1. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken in response to recent delays and cancellations on the ScotRail network. (S5T-01427)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** I have been absolutely clear that the recent performance on our railways has been unacceptable. Consequently, before Christmas, I instructed Transport Scotland to serve a contractual notice on ScotRail that it must prepare and submit a remedial plan to reduce cancellations and improve reliability to contract requirements.

I expect ScotRail to set out in the remedial plan how it plans to address the performance issues, to ensure that they can be realised and that the full benefits of the Scottish Government's record investment in our rail network is then received by service users.

Over the festive period, I have been in regular contact with senior officials at the ScotRail Alliance, where I left them in no doubt that appropriate and swift action was required. There has been a marked improvement since then. On Monday 7 January and Tuesday 8 January 2019, ScotRail had appropriately trained train crew available for all services. I will continue to monitor that daily, to ensure that ScotRail meets its training programme to remove train crew cancellations over the coming weeks.

However, more than 50 per cent of delays to ScotRail trains last year were caused by Network Rail, so fixing ScotRail's train crew problem will not be enough. It is essential that Network Rail in Scotland be fully aligned with the Scottish Government's priorities and fully accountable to the Parliament. Only then will it be possible for Scotland's rail system to be managed properly, as one system. Indeed, members will be aware that, in December 2018, the Office of Rail and Road found that Network Rail had weaknesses in its planning and capability to recover services following incidents. The ORR has issued a provisional order against Network Rail, which requires it to take urgent action to address those findings. Therefore, both ScotRail and Network Rail need to address those issues that impact on performance to ensure that the public receive the services that they expect and deserve.

**Colin Smyth:** Months ago, in September, ScotRail's performance plummeted to a level that breached its franchise agreement. Instead of taking decisive action to demand improvements, the cabinet secretary issued it with a waiver, giving it a licence to continue to fail. Not surprisingly, its performance got worse.

Last month, I challenged the cabinet secretary to stop bailing out ScotRail and start standing up for passengers by at least issuing a remedial notice against it and demanding a clear remedial plan. Again, the cabinet secretary refused to take action. He even told the Parliament:

"There are early signs of improvements"—[*Official Report*, 18 December 2018; c 10.]

when, in truth, ScotRail's performance was continuing to get worse.

Does the cabinet secretary not accept that he should have taken action long before now? Will he start to take responsibility for his inaction and apologise to Scotland's hard-pressed rail passengers for the miserable service that they are still receiving?

**Michael Matheson:** I very much regret the poor service from ScotRail that customers have experienced over recent months. There is no doubt that further action is required to ensure that the contract that Abellio has for the ScotRail Alliance is one that it is meeting contractually.

Colin Smyth will be aware that issuing a notice for a remedial plan requires there to have been a contractual breach of the franchise agreement. That was identified on 21 December 2018, when I instructed officials to ensure that such a notice was issued to ScotRail. That is exactly what I have done to ensure that it is being called to account for the contract that it has taken on.

On the waiver that has been provided, as the member will be aware, and as I have stated in the chamber on a number of occasions, the full powers and requirements in the franchise agreement remain in place. The waiver takes account of the very factors that were highlighted in the ORR report just before Christmas, which have had an impact on ScotRail's performance but which it is not able to manage itself—for example, the beast from the east, and the hot weather during the summer—and the impact from Network Rail's performance. All those factors have an impact on ScotRail's ability to meet the requirements. In its report in December, the ORR recognised that that has had a significant impact on ScotRail's overall performance, which is why it was given the 1 per cent waiver.

I can assure Colin Smyth that there is absolutely no lack of determination on my part to ensure that ScotRail keeps to the standards that we expect of

it, as set out in the contract. I am determined to ensure that we address that, and the remedial plan will assist us in dealing with it.

However, it is important that we are honest with the travelling public about the fact that we can address issues with ScotRail, but we also need to be able to address issues to do with the other half of our rail network—the infrastructure element of our railway. In some months, up to 70 per cent of delays have been caused by Network Rail. That is unacceptable, which is why action must also be taken to improve its performance so that we can achieve performance improvements across the board on the rail network in Scotland.

**Colin Smyth:** The cabinet secretary knows that, if he had not issued the waiver, he could have issued a remedial plan notice far earlier than he did. He eventually issued a remedial plan notice to ScotRail on Christmas eve because of a franchise breach in relation to cancellations and—as everyone knows—because of a fall in punctuality, which means that ScotRail will breach even the new performance level that has been set by the Government.

Given ScotRail's appalling failure, does the cabinet secretary honestly believe, as he said, that the performance targets that are set out in the franchise will be met—yes or no? If the answer is yes, when will that happen? If the answer is no, when will he finally bring an end to this failing franchise?

**Michael Matheson:** That is exactly what is set out in the franchise—the franchise sets out the commitments that we expect the franchisee to meet, and we will continue to press ScotRail to do that. It is clear that ScotRail has not been meeting those commitments in recent times, and it must take action to ensure that it is going in the right direction. We will continue to remain focused on that.

I am committed to making sure that ScotRail is held to account for its response in meeting the standards that are set in the franchise contract. I am also determined to make sure that we do everything that we can to improve the management of the infrastructure of the rail network in Scotland. If Colin Smyth is really committed to making sure that we deliver the best possible railway system for the travelling public in Scotland, I hope that he will support the devolution of Network Rail to the Scottish Parliament so that we can have an integrated network that enables us to deliver the services that passengers deserve.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Four members would like to ask supplementaries, so it would be good if we could make progress.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** I wish the chamber a happy new year.

I pay tribute to the ScotRail staff who worked over the festive period to keep Scotland moving, but it is clear that ScotRail's performance is still unacceptable. Helpfully, the cabinet secretary referred to the remedial plan that he has required ScotRail to put in place. If the plan does not result in long-term improvements, what sanctions—financial or otherwise—are available to the cabinet secretary under the existing franchise arrangements that mean that his threats to ScotRail have teeth and consequences?

**Michael Matheson:** The member has asked a helpful question. A key part of the franchise approach to the rail network in the United Kingdom is to make sure that the contract is utilised in a way that holds the contractor to account. That is why I issued the order for a remedial plan notice. ScotRail must now bring forward a remedial plan that sets out how it intends to get services back in line with what is set out in the contract. ScotRail will have eight weeks to set out that detail—it will have to submit its plan by around 18 February. If it fails to do that, it will be in breach of the contract. Any organisation that is in breach of its contract could be fined, costs could be increased for certain services that it provides to the taxpayer or the contract could be removed.

The requirement to produce a remedial plan has serious implications for the contract holder. It is not something that would be issued on a whim because of individual problems on a limited number of occasions. There has been a series of problems over a period of time, which I do not believe is acceptable.

I know from the discussions that I have had with ScotRail that it is clear about how serious the situation is for it, but it has assured me that it is determined to do everything that it can to make sure that it gets services back on line, in line with what is expected under the contract.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary mentioned some of the improvements that ScotRail made over the festive period, but could he give us a bit more detail about the impact that those improvements have had and, more importantly, what more ScotRail is doing to help those passengers who have been inconvenienced?

**Michael Matheson:** One of the main challenges that we have had in recent times has been to do with the ability of ScotRail to train its staff for the new Hitachi trains and the new routes that were introduced as part of the timetable change on 9 December. The late arrival of the refurbished high-speed trains is just one of the factors that have had an impact on ScotRail's ability to train staff.

Just under 900 members of staff needed to be trained, and ScotRail is now at a point where 20 per cent or so of those staff are still to be trained. It has given me an assurance that, as we go forward, the number of cancellations that come about as a result of a shortage of train crew will continue to decline, and it will continue to try to work that number down in the coming weeks. It will continue to be focused on training its staff in order to ensure that they have the level of competence that will allow it to minimise the number of cancellations that occur as a result of a lack of available crew.

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** I say to the cabinet secretary that we seem to be here repeatedly and we are hearing all the same stuff. I have lost count of the number of plans and improvement plans, and now we have a remedial plan. Plans are of no interest to constituents on the far north line who finish a hard day's work only to find that the train that they hoped would take them home has been cancelled. What level of mismanagement is required from Abellio before the cabinet secretary will take control of the situation?

**Michael Matheson:** The way in which the provisions are set out in the franchise agreement gives us the power to direct ScotRail to bring forward plans to address issues where it has failed to deliver proper services, and we are holding it to account for the contract. Requiring the remedial plan is one of the most serious actions that we can take, and we are requiring the company to ensure that it starts to address the issues effectively and systematically. It is very clear about how serious this is for it as the franchise holder.

We now need to see the detail of its plan, which we will receive in February, and to consider that. There will then be a period of time to allow the company to take it forward and ensure that it is delivering the agreed improvements that it has set out in the remedial plan. Once that has been taken forward, we as the Government will be in a position to assess the company's performance and whether it is actually delivering on the remedial plan that it has submitted to us. As I said to Jamie Greene, should it fail to do that and to meet those necessary standards, that could result in the company losing the franchise. It is aware of the potential implications for it if it fails to deliver on what is set out in the remedial plan.

**Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):** I would like to know in what way Michael Matheson's remedial plan of January 2019 differs from Humza Yousaf's performance improvement plan of January 2017.

**Michael Matheson:** The ultimate sanction if the company fails to deliver on the remedial plan and



meet the requirements that it sets out is that it could lose the franchise.

### Healthcare Environmental Services

**2. Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take regarding the cessation of trading in managing medical waste contracts by Healthcare Environmental Services Ltd, including supporting the 150 workers who have been made redundant. (S5T-01416)

**The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn):** The Scottish Government is concerned about the situation at Healthcare Environmental Services Ltd and is taking a number of steps to respond. The company advised the national health service boards in Scotland on 7 December that it was unable to continue to provide clinical waste collection services. NHS Scotland then implemented interim contingency arrangements to ensure that clinical waste is appropriately collected, stored and disposed of in line with industry regulations. There has been no impact on patient services.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency is monitoring the situation on a daily basis and is continuing to seek regulatory compliance. We will work with SEPA to ensure that the sites are cleared safely and all waste is disposed of appropriately, should that become necessary. There is at present no significant environmental risk and no risk to the wellbeing of local communities.

There is obvious and clear concern for the workforce given the impact on them. The company took up the offer of partnership action for continuing employment support on 27 December 2018, when it made its employees redundant. PACE partners attended a support event that was held in Shotts on 3 and 4 January and provided support to 125 individuals who were in attendance. We have also been in contact with representatives of the redundancy payments service. We are awaiting information from the company regarding employee details in order to progress redundancy payments.

We are monitoring the situation and will provide further support and take any further action as may be required.

**Alex Neil:** I thank the minister for his reply and for the PACE assistance that he and his department provided over the festive period.

As well as finding the HES workers jobs, the other top priority is for them to be paid their wages and receive the other payments that they are due. The company's bank, HSBC, has refused to release any funds since 5 December, which is why

the workers did not get paid. Will the minister urgently contact the bank and demand that the necessary funds be released urgently to pay the workers all the wages that they are due? Will he look at whether the Scottish Government can in the meantime provide urgent cash help to the workers who are owed their wages?

Finally, will the minister urgently contact the Insolvency Service again, as this morning it advised workers that they are not entitled to redundancy payments because the business has not currently been declared insolvent?

**Jamie Hepburn:** On the member's first point, I am aware that the company has set out the difficulties that it has had in accessing finance from its bank through the usual banking services, and I undertake to contact the bank, in co-ordination with the company, to see whether we can move the matter along. My expectation is that that would result in payments to the workforce; that is the basis on which I would seek to intervene.

On the contact from the Insolvency Service, I think that I need to get more detail of that. When a company is not in the process of administration and has not declared itself insolvent, there are certainly difficulties with workers being able to secure redundancy payments through that process. The information that we have had is that another process is under way; if the HES workers have been advised otherwise, I will need to look at that—if I can get that information from Mr Neil, I of course commit to doing so.

**Alex Neil:** I will supply the minister with the necessary information this afternoon; I myself received it only within the past half hour.

I want to ask the minister about the causes of the company going down. Princess Anne opened the new facility in April, and in September the United Kingdom Cabinet Office intervened, initially in relation to the management of waste south of the border. There are allegations that the UK Cabinet Office and, in particular, a senior official called Coleen Kaiser Andrews have, since September, been involved in an exercise to deliberately and systematically destroy the company. Will the minister urgently raise the matter with David Lidington, Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, in London, because these are serious allegations, and I have seen some indication that there is a degree of justification at least for making the allegation?

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Before the minister replies, let me say that I hope that Mr Neil would think seriously before naming in this Parliament an official who cannot answer back and taking advantage of parliamentary privilege in such a way.

**Jamie Hepburn:** I would be cautious about commenting on allegations whose full detail I have not seen. I say again that, if I am provided with information, I will have a look at it and that, if it is necessary to contact the Cabinet Office in light of that information, I commit to doing so.

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** What assurances can the minister give to communities in and around Shotts that the waste that is currently stockpiled on the site in Shotts is being properly stored according to the highest health and safety and public health regulatory standards?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I can give that assurance because, through NHS National Services Scotland, we have put in place interim arrangements with a range of companies: three licensed waste carriers are covering the whole of Scotland for priority sites—that is, large hospitals—and other contracts are in place with specialist companies to provide community collections from smaller sites. The arrangements will deal with waste on an on-going basis.

I talked about the steps that SEPA is taking. There is no indication that there is any substantial risk to communities just now, but that is why SEPA is involved and is there on a daily basis. We will continue to be informed by SEPA.

### Kaiam Europe

**3. Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will support the Kaiam Europe Ltd employees who were made redundant without notice and were not paid before Christmas. (S5T-01415)

**The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn):** The Scottish Government and its agencies have been working to support the former Kaiam employees in Livingston. Partnership action for continuing employment support was available from 24 December, two days after the company appointed an administrator. That support will continue. For example, a jobs fair is scheduled to take place in Bathgate on 17 January. Our shared goal is to help the people who have been made redundant to get back into work as quickly as possible.

Earlier today, I spoke with the administrator, KPMG, about how we can support those people to secure the redundancy payments to which they are entitled.

**Angela Constance:** Will the minister condemn outright the people who were responsible for the actions—or inactions—that led to more than 300 workers being informed on Christmas eve that they were being made redundant without notice and without pay? By way of contrast, will he commend the warm and generous response of the

wider West Lothian community, in particular community volunteers and council staff, who organised a community hub and collected and distributed donations of toys, food and gift vouchers, in addition to raising more than £22,000 for those affected?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I recognise that any administration or redundancy situation will be particularly upsetting and challenging for the individuals involved and their families and communities. There is no good time of year for administration or redundancies to happen, but before Christmas is a particularly bad time of year for it to happen. I regret that the chief executive of the company did not inform the workforce in person, as has been well reported, and that the company determined to go into administration at that juncture.

That said, we can all commend the response from the local community. It has been very clear that the community has rallied round to raise funds and to help on the ground by volunteering and making donations of toys and food. That shows the strength of community spirit in the area. Those who have been involved deserve the highest commendation from us all.

**Angela Constance:** The minister will be aware that, this morning, the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee began to get its teeth into questions that have to be answered about the transparency and due diligence of the Scottish Enterprise investment of £850,000 in Kaiam. Will he instruct Scottish Enterprise to co-operate fully and frankly with that committee, and will he confirm that that does not preclude any further investment to secure highly skilled jobs in West Lothian if a suitable buyer for the business can be found? Can he provide Parliament with an update on the efforts to find a suitable buyer for the business?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I will not rehearse the points that I made earlier to the committee about the expectation of due diligence being followed in each and every circumstance in which public funds are awarded. However, when that process is followed, it does not always result in the company that has been awarded funds being able to sustain itself over the longer term. Sadly, that has not been the case with Kaiam.

I do not need to instruct Scottish Enterprise to respond to any call from the committee. It is my expectation and belief that it will respond to any request from the committee.

As an update on efforts to sell the business, I can say that I discussed the matter with KPMG earlier today, and it has informed me that it has received in excess of 20 expressions of interest from various parties.

On the question of on-going support from our public agency, Scottish Enterprise has already, through the administrator, set out what support it may be able to offer any potential buyer.

**Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con):** Against the background of the bad mistreatment of the workers at Kaiam, what is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that companies in Scotland that are in receipt of regional selective assistance or are Scottish Enterprise account managed companies will not treat their workers similarly in future circumstances?

**Jamie Hepburn:** It is clear that any company is ultimately responsible for the manner in which it conducts itself with its workforce. The Scottish Government's perspective on fair work is well known. Part of fair work should be proper dialogue with employees about the circumstances that any company finds itself in. That is one of my expectations.

We have set out some of the work that we plan to take forward in respect of conditionality around regional selective assistance and other forms of public support through the fair work first principle, and we will set out more detail on that in due course.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I endorse Angela Constance's comments on the response of the community, West Lothian Council and other partners in providing advice and support to employees who are affected by redundancy at Kaiam. However, the responsibility for the closure lies with the owner, Bardia Pezeshki.

On five separate occasions prior to 24 December, ministers were warned about major problems that threatened pay and jobs at Kaiam. That situation ended up with 300 workers with no pay and no job. Will the minister answer this question directly: did he at any point in the period between 22 November and 24 December ask the company to inform workers that their jobs and pay were at risk?

**Jamie Hepburn:** There was an on-going process of engagement between Scottish Enterprise and the company. The difficulty that we had with this situation is that the circumstances were never the same at any given time. When we were first notified about the matter, it was not about the company closing but about finding a buyer. Thereafter, it was about actions to secure funding and to pursue a sale proposal. It was only much later on that the possibility of the company going into administration became apparent. We have done everything in the intervening period to try to support the company and, ultimately, to support its workforce, which we continue to do.

## Ultra-low-emission Vehicles

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-15243, in the name of Michael Matheson, on ultra-low-emission vehicles.

14:30

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** In 2017, we announced our commitment to phase out the need for petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032. Since then, we have seen huge shifts in the electric vehicle market alongside new commitments to decarbonising transport from within the automotive industry and by the international community. For example, the number of EV models available is set to jump from 155 at the end of 2017 to 289 by 2022, car manufacturers such as Nissan and Volvo anticipate that 50 per cent of all their sales will be of EVs by 2025 and countries such as India, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland are proposing to ban sales of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

The United Kingdom Parliament's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee recommended that the UK Government bring its ambitions for ultra-low-emission vehicles in line with those of Scotland.

Once again, we have shown that this Administration's leadership on climate change and low-carbon technology is giving Scotland the competitive and comparative advantages that are needed to respond to today's global challenges and opportunities.

Our commitment was also an important step in creating certainty for business during a period of unprecedented uncertainty and change. The Scottish Government's climate change targets, energy strategy targets and commitment to remove the need for new diesel and petrol cars and vans by 2032 all provide companies with a clear direction of travel. Those measures show Scotland's commitment to pioneering a low-carbon future and, as a result, they mark out Scotland as a centre for low-carbon investment.

What progress are we making on our 2032 commitment? I am pleased to say that we are fast approaching the installation of our 1,000th charging point on the chargeplace Scotland network. That is an important milestone—it means that the average distance from any given location to the nearest public charging point is just 2.78 miles in Scotland; that is the lowest in Great Britain, where the average is 4.09 miles. That reflects our commitment to bringing robust, reliable

electric vehicle charging to people and places across Scotland.

We are providing more funding than ever before to expand the number of low-emission vehicles on our roads through our switched on fleets initiative and the low-carbon transport loan.

The latest figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that 4.6 per cent of newly registered cars in Scotland in 2018 were low carbon. There has also been a 46 per cent growth in registrations of ultra-low-emission cars in Scotland over the past year, which is 13 percentage points higher than the rest of the UK.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

As the owner and daily user of a hybrid vehicle, I applaud the Scottish Government for its—if I can use this pun—direction of travel. However, I am also the owner of a classic car. Can the cabinet secretary reassure us that the owners of classic and historic vehicles that require petrol and diesel to run on will still be able to use those vehicles after 2030?

**Michael Matheson:** There is no plan to ban petrol or diesel vehicles, but Murdo Fraser might have difficulty in getting his classic car into low-emission zones in our big cities once they have been introduced.

In the past year, we have supported orders for more than 380 ULEVs across Scotland's local authorities and a further 120 in public sector fleets. We are working closely with the emergency services to increase the number of ULEVs in their fleets, with plans to replace more than 150 police, fire and ambulance vehicles with ULEVs in the next 12 months.

Those investments, along with further planned support, will more than double the number of ULEVs that we have supported in the public fleet. I am pleased to confirm that orders for the first fully electric vehicles in the Government car service have been approved, and they will enter service later this year.

Our support has undoubtedly facilitated those successes, but the achievements are a result of ambition and partnership working between local authorities, Scotland's public sector and the Scottish business community. For example, Dundee was recently named Europe's most visionary city at the World Electric Vehicle Association conference in Japan. I am sure that Parliament will join me in congratulating the city council, businesses and residents of that city on their vision and determination to make this happen.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):**

The cabinet secretary has mentioned electricity a

few times. Is there a place for hydrogen in the mix?

**Michael Matheson:** If John Mason bears with me, I will get to hydrogen, which has an important role to play.

This year, we will expand the scope and ambition of our work so that Scotland is at the forefront of growth in ULEVs and the ULEV market and so that our business community and workforce benefit from the opportunities that that growth presents.

Transport accounts for 37 per cent of Scotland's emissions and, in 2016, road transport was responsible for 68 per cent of transport emissions. Those figures frame the challenge that we face. The need for focused action is clear, as is Scotland's potential to become an innovation centre in low-carbon transport.

Scotland has one of the most highly qualified working-age populations in Europe, and we have more world-class universities per capita than almost any other country. My ambition is to build on those qualities to support low-carbon transport. To do that, we must take a lead in key technologies of the future and do so in a way that benefits all of society. Scotland must be an investor in and a producer of—not just a consumer of—the innovations that will shape the future.

In addition to Scotland's considerable expertise in areas such as battery technology, power engineering and manufacturing of buses and specialised vehicles, there is enormous economic potential from the use of hydrogen as a low-carbon fuel in transport. We can build on existing projects in places such as Aberdeen, Fife, Orkney and now Dundee to develop products, services, skills and expertise in hydrogen transport to benefit our economy and provide value to the wider world.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):**

Is there a risk in overfocusing on types of power, whether it is hydrogen or electric, to the exclusion of automation? The combination of automation with electric vehicles could have a transformative impact on our transport. Does that need to be considered?

**Michael Matheson:** Daniel Johnson raises an important point. Such issues need to be considered, but the timeline for progress on them is different. That is why we need to take action now to put in place the right infrastructure to enhance and make the best use of the new and emerging technologies while adapting to new technologies as they progress, particularly in the connected and autonomous vehicles market, which I have no doubt will continue to develop rapidly in the years ahead.

We must ensure that the increased demands on Scotland's electricity networks are managed effectively and that networks are suitably equipped to support our mobility agenda. We are working closely with network operators and other partners to understand the impact of EV uptake and to identify how innovation and smarter management can reduce the need for upgrades and the associated costs and disruption. That means harnessing the opportunities that vehicle-to-grid, smart charging and grid technologies provide in relation to reducing the need for investment in the networks.

However, new investment, including from the electricity network companies in Scotland, will be required to meet and manage the additional demands arising from the expansion of home and workplace charging. Scotland is well placed to sustainably meet increased demand for electricity. We have a global reputation for renewable energy and the increasing uptake of EVs offers us the opportunity to exploit more of our renewable energy resources. That is why we see economic as well as environmental benefits in making Scotland an early adopter of electric and ultra-low-emission vehicles.

It is vital that we explore and understand how shifts in mobility will affect Scotland's workplaces and skills base, and that we take advantage of those shifts now. Work is on-going through the energy skills partnership, which is being supported by Transport Scotland to link up with businesses in the automotive industry to create training opportunities for their staff.

We recognise that this rapid period of innovation and change presents real-world challenges. We will continue to work closely with our stakeholders to explore those, and I am certain that Scotland's collective ingenuity will enable us to create opportunities from them.

Alongside making progress on ultra-low-emission vehicles, we continue to take bold action across different modes of transport. We are helping bus operators to invest in new green buses to reduce carbon emissions and to improve the offer to passengers; we are introducing an improved bus service operators grant low-carbon vehicle incentive from 1 April 2019; and we will introduce a new green bus fund with funding weighted towards the lowest emitting buses.

Investment in our railways will continue to be a priority for the Government and the popularity of rail is expected to increase even further. As we prepare for the next rail investment cycle, we have a specific focus on low or zero-carbon hybrid electric-battery trains and hydrogen fuel cell powered trains to complement the revolution in rail and low-carbon electric traction.

Transport Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have been supporting the successive phases of the HySeas hydrogen ferry project. That groundbreaking project aims to deliver the world's first sea-going vehicle ferry powered by hydrogen that is produced using locally generated renewable electricity.

Autonomous vehicles, sharing and platform-based mobility services have the potential to revolutionise mobility patterns, with implications across private and public transport. The recent announcement of Scotland's first autonomous vehicle trial on the Forth road bridge demonstrates our commitment to understanding what those shifts will mean in practice.

The automotive industry and the energy sector are dealing with considerable change stemming from technological, environmental and consumer trends. We are responding positively to that change, working with partners to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy is as smooth as possible and benefits the people of Scotland. I look forward to hearing the views of members from across the chamber and to continuing to make progress with this ambitious and exciting agenda.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the progress being made in Scotland on ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) during an unprecedented period of innovation in mobility; recognises that Scotland has one of Europe's most comprehensive charge point networks and that this is continuing to be expanded, including the launch of the Electric A9; notes the promising growth in ULEV registrations in Scotland; further notes that the Scottish Government is on target to double the number of ULEVs in the public fleet, and recognises the leadership being shown by local authorities and other organisations to bring the benefits of ULEVs to communities across Scotland.

14:43

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** There is no better way to kick-start the new year than to discuss an issue that will affect not only this generation but the generations to come: climate change. Conservative members will support the Government's motion because it would be churlish to suggest that no progress has been made on ultra-low-emission vehicles in Scotland and because all parties in this chamber should unite in supporting this Government and any Government that moves towards a reduced carbon transport network.

Although our amendment acknowledges those efforts, it also recognises that there is still a lot of work to be done, specifically in our remote, rural and island communities, where there is still much worry around the move. I will touch on that in more detail, but I will summarise up front some of the key points about the obstacles that we face in opening up this opportunity.

There are issues that we cannot ignore, and we should listen to the concerns about the standardisation, the location and the quantity of charging points. The cabinet secretary made a number of comments on the quantity of charging points, but people still have range anxiety in relation to these new vehicles and where they think they can and will take them. It ultimately comes down to consumer choice—the range of vehicles that is available to meet a person's needs, the needs of their family and business and, of course, their personal choice.

The Scottish Conservatives are fully committed to our climate obligations. Our recent publication "Global Challenge, Local Leadership: Environment and Climate Change Position Paper" set out a number of ideas and measures that we would like to introduce to encourage the take-up and growth in ownership of electric vehicles, and I am happy to share them with the cabinet secretary. We have ideas around incentives such as free parking and the ability to use specific lanes; the establishment of specific funds to help rural communities; the increased availability of charging points at train stations, especially in station car parks; and a mandatory

"consideration of electric vehicles in future procurement plans"—

specifically the procurement plans of public bodies that would be purchasing large numbers of vehicles for their use.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):**

Does the member agree that it is incumbent on us, as society's highest earners and its representatives, to lead the way with our choice of vehicles and to go down the route of using hybrid and electric vehicles first, to show that we mean it?

**Jamie Greene:** Absolutely. However, given the number of miles and the distances that we cover, as many other people do in their daily lives, the problem is that there are simply no charging points near the places that I need to be. If that is a worry to us, it will be a worry to people outside the chamber as well. An important point, which I touched on briefly, is that range anxiety is an issue for people. The idea that someone could travel hundreds of miles and need time to find a charging point is putting people off changing their vehicles. There needs to be an appropriate number of charging points but also standardisation of the technology that the charging points provide.

What would happen if someone ran out of power in a rural part of Scotland? What would happen if a person found themselves in an area with no phone coverage and needed to seek help? It is not just about making charging points available and increasing the number of points,

which I would welcome. As it stands, certain charging points are available only for certain types of vehicle. There are 1,000 charging points but there are 3 million cars in Scotland and more than 1,000 petrol stations. We could see a scenario in which people are queuing. Anecdotal evidence from other places where electric vehicles are used shows that people have had to queue for up to four hours to get their car to a charging point. Even if the charging speed is increasing and getting better as technology improves, there is still a severe lack of spaces.

Yes, we can set an example and we should do so, but the infrastructure needs to be there.

Ultra-low-emission vehicles will help us to achieve our ambitions, but the reality is that electric vehicles currently account for less than 1 per cent of Scotland's nearly 3 million cars. Statistics that were recently released by Transport Scotland show that only 0.7 per cent of people said that they currently own an electric vehicle and only 40 per cent said that they would consider owning an electric vehicle. That figure has increased but it is still not enough, and someone considering that they might own an electric vehicle is not the same as that person going out and buying one. At the current rate, only 27 per cent of new car sales will be electric by 2030, which is nowhere near the 2032 target. It is a matter of creating the culture and the infrastructure that are needed to make it easier for businesses, families and commuters like us to make the right choice. As the RAC Foundation has said:

"you need to find the right charger at the right location with the right tariff scheme. Even then it needs to be serviceable and not already in use by someone else."

There has been welcome progress: the A9 electric highway is something that we should give the Government credit for. It is a good idea, but it is just one road. When I started in my transport brief, I asked some simple questions of the Government about how much future proofing had gone into some of the recent infrastructure projects that we have seen on the M8, the M73, the M74 and the Aberdeen western peripheral route. The short and simple answer to my parliamentary questions was that those motorways, although welcome, were not really future proofed for new ways of driving, whether that is automation or charging electric cars. Future proofing road infrastructure needs to lie at the heart of future projects, but it is perhaps already a case of too little, too late in some places.

The Scottish Conservatives will support the Government in its efforts to encourage more people to take up electric vehicles, but more progress is needed. Steps need to be taken to increase the number of charging points, particularly in remote and rural areas. We need to

tackle the range anxiety that I mentioned, and we must incentivise adequately and appropriately the take-up of electric vehicles. There are many ways in which we could do that. We need a change in procurement strategy so that, at the heart of its purchase decisions, the public sector leads the way. We should also provide adequate transition support for buses and taxis and encourage car sharing.

We support the debate and will support all the amendments, which are very constructive. I look forward to hearing speeches from other members. However, our support comes with a timely warning: current progress does not match the shared ambition that we all have, and that needs to change.

I move amendment S5M-15243.3, to insert at end:

“; understands that further efforts will be required for the Scottish Government to meet its 2032 target; underlines that additional steps will be required to tackle ‘range anxiety’ and ensure that sufficient charging points are available across Scotland, particularly in remote, rural and island communities; recognises that lack of standardisation of charging points remains an obstacle; understands that creative and innovative schemes and funds may be required to encourage uptake of ULEVs; recognises that concerted effort will be required to fully deliver the benefits of mass ULEV usage, and calls on all Members to adopt a cross-party approach to ensure that Scotland meets its obligations to reducing carbon emissions and continues to lead the world in tackling climate change.”

14:51

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):**

Transport accounts for almost two thirds of Scotland’s greenhouse gas emissions, with road transport responsible for almost three quarters of that. If we are to meet our targets to reduce emissions, we need to transform our transport system. Switching to ultra-low-emission vehicles has a role to play in that transformation.

The issue is not just about meeting environmental targets. Air pollution is a public health emergency that is responsible for tens of thousands of early deaths each year across the United Kingdom. Poor air quality increases the risk of stroke and heart failure, and it causes and exacerbates an ever-growing list of conditions such as type 2 diabetes, asthma, bronchitis and atrial fibrillation. From low birth weight to dementia in old age, air pollution impacts on our health throughout our lives, but it has a disproportionate effect on the health of children and older adults. It contributes to Scotland’s shameful record on health inequalities, with deprived urban communities often experiencing the highest rates of air pollution. Reducing air pollution is therefore a public health necessity as well as an environmental one, and supporting the use of

ultra-low-emission vehicles is an important part of that.

However, despite a welcome increase in the number of electric and hybrid cars in recent years, financial and practical barriers mean that they still make up less than 1 per cent of road vehicles in Scotland. The Scottish Government’s overarching aim of increasing the number of electric and hybrid cars and phase out new petrol and diesel cars by 2032 is welcome, but, so far, we have not had a comprehensive, long-term plan from the Scottish Government incorporating the incentives, infrastructure and technological developments that are required to meet that aim. As a result, there remains a significant barrier to overcome.

Recent research by the AA found that just 31 per cent of people want to own an electric vehicle and, crucially, that more than three quarters state that they are too expensive for them. We need to learn from countries such as Norway, where ultra-low-emission vehicles now make up more than half of all new cars purchased, partly due to a range of measures and incentives that have almost wiped out the difference in costs. We should ensure that incentives do not simply benefit those who can already afford a ULEV.

More infrastructure investment is also required, not just in the number of public charging points, whose growth has not kept up with the rise in the number of electric cars, but in new and innovative technologies. Last year, in Sweden, the world’s first electrified road, which recharges the batteries of electric vehicles as they drive, opened. Looking ahead, the tracked electric vehicle project proposes a new type of electrically powered highway for electric vehicles with autonomous driving capabilities. Across the world, exciting and transformative work is taking place, and Scotland must be at the forefront of that.

It is not just about electric vehicles, though. As the Labour amendment highlights, and as others have mentioned, we need to consider how we can better support hydrogen-powered vehicles. Hydrogen-based systems are at the heart of the development of greener ferries. As my colleague Lewis Macdonald will highlight, hydrogen-powered buses have been rolled out in the north-east of Scotland. Just yesterday, Alstom and Eversholt Rail Group revealed plans to introduce hydrogen-powered trains to the UK, with the first expected to be on the tracks as early as 2022. That raises the fact that we need a holistic approach to reducing the emissions from transport that not only covers the use of ULEV cars but delivers a modal shift towards the use of public transport—in particular, environmentally friendly public transport vehicles.

It was once said:

“A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It’s where the rich use public transport.”

For far too many people across Scotland, particularly in many rural areas, public transport is not a feasible option. We see that in plummeting bus usage figures. The annual number of bus passenger journeys in a year is now 22 per cent lower than when the Government came to power—107 million fewer journeys a year—yet bus fares have risen by 47 per cent in the past decade. Increasing the use of ULEV cars, desirable as that would be, would not reverse that decline or reduce congestion, but support for more measures to promote bus priority, for example, would.

It is not just our buses that need improvement. As we have discussed, the services on Scotland’s rail network are less punctual and less reliable than they have been for more than a decade, yet fares have gone up by 35 per cent in the past 10 years.

Rates of active travel, which is the ultimate form of healthy and environmentally friendly travel, also remain too low. The recent increase in spending on active travel is welcome, but it is important to ensure that the benefits of that investment are widely shared. Disadvantaged communities and rural areas cannot be left behind. Roger Geffen, the policy director of Cycling UK, noted that UK cycling conditions still

“disproportionately deter young people, older people, women and people with disabilities from cycling”.

We cannot expect car usage to reduce without delivering improvements to the alternatives.

Expanding the use of ULEVs in Scotland is a positive aim. I welcome the progress that has been made in recent years, and Labour will support the Government’s motion. However, we will also support all the amendments that have been lodged, given their focus on the need to build on that progress. Usage of ULEVs remains below the level at which it has to be if we are to meet our ambitions on the issue.

The Scottish Government needs to provide a long-term plan that sets out in detail the measures that will be taken to deliver on its target that new petrol and diesel cars will obsolete by 2032. However, beyond that, we must develop a more sustainable, integrated and affordable transport system in which public transport and active travel are realistic alternatives to the car. I therefore move amendment S5M-15243.4, to insert at end:

“; further recognises the importance of ULEVs to tackling air pollution and improving public health and tackling greenhouse gas emissions; notes the need for more investment in infrastructure to significantly grow the use of ULEVs; believes that the promotion of ULEVs must also be

accompanied by a modal shift towards increased use of public transport and active travel, within a better integrated, more affordable and sustainable public transport system; notes the importance of hydrogen as well as electricity in powering ULEVs, including potentially rail as well as road vehicles; welcomes the action already taken to promote hydrogen vehicles, and calls on the Scottish Government to continue working with local authorities and energy and transport companies on the further development of electric, hydrogen and other low-emission transport technologies in Scotland.”

14:57

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):**

I commend what the Government motion says about “an unprecedented period”. It most certainly is unprecedented, but I suspect that we are talking about slightly different things. We need to consider climate change and the global challenge that it presents to us, as well as the many commendable things that are mentioned in the motion.

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill is insufficient as far as the Scottish Green Party is concerned. We need a climate emergency bill, net zero emissions by 2040, boosted 2030 targets and the introduction of a range of policies to make sure that changes are not put off until the next decade.

We also need radical policies, some of which have been alluded to by Colin Smyth. The issue is about attitude. Transport policy seems fixated on road building; yesterday, there was another announcement by the Scottish Government, proudly trumpeting £40 million on another new road. It builds roads and people drive on them. We spent £750 million completing the M8, but every morning when we switch on our radios, we hear that it is congested. We need a different approach. A lot of what has been said presupposes more of the same with just a different mode of propulsion, but that is not going to work.

It is true that the Scottish Government enjoys the support of all the Opposition parties for the main road building programme—actually, no, the Government does not enjoy our support, as we consider many of the roads to be vanity projects. There is expenditure in my area of up to £60 million for a trunk link road that, according to Transport Scotland’s figures, takes people between two points 12 seconds quicker. That fact is an obscenity that we ought to look at.

We should also look at the whole system of inspection, repair and replacement, because the Scottish Government is committed to massive funding of the trunk road network, while the fabric of the road network for which local authorities are responsible is decaying—we had a report about that yesterday. That is where inspect, repair and replace comes in. The Scottish Green Party is not against expenditure on roads, but we want to



maintain our existing infrastructure before we consider anything else.

A number of members have alluded to health. Air quality is very important, and its significance is shown by the fact that thousands of people die every year as a result of poor air quality. I want to mention a couple of locations in relation to that issue.

In Inverness, the town where I stay, the local authority, instead of discouraging private motor vehicles from entering the Academy Street area, was recently trying to encourage them, in its mistaken bid to increase the shopping footfall in the town centre. In Scotland, there is a crying need for us to reduce the number of areas in which air quality damages the health of, in particular, older people, the infirm and young people.

I also want to mention air quality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As some members will be aware, its air quality is affected by cobalt mining. That issue was covered in an article in today's *Daily Record*, which states:

"In hellish, dusty mines, children as young as 10 scrape fragments of cobalt from the dirt and into a sack with their bare hands, inhaling poisonous metallic particles."

We need to change the system; we do not just need to replace one system with another. I listened carefully to what the cabinet secretary said about buses. He made a number of important points, and I have the details here of the money that has been expended on buses. However, he did not mention bus patronage. If we are going to change, we need to get people on to buses. I know that there is the Transport (Scotland) Bill, but it is not ambitious, so some of us want to make it more ambitious.

As we heard repeatedly from witnesses who appeared before the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, the challenge with bus travel is congestion, which holds up buses. Mechanisms are in place in the form of bus lanes, gates and priority light systems, but that problem affects people. People will not get a bus between places if it is quicker for them to walk between them. The mode of propulsion is a factor, so we need to find a different way ahead.

Without being too parochial, we have talked about the electric A9, but what about the Highland main line—the railway line that runs right beside the A9? We can compare the £3 billion that is expected to be spent on the A9, and the other £3 billion for the A96, with the fact that we will have diesel locomotives with a 30 to 40-year lifespan. I am all in favour of reusing and repairing, but we are not comparing like with like. The cabinet secretary will be sick of me talking about rail, but the reality is that 25.3 per cent of the rail network

in Scotland is electrified, which is really good, but 0 per cent of the Highland main line is electrified, with no plans to change that. The benefits of electrification that apply to road travel apply equally to rail travel.

I want to touch briefly on the automotive industry, because it is clearly a very powerful lobby. I am one of the many people who feel quite let down, because we thought that we were doing the right thing a number of years ago by buying a diesel vehicle—in fact, we were positively encouraged to buy a diesel vehicle—only to be told that such vehicles are dirty polluters. There is an issue about confidence in what we are being told, and that will apply to some of the new technologies, too. Although I am not in any way technical, and I hear what people say about hydrogen, we need to have a clear evidence base for all future decisions.

I move amendment SM5-15243.1, to insert after "registrations in Scotland":

“; welcomes the important role that ULEVs can play in decarbonising the transport sector, but recognises that this technology does not address the need to cut congestion and to improve road safety”.

15:03

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I thank the transport secretary for lodging his motion, which allows us to start 2019 with this important debate. In the context of the recent lack of progress in reducing emissions in the transport sector, the question of how we accelerate the take-up of ultra-low-emission vehicles has taken on a greater significance, importance and urgency. I recognise and welcome many of the steps that have been taken and which were laid out by the transport secretary earlier, as well as the proposals on where we go next, including the electric A9 and moves to create low-emission zones in various cities across Scotland.

I am slightly concerned that the Government's motion comes across as a little self-congratulatory. If it is left unamended, there is the risk that it will foster complacency, which would see Scotland fail to achieve what we should be aspiring to achieve. Therefore, it is encouraging that a range of amendments have been lodged by colleagues from all the other parties. If agreed to, those amendments would make for a more meaningful statement of intent by Parliament on an issue that commands strong cross-party support, as Jamie Greene rightly reminded us.

I will address the proposals that are set out in my amendment shortly, but before assessing what we need to do, we should perhaps reflect for a moment on where things stand. Yes, progress has been made with the take-up of electric and other

low-emission vehicles in recent years, and it has been supported by a welcome expansion of the charge point network. However, before we get carried away with patting ourselves on the back, we should reflect on how that measures in comparison with what is happening elsewhere, particularly in Europe.

The truth is that we compare favourably with many, but fall well short of those who lead the way. The Netherlands is the prime example. In eight years, the Netherlands has gone from having 400 charge points to having 18,500. As the transport secretary reminded us, Scotland is touching on 1,000. Norway, Denmark, Switzerland and Austria are similarly ahead of the game.

As for the take-up of low-emission vehicles, Norway has successfully gone from having such vehicles comprise 1 per cent of the overall car pool in 2014 to their comprising 10 per cent in 2018. It also has more ambitious targets for the phasing out of diesel and petrol vehicles. Again, that shows what can be achieved with the right level of political ambition supported by a mix of legislation, policy and incentives.

We need to scale up our ambitions to meet our environmental objectives, capture the economic opportunities and deliver the social and health benefits. As Colin Smyth's amendment rightly points out, air pollution is a killer, contributing to approximately 40,000 premature deaths in the UK every year and costing the NHS billions. That is simply unacceptable and it is also unsustainable.

Having criticised the self-congratulatory tone of the Government's motion, I am hesitant about reminding members that Orkney still has the highest proportion of EVs of any community in Scotland. However, as the transport secretary will be aware from our recent meeting with representatives of the Orkney renewable energy forum and Orkney Islands Council, there is unquestionably an ambition, a desire and a strategy for going much further. That illustrates perfectly the point that is made in today's motion about the leadership being shown by local authorities and other organisations, not just in Orkney but across the country.

In Orkney, through the efforts of the council, OREF and others, the focus is now extending beyond merely an expansion in the take-up of low-emission cars and buses. Projects are well under way to develop the next generation of hydrogen-powered ferries, while discussions about low-emission alternatives in our lifeline air services are also taking place. Harnessing Orkney's abundant renewable resources to cutting-edge innovation will enable the islands to continue to identify solutions for the challenges that we face from climate change to fuel poverty. In turn, I have no

doubt that they can have a wider relevance and application over time.

To make all that happen will, however, require a more flexible and long-term approach to public funding. That point was made during the recent meeting that the minister and I had with local Orkney stakeholders, as were concerns about the way in which the charge point network functions. I know that the transport secretary plans to review the network, how it is used and how it might be made to operate more effectively, and I welcome that as part of an exercise in making sure that we have the right chargers in the right place and funded in the right way. The present lack of public confidence in range and reliability holds back efforts to encourage take-up of low-emission vehicles.

Combating those perceptions and building that confidence will require a charging network that is fit for purpose. We cannot just replace the petrol station model. We need to be more creative and reflect current patterns of usage, including the extent of charging at home. We will also need to take into account the increase in demand on our grid and establish smarter ways of meeting that demand.

Whatever the future charge point network looks like, reliability will be critical. For whatever reason—possibly poor back-office systems—faults are not being properly logged and tracked by chargeplace Scotland. Communications with users and even owners of the charge points is inadequate and remedial action is not taking place in a timely fashion. That is not good enough; it undermines public confidence. We must do better. The CPS contract is up for renegotiation in the near future and that is a perfect opportunity to get it right.

I therefore urge the transport secretary to set up an expert panel, including user groups such as the Electric Vehicles Association Scotland, OREF and others that have a practical interest in developing the service, to inform the process going forward, ensure the specifications for the next contract and address the shortcomings of the current contract.

I also urge the Scottish Government to work closely with UK counterparts to put in place a range of incentives that can stimulate take-up of ULEVs. That needs to involve creative use of the taxation system, as well as properly targeted grants. Such measures can build public confidence and enable Scotland to raise and realise our ambitions in an area in which we should aspire to be not just good but world leading.

I move amendment S5M-15243.2 to insert after “registrations in Scotland”:

“; understands, however, that Scotland lags behind European leaders in the provision of charge points and ULEV share; believes that the Scottish Government should urgently review how the charging network can be further expanded and efficiently maintained, and work with the UK Government to ensure that effective incentives are in place to support increased take-up of greener vehicles”.

**The Presiding Officer:** We turn to the open debate. Members have five minutes for their contributions.

15:10

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Happy new year, Presiding Officer.

Scotland has some of the world’s most ambitious targets when it comes to making our country a low-carbon economy. It goes without saying that I am, as convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, passionate about making sure that we meet those targets. As a rural MSP, I am equally passionate that in doing so, rural communities are not disadvantaged and should always be at the heart of just transition decisions. If rural communities are not included, we will simply not get there.

In the past decade, we have made huge strides in increasing the number of ultra-low-emission vehicles on Scotland’s roads. We had about 10,000 in 2018, compared to 495 in 2011. I am one of the drivers who has made the leap. I drive a Kia Niro—one of the lowest-emission hybrid vehicles one can get. My aim is to switch to a fully electric car once my lease is up and the charging infrastructure is in place in my rural community, as part of the Government’s investment in charging stations.

The Scottish Government’s objective is that the need for petrol and diesel cars and vans will be phased out by 2032. That is a laudable goal, but for those of us in areas that are ill-served by public transport, life without a car would be nigh on impossible. There is but one railway station in my constituency, in its largest town—Inverurie—and it is 25 miles from the second-largest town, which does not have one, and nor do any other towns in my constituency

Rural areas need greener options. A person should not have to live in a city to be part of the carbon-reduction revolution. For my whole working life, I have wanted very much to be part of that revolution. However, in 10 years of commuting into Aberdeen with small children and babies in the back of my car, when I had to get to nurseries and childminders as well as to Aberdeen College, it was simply impossible for me to use public

transport—and that was as a person who really wanted to do that.

In October last year, I was in Iceland and spoke to the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Guðmundur Guðbrandsson, about his Government’s decision to ban registration of all new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, with a view to the country being electric-only from 2050. As a small independent country, Iceland can take all the legislative and policy steps that are necessary to make that transition, but it is still an ambitious policy and a brave decision. The action is ambitious, but if it is not done carefully, it is potentially inequitable—especially for low earners. In order to achieve our shared carbon-emissions ambition, Governments must ensure that they make it financially possible for all motorists to move from petrol and diesel vehicles to ultra-low-emission vehicles.

In the constituency that I represent—Aberdeenshire East—the public transport system is very radial. The vast majority of buses head in towards the city of Aberdeen. People who commute between the towns of Ellon, Turriff, Oldmeldrum and Inverurie, and mums and dads dropping their children at nursery or at school, cannot use only public transport to do that. The bus routes either do not exist or have a skeleton timetable.

My son has recently moved to Edinburgh. As a child who had to use Aberdeenshire buses for his entire teenage life, he says that one of the best things about studying in Edinburgh is the buses. Unreliable buses in Aberdeenshire messing up their day has been part of life for him and his friends. When I was first elected, the greatest case load that I got from him and his friends seemed to be about the buses.

I will move on to my nearest city. The Scottish Government has committed to making Aberdeen one of four low-emission zones in Scotland. The proximity of the harbour to the city centre means that freight lorries often account for a large percentage of the city’s traffic and cause most emissions. It is hoped that the new Aberdeen western peripheral route will massively ease that congestion by moving the majority of heavy vehicles out of the city altogether. The cabinet secretary will be pleased to hear that we are already seeing the benefits of that. Not having to sit in traffic in a city that one does not even want to go to in order to travel between two rural locations north and south of Aberdeen does not just improve journey times—it also makes a big difference to emissions.

Aberdeen has been using hydrogen buses for a number of years. Last year, a new hydrogen refuelling station was opened to the public, which

allows for refuelling of cars, vans, trucks and buses.

We know that transport contributes more than a quarter of Scotland's greenhouse-gas emissions, with the road sector accounting for the largest proportion of those emissions. In 2015, cars, lorries, vans, buses and motorcycles emitted 9.6 megatonnes of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere.

We need to tackle the problem. Like Iceland, the topography of our country means that we cannot live without cars. Low-emission vehicles are the future for communities such as mine. If we are to achieve our goals, those vehicles must be affordable to all motorists. I look forward to seeing how we, as a nation, will be a leader in that regard, and to our consigning to history carbon-emitting cars for commuting.

15:15

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Con):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, specifically on farming.

The way that the world travels is changing: the wheel has not been reinvented, but the engine that powers the wheel has. There is a general switch over from petrol and diesel to electric vehicles that is, sadly, only in its infancy. There is an air of inevitability about the scale of the change and how it will increase.

It is therefore only right that the Government prepares the way and ensures that our road network is fully up to speed. That is why I cautiously welcome the Scottish Government's plan to add an extra 1,500 electric charge points across Scotland. It is a start, but is it enough? The answer is no, especially in rural areas. The Scottish Conservatives have set out the need to increase the number of charge points in our small towns and rural areas, where long journeys have become the norm. Without the right infrastructure, increasing use of electric cars on our roads will continue too slowly. We need to change that.

Reports have shown that although 41 per cent of people would consider buying an electric car, less than 1 per cent own one. That is a huge gap, which we must all address. If car drivers in rural areas feel that they cannot use an electric car to do the school run, to get to work or to get to a hospital appointment, I am afraid that they will stick with petrol and diesel. It is as simple as that, because there are few options.

We should not focus only on car users: small businesses that need vans and lorries to get their goods to the marketplace face the same problem. The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee heard evidence that it would take up to 38 vans to

redistribute the food from an articulated lorry. Thus, if there are not sufficient vans—and electric ones, at that—we will continue to have lorries entering the most polluted areas of Scotland. We need to get on with moving industry and the haulage industry away from diesel.

To my mind, what is noticeable is the lack of support for small businesses and farm businesses to transition to ultra-low-emission vehicles. We should not forget that tractors and other farm vehicles, which make up only 2 per cent of the vehicles on our roads—about 58,000 vehicles—are working day and night to put high-quality food on our plates. The farmers are reliant on the cheaper red diesel to operate the full array of farm machinery to grow and harvest food. One thing is for sure—the farming industry as a whole will require support to adapt, and to do so in the timescale that the Scottish Government has set. The Scottish Government needs to work with industry leaders to find a way forward. It can be done, but it needs a concerted effort.

Today, we are congratulating ourselves on setting a target, but it is delivery of the target that will be important. We have a long way to go and there is much more to be done. It is important that we, as a Parliament, take the lead and work together to try to reduce emissions across Scotland.

15:18

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** For once, my previous employment is actually of some use in a debate in Parliament. People lazily say “a former used-car salesman”. At this point, I say for the record that I never sold a used car in my life. My involvement in the industry was in corporate-fleet sales. When I was involved in that industry 11 years ago, 80 per cent of the new-car market was fleet and corporate vehicles, with only 20 per cent being made up of retail. That is unusual; people expect to walk in to a car showroom and buy a vehicle. The greater volume was in that 80 per cent, but not the profit, which came from poor guys like MSPs turning up at a dealership to get a car.

One of the negatives that people constantly mention about electric vehicles is how much they cost. As someone who has worked in the industry, my argument is that the manufacturers are beholden—they have the opportunity to discount vehicles such that they can obtain market share and ensure that they get models. They have done that in the past, and the responsibility to do so is theirs now.

As has already been mentioned, another problem is battery power. The most popular car in the UK electric vehicle market is the Nissan Leaf, which is said to have a 250-mile range. However,

we all know that, in reality, that is not necessarily so, because the range that is achieved depends on the driver's driving style, the road that they are on, the weather that they are going through and how much power they have. I would probably struggle to get a vehicle from Paisley to Edinburgh and back on one charge, which would be a problem from the start. I can only imagine how that would affect someone who lives in a rural environment.

The battery issue is a technological one that we might be able to solve as the technology gets better. However, as John Finnie rightly said, the components that make up batteries are also a problem. If we are seeking a sustainable future, those who control the batteries and where they go will control the market. Manufacturers have worked that out.

Elon Musk is having a problem. It is difficult to start a company and go from zero to whatever overnight, as he has done with Tesla cars. However, he has not delivered on any of the targets that he, as a manufacturer, has set. He probably has more chance of reaching Mars with his other project than he has of reaching some of the car vehicle targets that he has made. In all honesty, that is what the motoring press would tell us.

Yesterday, I read that Norway is the biggest market for Tesla in Europe, but that the Netherlands nearly beat it—it was just a hundred cars short—because companies there, including major car rental companies, bought 8,585 vehicles. As I have said, I have dealt with the corporate-fleet world, so I think that what will make the difference is getting it and industry to think that way and to see electric vehicles as the way forward.

The Scottish Government cannot achieve that on its own: it will have to work in collaboration with the transport industry—particularly, bus and haulage companies. I spoke to Craig Allan, who runs Paisley Taxis Ltd, which is one of the traditional Hackney cab companies. He bought one of the new electric London cabs, whose manufacturer is not called the London Taxi Company any more. It traditionally made the old Hackney cab, but it has moved on and is now called the London Electric Vehicle Company. It has seen the change. For the major part of the market that it supplies, legislation has changed so dramatically that it has had to change how it does business. That is a perfect example of how legislation can make a difference in the future and how we in Parliament could dictate to industry and manufacturers in order to change their ways.

The new LEVC TX is manufactured at a new facility at Ansty Park, near Coventry. It was purpose built with a £325 million investment—the

biggest investment in a UK car plant in the past 10 or 15 years. That shows us that if we, as legislators, can make changes, however small and in whatever way, we can achieve things.

I got in touch with some car companies. It is ironic that the ones that I used to work for did not get back to me. I do not know what that says. The Renault Nissan Mitsubishi alliance's response was interesting. It talked about how it is a market leader and has sold 490,000 EVs worldwide, and said:

"In addition to this, as a leader in charging infrastructure, Nissan has more than 2,300 quick-charge stations in Europe. This number is predicted to increase to 5,500 by 2020."

That shows that car companies are moving the right way, too. Therefore, we must, as legislators, ensure that we work with them to achieve what we want.

I do not see the problems that other members have mentioned: we can get this right. I would almost guarantee that, come the next time members are buying their cars, the vast majority of us will buy electric vehicles.

15:24

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** As we have heard, ultra-low-emission vehicles are an important part of a reimagined and progressive transport system for Scotland's future. Many of us consider the environment when taking our daily transport decisions. Many of us would also enjoy a higher quality of life were we not surrounded by diesel and petrol cars when making journeys or trying to enjoy the outdoors.

A future in which ULEVs are an accessible and affordable form of transport, combined with far improved public transport and active travel provision, is a very positive one indeed. Yesterday, I read that Luxembourg plans to make public transport free—there's a thought. In Scotland, work should continue to be done across Government, local authorities and energy and transport companies on the further development of such innovative technologies.

Recently, Ludovic Hunter-Tilney, who is the pop music critic of the *Financial Times*, asked whether the car is still modernity's icon of freedom. He reminded us of Chuck Berry singing

"Riding along in my automobile"

as the ultimate cool in 1956. He went on to write:

"Even when reality involves traffic jams and honking horns, driving has been made to seem liberating: 'Beep, beep, beep, beep, yeah!' The Beatles chorused in 'Drive My Car'."

As he pointed out, things are changing culturally when

“radio DJ Jeremy Vine, a prominent cyclist, wants to abolish the term ‘drive-time radio’ because, he says, it celebrates ‘a form of transport that kills 1,700 people a year’ on UK roads.”

If we are to truly move towards a transport system that is fit for the future, we need a full modal shift of our transport systems so that we can step away from the saturation of cars and vans. There is still a mass of improvements that the Scottish Government has the power to make. Low-emission zones should be an important part of the delivery of those improvements, but the opportunity has not yet been realised, with the first LEZ, which is in Glasgow, being renamed a “no ambition zone” by Friends of the Earth Scotland. Although more robust plans are being developed, funding is still a concern.

Just yesterday, I joined colleagues from Scottish Labour to demand that the ScotRail franchise be taken back into public ownership. We need to turn around the often-chaotic service that we are paying for anyway and make it work for passengers, our environment and the people who work on our railway.

The Parliament should also recognise the impact of delivery vehicles and the need for consolidation hubs with connected final-mile arrangements. I welcome the briefing from UPS, which calls on the Government to support innovative urban delivery systems, such as walking or cycling delivery logistics. I believe that the use of small-van ULEVs should also be considered as part of such systems, and I would welcome comment on that from the minister.

As Colin Smyth and other colleagues have told us, for too long air pollution has been considered a necessary evil that has allowed us to continue to enjoy the ease of diesel and petrol vehicles. The damage that air pollution causes to the health of our communities, commuters and the more vulnerable old and young is surely a strong motivating factor in moving towards greater use of ULEVs.

In 2014, pollutants in the air contributed to more than 2,000 deaths. There are schools within 150m of illegally polluted streets in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. In “Reducing emissions in Scotland—2018 Progress Report to Parliament”, the UK Committee on Climate Change identified transport as the Government’s biggest sectoral challenge. That transport emissions—even excluding international aviation and shipping—increased between 2015 and 2016 is a mockery. As the climate change spokesperson for my party, I celebrate the target to phase out diesel and petrol cars by 2032 but, in our view, the Scottish

Government still needs a stronger and more robust plan.

There has been much discussion about charging points infrastructure in today’s debate and elsewhere. As the Planning (Scotland) Bill moves towards stage 3, should consideration be given to having an obligation in the planning system for new-build housing, commercial and public buildings to incorporate charging points, with an appropriate lead-in time? I thank Smart Energy GB for highlighting the role that a smarter electricity grid could play in that. Whatever the fuel, congestion in our towns and cities is unpleasant and frustrating. If we are to have shorter journeys, the Government needs to make active or public transport the easiest and most attractive choice.

I want to make a brief point about rural issues.

**The Presiding Officer:** Very briefly, please.

**Claudia Beamish:** Rural poverty can be hidden in small pockets, but many people in rural areas face real difficulties. I believe that there is a case to be made for providing interest-free loans to low-income rural dwellers in places where public transport will never go, to enable them to get modern wheels.

**The Presiding Officer:** That was brief—thank you.

15:30

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I begin by declaring an interest as a farmer, an historical rural dweller and the owner of a rural business. I welcome this debate on ultra-low-emission vehicles. It is certainly appropriately timed, given that it is being held only eight days after the introduction of Scotland’s first low-emission zone. That took place in Glasgow on 31 December, thereby delivering—on the last possible day—the Scottish Government’s commitment to introduce an LEZ in Glasgow in 2018.

Without doubt, transport and the use of low-emission vehicles will have a very important part to play in keeping greenhouse gas emissions to a minimum. Today’s debate has largely focused on low-emission car use, but it is important to note that emissions from other modes of transport will also need to reduce significantly if we are to meet future climate change targets. In that context, we need to look at aircraft design, where technology is currently leading to the development of hybrid aeroplanes. We need to look at trains, where innovative thinking is developing the use of hydrogen as the next-generation fuel of choice. Already in Europe, there are trains in service that use hydrogen as a fuel instead of diesel where electrification is not an option. We also need to

take a realistic look at shipping, and particularly ferries. As others have mentioned, shipping is a huge producer of carbon. Without doubt, the potential for the use of hydrogen as a fuel on board ships is a growing opportunity as well.

I turn to low-emission-vehicle use in Scotland. We have heard today that the Scottish Government is pinning its hopes on phasing out petrol and diesel car use in Scotland by 2032, which is only 13 years away. That is certainly an ambitious target. The important point is whether it is achievable, and the answer to the question whether it is feasible is that that is entirely a function of investment. The fact that the technology largely exists to deliver on the 2032 target is welcome, as we are not dependent on future inventions to meet ambitious targets that are arbitrarily set. However, I am not certain that the scale of investment that the Scottish Government has proposed thus far matches its ambitions. The cost of incentivising and delivering on the 2032 target will therefore fall more and more on the Scottish taxpayer.

At present, hybrid and electric cars are unaffordable for most people. Many would be happy to use them, but most cannot afford to do so. Of course, the Scottish Government may propose by legislation and punitive taxation to drive current vehicle types from our roads and encourage modal shift on to buses, trains and bicycles, but that will require from the people of Scotland a willingness to change that does not currently exist. Electric vehicles represent less than 1 per cent of ownership, as has been discussed. Low-emission zones in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee will be an early test of how the Scottish car-driving public will react to low-emission zones and, by extension, the use of low-emission vehicles.

Difficult as the problem of either modal shift or the ability to afford electric cars will be for city or urban dwellers, it will be significantly more difficult for those who live, work and run businesses in rural Scotland. Bus usage is falling across much of urban Scotland and is becoming almost non-existent in rural Scotland. That is a real problem, as Colin Smyth said.

Networks of electric vehicle charging points will be created, reasonably enough, in our towns and cities and on our busiest road routes, and I welcome the start of the electrification of the A9 before Christmas. I welcome, too, the Scottish Government's ambition to eliminate range anxiety for electric car users by 2022. That will be essential if ownership of electric and hybrid vehicles is to increase from its current very low base, because people will not switch to electric or hybrid vehicle use unless and until that reassurance is in place. If that happens by 2022, I

will, of course, be delighted, but at that point only 10 years will remain before the 2032 target is to be achieved.

Although we support in principle the Scottish Government's push towards the uptake of low-emission vehicles of all types, the people of Scotland, and particularly rural Scotland, will not expect to be seriously out of pocket if they are expected to change their habits of a lifetime. The people of Scotland will need to be persuaded towards doing the right thing for the environment, rather than being coerced or bullied into a position that many currently do not adhere to.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** I must tell members that we are very tight for time, because a statement has to follow the debate at 4.30.

15:34

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I declare that I am honorary president of the Scottish Association for Public Transport and honorary vice-president of Railfuture.

I listened with interest to what George Adam said about taxis. Six years ago, I was across in Ireland to give evidence to the Irish Parliament's rural affairs committee, and I travelled back to the airport in an electric vehicle: a Nissan Leaf. The driver told me that he could drive all round Dublin on a single charge. The technology has been with us for a while. That driver was an early adopter; Nissan had given him the taxi, to prove that it could do the job—so he was really enthusiastic, because he had got the car for nothing.

The Tory amendment mentions "standardisation of charging points". That is a proper matter to consider, but I am very uncertain as to whether we are ready to set a standard. There is direct current charging, there is alternating current charging and there are nine different physical connections that can be made in different charging points. We have 150kW charging points coming in this year and 350kW charging points coming in in about a year or 18 months' time. The standards are probably not stable enough to enable us to choose a winner.

However, there is a way forward. We can have a standard of physical connection—that would be helpful. We can have a standard on the logical messages that travel between the charging station and the vehicle that is being charged. We can build in a standard that future proofs charging stations, so that they can accommodate changes. It is time to do that.

It is worth considering that 100 years ago, when electricity was being put into domestic and

industrial premises, there were no standards. Every electricity company had a different plug design. Some systems used DC and some used AC. Systems ran on different voltages and to different fusing standards—some had no fuses at all. We are in such an era now, and we need to move out of it.

**Jamie Greene:** Will the member give way?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I suspect that I do not have time; I ask the member to forgive me.

Claudia Beamish talked about planning and domestic houses. My colleague Richard Lyle has been banging on about councils for some time, because councils could make it a planning condition that new developments must put in terminals. That would be a good idea.

I had not realised that Orkney has the greatest density of electric vehicles. I looked into the matter after seeing Liam McArthur's amendment, and I found that there are seven charging points in Kirkwall. I was going to wind Mr McArthur up about that, but now I discover that there is a perfectly good reason for it.

I look forward to the Loganair Islander aircraft becoming electric in about three years' time. The new Audi e-tron is 408 brake horsepower and the Islanders require 520 BHP, so that is well within the compass of what is available and working now. When electric engines are put in, the weight of the aircraft will be reduced, and it will be easier to fly—and, by the way, the top speed of the Islander is about the same as that of the new Audi, which has a range of more than 200 miles.

A lot is happening in public transport. In the central belt, we have new electric trains. Yesterday, I had a high-speed train for my journey down to the Parliament; I loved it. On the Inverness to Aberdeen line, there are classic HSTs that are not yet refurbished but are still super. There are the class 170s on the line down to Edinburgh—and a lot of journeys on that line are on HSTs—and there are the class 385s. The railways are super; they are not perfect everywhere, but my goodness, I would not go back to my journeys of 10 years ago, for anything.

We have been talking about ultra-low-emission vehicles, but no one has mentioned ferries, and we have the first electric ferries—[*Interruption.*] I beg members' pardon; out of the corner of my eye I saw a hand go up. Well, no one has mentioned electric bicycles. Getting more people to use electricity-assisted bicycles would help people to get exercise.

Getting involved in transport is almost an instinctive thing. My first motorised transport was my piler—otherwise known as a bogey or a cairtie—which we used to put the motor mower in

front of to tow us around the back garden. It is amazing that we did not kill anybody with the blades going.

This is an excellent debate. I look forward to my next vehicle being an electric one in about two years' time. I hope that everybody else does the same.

15:40

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** It is scarcely 100 years since transport in the western world was revolutionised by the rise of the internal combustion engine, which decisively replaced horsepower for the first time in history. Now, according to insiders who were quoted by the *Financial Times* at the end of December, we may have reached another milestone: the point at which global demand for vehicles that are powered by internal combustion engines will begin to go down. Even a year ago, the predictions were that the era of petrol and diesel would come to an end in the foreseeable future but that demand for internal combustion vehicles would probably not peak until the 2020s. Experts now believe that the year of peak demand may, in fact, have been the year just ended—2018. Just as the rise of the internal combustion engine reached a point at which it became unstoppable, so the rise of alternatives to the internal combustion engine will also reach a tipping point—and that is already not far away.

Action to support electric vehicles is welcome, but it would be a mistake to put all our low-emission eggs in a single electricity basket. Although an infrastructure for charging electric cars is important, a different approach will be required to tackle the largest and most polluting internal combustion engines, which include those of diesel-fuelled buses and trucks and diesel locomotives on our railways. There is increasing evidence that the most efficient way to phase out those vehicles here and around the world will be by developing hydrogen as the low-emission fuel of choice in public transport and in freight.

On a global scale, Japan leads the way. The local authority in Fukushima, for example, is building a new hydrogen production plant on a site that was originally zoned for a new nuclear power station. In that case, the fuel source is electricity generated from solar panels. Japan is also pioneering the production of hydrogen from human waste. One expert reckons that biogas extracted from sewage sludge could power nearly 2 million hydrogen fuel cell vehicles across Japan in the near future.

The athletes village for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games will be powered by hydrogen



from Fukushima and, for the first time, hydrogen will be the fuel for the Olympic torch.

What the Japanese Government and business want now is the promotion of global collaboration in order to grow hydrogen technology while cutting costs. That is where Scotland could and should come in.

The cabinet secretary has referred to Aberdeen. Aberdeen has, with Scottish Government support, built up the largest fleet of hydrogen-powered buses in Europe. The vehicles are owned by Aberdeen City Council and are operated by First Aberdeen and Stagecoach alongside conventional diesel-fuelled buses. Hydrogen buses require a hydrogen fuelling point, which the council provides at Kittybrewster—that has also been mentioned. That fuel point has, in turn, allowed the use of hydrogen to fuel cars and vans.

The next stage could be hydrogen production fuelled by renewable electricity generation. Major new offshore wind farms, such as that at Aberdeen bay, will generate more power at some times than the grid can use. Like solar power and biogas in Japan, offshore wind in Scotland can be the feedstock for hydrogen production to fuel buses, trucks and much else besides. Those developments will need willing partners, such as hydrogen technology companies, renewable energy generators, local authorities such as Aberdeen City Council, and the Scottish Government.

If Scotland is to be a producer as well as a consumer, we certainly cannot afford to stand still. Last September, Lower Saxony in Germany deployed the world's first hydrogen train to replace diesel locomotives on 100km of non-electrified tracks close to Germany's North Sea coast. Alstom, which also builds France's TGVs, expects to deliver 14 hydrogen trains to Lower Saxony by 2021.

Even closer to home, plans were revealed only this week for hydrogen-powered trains on the greater Anglia network in England to replace diesel trains, but using locomotives that were originally built for electric trains some 30 years ago. Their range is 1,000km, which is similar to that of a diesel train, and their maximum speed of 87mph is similar to the maximum speed of a diesel train.

The campaign for rail electrification Aberdeen to Edinburgh—CREATE—has long argued for extending the infrastructure for electric trains north of the central belt. Hydrogen now offers another option. That option is the 21st century steam train—the only emissions are steam and water. Just as Scotland should build on its strong position on hydrogen bus transport, so should we look to lead the way on hydrogen trains, on the three

quarters of the Scottish rail network that have not been electrified.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must conclude there. I am sorry, but I must be very firm. I want to fit in everyone who has been sitting waiting.

15:45

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Scotland, as a nation, is changing in many ways. Change, in most circumstances, is welcome—and the change that we are seeing in the advancement of our infrastructure is something that we should all be proud to support.

Of course, the driving force—to coin a phrase—behind many of the changes that we have heard about so far is the rapid pace of technological advancements and the growing popularity of low or zero-carbon-emission vehicles. As we have heard, Scotland is at the forefront of those changes, and we are doing more now than ever before to embrace, support and enhance our infrastructure to allow that to happen.

In 2011, the commercialisation of electric vehicles was limited to only a few, very expensive types, and the technology, which had been around for decades, had only started to become more accessible and affordable for large-scale production. By the end of 2011, 495 ULEVs were licensed in Scotland. If we fast forward to quarter 3 in 2018, that number has increased by more than 2,000 per cent to 10,360. In the same time, our infrastructure has improved and grown to accommodate that increase in the uptake of those vehicles.

No one is ever too far from the nearest public charging point; as the cabinet secretary mentioned in his opening speech, motorists are on average 2.78 miles away from their nearest charging point. However, I do not think that he mentioned that the average across Britain is 4.09 miles. Although much progress is still to be made, we are ahead of the game, at least in the UK.

In addition, with the Scottish Government's chargeplace Scotland live interactive map providing real-time information on the position and status of each public charging point, the progress that has been made in the face of a rapidly advancing area of transportation is clear to see.

The motion refers to the "Electric A9". I often use the A9 to head to Ullapool. The electric A9 is an innovative and welcome step in the right direction for ULEVs, and indicates further progress towards phasing out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032. As part of that project, and with funding from the low-carbon travel and transport challenge fund, which is part

of the European regional development fund, Falkirk Council has received funding to build a 20-unit electric vehicle recharging hub at the Falkirk stadium, which will be powered by a 168-panel solar canopy. That will not only lower the carbon footprint of motorists, but generate the power from a sustainable source. Similar hubs will be placed along the entire route of the A9 from Falkirk stadium all the way to Scrabster harbour, allowing urban and rural communities and businesses the opportunity to access EV charging points.

It would be remiss of me to speak on the subject of ULEVs without mentioning vehicles that have more than six or eight passengers. Scotland's road network does not just accommodate cars; our network of buses work hard to get people to where they need to be on a daily basis. That may not always be as efficient as we would like, but we can work on that. As an aside, I would be happy to see the Transport (Scotland) Bill contain provisions to bring bus routes into the hands of the public again, or at least into the hands of local authorities, to ensure that services are focused purely on passengers and not for profits. That is a topic for another day.

When we look at buses in Edinburgh, for example, it is clear that a few of them are without the trademark noise and smell from the traditional diesel engine. That leads me to another Falkirk district connection: the advent of the enviro range of vehicles by local bus builder Alexander Dennis Ltd, or ADL. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will not mind me giving a plug to ADL, which is situated in his constituency, given that a large number of the workforce are resident in my constituency. The single-deck Enviro200 model is available in an electric variant and the double-deck Enviro400 model is available in biogas, hybrid and, as recently announced, hydrogen fuel cell variants. Those are all low and zero-emission solutions to the decarbonisation of our road transport networks.

Incidentally, I very much welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to continuing the green bus fund, of which ADL, as well as other bus builders, is a beneficiary.

Presiding Officer, I am aware that I am fast running out of time. Scotland is a small nation that has always had a reputation for being innovative and ambitious. The Government's ambition for ULEVs in our communities is no different, and it is thanks to the work of the Government and its partners that we are building a country that is fit for the future, whatever may lie ahead of us.

15:50

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries)**  
**(Con):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to

speak on what is a hugely topical subject. It is important to me for two main reasons—because I am a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, which is scrutinising the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, and because I represent the rural constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries.

The cabinet secretary was correct to paint an improving picture on the introduction of ultra-low-emission vehicles but, in reality, progress has been painfully slow. The Scottish National Party Government plans, in a frighteningly short 13 years, to phase out new petrol and diesel vehicles in favour of electric vehicles in a bid to hit its ambitious low-emission targets. However, only 1 per cent of the almost 3 million cars that are on the road in Scotland are currently electric.

We welcome the commitment to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles, and I know that the SNP will point to the fact that the UK Government's plans are eight years less ambitious, but we have yet to see the detail from the SNP Government on how it will achieve its earlier 2023 target. We need to know what that will mean in practice for car and van owners and what national and local infrastructure will be put in place.

We do not have detailed information on the proposed LEZs in our cities. Even in our largest city—Glasgow—where a low-emission zone was recently rolled out, Strathclyde partnership for transport has warned that significant investment will be needed to ensure that buses meet the required standards by the end of 2022.

If significant investment is needed in our cities, how much will be needed to ensure that the transition works in rural areas? What infrastructure needs to be put in place so that our rural communities are fully prepared? If the whole of Scotland is to be successfully involved in the transition to an electric future, the SNP Government must urgently address planning for infrastructure in rural areas.

We have all seen the headline-hitting announcements about the A9, but there is little detail on the Government's electric highway plan, which formed just a single sentence in the programme for government document in 2017. What is the national plan?

We need to ensure that drivers have the information and support to give them confidence to travel the country without experiencing range anxiety. As the port of Cairnryan is in my constituency, the road haulage industry is hugely important to the local economy. The Scottish Government must outline its plans for how it will support that industry in transitioning to low-

emission vehicles. Road haulage companies that use major trunk roads such as the A77 and the A75 need to have confidence that, in the new age of electric, they will be sustainable not only environmentally but economically. The need to get the transition right first time round cannot be overstated.

The Scottish Conservatives' environment and climate change paper set out a range of measures to encourage and accelerate the uptake of electric vehicles. We outlined plans to establish a fund that would expand electric charging points in small towns, in rural areas and at train stations. Having greater access to charging points as soon as possible would help to give rural constituents confidence that electric cars will be an option sooner rather than later. At the moment, given range anxiety, I am not convinced that many of my constituents would think of switching to an electric car. Our paper also outlined plans that would require all public bodies to conduct a cost benefit analysis of replacing existing fleets with electric cars.

The recommendations in the ECCLR Committee's report on air quality in Scotland go some way to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the inevitable transition to a low-emission future, which will have great economic benefits and secondary benefits for our health and communities.

It is time for the SNP Government to stop coasting and start accelerating down the road of opportunity to a cleaner, greener Scotland before we miss the proverbial bus.

15:54

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I understand that our focus today is probably on road vehicles, but, as other members have mentioned, trains are also vehicles, and the increasing electrification of the rail network is a tremendous way in which to reduce emissions.

Like many people, I am a little bit sceptical about some of the promises that are made in favour of new technologies—let us see how they work in practice. However, a friend took me out for a run in their electric car and I have to say that I was very impressed. For me, one of the key challenges around switching to an electric car is whether it can get me from Glasgow to Inverness without a charge and, if it needs a charge, whether that will be fast and dependable. I think that that is what is meant by "range anxiety", which is mentioned in the Tory amendment.

For drivers like me, who are open but sceptical, we need to get the infrastructure in place and to build up public confidence in that infrastructure. The A9 has been mentioned quite a lot—

particularly the section between Perth and Inverness—and I think that the lack of service stations is definitely a problem. I recognise the desire to support local communities rather than have people bypass them. However, if I am heading for Inverness, for work or whatever, I do not want to go into Pitlochry or Aviemore—either to buy petrol or to charge my electric car—and get bogged down by tourists. Please do not get me wrong; they are nice places, but I do not think that they fulfil the role of service stations.

Battery technology is clearly one of the challenges, and I understand that that is one of the reasons why hydrogen buses have been trialled in Aberdeen as an alternative to electric vehicles. Hydrogen appeals to me for a number of reasons although I accept that that technology may not be as far advanced and the cost may still be higher than the cost of using electric vehicles.

Wind power is becoming our staple renewable, along with hydro, but one of the challenges is how to store the energy even if it can be generated cheaply. Another option is to use electricity from wind power to produce hydrogen through electrolysis. It seems to me that there are a number of advantages to that, including the fact that hydrogen is easier to store than electricity, the speed of refuelling and the fact that it potentially has multiple uses including replacing natural gas in the grid.

I do not want to use up all of the huge amount of time that I have available, so I will end by saying that, personally, I am not quite ready to replace my petrol car with an electric one but I am open to the possibility, with a bit of persuasion. I think that I may be like others in feeling that. I suspect that I am not unusual and that a fair number of members of the public are waiting to see how things develop.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Regrettably, four members who participated in the debate are not in the chamber for the closing speeches. I will name them at the end of the debate. One of them has just shot in—that is fine. If you have been recharging, you should have been in here before.

I call Liam McArthur to close for the Liberal Democrats. Mr McArthur, you have a tight six minutes.

15:57

**Liam McArthur:** I would have liked to start with a declaration of interest as the owner of an EV or even a ULEV, but I am not such an owner yet. Over the past year or so, I have been weighing up the advantages and the potential disadvantages. I certainly hope that, later this year, and by the time we have the next debate on this topic, I will be able to declare that interest with some pride.

Gillian Martin was absolutely right to lay down that challenge about the leadership that we should be showing. The cabinet secretary indicated that the Government car pool is soon to go out to procurement of EVs, but I observe that we are some way down the course and the Government is hardly taking a leadership position in that respect.

The importance and the function of leadership was summed up very well in George Adam's excellent speech. There is the leadership that corporates can take through their purchasing processes and their leasing arrangements but there is also the leadership that we, as policy makers and legislators, can take in sending a clear signal about where legislation and regulation are going in order to allow vehicle and component manufacturers time to innovate and respond to those public policy messages.

The cabinet secretary set out very fairly in his opening remarks some of the signals in relation to the progress that has been made and reasons to feel encouraged. All of those points were entirely legitimate. We are seeing that progress in the take-up of ULEVs and in the expansion of the charging network. In relation to some, we are showing a competitive and a comparative advantage.

Nevertheless, there is a question about whether the yardstick should be the rest of the UK or those countries that are genuinely out in front, such as Norway and the Netherlands, which were mentioned by a number of colleagues. It is very much in our own interest to make progress—again, a number of contributors to the debate have pointed to not just the environmental imperative and benefits that arise from pursuing this path but the economic advantages that come with it and the benefits that will come through social and health improvements.

I very much welcome the comments of Colin Smyth, who highlighted the impact of air pollution on health and equalities, including the premature deaths that result from air pollution and the billions of pounds that it costs our national health service each year. I also welcome the contribution made by Jamie Greene, who highlighted the specific challenges in remote and rural areas, which I accept. Likewise, Gillian Martin called for rural areas to be able to play their full part in the green revolution, and I echo her sentiments entirely—range anxiety and reliability anxiety are perhaps more keenly felt in rural areas. Orkney stands as an example of a rural island area that has embraced the take-up of electric cars and is seeing electric vehicles pushed into other areas of transport as well. Therefore, there are ways of overcoming that anxiety. I extend an invitation to Stewart Stevenson to take the inaugural Loganair

inter-islands flight in the electric aircraft in two or three years' time.

We have talked about the charge-point network being critical to addressing range anxiety. Angus MacDonald highlighted the chargeplace Scotland map, which is beneficial but only in so far as it is accurate in real time. Enough concerns have been raised over the piece to suggest that that is not always the case. In the new contract with CPS or whoever, we need to include specifications that are informed by users who have the experience to ensure that such problems are addressed going forward.

Much of the focus today has been on electric vehicles, but the potential role to be played by hydrogen has been emphasised by many members, particularly when it comes to public transport such as buses and ferries. It is not just about the mode of propulsion—John Finnie made the fair point that, whatever the technology, there is a need to see a shift to the use of public transport and, frankly, the provision of public transport in areas where it does not currently exist.

I welcome the debate, which has been a forward-looking way to start 2019. It has been consensual and there has been plenty of food for thought over the course of the debate, but the consistent message from most members has been that, much as we welcome the progress that has been made, it is imperative that we raise our ambitions and show—and see—real leadership for the environmental, economic and social and health benefits that derive from those ambitions. There is cross-party support for that, and I look forward to working with the cabinet secretary's officials, with colleagues who have contributed to the debate and with the councils and other organisations that are showing leadership in the area, so that we can deliver the ultra-low-emission future that we absolutely need to see.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call John Finnie, I say to the three culprits who came in late together—Claudia Beamish, John Scott and Gillian Martin—that I have had pen on paper from only one of them. I think that the other two ought to apply pen to paper to explain why they did not have the courtesy to be in the chamber for the beginning of Mr McArthur's closing speech. It was a discourtesy not just to me but to the chamber and to the member.

16:03

**John Finnie:** It has been an interesting debate in which members have expressed a wide range of views, a lot of which have been voiced consistently. The cabinet secretary started by talking a lot about technology. As, I think, I said at the outset, I am not a very technical man: I like

simple things such as buses and trains. I hope that, in his closing speech, the minister will talk about bus patronage. There is a concern that the Scottish Government seems quite resigned to and accepting of the fact that bus patronage continues to drop. Likewise, there is concern about congestion—which I alluded to earlier—having implications for bus patronage.

I also alluded to trains and diesel vehicles, and I am glad that Stewart Stevenson enjoyed his trip yesterday—I saw that he shared that with the public. I will not be overly graphic but will say that, given the model of train, I hope he did not make full use of the facilities, because that would have been to the disadvantage of our very valued rail workers.

The cabinet secretary used the phrase “transition to a low-carbon economy”,

which is a really good phrase. I like the word “just” to be added in front of “transition”, as “just transition” is the phrase that is used in a report that the Green MSPs commissioned a few years ago. I would like to think that the cabinet secretary has read and digested that report fully and basked in its content. We all want a just transition, and that does not come about by commending tax breaks for fossil fuel companies and multinational corporations. We need to have a consistent approach.

That also applies to incentives, which I heard a great number of members talk about, including Jamie Greene, who suggested free parking. Maybe he would like to speak to some of the very large corporations that run very large car parks, to see whether they would be up for that. Or does he mean that the public purse would pay for free parking? When there is public expenditure—freeing someone of the obligation to pay a charge is the same as expenditure—we must understand who the beneficiaries are. There is a wider benefit to the community if people are encouraged to use low-emission vehicles. A number of members talked about that.

Gillian Martin, Claudia Beamish and Liam McArthur talked about the rural-urban dimension. I am a car owner—as many members have said, one cannot live in the countryside and not own a car. There are very many challenges, but we have to remember that a sizeable proportion of people in our rural communities are not car owners. Thirty per cent of households in Scotland do not own a car. If all our policies are directed by a presumption of car ownership, that is not healthy.

Some solutions that many people would think of as simple would have consequences. We heard from Edward Mountain about the number of vans that are the equivalent of a heavy goods vehicle. That is important information that we need to

digest. I would far sooner see those goods in a container on a train, but the reality is that we rely on motorised transport and will continue to do so regardless of the mode of propulsion.

Like other members, I thought that George Adam’s speech was possibly the most interesting in the debate. This is not something that I imagined I would say, but I found the relationship with markets interesting. It is helpful to understand the percentages represented by fleets and personal ownership and the potential to drive policy using the approach that he described. I thank George Adam for that. I do not know whether it is more or less likely that I would buy a motor vehicle from him, but it is probably more likely.

I turn to comments from my friend and colleague Claudia Beamish, who mentioned the 2,000 deaths from emissions in 2014 and talked about the proximity of schools to many areas with high levels of pollution. Those issues are hugely important and will, of course, play a part.

The climate change plan contains no policies on curbing private motor car use and little on improving bus services. Indeed, as the draft budget stands, there is a £7 million cut in expenditure on bus services, which will not help the one third of households in Scotland that have no access to a motor vehicle. As my colleague Mark Ruskell said, the plan

“bizarrely assumes even more traffic on our roads, with ministers pinning hopes on a magical overnight switch to electric vehicles.”

That will not happen.

I am pleased that my colleague John Mason mentioned rail—that was helpful.

Professor Philip Alston’s United Nations report has been much quoted by the Scottish Government. He says:

“Transport, especially in rural areas, should be considered an essential service, equivalent to water and electricity, and the government should regulate the sector to the extent necessary to ensure that people living in rural areas are adequately served. Abandoning people to the private market in relation to a service that affects every dimension of their basic well-being is incompatible with human rights requirements.”

I hope that we would all agree with that.

In case I am perceived as being very negative, I point out that, as our amendment says, we recognise the important role that ultra-low-emission vehicles can play in decarbonising the transport sector. However, they will not affect congestion or have a great impact on improving road safety, unlike my colleague Mark Ruskell’s Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill, which I hope the Government will support.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must finish there. Thank you very much. I call Daniel Johnson to close for Labour. Six minutes, please.

16:09

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** I have hugely enjoyed this debate, which has come as something of a relief. Members are all too used to debating matters of the constitution and political crises, so this debate is almost overdue. The issues raised by this topic and others are hugely important for Scotland's future, its economy and how people will work and live.

There is an opportunity cost to the other things that are going on. This afternoon, members have raised the need for solid plans to make sure that we embrace the opportunities and benefits that are in front of us. It is too easy to see the choice between electric and low-emission vehicles as being a lifestyle choice between different types of car, but it is much more profound than that. Transportation is about how we move around and how goods and services are delivered—it is the glue of our economy and fundamentally important.

Many members have spoken about congestion, which costs the economy between 1 and 2 per cent of our gross domestic product. Getting such a change right is of huge importance to the future of the economy and how people work. Likewise, 10 per cent of people work in transport and distribution, and the shift away from hydrocarbon-based vehicles is important for how we get to work and how our goods are delivered around the country. That richness has come out in the breadth of today's debate.

I will focus on the comments that were made by John Finnie and Liam McArthur. Referencing them is not just a bad habit from the Justice Committee because, between them, they have made us see the debate in a broader context.

Many of the things that we are doing are good but, as Liam McArthur put it, they are not the very best that they could be. Norway, a country with 5 million people, has the largest market for EV vehicles in Europe. Although the UK might be on a par now, its EV sales outstripped the UK's in the year before last, which is unbelievable. We need to look at the size of the opportunity to make sure that we are the very best.

Similarly, John Finnie was right that we need to make sure that we do not just replace the method of locomotion. That is why I raise the issue of automation. If all that we do is simply replace petrol and diesel-powered vehicles with battery-powered ones, we will miss a trick and an opportunity. We will certainly miss an environmental opportunity, and many colleagues have spoken about air quality and climate change,

which are both of profound importance. Automation has huge possibilities for increasingly improving the efficiency of our road use, as well as bringing other benefits. Automated vehicles use roads more efficiently because human drivers are prone to errors and inefficiencies. Automated roads, where space is allocated more efficiently and vehicles talk to one another in real time and share data, may have huge economic advantages.

I agree with the cabinet secretary that there is an issue about when those technologies will come online, but by 2032 there will be similar and overlapping timeframes. Talking about the switch to EV without considering the general impact of other technologies, and automation in particular, may be a mistake.

A number of members have commented on the need to go further than the targets that we have in place. The 2032 targets are laudable but it is important that we are ambitious. We must go further. We need a robust plan that will integrate those targets with what has emerged this afternoon, which I think are the three Is: the investment in infrastructure that is required and incentives for people to switch. Those three—investment, infrastructure and incentives—will deliver the change that we need. I will look briefly at infrastructure.

Much has been made of whether the number of charging points is sufficient, which is a hugely important issue. As I understand it, the targets mean that there will be one charging point for every 3,000 drivers. A number of members have made the point that that is insufficient.

Beyond that, we need to think about how charging points are powered. The uptake of EVs is estimated to increase power consumption by 25 per cent, and much of that will be a very different type of usage because of the high drain that rapid charging requires. Therefore, we need to look at the underlying infrastructure requirements and the need for a smart grid. We also need to look at the full spectrum of requirements. The points about hydrogen for freight and heavy goods vehicles that travel long distances are hugely important and were well made.

We need a plan that integrates all those issues across all areas, so that we get this right. It should not simply be about targets. We should learn from the very good examples that we have in Scotland, such as the A9 and the work that has been done by Dundee City Council. We should ensure that such projects are extended so that the whole of Scotland can enjoy the benefits of the switch to electric vehicles.

16:16

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** As we have heard from members across the chamber, we are all committed to moving towards a low-carbon economy, and ultra-low-emission vehicles are very much part of that journey.

As it is the new year, I echo the goodwill that has been shown by other members during our first debate back by commending the Scottish Government for its pledge to expand Scotland's electrical charging infrastructure between now and 2022, so that range anxiety will become a thing of the past. That is particularly welcome in rural areas, where the uptake of electric vehicles is considerably lower than it is in urban areas, due to range anxiety.

As my colleague Jamie Greene noted in his opening speech, the Scottish Conservatives have set out a number of measures in our environment and climate change policy paper, which was published in February 2017, to encourage the use and ownership of electric vehicles. Those measures include new incentives such as free parking and the use of bus and taxi lanes by electric vehicles; establishing a fund to provide charging points in small towns, rural areas and train stations; a requirement for all public bodies to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of replacing vehicle fleets with electric vehicles; and providing support to buses and taxis in their transition to being powered by renewables. All that requires significant investment, and I am pleased that the UK Government has committed to investing more than £1.2 billion in the industry, as well as to working with private investment.

Unfortunately, the uptake of electric vehicles in Scotland is nowhere near where it needs to be to achieve the Scottish National Party Government's aim to phase out new petrol and diesel cars by 2032. Given that electric vehicles accounted for only 1.77 per cent of new vehicle registrations in 2016, which was up by just 0.09 per cent from 2015, at this rate it will take a thousand years for the SNP to achieve its goal. Worryingly, that will possibly be after Tesla reaches Mars, as the former car salesman George Adam pointed out.

I know that SNP members such as Angus MacDonald drew attention to the fact that their target date by which to phase out diesel and petrol vehicles is eight years before the UK Government's target. However, we have seen little detail on how the SNP Government plans to meet its aim, and it is clear that, whatever initiatives the Government has in place to increase electric vehicle uptake, they are simply not working—perhaps with the exception of those in Orkney, as Liam McArthur was keen to note.

A move to low-emission vehicles does not necessarily mean a straight switch from diesel to electric. Other issues, such as hydrogen batteries and automated cars and roads, have been touched on, and they are probably subjects for another day, given the reduced time for debate today. A couple of those issues were mentioned by John Mason.

Taxis have been mentioned, and the Energy Saving Trust offers interest-free loans to enable people who own or operate hackney cabs that are more than eight years old to replace them with new and efficient models. However, the scheme does not pay for the conversion of vehicles, and I would be grateful for an update on any discussions that the cabinet secretary or the minister has had with the Energy Saving Trust, so that Stewart Stevenson can perhaps take an electric taxi journey in the north-east sometime in the near future.

The Federation of Small Businesses has also called on the Government to support a switch to low-emission vehicles through a £15 million low-emission zones support fund. That would enable small businesses to invest in cleaner fleets, coinciding with the roll-out of low-emission zones.

As Finlay Carson noted, having access to a vehicle is vital for personal and business purposes for many people in rural parts of Scotland. Right now, the infrastructure is not in place to give our rural constituents the confidence that they can switch to electric vehicles. That point was made correctly by Gillian Martin, and I hope that she can switch to an all-electric vehicle sooner rather than later.

Edward Mountain also highlighted the farming industry's heavy reliance on diesel-operated machinery and the fact that it will require considerable support to help it to achieve low-emission targets. I join the industry in calling for reassurances that the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles does not adversely affect either our rural communities or public transport, as Lewis Macdonald highlighted.

As my colleague John Scott mentioned, transport and the use of low-emission vehicles will have an important part to play in keeping greenhouse gas emissions to a minimum, a point that Claudia Beamish, Colin Smyth and Daniel Johnson emphasised, and one that will receive support from Conservative members.

However, right now we are not where we need to be. The SNP Government has failed to meet targets under the European ambient air quality directive for nitrogen dioxide, even though the deadline for compliance was back in 2010.

Our environment is fragile and we must do what we can to protect it. John Finnie set out some

good examples so, like him, I urge the SNP Government to do more than make pledges. The switch to low-emission vehicles will require a collaborative effort across the public and private sectors. Right now, the Government is not leading the way in lowering emissions and further action is needed to incentivise Scotland to make the switch. We all share the same ambition and would support deliverable measures.

16:21

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** As we have heard throughout the debate, which was largely consensual until some aspects of Mr Burnett's speech—although he did have some warmer words for us—we have been making significant progress on our ambitious agenda to decarbonise transport for domestic users and to provide infrastructure that visitors to the country can also access.

Jamie Greene and other members around the chamber talked about range anxiety. It is important to stress that, as the cabinet secretary said, although 1,000 public charging points have been established in Scotland to date, that figure does not include the additional 350 workplace chargers that we are funding with the additional £5 million that we are investing, and the 1,200 charging points that are being added to the 461 workplace charging places and 1,928 domestic charging places that were in place at the end of 2017-18. I apologise if members were not given the full extent of the figures, but we have many more than the 1,000 public charging places that we have already invested in and will continue to invest in.

As the cabinet secretary also said, there are now more than 1,000 ULEVs in public sector fleets. The support available to businesses and individuals looking to make the switch to an electric vehicle has increased dramatically, from £8 million to £20 million. I draw members attention to, and can provide them with further details on, the funding that we provide through the low-carbon transport loan that the cabinet secretary referenced. That can provide up to £35,000 to cover the cost of purchasing a new pure electric or plug-in hybrid vehicle, and up to £10,000 to cover the cost of buying a new electric motorcycle or scooter, for those who are interested in doing that.

To address the points raised by Claudia Beamish and Colin Smyth, the budget for active travel has doubled from £39.2 million in 2017-18 to £80 million for 2018-19. We recognise the important points about investing in sustainable active travel and encouraging people to lead more healthy lives. We have also finalised the eighth round of the green bus fund, and anticipate

supporting more than 125 new green buses in that round.

Those are just a few highlights from an increasingly ambitious agenda.

I would also like to mention the international dimension. Members might not be aware that the Scottish Government is playing a leading role in the under2 coalition's zero-emission vehicle project. I heard directly about the work that we are doing with the under2 coalition when I visited San Francisco for the global climate action summit, which was held by Governor Jerry Brown.

Our energy strategy, which was published just over a year ago, included our ambition to decarbonise the whole energy system. We now have a target for the equivalent of 50 per cent of the energy for Scotland's electricity, heat and transport consumption to come from renewable sources by 2050. A key component of meeting that target will be the extent to which we can shift our energy for transport from fossil fuels to low carbon or renewable electricity or hydrogen, which many members have mentioned today.

As members have said, transport accounts for 25 per cent of our energy use, but 37 per cent of our climate emissions, and we recognise the importance of tackling that important statistic. The shift to electric vehicles gives us an opportunity to use more of Scotland's abundant renewable energy resources while reducing our fossil fuel consumption. The work being done in Orkney that Mr McArthur referenced is a very good example of that.

That shift raises questions for our electricity networks, which will need to meet and manage the higher demand. We are working closely with Scotland's network operators and with National Grid to share evidence and analysis, including data from the chargeplace Scotland network, to make sure that the transition to electric vehicles is carefully managed and that we limit the impacts on the network through the use of smart and other innovative charging technologies.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Would Mr Wheelhouse accept the point, which has been made by members in different parts of the chamber, that that renewable energy does not just directly support the electricity network, but gives Scotland the feedstock for the production of hydrogen, which has even wider uses?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I am happy to do so and I will come on to that point in more detail shortly. I recognise the interest of Mr Macdonald and of other members in the matter. Because of capacity constraints, we have been innovating in the production of hydrogen in the BIG HIT—building innovative green hydrogen systems in an isolated territory—project in Kirkwall and the surf 'n' turf



project, also in Kirkwall, which uses surplus tidal energy and wind energy produced in Eday to store electricity in the form of hydrogen. That is very positive work.

**Liam McArthur:** I would point out that the surf 'n' turf project is based in Eday rather than in Kirkwall.

Will the minister give an undertaking that users will have meaningful input into the future contract for chargeplace Scotland, so that we can learn some lessons from what has happened in the current contract?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I can give the member assurance that officials from Transport Scotland have been engaging with chargeplace Scotland with regard to the problems that have arisen in Orkney and between Orkney and the central belt, which he referenced previously in questions. I am happy to take up that point with the member in my islands portfolio discussions with him. I know that the cabinet secretary has been actively engaged in that.

The Scottish Government wants the transition to a low-carbon economy to be a just one. We have established the just transition commission, led by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. That will consider employment, economic and social issues together with the development of climate change policies. We want, therefore, a transition for our transport sector that will ensure that no one is left behind as our technological and economic landscape develops. That is an important aspect. I know that a number of members—John Finnie, Claudia Beamish and others—have referenced that in the debate today.

In the time available to me, I will respond to other points made by members. I have touched on the islands aspect and rurality. The projects in Orkney are giving us major lessons about how we can make rural and island communities benefit from the transition.

Daniel Johnson and Liam McArthur made points about using Norway as a comparator. Norway has significantly increased the uptake of ULEVs through a combination of tax and VAT on EVs, and incentives such as free parking, which, I recognise, have been referenced by members today. The Scottish ministers do not have a locus on VAT or import tax, because those are reserved matters. Therefore, we must work with the UK Government to try and get a supportive fiscal environment in place, in order to encourage a higher take-up of EVs.

I recognise the issue that Edward Mountain raised about rural sectors, and I am happy to discuss any ideas that he might have on that. Tax allowances—maybe at a UK level—are something

that could be looked at. I would be keen to discuss what measures could be put in place.

I want to highlight to Colin Smyth, who was worried about the apparent lack—in his perception—of strategy around EVs, that, as the cabinet secretary referenced, the national transport strategy and the network vision statement, which I will publish later this month, will give more detail on the necessity for investment in infrastructure to support EVs and their roll-out more widely.

In the time that I have available—I have just one minute left—I will highlight the work around hydrogen. Members have raised an important point today. We have companies such as Hyundai, which is investing £5 billion in research and development in hydrogen and is currently producing models, and Honda and Toyota, which are two other major manufacturers that are known to be interested in rolling out hydrogen models. That is an indication of significant money in the automotive sector that is being directed towards hydrogen. I take the point that members have made about heavy goods vehicles and other transport options. The work in Levenmouth, in particular, which is looking at commercial vehicles and refuse collection vehicles, will give us some advice about how that technology can work.

I will wind up, because I know that there is important business to come.

## Procedure for Handling Complaints Involving Current or Former Ministers (Judicial Review Conclusion)

16:30

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** I move straight on to the next item of business, which is a statement by the First Minister on the conclusion of a judicial review. The First Minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

16:30

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** On 16 and 24 January 2018, the Scottish Government received two formal complaints of alleged misconduct by Alex Salmond during his time as First Minister. Those complaints came from two separate individuals.

The complaints were investigated under the procedure for handling complaints involving current or former ministers, which I will refer to from here on as “the procedure”. As members are aware, that procedure was signed off by me and came into force in December 2017. As part of that procedure, I formally delegated responsibility for investigating complaints of such a nature to the permanent secretary.

The new procedure formed part of a wider review of Scottish Government policies and processes for addressing inappropriate conduct that the permanent secretary was asked, by the Cabinet, to undertake in the wake of the me too allegations. That review was confirmed to Parliament by John Swinney on 31 October 2017.

In August 2018, following the conclusion of the investigation into the complaint that had been raised about his conduct, Alex Salmond sought a judicial review of the procedure and the way in which it had been applied to him. This morning, the Court of Session accepted a joint minute from the Scottish Government and Alex Salmond settling the action for judicial review. The permanent secretary issued a statement earlier today, detailing the reason for the decision to settle the case.

It is also appropriate for matters to be set out—at least in summary—to Parliament. Therefore, I will, as far as I am able in the light of the terms of the settlement and, perhaps more important, of the on-going police investigation, seek to provide Parliament in this statement, and in answers to the

questions that follow it, with as much detail as I can.

The decision to settle the case was taken by the permanent secretary, with my support, when it became clear that, in one procedural respect only, albeit that it was an important one, application of the procedure could be perceived to have been flawed. In November 2018, Mr Salmond adjusted his petition for judicial review to advance a ground of challenge based on interaction, before the complaints were formalised, between the complainants and the person who was subsequently appointed as investigating officer.

In late December 2018, the work that was being undertaken to produce relevant documents to the court, in advance of the full hearing that was scheduled for next week, led the Government to reassess its position in relation to that ground of challenge, in the light of the full picture that had become available. After reassessing all the available materials, the permanent secretary concluded that the impression of partiality could have been created, based on one specific point—contact between the person who was appointed as investigating officer and the two complainants in advance of and around the time of their complaints being formalised in January 2018.

That prior contact was in the form of welfare support and guidance that was provided to the women who were making the complaints. It is important to stress that the support and guidance were in themselves entirely legitimate and entirely appropriate.

As was set out in the Court of Session this morning, the Government does not accept claims that that was in any way encouraging the complaints, nor is there any suggestion that the investigating officer did, in fact, act in a partial way, or that either the investigation or the decisions that were reached were partial. The Scottish Government is also confident that in all other respects the procedure that was followed was fair to all concerned.

However, as members will be aware, it is a well-established principle that such a process must not just be impartial in fact, but must also be seen to be so. It was on that basis that the permanent secretary decided to settle the case and to agree that the decisions that she had reached about the complaints at the conclusion of the investigation should on that ground alone be set aside.

It is important to note as a simple matter of fact that today’s settlement has no implications, one way or the other, for the substance of the complaints or the credibility of the complainants. The judicial review was never about the substance of the complaints; it was about the process of investigating them. It will be open to the Scottish

Government to reinvestigate the complaints, subject, of course, to the views of the complainants. However, for reasons that I am sure Parliament will understand, that will be considered only when the on-going police investigation has concluded.

It remains my view that the Government was right to begin an investigation when serious complaints were made, and not to allow them to be swept under the carpet because of the identity of the person who was being complained about. Although, in one respect, operational application of the procedure was flawed, the Scottish Government considers the procedure itself to be robust, and it remains in place.

However, the permanent secretary has rightly instructed a review of the procedure's application in relation to the specific point that has arisen, in order to ensure that employees can have confidence in the process that will be applied should there be, in the future, a need to investigate complaints about ministers or former ministers.

There is one final point about the process that I wish to make, in the light of today's developments. The Government has not, at any time, made public either the outcome of the investigation or the substance of the complaints, and that will remain the case. As I have already mentioned briefly, and as members will appreciate, there is an on-going police investigation that must be allowed to take its proper course. As I have just observed, the Government could also reinvestigate the complaints, in due course. In the circumstances, it would not at this stage be appropriate for me—or anyone else, for that matter—to say anything about the substance of the complaints.

In the past, questions have also been raised about meetings that I had with Alex Salmond during the investigation, so I want to address that issue now. I met him on three occasions: on 2 April 2018 at my home in Glasgow; on 7 June 2018 in Aberdeen, ahead of the Scottish National Party conference; and on 14 July 2018, at my home. I also spoke to him on the telephone on 23 April and 18 July 2018. I have not spoken to Alex Salmond since 18 July. On 2 April, he informed me about the complaints against him, which—of course—in line with the procedure, the permanent secretary had not done. He set out his various concerns about the process. In the other contacts, he reiterated his concerns about the process and told me about proposals that he was making to the Scottish Government for mediation and arbitration. However, I was always clear that I had no role in the process. I did not seek to intervene in it at any stage—nor, indeed, did I feel under any pressure to do so.

In conclusion, I say that it is deeply regrettable—perhaps that is an understatement—that, as a result of a failure in proper application of one aspect of the procedure, the Scottish Government has had to settle the matter today.

This morning, the permanent secretary apologised to all involved. In echoing that, I want also to express my regret—in particular, about the difficult position in which the complainants have been placed. I know that the permanent secretary has spoken directly to both women. I can only imagine how difficult the decision to raise concerns, as well as the publicity around the investigation and the judicial review, must have been for them in recent months. They had every right to expect the process to be robust and beyond reproach in every aspect, and for it to reach a lasting conclusion. I am sorry that, on this occasion, that has not been the case.

It is fair to say that, in recent months, all organisations have grappled with the challenge of ensuring fair and robust processes for investigation of complaints that can sometimes be historic in nature. It is because we—and I personally—take that task so seriously that the Scottish Government is determined to learn and apply lessons from this case, so that any member of staff who raises complaints in the future can have confidence that every aspect of the process that is applied will be robust. Ensuring a robust complaints process is part of the responsibility of every organisation to provide a safe and respectful working environment. As First Minister, I am determined that the Scottish Government will live up to that responsibility.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The First Minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow up to 20 minutes for questions, after which we must move to decision time. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask questions pressed their request-to-speak buttons now.

**Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** I note that this is the subject of an on-going police investigation, which none of us must prejudice. Given the detail in the First Minister's statement, which we received just after 10 past 4, we will wish to reflect further on it.

The First Minister rightly mentioned the two complainants at the centre of the matter. The trouble is that good intentions towards complainants are worth little if the Government cannot meet basic standards of competence. It is clear that what we have witnessed today is deeply disappointing: a questionable investigation and, seemingly, a Scottish National Party civil war played out at the taxpayer's expense to the tune of hundreds of thousands of pounds in legal costs.

I turn to some questions. First, in November last year, the First Minister said:

“I am absolutely satisfied that I, the SNP and the Scottish Government have acted entirely appropriately at all stages.”

Now we have learned that that was not the case. Why, only two months ago, did the First Minister confidently insist that she had got everything right? Did she just not know what was going on in her own office?

Secondly—I think that this is of crucial interest today—paragraph 12 of the Scottish Government procedure provides for the First Minister being involved at the conclusion of the process, only when the outcome of the investigation is complete. In light of that, why was the First Minister involved in a series of meetings and phone calls with Mr Salmond, about which, with respect to the latter, we are being told only today for the first time? That seems completely inappropriate in terms of the guidance in the procedure that the First Minister herself said that she had signed off just months previously.

Turning to my final question, we have learned a lot in recent months about the need to support victims of sexual harassment. In the wake of today's events, does the First Minister think it more or less likely that complainants will have the confidence to come forward? If this is the example of the Scottish Government, what hope is there of reassuring others? Does the First Minister not agree that, above all else, people must have total confidence in coming forward when such issues arise?

**The First Minister:** I thank Jackson Carlaw for his questions. I hope that he will understand my decision not to respond to the more blatant political elements of them, because I do not think that that would be appropriate. His comments about a “civil war” were simply ludicrous and, if I were to respond to them, I would not do justice to the seriousness of the matter at hand.

I turn to Jackson Carlaw's serious questions. First, he asked about complainants. It is absolutely essential that we keep the interests of complainants at the heart of our consideration. The Scottish Government took steps—as did many other organisations—to put in place a procedure for dealing with complaints of harassment, including complaints of sexual harassment. In my view, that procedure is robust and it remains in place. In one aspect of the application of that procedure, the Scottish Government processes have fallen short, and I deeply regret that. The Scottish Government must reflect seriously on that and must be determined to learn lessons.

Jackson Carlaw quoted something that I said—I will not quote it back, because I do not have the exact words that I used—to the effect that I was satisfied with the actions that the SNP, I and the Scottish Government had taken. The investigation has nothing to do with the SNP, so I will refer to me and the Scottish Government. At that point, I believed that that was the case. Today, with the exception of the one aspect that the Government has conceded was flawed, I still believe that all the aspects of the application of the procedure by the Government were fair and robust. That is no comfort to anybody, because that one flaw has led to today's decision.

Jackson Carlaw asked whether it was the case that I simply did not know what was going on in my Government. Here we get to the nub of the matter—I did not know what was going on in the investigation, because the procedure said that I should not know what was going on in the investigation. I was informed of the investigation by Alex Salmond, but I did nothing to intervene in that process as a result of any of that. That is an important point and one on which I am very clear.

Lastly, Jackson Carlaw asked whether this makes it more or less likely that complainants will come forward. I am absolutely clear that my responsibility and the Government's responsibility is to make sure that we encourage, enable and empower people with complaints to come forward, by putting in place robust procedures and by doing everything that we can to make sure that those processes are beyond reproach. If mistakes are made, as a mistake was made in this case—it was in good faith, but nevertheless a mistake was made—it is absolutely incumbent on us to ensure that lessons are learned in order that we can ensure, collectively, that we encourage anybody with a complaint to come forward and feel that that complaint will be treated seriously and appropriately.

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the First Minister for advance sight of her statement. The First Minister cannot be held responsible for the actions of her predecessor, but she is in the end responsible for the actions of this Government, and this Government has let these women down badly. Let us be clear. It takes unflinching courage to step forward and challenge powerful men and powerful institutions, which is why the women deserve so much better than this, and also why their treatment, their access to support and representation and their access to justice must be paramount and a priority.

This is a question of competence, but it is also a question of trust. If this Government cannot be trusted to deal competently with a case involving a former First Minister of this country, what trust and confidence can other women have in this

Government's handling of their complaints of harassment? This is extremely serious. Apart from a review of procedures, what further action is the First Minister now prepared to take to restore trust and confidence in her Government's handling of present and future harassment complaints?

**The First Minister:** I thank Richard Leonard for his questions. First, I am responsible for the Scottish Government. That is why I am standing here, accountable to Parliament, in the right and proper way. In this case, because of the procedure, I was not personally involved in the conduct of the investigation, but nevertheless I absolutely accept my responsibility to answer these questions and also, now, given the error that has led to the situation that we are in today, to make sure that appropriate steps are taken to learn and apply any lessons that are required.

I have said already and I say again that I deeply regret the position that two women have been placed in and it is incumbent on not just me but the Government in its entirety to make sure that, in future, we give women—and not just women, but everybody—confidence that, if they come forward with complaints, they will be treated seriously and the processes that are applied will be robust.

This is not to try to make excuses, but part of that responsibility is to be clear in fact about certain things and not allow them to be lost. The Government has put in place a procedure that is robust in all aspects bar one. Of course that is important, because it has led to the situation that we are in today, but in every other aspect the Government is confident that that procedure was applied correctly.

On the error that was made, it is important to allow the review that has been instructed today by the permanent secretary to happen and not to pre-empt any conclusions of that, but I happily give an undertaking today to report back to Parliament on the outcome of that review and any steps that will be taken as a result of it.

Finally, as I think I said in my statement, the permanent secretary has spoken to the two women involved to apologise and offer support. It will be open for the Scottish Government in the future, dependent on the views of the complainants, to reinvestigate the complaints, but of course that consideration has to await the conclusion of the police investigation. I understand that the permanent secretary has spoken to trade unions, or is speaking to them in the course of today, in order to give assurances there about how these complaints will be taken forward.

I do not want anyone in this chamber to be in any doubt about how seriously I treat this situation. It is because it is incredibly important that people have confidence in processes that I feel so

regretful about what has happened today and feel the responsibility, not just for what has happened but to take whatever action is required to ensure that situations like this cannot happen again in future. I undertake to keep the Parliament fully updated as the review takes place.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** In the midst of all this heat, what must be protected is the right of people to speak up. Great progress was made by the me too movement, which gave people who had been silent for so long the confidence that they would be heard.

It is important that nothing stops that. Members of this Parliament should stand together and speak with one voice on that important issue. What has happened today is not a victory for anyone. I understand that the civil service procedure was flawed, but does the First Minister agree that the police must be allowed to get on with their work, free from political pressure?

**The First Minister:** I thank Willie Rennie for his question and agree entirely with the sentiments and the substance of it.

I do not want to sound pedantic here, but there is a point that I feel that it is important to stress, partly in the interests of what Willie Rennie was talking about. The Scottish Government's procedure is not flawed; we concede that the application of that procedure, in one respect, was flawed. That perhaps sounds as though I am nitpicking, but it is an important distinction.

Willie Rennie is absolutely right to say that a lot of progress has been made since the me too allegations came to light. Sometimes—and I am not talking about this case—it feels as though with every step forward we take a step back. It is really important that we all encourage people to come forward and that we make them feel able to do so.

That is why I regret so deeply what has unfolded today. I think that Willie Rennie was right to say that it is not a victory for anyone; it has no implications one way or the other for the substance of the complaints. It is important for all of us to recognise that a police investigation is under way and it is incumbent on all of us to ensure that we do not say anything that might impinge on that investigation. In the interests of everyone concerned, the investigation must be allowed properly to take its course.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Nine members want to ask a question and, for obvious reasons, I let the first questions and answers go on longer. I do not think that I will get through all nine questions, but if questions are short, we should get through most of them.

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** We live in a society in which women and girls

regularly experience harassment and sexism, whether it happens on the street, in social settings or in a workplace. What does the First Minister say to those women and girls, to give them confidence that society can change? What should we all do—men and women—to stand up to those who perpetrate such harassment?

**The First Minister:** Ruth Maguire raises the most important issue at the heart of this general debate. First, we must all make absolutely clear—as I think that all members in this Parliament do—that harassment of women and girls is completely unacceptable and should not be tolerated. Secondly, we must ensure that the correct procedures are in place for dealing with harassment, and that—and this is pertinent to this case; it is where the Scottish Government has not got it right—every aspect of the application of those procedures is robust and correct as well.

The last thing that I would say—and this is a responsibility that I feel very acutely today—is that when mistakes are made, there must be recognition of and transparency around that. There must be a determination to recognise mistakes, so that the process of putting things right and learning the lessons of mistakes, rather than setting us back, helps us to encourage women to come forward in future. That is what I am determined to seek to do.

**Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** The permanent secretary has spoken today to the two women at the centre of the case. What support will the Scottish Government offer the women in future?

**The First Minister:** As Annie Wells said, the permanent secretary has already spoken to them. The Scottish Government will offer any support that they require.

I should say that one of the—I do not know whether this is the right word; it is the word that I will use—ironies of this is that it was the giving of support to the women that led to this situation. The support that was given to the women before their complaints were formalised was entirely legitimate and appropriate; the problem was that one of the people involved in giving support subsequently became the investigating officer, which created the impression of partiality, although there is nothing to suggest actual partiality.

The women will be offered whatever support they need. In due course, as I have said a number of times, the reinvestigation of the complaints is an option, but that consideration requires awaiting the end of the police investigation.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** Will the First Minister make it clear that the decision by the Court of Session today is not about guilt or innocence; the outcome is that the process for handling the complaints has been

found not to have been properly carried out? Will she confirm that immediate and urgent steps are being taken to ensure that the lessons have been learned and that staff can be confident of the procedures that are in place?

**The First Minister:** As I said in my statement, the lawyers among us, in particular, will know that judicial reviews—not just this judicial review—are not about the substance of issues; they are about the processes that are applied in a particular case. That is the situation here. Even if the judicial review had not ended in the way that it ended today and had gone to the full hearing that was scheduled for next week, it would never have been about the substance. To use Stuart McMillan's language, this is not about guilt or innocence.

What has happened today is regrettable—from the perspective of Alex Salmond and of the complainants. Everybody involved had a right to expect that the process was robust in all respects. However, other processes are under way, as has already been acknowledged, and it is very important that those processes are allowed to take their course.

On lessons learned, I have already mentioned the review that the permanent secretary has instructed. As I said in response to Richard Leonard's question, I am not going to pre-empt the direction in which that review might go. However, I will ensure that it is thorough, that it happens as quickly as possible and that Parliament is kept fully updated.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** There have been long-standing concerns about the Scottish Government's transparency. We now know that the First Minister has spoken to Alex Salmond on five separate occasions, none of which are referenced in her diaries. Will she now make the content of those meetings public? If not, why not?

**The First Minister:** The contacts that I had with Alex Salmond, the dates of which I have set out today, were not Government meetings. I have known Alex Salmond as a friend and colleague for 30 years, and he was then a member of my party, although he is not at the present time. People can make judgments about the decisions that I took, but one of the things that I have found out in the course of dealing with this is that there is no manual for suddenly finding oneself in a situation in which somebody whom one has worked with in that way is subject to such accusations. However, I was very firm when, as I have set out, in the first meeting he informed me of the complaints and when, after that, he made me aware of the concerns that he had about the process and that he was proposing mediation and arbitration, that—and this is the key principle for me—I had no role in the process. I did not intervene or seek to

intervene. Self-evidently I did not, because what Alex Salmond was seeking did not happen. That is the important principle—and one on which I am absolutely satisfied.

Today, not just on that issue but on the more general issue, I am anxious to be as transparent as possible within the confines of an on-going investigation. As we move down and out of the investigations, if there is more information that the Government can make available to Parliament, of course we will do so.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** The First Minister has just taken a question about support for the complainants. I agree with offering support. Is it possible that that support could be provided by a third party if the women preferred that?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I am sure that that is possible; I will certainly feed that back. Anybody in the Scottish Government—not just the women whom we are discussing—who has concerns or issues about any minister, former minister or other member of staff in the Scottish Government should be offered appropriate support. If that support is outside the Scottish Government, it should be considered.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Paragraph 12 of the relevant procedure explicitly provides for the involvement of the First Minister only when the outcome of the investigation is complete. That being so, why did the First Minister consider it appropriate to meet Alex Salmond not once but three times and to have two telephone calls while the investigation was on-going?

**The First Minister:** I have set out a response to that already. I make it very clear that I was not involved in the procedure in any way. I did not intervene in the procedure, I did not seek to intervene and I did not try to influence the course of the investigation. Had I done so, that would have been the subject of absolutely legitimate criticism.

All of us reflect on decisions that we take all the time. I am sure that it will be no different for me in this circumstance as it is on everything else, but I am absolutely satisfied that I acted appropriately, and I will continue to do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes questions on the statement. I apologise to Bill Kidd, Daniel Johnson and Rona Mackay, whom I failed to reach.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The first question is, that amendment S5M-15243.3, in the name of Jamie Greene, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15243, in the name of Michael Matheson, on ultra-low-emission vehicles, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-15243.4, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Michael Matheson, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-15243.1, in the name of John Finnie, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Michael Matheson, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-15243.2, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Michael Matheson, 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)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (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)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)

McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 50, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-15243, in the name of Michael Matheson, as amended, on ultra-low-emission vehicles, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

That the Parliament recognises the progress being made in Scotland on ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) during an unprecedented period of innovation in mobility; recognises that Scotland has one of Europe's most comprehensive charge point networks and that this is continuing to be expanded, including the launch of the Electric A9; notes the promising growth in ULEV registrations in Scotland; welcomes the important role that ULEVs can play in decarbonising the transport sector, but recognises that this technology does not address the need to cut congestion and to improve road safety; further notes that the Scottish Government is on target to double the number of ULEVs in the public fleet; recognises the leadership being shown by local authorities and other organisations to bring the benefits of ULEVs to communities across Scotland; understands that further efforts will be required for the Scottish Government to meet its 2032 target; underlines that additional steps will be required to tackle 'range anxiety' and ensure that sufficient charging points are available across Scotland, particularly in remote, rural and island communities; recognises that lack of standardisation of charging points remains an obstacle; understands that creative and innovative schemes and funds may be required to encourage uptake of ULEVs; recognises that concerted effort will be required to fully deliver the benefits of mass ULEV usage; calls on all Members to adopt a cross-party approach to ensure that Scotland meets its obligations to reducing carbon emissions and continues to lead the world in tackling climate change; further recognises the importance of ULEVs to tackling air pollution and improving public health and tackling greenhouse gas emissions; notes the need for more investment in infrastructure to significantly grow the use of ULEVs; believes that the promotion of ULEVs must also be accompanied by a modal shift towards increased use of public transport and active travel, within a better integrated, more affordable and sustainable public transport system; notes the importance of hydrogen as well as



electricity in powering ULEVs, including potentially rail as well as road vehicles; welcomes the action already taken to promote hydrogen vehicles, and calls on the Scottish Government to continue working with local authorities and energy and transport companies on the further development of electric, hydrogen and other low-emission transport technologies in Scotland.

## Transport Infrastructure (South-west Scotland)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14266, in the name of Brian Whittle, on transport infrastructure in south-west Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises the importance of good transport links to the economy of south west Scotland and the country as a whole; acknowledges the reported concerns expressed by individuals, businesses and community campaign groups regarding the ability of the existing transport network in the south west, including the A77, A76, A75, the Bellfield interchange and the Stranraer-Ayr and Dumfries-Kilmarnock rail lines, to cope with existing demand; notes that the A77 and A75, which are the main road links used by traffic travelling to and from the Stena Line and P&O ferry terminals at Loch Ryan, are single carriageway roads over much of their length; understands that they offer few safe opportunities for overtaking and pass through a number of communities; believes that several campaign groups have been set up calling for various improvements to transport infrastructure, including investment in the trunk road network to bypass towns and villages and upgrading routes to dual carriageway where possible, the re-opening of Cumnock railway station, and improvements to reliability and quality of rail services; considers that good transport infrastructure plays a valuable role in economic development, tourism and quality of life, and, to boost the area's economy, reduce journey times, improve road safety and give it the best opportunity to succeed, notes calls for the Scottish Government to develop a long-term programme of sustained investment in the south west's transport infrastructure, similar to investment elsewhere in the country.

17:04

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to have brought the debate to the chamber. I thank business and community campaign groups including the A77 action group, the dual the A75 campaign, the Ayr to Stranraer train line action group and the Maybole bypass committee for all their tireless work, and I welcome some of their members to the gallery. The chronic lack of investment in the south-west's infrastructure being brought to light is due in no small part to those groups' persistence.

I have a map of Scotland on which all the trunk roads are marked with their speed limits. People can drive on trunk roads from Ayr to Golspie in Sutherland, which is some 275 miles, before hitting a 30mph limit. We can drive from Ayr to Aberdeen, which is 175 miles, or from Ayr to Berwick-upon-Tweed, which is 160 miles, before hitting a 30mph limit. We can drive from Gretna to Barcelona without hitting a 30mph limit.

That is significant because the trunk roads that link Ayr and Greta to the port of Cairnryan are littered with 20mph and 30mph speed limits, as they go through many small towns and villages that are not set up to take the convoys of 44-tonne lorries and goods vehicles that charge many times a day to and from what is the third-biggest port in the United Kingdom and the biggest port in Scotland. Over the years, the volume of commercial traffic has had significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of the communities' populations, and on wear and tear on roads and housing.

I took the opportunity of travelling down to Cairnryan on a 44-tonne lorry. I suggest to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity that the journey is worth taking for anyone who really wants to understand the scale of the problem. Witnessing the driver negotiating the narrow streets of towns including Maybole and Minishant, going through the tight turns in Girvan, and making the slow climb out of Ballantrae on a narrow road, as lorry convoys from the recently docked ferries came the other way was eye opening—and unnerving, in places.

What is more, how big does a pothole have to be for a 44-tonne lorry to swerve to avoid it? The answer is far too big to be safe for other road users. There are too many instances of such manoeuvres having to happen.

The A70, the A75, the A76 and the A77 long ago became unfit for purpose, and have become woefully so over the years. The rail service is far from satisfactory, especially when we look across the country at the investment in the Borders railway. To be frank, we are sometimes relieved that any trains are running at all, given the issues at Ayr station and the Station hotel, which seem to be far from being resolved. After the news that the final structural survey is not due to come out until March, I hope that the cabinet secretary will join me in pushing for a speedy resolution of the questions that hang over the Station hotel's future.

At one point when the rail link was closed, the A77 was also closed, which in effect cut off south-west Scotland. The diversion along B-class roads, which are even less suited to heavy goods vehicles, adds about an hour to a journey north, and I am sure that the journey feels a lot longer to someone in the back of an ambulance or on a bus to Ayr for cancer treatment. A patient can have a round trip of more than four hours, plus time for medical treatment. That is not fair, apart from anything else.

The timeline of promises over the past decade is worth mentioning. In 2010, the then First Minister, Alex Salmond, promised significant upgrades to the A75 and the A77 when opening the ports. Stena Line invested £240 million and

P&O invested £90 million on the back of that promise. In 2011, the then transport secretary, Alex Neil, attacked the previous Labour Administration for its lack of investment in the south-west's infrastructure and said that that was scandalous.

In 2016, I attended a transport summit in Dumfries that was chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Humza Yousaf, at which they listened to the concerns of freight hauliers, shipping companies, businesses, local people and politicians. In 2017, I organised a meeting between the then Minister for Transport and the Islands and the A77 and A75 action groups, at which he listened. Last year, the new Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity met the action groups and listened. Jeane Freeman has issued annual newsletters proclaiming that this year is the year for the Maybole bypass, only for it to be shown to be an empty promise.

We have had 10 years of talking and listening, but very little action. We now have a south-west infrastructure study that will feed into the national strategic transport projects review 2 paper, which will not be complete for another two years. Call me an old cynic, but it is convenient that that will be just before the next election. It is easier for the Government to discuss what it will do than to justify action that it is responsible for taking—or, as in this instance, for not taking.

While we are having the debate, the Cairnryan to Stranraer route continues to be eroded. The Belfast to Dublin road is now a motorway. When they offload at Holyhead, hauliers go straight on to a dual carriageway. About 45 per cent of Northern Ireland's trade with the UK currently comes through the port of Cairnryan—much of it is movement of just-in-time goods—and it is worth more than £1 billion. History shows us that once the trade has been lost to other routes, it is unlikely to return. This is not just about the future of the economy of the south-west; it is about the economy of the whole of Scotland.

We should have a cycle route from Ayr to Stranraer, similar to the north coast 500, in order to tap into the huge cycle tourism market. That would be a fabulous route that would attract thousands of enthusiasts. There are so many obvious benefits to proper long-term planning.

I am sure that in their speeches Scottish National Party members will be quick to mention the final arrival of a bypass for Maybole. I ask the cabinet secretary whether there is a contractor for that work, yet.

Let us remind ourselves of a few other infrastructure projects elsewhere in the country that have been completed between the first pledge

from the Government for a Maybole bypass and today. There is the Queensferry crossing, at £1.34 billion; the M8, M73 and M74 improvement project, at £415 million; the Aberdeen bypass, which is more or less complete, at £745 million, with the contractor now asking for an increase to £1 billion; the Borders railway line, at £350 million; and the Dalry bypass, at £60 million. If we add the £3 billion commitment to dualling and electrifying the A9, the total is at the thick end of £7 billion of investment in infrastructure projects across Scotland, compared with a proposed £30 million investment in the south-west for the much-delayed Maybole bypass.

The plans that have been submitted are far from ideal and show a lack of foresight from the Scottish Government. The road will not be a dual carriageway. Moreover, the Government has resisted calls to build the bridges in such a way as to be able to convert them to dual carriageway in the future without major reconstruction. That speaks of short-termism and getting away with doing as little as possible.

Throughout the campaign, the ask from all parties has been entirely reasonable and pragmatic: it is for a long-term investment strategy and parity in investment for the south-west. After more than a decade of the SNP Government, it is clear that the south-west of Scotland has never been a priority for this or any other Scottish Government.

Moreover, I think that we have tried to keep the debate politically light, because the outcome is far more important and far-reaching for the south-west than any political agenda. However, we have had to drag ministers to the table to discuss the matter and—to be quite frank—it seems that the SNP has become interested only because of the interest that has been generated by other parties. It should not be beyond people in Parliament to come together to deliver what is obviously needed.

There has been a lot of rhetoric over the past decade and more. That has resulted in the south-west infrastructure network being so neglected that to bring it up to a standard that is fit for purpose will take a level of investment that makes it extremely problematic. However, the longer the south-west is ignored, the more difficult the solution will become. We are beyond debate and discussion. The south-west needs investment and it needs it now. There can be no more excuses.

17:12

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** First, I congratulate Brian Whittle on having secured this important debate. It is yet another debate about how we can improve the infrastructure in the south of Scotland, and it demonstrates combined work

by members from across the chamber—from constituency members, as well as from South Scotland regional MSPs. I highlight the absolute need for major infrastructure investment and improvement in the south of Scotland. It is important that we all work together, across all parties, for our constituents across the region. I thank the cabinet secretary for being so supportive in my engagement with him.

P&O Ferries has seven crossings daily from Cairnryan to Larne during the week, and Stena Line has six daily crossings from Cairnryan to Belfast. Both companies are responsible for over 10,000 freight-vehicle crossings every year, and all those vehicles access the ports via the main arterial routes—the A75, A76 and A77. That is just an example of how important South Scotland is to the whole United Kingdom, as well as to the Republic of Ireland and the European Union.

I have said in previous debates that there is a need for wider upgrades to infrastructure in South Scotland—in particular, on the A75, A76 and A77. Those main arterial routes connect the south-west to wider Scotland. Businesses, local people and our emergency services rely on the routes for their daily business and operations, and the routes are essential for bringing visitors, tourists and investment to the region.

However, the roads are not fit for purpose, as Brian Whittle outlined. That is causing much upset, dismay and frustration among local people and businesses. I have listened to the people in South Scotland and I am not alone in my desire for more attention and investment. Many people feel isolated and forgotten in our corner of Scotland. I would like the Government to assure me that we are not forgotten and that the necessary work will continue.

In August 2018, I hosted a meeting in Stranraer with representatives from the A75 and A77 action groups. The meeting was attended by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson; by representatives from Stena Line and P&O Ferries; and by local members Brian Whittle, Finlay Carson and Colin Smyth. The message from the people who attended the meeting was unanimously clear: the south-west of Scotland requires major transport upgrades, particularly on the three main roads that I have mentioned, in order to attract business and people to the region and to allow the south-west to flourish.

I am sure that the Government understands how important it is for large businesses such as Stena Line and P&O Ferries to remain in the region. Small businesses and microbusinesses, of which we have many, also rely on those important roads. Such businesses are local employers—they attract people to the region and allow for economic

growth, so we need to work with them in order to ensure their future. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Stena Line and P&O might even pull out of Cairnryan and move their operations south of the border to Holyhead, where the infrastructure could be described as more favourable. That must not be allowed to happen, so I ask the cabinet secretary for a commitment that he will work with and listen to the concerns of Stena Line and P&O Ferries, as well as those of other businesses.

Shortly before the Christmas recess, I attended a Transport Scotland briefing in Dumfries about the initial findings of the south Scotland strategic roads review. I was encouraged to hear officials acknowledge the need for upgrades, and to hear that they have listened to the voices of local people. I look forward to seeing the results and recommendations being published as soon as possible. I know that the Scottish Government has invested in the A75, A76 and A77—for example, with the creation of the Dunragit bypass and now the Maybole bypass, which was lobbied for for many years and to which my motion late last year related.

We have witnessed lorries passing each other on blind corners on narrow cliff-edge roads near Ballantrae. We have dashcam footage of lorries passing three abreast going uphill on the Gatehouse of Fleet bypass. There have been too many deaths on the roads. I hear and know the frustration of the roads' users: I declare an interest as one of those users.

I reiterate the comments and thoughts of my constituents and businesses on the need for major upgrade improvements to the A75, A76 and A77. I also recognise the work that the Scottish Government has carried out in progressing the south-west Scotland transport study, and I encourage the cabinet secretary to publish the full findings and recommendations of the study as soon as possible.

Finally, I take the opportunity to stress to the cabinet secretary how important it is for the SNP Government to ensure that people in the south-west of Scotland are listened to, are connected to wider Scotland, the central belt and the rest of the UK and, most important, that they feel as though they are not forgotten.

17:17

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I thank my colleague, Brian Whittle, for securing this hugely important debate and for raising a matter that is of great concern to my constituents in Galloway and West Dumfries in the far-too-often forgotten and ignored south-west of Scotland.

Having been born and brought up on the edge of the A75, I am acutely aware of the need for upgrades to our transport infrastructure and that need has never been more urgent. Over the past 20 years, investment in Dumfries and Galloway has been significantly reduced in comparison with other major trunk roads. Compare that investment to the time of Ian Lang and Sir Hector Monro, when they delivered new bypasses and other major upgrades at Glenluce, Newton Stewart, Palnure, Carsluith, Creetown, Gatehouse of Fleet, Barluka, Ringford, Bridge of Dee, Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Collin and Annan—what a record compared with the example that we have had today of, I think, two bypasses from this SNP Government and its predecessors. The local SNP members merely skirted around the issue during Emma Harper's recent members' debate on the subject. Of course, I welcome investment in other poor roads in Scotland, but not at the expense of the south-west. We just want equality and equity of investment. The current trend of ignoring the routes in the south-west of Scotland, including the A77 and A75, cannot continue.

In 2016, I attended the much-heralded transport conference in Dumfries where the Deputy First Minister and the transport minister promised action on transport. Two and a half years later, the people of the south-west of Scotland are saying a big thank you for nothing.

The Deputy First Minister, Mr Swinney, has a history of promising and not delivering. On a pre-election visit to Stranraer in April 2016, he announced five key pledges for the south of Scotland, including further improvements to the A75 and A77, calling the package

“an ambitious action plan for the South”.

It had a timescale. Aileen McLeod welcomed the announcement, saying she was confident that the improvements would

“make a massive difference to this region over the next five years.”

She went on to say that

“only by casting ... votes for the SNP ... can we ensure these are delivered in full.”

Well, the SNP is in government, but until now the only thing that it has delivered is broken pledges.

I am committed to supporting the vital port of Cairnryan. The cabinet secretary will have been left in no doubt about its importance, following the meeting that we were both at in Stranraer last August, which was attended by Stena and P&O.

The Freight Transport Association's policy manager for Scotland, Chris MacRae, said:

“For such a key route, the lack of consistent road surface is a headache for both freight operators and local residents, and deserves urgent attention. Bypasses need to be

constructed as a priority for the villages that the road currently travels through, and we would urge Transport Scotland to investigate the possibility of duplicating the current A9 pilot scheme, which uses average speed cameras and increased speed limits of 50mph, to keep this key economic corridor to and from Northern Ireland open and functioning efficiently.”

Cairnryan handles around 45 per cent of Northern Ireland’s trade with the UK. There are around 9,000 sailings a year on the Loch Ryan to Belfast route, accounting for 410,000 units of freight. The route has grown by 1.3 per cent over the past year, but that is outstripped by far greater growth in movements between the ports of Holyhead and Dublin. According to the FTA,

“That will only continue if the inadequate quality of the A75 and A77 is not addressed soon.”

The feeling of being forgotten was extremely apparent last year when trains did not run for more than two months on the Ayr to Stranraer line. While the safety issues at Ayr Station hotel could not be ignored, full rail route closures in future will not be tolerated by people from Stranraer. I seek the cabinet secretary’s assurance that contingency plans are in place to ensure that such closures do not happen. The line is a lifeline for rural commuters heading for work, further education and social activities, yet at times my constituents could have been forgiven for believing that they might never see a train running again on the line.

Like Brian Whittle, I pay tribute to the campaign groups that are fighting tirelessly for transport infrastructure upgrades in the south-west. The A77 action group and the dual the A75 campaigners in particular have highlighted why those roads deserve to be brought into the modern age. It is time that those groups and the south-west were paid more than just lip service. We do not need report after report and review after review. We do not need a Government that just listens. We do not need a Government that just makes pledges. We need a Government that listens and then delivers on its pledges, and nowhere is that need greater than in the south-west of Scotland.

17:22

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** There has been substantial investment in road and rail infrastructure in the south-west of Scotland since 2007. That has been welcomed by those of us who were in Parliament then who campaigned for that investment, and welcomed, too, by the many hundreds of thousands of commuters who benefited at the time and still do. The problems had been evident for many years. Why those works were not carried out prior to the Scottish National Party taking power remains a mystery that perhaps only our colleagues in the Tory and Labour parties can explain.

On the roads network, around 10 schemes on the A77 and A75 were introduced by this Government and an investment of around £85 million was committed.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Willie Coffey:** No thanks.

The infamous problems and dangers at the Symington to Bogend toll, just south of my constituency, were finally attended to by this Government, making that road much safer for commuters and the significant farming community that has to access the road at all times of the day. I recall some horrific incidents on the road over many years, yet nothing was done about it until the SNP Government came into office. We should all acknowledge that. That investment alone was more than £10 million and was money well spent.

Along with my colleagues at the time, I campaigned for the introduction of the half-hourly rail service from Kilmarnock to Glasgow, which has been a huge success. Not only has the frequency of services doubled but the investment in the stations, platforms and car parking that has gone along with it has transformed the rail service to Glasgow for people in Ayrshire. As I recall, that investment cost around £38 million. It had been talked about for eight years in Parliament before 2007 but, like the Symington improvements, nothing was done about it—until this Government put up the money and got it done.

That is just the Kilmarnock to Glasgow line. From 2014, more than £146 million has been spent on rail infrastructure, track renewal and refurbishment and signalling improvements. From 2007, parliamentary answers show that about £190 million has been spent on maintaining the A77, A75 and A76; that is a substantial investment that exceeds by some margin anything that was done prior to that. When Labour was in power, it delivered—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me, Mr Coffey. Could members please extend the courtesy to Mr Coffey that is extended to them when making contributions?

**Willie Coffey:** I look forward to hearing contributions that might be made to the debate, Presiding Officer.

When Labour was in power in Scotland, it delivered one major project on the A75. In the first five years of the SNP Government, more than £36 million was spent on that road, compared with Labour’s £6 million. In the same period, on the A77 in south Ayrshire, this Government has spent more than £35 million, compared with the previous Administration’s paltry spend of about £1.9 million. Looking back into the mists of *Hansard*, there are

mentions from way back in 1989 and onwards of projects in Ayrshire and the south-west that never got started. Dunragit, Bennane, Barlae and Maybole were all mentioned as early as 1989 but all had to wait for the SNP to arrive and deliver.

On the horizon was the Maybole bypass, another scheme that had been talked about for decades but on which nothing was ever done. My former colleague Adam Ingram, who was the MSP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, was a champion of that project, which will be delivered by this Government at a cost of about £30 million.

Looking ahead to south-west Scotland's future needs, Transport Scotland is undertaking that work as part of its strategic transport projects review. A key part of that is how we better connect Ayrshire—not just to Glasgow and then to stop there, but to Edinburgh and the north, particularly by rail, to the south of Scotland and the Borders and, perhaps, to the ports of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire in the Republic of Ireland via our excellent ferry ports. That direct connection would provide a huge boost to the Ayrshire economy.

Far from the tale of lack of investment that is spun by the Tories and their Labour supporters, the facts are quite different and show that, when it comes to delivering transport infrastructure projects in the south-west, the SNP Government has delivered. This Government will continue to deliver for the people of the south-west of Scotland.

17:28

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Brian Whittle for lodging his motion, and declare an interest as the chair of a local campaign group to reopen Eastriggs railway station on the Nith valley line in south-west Scotland.

In November, when we debated in this chamber the roads infrastructure in the south-west, I stressed that the fundamental issue is not simply about roads; it is about the economy. Much of the south-west of Scotland is plagued by low pay, rising unemployment and an outward migration of young people because of a lack of local high-skilled and high-paid employment opportunities in the area. There is no doubt that the lack of investment in our infrastructure—physical and digital—has contributed to those economic weaknesses and acted as a barrier to growth for existing firms and to our ability to attract new businesses to south-west Scotland.

Both the A75 and the A77 are of strategic importance not just to south-west Scotland but to all of Scotland, the north of England and Northern Ireland. They provide clear connectivity to the ferry port at Cairnryan, yet both roads are simply not fit for purpose. I have no doubt that, had the ferry

companies known that there would be so little investment in the A75 and A77 from the current Government in recent years, they may well not have made their investments in the Cairnryan ferry terminals. At a time when the Government is pledging £3 billion to dual the A9 from Perth to Inverness, it is a scandal that just 1 per cent of that sum is planned for investment in trunk road upgrade projects in the whole of south-west Scotland.

The south-west is the forgotten part of Scotland when it comes to road improvements, and the issues are not confined to the A75 and A77. The A76, which links Dumfries and Galloway to East Ayrshire, cuts through many communities whose local economies have never recovered from the impact of the closure of the mines. Part of that so-called trunk road, at Enterkinfoot, has been reduced to a single lane with traffic lights for more than four years now; that is a symptom of the lack of urgency about road improvements in the area.

I pay tribute to the members of the A75, the A76 and the A77 action groups, some of whom are in the public gallery, for their work in highlighting the plight of the communities along those roads. They are being let down by the lack of urgency and investment. Fortunately, they do not share Willie Coffey's view that everything is fine.

As the motion highlights, the inadequacies in our transport infrastructure in the south-west of Scotland go beyond roads. Much has been said in recent weeks about the roll-out of the new ScotRail timetable. However, that new timetable has completely bypassed the south-west, with no increased services, although given the shambolic way in which it has been implemented in other areas, with cancellations, delays and overcrowding, maybe that is a blessing. Whether it is TransPennine Express or Virgin Rail from Lockerbie or ScotRail from Dumfries, Stranraer and Ayr, it remains the case that services in the area are just not frequent enough and are holding back the area's economy. The potential to get more people off our roads and on to our trains in the area is enormous, but that potential is not being realised.

This issue has not been mentioned so far, but it is also no exaggeration to say that in many parts of the south-west the bus network is close to collapse, with recent cuts in routes across Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway. I can tell the cabinet secretary that there are many more cuts on the way unless firm action is taken to invest in supporting our bus network in the area.

I am sure that, in summing up, the cabinet secretary will point to the south-west transport study that is being carried out, which will feed into the strategic transport projects review. However, the completion of that review is years, not months,

away. It is not clear how the south-west study will influence the outcome of the Scotland-wide review or even how the many projects that I am sure will be listed in the south-west study will be prioritised for investment, so that it does not become a wish list that is never delivered.

What is clear is that the clock is ticking. A fairer share of transport investment needs to come to the south-west of Scotland to support the local economy—an economy that simply cannot wait for the outcome of a review that is still years away.

17:32

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** I congratulate Brian Whittle on securing time for this important debate. It has given me the opportunity, yet again, to hear more about the problems, opportunities, issues and matters of concern that relate to transport infrastructure in the south-west of Scotland.

A number of points that have been raised in the debate are very similar to points that were raised in the debate on 6 November, which was secured by Emma Harper. The debate has also echoed many of the points that I heard when I visited Stranraer in August last year. I know that a number of members who are present attended that meeting along with local campaigners.

I am conscious that such debates can become quite fractious around where spending should be prioritised, but I reassure all members that the Scottish Government recognises the importance of transport links in the south-west of Scotland not just to those who live there but to the local, regional and national economies. As Willie Coffey rightly pointed out, although some people might not like it, the reality is that the Government has made significant investment over its term of office. Having said that, I recognise that, for some people, that is just not enough. Many of the projects that we have completed in other parts of the country bring wider economic benefits to the whole of Scotland.

Several members have referred to the Maybole bypass. I confirm that the tender competition for the A77 Maybole bypass has now been concluded and there is now a mandatory standstill period. The winning contractor will be announced at the end of the standstill period. Construction work is expected to commence early this year, once the successful contractor starts the programme of work that they have set out. There is absolutely no doubt that the project will help to separate local traffic from those who are travelling further afield—particularly the heavy goods vehicles that might be going to the port of Cairnryan.

I had the pleasure of meeting the Maybole bypass committee a number of months ago. The meeting was hosted by Jeane Freeman, and we were there to hear about people's experiences of the problems with traffic passing through Maybole. The committee members were pleased to hear about the progress that was being made, and I put on record again my thanks for their commitment to the issue, which has lasted many decades. They have been determined to see improvements made to Maybole, and the bypass will be delivered during the coming year.

A significant difference will be made to a town such as Maybole. It is estimated that the bypass will reduce traffic on the high street by approximately 50 per cent and the number of heavy goods vehicles that pass through Maybole will be cut by 90 per cent. There is no doubt that that will be a significant benefit for those who live and work in the area of Maybole and those who go further afield.

We also recognise the important role of our strategic road network and our rail network. The A75 and A77 provide important links to the port of Cairnryan, which is used for daily journeys for freight and passengers going to and coming from Northern Ireland. Many businesses in the south-west of Scotland and further afield rely on those transport links to get goods and materials and to access key markets.

In response to the concern that Emma Harper raised, I can say that we fully recognise the important role that the port of Cairnryan plays in the south-west and in Scotland as a whole. We want to see it continue to play an important part in our economy.

We are having to implement a range of different programmes across our transport network, whether in road, rail, freight or air, in challenging financial circumstances. The fiscal environment makes it challenging to set the priorities in which we want to invest to get the right type of return for local areas and for the country as a whole. Of course, we want to support economic development across the country, and the south-west of Scotland is no different. However, a process must be undertaken to identify where the strategic investments should be made.

We have commenced the second strategic transport project review. That will not take years to happen; it has already started and its initial focus has been on the south-west of Scotland. I understand that a number of members who are in the chamber tonight took the opportunities that were provided to participate in elements of that study. Briefing sessions were held in Dumfries and Ayr, and I thank those who took the time out of their days to participate in those events.

The study is now moving forward at pace. Since the debate that we held on 6 November, the stakeholder engagement programme has been completed and work to summarise and report on the outcome from that programme is being done. I am encouraged to hear that 3,200 people responded to the public survey and the successful stakeholder events that were delivered in Stranraer, Maybole and Dumfries. The sessions in Dumfries and Ayr also allowed a number of members who are here tonight to participate in the programme. I put on record my thanks to those in the local communities who participated.

If it would help, I would be happy to give members some information about the initial feedback from the stakeholder programme, which has reinforced the importance of some of the areas that we thought would be priorities. Some particularly important points have been made about access to the port and the impact that freight has on the existing road network and how it can be reduced, particularly on the A75 and A77. There has also been a call for improved integration of bus and rail services and a call to address the lack of resilience in the road network when incidents occur.

Now that that part of the process has been completed, it will move forward to the next stage of developing options to address the key issues that have been highlighted through the engagement process. The possibility of further appraisals of some of those specific options will be considered, and the work will then form part of the overall thinking behind our strategic transport projects review.

I recognise that members have come along this evening to put the case for the south-west.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Michael Matheson:** Let me just finish this point.

However, I have no doubt that members from the north-east, the north-west and the south-east would all argue for strategic investments in their respective regions. As a Government, we look at such matters responsibly, considering the range of priorities across the country before coming to collective decisions on the most appropriate measures to invest in and support in order to achieve the strategic transport projects review's recommended outcomes.

I am happy to give way to Mr Carson.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will allow it just this once, Mr Carson.

**Finlay Carson:** With regard to the review that is currently being undertaken, if a report comes out that says that time-critical investments in a road are needed as a matter of urgency, will the cabinet

secretary commit to producing the finance to undertake those investments prior to the completion of the national review?

**Michael Matheson:** I find it a wee bit rich that the Conservatives are demanding that we bring forward capital spending when the UK Government is doing everything that it can to cut our capital budget year in, year out. When it comes to demanding capital spend, the member is on pretty thin ice given the UK Government's track record and its repeated cuts to our capital budgets.

The member will be aware that there is a maintenance programme for dealing with any urgent matters. The second strategic transport projects review is the key approach that we must take, and it looks at all the demands right across the transport network, whether in road, rail, ferries or air transport—all those matters must be considered.

**Colin Smyth:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No, Mr Smyth.

**Michael Matheson:** I will finish on the difficulties that the poor state of the Ayr Station hotel building has caused, given the risk that it posed to the line in Ayr. It is very clear that consecutive administrations in South Ayrshire Council should have taken action at a much earlier stage, given the deterioration of the building. The council has a responsibility to the local community to take action on it, but, over a considerable period of time, it has not taken the necessary action. The Government stepped in and created a task force to make sure that appropriate measures were taken and to provide the necessary financial support to encapsulate the building and make it safe in order to allow the line to continue to be used.

We will continue to do what we can to get the right investments in our transport network right across Scotland, including in the south-west. I am committed to continuing to listen to the views of those in the south-west of Scotland on what our priorities should be.

*Meeting closed at 17:43.*



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

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