



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Wednesday 29 May 2019**

**Session 5**



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**Wednesday 29 May 2019**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>NEXT STEPS IN SCOTLAND'S FUTURE</b> .....	1
<i>Statement—[Michael Russell].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell) .....	1
<b>PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME</b> .....	14
<b>HEALTH AND SPORT</b> .....	14
Passive Smoking .....	14
Health Services (Impact of Brexit) .....	15
General Practitioner Recruitment (Rural Communities) .....	16
Long-term Conditions (Art Therapy) .....	17
NHS Grampian (Referral to Treatment Target) .....	18
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (Staff Car Parking) .....	19
Out-of-hours Urgent Care (Fife) .....	20
Hospital Meals (Nitrites) .....	22
<b>COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b> .....	22
Child Poverty .....	22
New-build Social Housing (Dumfries and Galloway) .....	23
Scottish Land Commission (Land Development) .....	25
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Meetings) .....	25
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (Visit to the United Kingdom) .....	26
Glasgow City Council (Meetings) .....	27
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Local Government Finances) .....	28
<b>WIND TURBINE CONSTRUCTION (FIFE)</b> .....	29
<i>Motion moved—[Richard Leonard].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Derek Mackay].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Dean Lockhart].</i>	
Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab) .....	29
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay) .....	33
Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	36
Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) .....	39
Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD) .....	42
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....	44
Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP) .....	47
Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con) .....	49
Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP) .....	51
Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....	53
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP) .....	55
Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	57
Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP) .....	59
Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	61
Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP) .....	64
Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	66
John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP) .....	68
Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	70
The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse) .....	74
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab) .....	77
<b>BUSINESS MOTION</b> .....	81
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	84

<b>EXPANDING SCOTLAND'S RAILWAYS</b> .....	85
<i>Motion debated—[Mark Ruskell].</i>	
Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) .....	85
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP) .....	88
Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con) .....	90
Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP) .....	91
Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab) .....	92
Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green) .....	94
Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind) .....	97
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	98
Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con) .....	100
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab) .....	102
Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP) .....	104
The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse) .....	105

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 29 May 2019

*[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:30]*

## Next Steps in Scotland's Future

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The first item of business is a statement by Michael Russell, on the next steps in Scotland's future. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell):** Much has happened since late April, when the First Minister set out the Scottish Government's view of the continuing Brexit chaos and of the measures that this Government must bring forward to protect the people of this country.

Last Thursday, Scotland said, loudly and clearly, that it is a European nation and it intends to remain one. It also rejected all attempts to deflect that argument with spurious assertions about other matters and showed its contempt for equivocation.

Elections can be brutal judgments on parties and politicians. This one certainly was. Elections can also be fresh starts. If all the parties in this chamber are willing to hear the clear voice of Scotland, I believe that we can find a way to put behind us the divisions of Brexit and move forward together. That is what this statement is about.

On 11 April, when the European Union threw the United Kingdom a lifeline so that it could avoid a no-deal Brexit, Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, said to Westminster:

"Please do not waste this time".

He has been ignored. Not only has nothing happened to resolve the Brexit impasse, the stalemate looks like lasting for several more months whilst ever more extreme Tory members of Parliament vie with each other to present the most hard-line positions to their party faithful.

The Tories are heading for a no-deal Brexit, and some positively welcome that disastrous direction of travel. A Boris Johnson premiership is no longer a bad joke; it is a frightening possibility. Substitute Raab, or Leadsom or Gove or Hancock, or McVey, or any of the others, for Johnson and the situation is no better. Most are heading, with pleasure, to the cliff edge, but Scotland must not be forced to go with them against our will.

So let me at the outset make one thing very clear to the Tories at Westminster and the Tories

in this chamber. The Scottish National Party manifesto on which we won the Holyrood election in 2016, and on which this Government is founded, said that the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum

"if there is a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will."

Any deal that takes Scotland out of the EU against the wishes of the majority of people in Scotland has that effect. That is what people voted for when they voted the SNP into Government.

If a new Tory prime minister attempts a no-deal Brexit, although we will do everything possible to stop it, and everything we can to mitigate it, it will be yet further proof that the conditions set out in our manifesto in April 2016 have been met in full, and there will be even greater urgency to give Scotland the choice of a different future.

The Scottish Government and the SNP at Westminster will continue to do all that we can to stop Brexit for the whole UK. In particular, we will continue to support a second referendum on EU membership, a position that received widespread support on Thursday. However, time is running out. The third anniversary of the Brexit referendum will be with us in less than a month. The accelerating shambles has caused and is causing real damage to Scotland's economy and social fabric.

The assumption that a UK Government and a UK Parliament would or could in any way do better for Scotland than our own independent institutions has been finally and completely destroyed.

There must be—and there is—a better way forward, and that is for Scotland to become an independent European nation. As we seek that way forward, we must try to build as much consensus as we can.

One thing that we have learned from Brexit is that there is a need for reconciliation and the bringing together of different views. The current Prime Minister did none of that when in office, and the baleful result is there for all to see. We must try to break the current logjam with the power of fresh ideas.

To do that, we must approach our collective national future in a spirit of openness and acceptance that we all want the best for our country. We must be mindful, not just of those who won but of those who lost, not just this week, or even in 2016, but in 2014 too. It will not be easy, but at least we start the process with a high degree of consensus on the basic fact: the Westminster system is broken and there is no mending of it in sight.

Last month, the First Minister said that we must reach out and be inclusive, and our approach to the three tasks that we are now taking forward has been, and is, just that.

First, as context, I can confirm that despite the chaos that we witness in Whitehall, my colleagues and I will continue to attend intergovernmental meetings with UK and Welsh—and hopefully soon Northern Irish—counterparts. The destination that the Scottish Government wishes for this country is independence, but as we travel towards that, we have a role in helping to improve the structures under which we presently live and work.

In the past two years, I have often quoted the terms of reference of the joint ministerial committee (EU negotiations). They have consistently and fundamentally been ignored by the UK Government, and that strategy was—I believe—at the express wish of the current Prime Minister, and was imposed upon her ministers at every level and every turn. She had—and continues to have—no interest in seeing the devolved settlement observed.

Now that she is going, that must change; there must be a new, meaningful respect for our position and for the responsibilities that are ours as of right. There needs to be a clear and urgent timetable for the current intergovernmental review, which must secure a legal underpinning to the relationship, and the UK Government must commit to respecting the legislative consent mechanism, rather than ignoring it. Those matters will be discussed at the next JMC(EN), which is due before the end of June. We must see significant progress on them, if those meetings are to have any future purpose.

That is about the journey. Let us now turn to the destination and the three areas of activity that the First Minister set out in her April statement.

First, the Referendums (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Parliament yesterday and has been published this morning. It is hoped that the bill will have completed its parliamentary progress by the end of this calendar year. As the First Minister said in April, it is the intention of the Scottish Government to offer the people of Scotland a choice on independence later in the term of this Parliament. Of course, should circumstances change, we would have the option of seeking Parliament's agreement to proceed on an accelerated timetable.

The bill provides a legal framework for holding referendums on matters that are now, or in future, within the competence of the Scottish Parliament. The rules it sets out are of the highest standards and will ensure that the results are widely and internationally accepted. It brings Scotland into line with the UK, where there is already standing

legislation for referenda through the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act, which Westminster passed in 2000.

As the First Minister indicated in her statement, at a future date, we intend to negotiate with the UK Government for a section 30 order to put beyond doubt our competence to hold a referendum on independence. When the framework is used in those, or any other circumstances, a separate vote at a future date will allow members to consider the specific topic and approve the question.

The proposed franchise will be based on that used for local government and Scottish Parliament elections, which includes EU citizens and 16 and 17-year-olds. It will be updated to incorporate future extensions to the franchise. I have previously set out my intention to extend the franchise for Scottish Parliament and local government elections to all people legally resident in Scotland, whatever their nationality. Those proposals will be brought forward shortly. Given the disastrous and shameful experience of many EU citizens last Thursday, it is now obvious that that is the only way to secure the democratic rights of every citizen.

I look forward to working with other parties at all stages of the parliamentary process.

Secondly, on cross-party talks about the broken Westminster system and the future needs and direction of Scotland, I welcome the commitment from Labour and the Greens to explore what might be possible. I hope that the other parties who have not yet responded will now confirm that they wish to do so. I have suggested using an independent interlocutor who would talk to parties separately to gather views and create an agenda and format for the talks. That would take the pressure out of the process and allow better engagement, without any hangover from past discussions. I intend to start a first round next month and to build on that, if the other parties are willing.

Those talks are without preconditions, and I commit myself and the Scottish Government to constructive engagement in them. I know that wider civic Scotland is keen to be involved, and I will work with the parties to consider how that might be possible.

Finally, we have made considerable progress on the creation of a citizens assembly. Two weeks ago, I visited Ireland, where I met some of the key people responsible for its constitutional convention and citizens assembly. I am meeting a range of experts from this country and overseas in order to further inform our own planning.

There is already a lot of interest in and enthusiasm for the assembly. I hope that all parties will welcome and become involved in the initiative, as was the case in Ireland. In order to

help members to engage more, I have arranged for the secretaries of the Irish initiatives to come to Scotland on 19 June to speak to members of the Scottish Parliament and others. That will include a briefing session for party leaders or their nominees. At and after the meetings on 19 June, I would want all parties to offer their thoughts and suggestions.

I hope to be able to announce an independent chair and the formation of an expert steering group in the coming weeks and to confirm the timetable and the process for formulating the precise issues for deliberation when we return in September. We intend to hold the first session of the assembly in the autumn and to have all five or six sessions completed by next spring.

In conclusion, as we take forward a range of activities based upon consensus and compromise, we will be endeavouring to get away from the negativity and nastiness of the current Brexit process. Scotland deserves—and this week has clearly demanded—better. We must create a country in which we all feel that we have gained something worth having and where we all feel part of a shared national endeavour, regardless of the particular side of the argument that we come from. That is the spirit that imbued the First Minister's statement in April and which the Scottish Government is determined to carry forward. I hope that we can do so together. That is the fresh start the people of Scotland have offered to us. We should all grasp it with both hands.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow about 20 minutes for questions.

**Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** I thank the minister for early sight of his statement.

In a week in which new figures show that more patients than ever are waiting more than 12 weeks for treatment in Scotland's national health service, we might have expected a ministerial statement on the Scottish National Party's mishandling of the health service, but, no—here we are again, talking about Nicola Sturgeon's pet obsession with independence, and this is only a few days after she said that a vote for the SNP in last week's European election was not a vote for independence. She must think that our heads button up the back.

First, although there is a case for standing legislation on the conduct of, and the campaign rules for, referendums, the bill goes much further than that. Under the bill, the SNP ministers will have the power to set any referendum question at any time on any matter of their choosing. Ministers, not Parliament, will set the question, pick the date and determine the campaign period.

Further, if they change their minds, ministers, not Parliament, can then change any of those rules. The bill is not about the democracy of letting the people decide in a lawful referendum; it is about the diktat of ministers. Even the powers of the Electoral Commission to scrutinise proposed referendum questions will be diminished in comparison with the position in United Kingdom law. Why should ministers, not Parliament, determine these matters?

Secondly, can the minister tell us whether referendums under the bill will have to be binary—yes/no; leave/remain—or whether multi-question and multi-choice referendums could be established?

I agree with the minister that Scottish independence could be established only by a referendum. Clearly, we could not have independence without a lawful referendum. However, what are the other matters that the SNP ministers are proposing to put to a referendum? They claim that the bill is a framework bill for referendums in general. I suspect that it is no such thing and that, in reality, it is a Trojan horse for a wildcat indyref 2. However, the minister could prove me wrong. What are the other issues—besides independence—that he intends to put to the people in a referendum?

**Michael Russell:** There were a number of questions there, and I will do my best to answer them.

On the issue of priorities, my friend the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport is working hard on the health service, and some of the results of that are clear. Scotland's core accident and emergency services are the best performing in the United Kingdom—that has been the case for almost four years. We have record highs in health funding and patient satisfaction; NHS staffing is up by over 13,600, or 10.7 per cent, under the SNP; and patient safety is massively increased. Further, 5.1 million people are now registered with an NHS dentist. Of course, work continues, but that record is a good one.

Let me move on to the question of the First Minister apparently attempting to achieve the referendum by stealth. Not only did the First Minister announce her intention to take forward this bill on 24 April, but she was so stealthy about it that she sent a card to every household in Scotland—every single one—that said:

"We'll offer people a choice of a future for Scotland as an independent, European nation."

How stealthy was that? *[Interruption.]* A stealth referendum. *[Interruption.]* Absolutely. How stealthy was that?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Can we calm down a bit, please, if we wish to listen to the cabinet secretary?

**Michael Russell:** How stealthy it was to send a message to every household in Scotland—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me, Mr Russell. It is very difficult for anyone to hear anything except front-bench members shouting at each other.

**Michael Russell:** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

Let me address the issues that Mr Tomkins raised about the bill. Mr Tomkins is a constitutional lawyer, and he therefore understands that, at Westminster as here, the Government proposes and Parliament scrutinises and decides. That is exactly what happens in line with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, which was passed by Westminster—it is exactly the same process. If Adam Tomkins wishes to have a system in which Parliament proposes the referendum, he can support a move to such a system, but it is not the system at Westminster and it is not the system here. Nevertheless, Parliament will, of course, be able to scrutinise and decide on every single detail.

If Mr Tomkins wishes to see developments to the bill, it is open to amendment. The bill will go through a system in which amendments would be welcome, because I have always welcomed full debate on such matters. The problem with Mr Tomkins's position is that he does not want this Parliament to decide: he wants Westminster to decide. No, he actually wants the Tory Prime Minister—whoever that is—to decide, and he wants them simply to say no. That is not democracy, and that is not what we will be doing.

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement.

Labour delivered devolution, and, in the 20th anniversary year of the Scottish Parliament, Labour continues to support and defend devolution. Up until Brexit, the devolution settlement, which was founded on the Scotland Act 1998, worked well. Although it is evident that there is a breakdown of trust between the present UK Government and the devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales, that is not because it is a UK Government but because it is a Tory Government.

The cabinet secretary noted in his statement that Theresa May has had

“no interest in seeing the devolved settlement observed.”

However, it is clear that the Scottish National Party Government here does not observe the devolution settlement either. Today, it is once again seeking to advance the cause of the break-up of the United Kingdom. Does the cabinet secretary not understand that his party's obsession with the creation of a separate Scottish state is a distraction from the real issues that this Parliament was brought into existence to tackle?

**Michael Russell:** Let me start by paying brief tribute to my former shadow, Neil Findlay, who, regrettably, is not in the chamber today. Although it is no secret that he and I were not soul mates, I regret that any individual has decided that they do not want to continue in the role, and I absolutely wish him well in the future. I hope that, whatever he decides to do, he enjoys it more than being a member of the Labour group. I also make the point that only 14 members of the Labour group are present. I wonder where the others are—are they still in office or still attending?

Let me come to the points about the referendum. Respectfully, I do not agree with Mr Leonard, because I do not believe that the bill is in any sense a distraction. Mr Leonard has to address this question: how will he achieve the things that he wants to see if there is a constant block on them from a Tory Government at Westminster? I have lived through even more Tory Governments than Mr Leonard has, and the reality is that, whatever happens, that is the block on progress on Scotland.

There is an opportunity to ask how we can move forward to a more socially just, fairer and more equal Scotland. Mr Leonard and I have a genuine disagreement about how that will be done, but the evidence of the past 50, 60 or 70 years is on my side. The evidence shows that that cannot be done through the United Kingdom, but it could and should be done through the Scottish Parliament. I therefore ask Labour members to join us in that task. There would then be a substantial majority in the chamber for the type of equal and fairer Scotland that we all want to see. I regret that the barrier to that happening is on the Conservative benches and, alas, still on the Labour benches. It does not have to be like that.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I, too, am grateful for the advance copy of the statement, and I welcome the publication of the bill.

I certainly commit to working with any other political party that has serious proposals to make the process more democratic and to ensure that powers are properly with the Parliament, not ministers. We have done that before, and we are willing to do it again if there are serious proposals—even if some political parties have not recognised that the collapse in their vote last week means and necessitates a change in their position



in relation to the political crisis that we are living through.

One aspect of that crisis is the hacking of democracy. We have seen a growing body of evidence that the 2016 referendum was affected not only by empty promises on the side of a bus and racist rhetoric from Farage and Johnson but by dodgy money and dodgy data. What opportunity is there to ensure that the bill prevents undermining of the democratic process such as we saw in the 2016 EU referendum?

**Michael Russell:** Patrick Harvie makes a very important point. We saw a great deal of shady activity—and probably worse than shady activity—in that referendum campaign, and we have seen today a charge pending for misrepresentation against one of the Tory leadership contenders. It is, of course, up to the courts to decide how that matter will proceed.

In those circumstances, I am very open to discussion with any party in the chamber that wants to strengthen the legislation—not just the Referendums (Scotland) Bill. Two other bills on electoral matters are due to be introduced. One, which I have mentioned, is on the franchise; the other is on the conduct of elections. Once members have seen those proposals, it will certainly be possible to consider how they could be strengthened.

If the whole chamber showed that it supports democracy and the rules that underpin democracy, that would send a powerful message. I will work with anybody to send that message and ensure that elections are run properly.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The cabinet secretary has learned nothing from the chaos of Brexit. Surely, by now, even he must understand that economic damage and national division are caused by breaking up long-term economic partnerships. Independence will mount chaos on top of the Brexit chaos.

The cabinet secretary also has an awful lot to learn about building consensus. In one breath, he appeals to all of us to work together reasonably and maturely before he launches another attack on every single one of us.

The cabinet secretary says that there are no preconditions for his cross-party talks—apart from another independence referendum, that is. Does he not understand that that is a major barrier to our participation in those talks?

**Michael Russell:** I regret that, and I hope that Mr Rennie will think that matter through. If there are no preconditions, there are no preconditions. The First Minister has made it absolutely clear that the cross-party talks are to look at alternatives that parties wish to bring forward. I have tried to create

a non-confrontational structure for those talks that will allow people to take part without confrontation. I hope that all the parties will take part in those talks—certainly through the first stage of talking to the interlocutor to see what the agendas are. If there are alternatives, they should be put on the table. I cannot say fairer than that. That is important.

The other question that needs to be addressed, which I put in one form to Richard Leonard and put very clearly to Willie Rennie, is: what is the alternative to a no-deal Brexit when we get to that moment at Westminster? Do we just do what we are told? Do we just accept the economic chaos and disaster that will take place? Mr Rennie might not have sympathy with the Secretary of State for Scotland—I do not have much sympathy with him—but he described the potential of a no-deal Brexit as an economic catastrophe. The reality is that that is where we are heading; that is where we are being driven by Tory leadership candidates. What will Mr Rennie do in those circumstances? That is a vital question, and he needs to answer it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Members will be aware of the inordinate amount of time that has been taken by questions from party leaders. If I ask for brevity, I ask members to please bear that in mind so that as many members as possible can ask their question.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it should be for the Scottish Parliament, not Westminster, to decide whether people in Scotland should be given a choice over their future, particularly given the chaos that is unfolding in the Westminster Parliament?

**Michael Russell:** Yes. If any other country was substituted for Scotland in that question, people would realise how obvious the answer is. Of course the people of Scotland should decide their own future.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** In his statement, the cabinet secretary talked about “consensus”, “reconciliation” and leaving behind “negativity and nastiness”. However, he has never apologised for suggesting that our colleagues in Westminster are traitors to Scotland. In that spirit of reconciliation and making a fresh start, will he now do so?

**Michael Russell:** It is very difficult for me to apologise for something that I did not do. Let me try to reach out: if those colleagues and those who support them on the Conservative benches were offended by what I said, I am sorry that that took place.

Can we now accept that we should be looking forward and trying to find a way of working

together? Will Murdo Fraser commit his party to sitting down and having the conversations that we need to have?

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** In 2016 and in last week's EU elections, Scotland decided overwhelmingly that it wanted to remain at the heart of Europe. Will the cabinet secretary tell Parliament the extent to which the UK Government has listened to the views of the people of Scotland during the Brexit process?

**Michael Russell:** It has not listened at all. As I said in my statement, there has been a deliberate attempt by the Prime Minister to ensure that those voices are not listened to. The Prime Minister is not a person who finds dialogue easy.

We are all hoping for positive change, but I know that often that has proved not to be what happens. It is always dangerous to say that things cannot get any worse, because clearly they sometimes can. However, in these circumstances, there is the opportunity for change at Westminster. The next meeting of the JMC(EN) will be held sometime in June, and I will be delighted if I find that there is a changed attitude at it.

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** In the 13th year of this Government, more than a million people in Scotland are living in poverty, with children going hungry, rough sleeping on the increase and pensioners being unable to afford to heat their homes. Where do the SNP's priorities lie? The statement talks about "consensus", but when will the Scottish Government respond to the clear consensus among anti-poverty organisations, who have called for urgent action? When will the Government make tackling poverty its priority, rather than focusing yet again on the constitution?

**Michael Russell:** I refer the member to last week's United Nations report. *[Interruption.]* It is important that we deal with facts. The UN report is absolutely clear about where the responsibility lies; alas, it lies with successive Westminster Governments.

I say to the member, as I said to the leader of her party, that there is a way to move on and do the incredibly hard work that is required to recreate Scotland in the way in which we would like it to be recreated, with poverty eliminated. However, that will require a national consensus about putting the country's resources to the good of the country. We cannot do that unless we have control of those resources. The issue is simple.

I commend the member on her passion on the subject. It is a passion that she is right to feel strongly about. Poverty shames Scotland, but the only way that we will move on fully and finally from that situation is by ensuring that all the country's resources and efforts are devoted to tackling

poverty. That cannot be done within the current settlement.

**Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** In relation to the Scottish Government's offer of cross-party talks, does the cabinet secretary believe that there could be some consensus around, for example, migration in the light of Scotland's particular circumstances, as recognised most recently by the director general of the Confederation of British Industry?

**Michael Russell:** The member makes a very strong and good point. In panels that I have been on with Opposition members, all of us—even the Conservatives—have been able to agree that the devolution of migration is something that should move forward. However, the problem lies with the timescale and the decision-making process: there is no timescale for it, and the Tory Government's decision-making process has been entirely negative.

The current Prime Minister is a woman obsessed by migration. She is against any form of migration, and she talks with pride about ending freedom of movement, which is a matter of grave shame and real damage to Scotland. If there were a willingness to change, the Conservatives could bring the issue to the cross-party talks, and we could agree to put that point to Westminster, with the complete agreement of this chamber, and hope that that would have some effect.

I am very happy for that to happen. It is something that every single one of us could back—

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** No—they are shaking their heads. *[Interruption.]*

**Michael Russell:** I am sorry, but there are some members of the Tory party who are not willing to back that. That is a pity, because the effect of ending freedom of movement will be profoundly felt in every constituency and region of Scotland that they represent.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Does the cabinet secretary believe that referendums under this bill should be advisory or binding, and can he point me to the provision in it that states that the Scottish Government will respect the result of them?

**Michael Russell:** I think that we have to be firm either on one side or the other. For example, the UK Government's EU referendum was meant to be advisory, but apparently it is now the most binding thing that could possibly have been decided and cannot be changed in any way. If the member wants to engage seriously with this bill,

as I am sure he does, let us have that debate about what the right thing to happen should be.

**Adam Tomkins:** What's your view?

**Michael Russell:** That is a rather curious position that we have just heard from Mr Tomkins. He lambasts us for apparently not having any desire to involve Parliament in this, but when I say, "Let's have a parliamentary debate on this," he shouts, "What's your view?" The reality is that ye cannae win with them. I hope that we can have that debate; we will come down on one side or the other, and perhaps it will be an amendment from one of the Tories that will allow us to do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes questions on the cabinet secretary's statement. I apologise to Stuart McMillan, James Kelly and Fulton MacGregor for being unable to bring them in.

## Portfolio Question Time

14:03

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is portfolio question time. Again, I want to allow as many people as possible to participate, so I would like short questions and answers.

### Health and Sport

#### Passive Smoking

1. **Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to prevent passive smoking. (S5O-03290)

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** In June 2018 we published "Raising Scotland's Tobacco-free Generation: our tobacco control action plan 2018", which sets out 50 measures intended to prevent take-up of smoking, to protect people from second-hand smoke and to support people to quit. The measures will help to deliver our ambition to have a tobacco-free generation by 2034, and all of them will reduce passive smoking.

As for second-hand smoke, the action plan also contains measures to ban smoking around hospital buildings, and to remove smoking from areas where children learn and play, as well as communal stairwells.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Although the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 makes it an offence to smoke in enclosed public places, it does not specifically cover children's play parks, schools' outdoor facilities and other playgrounds. As we know, the effects of passive smoking are exacerbated in children because their lungs are not fully developed. Does the Scottish Government have any plans to follow the Welsh Government, which is enacting the changes that are set out in the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 to ban smoking in outdoor facilities and play parks?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** That is an important question. The action plan includes a commitment to monitor the developments in Wales and to monitor implementation of the guidelines that we issued to local authorities in 2017. We will do that before we consider whether legislation is required, which is the correct approach. As I said, the guidance was published in 2017, and we plan to engage with local authorities on implementation later this year.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 has

been a resounding success with, in the year following its introduction alone, an 86 per cent reduction in passive smoking in bars, a 17 per cent fall in heart attacks and an 18 per cent decline in child asthma hospital admissions? Does he therefore agree that it is time for the Tories finally to apologise for opposing the bill tooth and nail at stages 1 and 3, given the thousands of lives that it has saved since its enactment?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** There is no question but that the ban had a very quick impact. The assessment in 2008 found an immediate impact, and I think that further assessment will show a wider range of benefits from the ban. It is important to acknowledge Mr Gibson's commitment on the issue, which goes right back to the first session of Parliament.

However, on Kenneth Gibson's final question, I think that we have moved on some distance from then. From the Conservatives who are in the chamber now, I hear support for that public health measure. Therefore, I am minded to try to work with them on the issue, and on other public health measures relating to obesity and to alcohol and drugs, because on those issues we need to rise above politics and to work together to do what is best for the people of Scotland.

### Health Services (Impact of Brexit)

**2. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the reported concerns of national health service boards regarding the possible impact of Brexit on their services. (S5O-03291)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** The Scottish Government shares NHS boards' concerns, including on supply continuity, research and workforce. We continue to plan and prepare so that we can minimise the impacts, but I need to be clear that we cannot remove or mitigate all the risks that are involved with Brexit.

Alongside activation of our Scottish Government resilience room, we have established a health response hub, to assist boards. We have written to staff from other European Union countries and are supporting people who are applying for settled status. Many medicine supply issues are outside our control, but we have established a medicines shortage response group and we are working with NHS National Services Scotland on medical devices stockpiling.

**Gil Paterson:** In the light of the EU election result, which demonstrated that Scotland overwhelmingly rejects Brexit, and against the backdrop of a new Tory Prime Minister potentially crashing us out of the EU without a deal, what

preparations is the Scottish Government making to protect our NHS in the event of a no-deal Brexit?

**Jeane Freeman:** As Gil Paterson knows, I have just outlined those preparations. I repeat: we cannot mitigate all the impacts of a no-deal Brexit, which would result in a significant shock to our economic system and would, in due course, produce additional demands on our health services.

The end of freedom of movement presents severe workforce challenges in healthcare and, in particular, in social care. It is astonishing that, in this century in this country, we are busy working out how to feed and look after our citizens because we are being taken out of the European Union against our will.

### General Practitioner Recruitment (Rural Communities)

**3. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage the recruitment of GPs in rural communities. (S5O-03292)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** The new GP contract, which was developed in partnership with the British Medical Association, is helping to cut doctors' workloads and to make general practice a more attractive career in rural and urban practices, and it enhances GPs' role as expert medical generalists.

In addition, we have a package of measures to support rural general practices. We have significantly enhanced recruitment incentives and recruitment and relocation support, we support the Scottish rural medical collaborative, and we are investing in support for information technology improvements in rural health boards and in support for rural dispensing practices. Even so, there are issues around the flexibility of the contracts, which I take very seriously, so we will continue to consider how we can address those concerns.

**Michelle Ballantyne:** It is clear that the measures are not working quickly enough. This week, Tranent medical practice in East Lothian took the decision to stop taking advance bookings for GP appointments. The practice is quite clear about what has prompted that decision: it is the on-going shortage of GPs in the practice, which has come about as a result of recruitment issues. The decision to halt advance bookings has clear implications for the accessibility of GP services for local residents, particularly for those who work during the week.

What assurances can the cabinet secretary offer me and residents of East Lothian that other medical practices across South Scotland will not

have to take similar measures in order to make up for the Scottish Government's failure to recruit and retain GPs?

**Jeane Freeman:** I do not accept the premise with which Michelle Ballantyne ended her question. In addition to Brexit, among the greatest challenges in respect of retaining our workforce are decisions that the United Kingdom Government has made on pension contribution increases, which are proving to be exceptionally challenging across our health and care workforce. If the member does not believe me, she should ask the royal colleges, the British Medical Association—representatives of which I am meeting later—and the many others who have raised the matter with me. Of course, if we had had the powers, we would not have made such a foolish decision in the first place and, if we had, we would reverse it now.

The GP contract is relatively new, and we need to recruit into the multidisciplinary teams in order to provide the right care for patients at the right point, but we are seeing challenges in some—not all—areas. NHS 24 is involved in order to improve matters significantly, in particular in Dumfries and Galloway. When a GP practice is especially challenged, it is, of course, our responsibility to act immediately, along with our healthcare and social care partners, to intervene and support patients.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Unusually, I have a question. What part of “short and succinct” do members in the chamber not understand? Could members please have some regard for their fellow members and take on board my request to be short and succinct?

#### Long-term Conditions (Art Therapy)

4. **Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure that more young people and their families managing long-term health conditions can access art therapy. (S5O-03293)

**The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey):** Art therapists are a small professional group, but they have a huge contribution to make in helping people of all ages to improve their general development and social interaction and communication skills and in supporting mental and physical rehabilitation. As is the case with other allied health professions, access to art therapy is based on clinical need.

**Iain Gray:** The Teapot Trust, which was founded by my constituent Dr Young, has gone from strength to strength and now provides art therapy in all Scotland's children's hospitals, as well as in Great Ormond Street hospital and Alder Hey children's hospital. It is also working with some child and adolescent mental health services

and would like to expand that provision. I wrote to the Minister for Mental Health recently to ask whether she would meet Dr Young and me, but she replied that she was too busy. Today, the trust announced its new chief executive, Sarah Randell. Can the minister be prevailed upon to find half an hour in her diary to meet me and Ms Randell?

**Clare Haughey:** I am aware of the work that the Teapot Trust does and I congratulate Laura Young on the work that she has done. From my clinical practice, I am well aware of the value that art therapists bring to both children and young people's services and adult services. If Mr Gray writes to me again, I will certainly reconsider his request. He has been a minister, so he will be aware that sometimes diary constraints mean that I cannot meet everyone whom I would like to meet.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** Will the minister provide an update on the number of art therapists working in CAMHS and confirm what is the wider vision around access to therapy not only in the NHS but in social care services?

**Clare Haughey:** As I said in my previous answer, it is up to NHS boards to determine the staffing that is required in their areas, based on local need, but I recognise that art therapists are a valuable addition. I do not have the numbers that Mr Briggs has asked for, but I will write to him with the figures.

#### NHS Grampian (Referral to Treatment Target)

5. **Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve NHS Grampian's performance in meeting the 18 weeks referral to treatment target of at least 90 per cent. (S5O-03294)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** As part of the waiting times improvement plan, additional funding to NHS Grampian has so far supported a new cataract procedure room, which has provided additional patient treatment areas, and additional endoscopies. In addition, NHS Grampian is working with neighbouring health boards to maximise the use of capacity, with a focus on general surgery and urology, to reduce the number of patients waiting the longest.

**Tom Mason:** Figures published yesterday show that, rather than meeting the 90 per cent target, Grampian's performance for patient journeys within 18 weeks has declined again to 61.7 per cent. That is the single worst monthly performance of any health board in any month since at least January 2011. Does the cabinet secretary not agree that that is shocking and will she take the opportunity to apologise to the patients in Grampian? Will she admit that whatever grand

plans and strategies she has are simply not working?

**Jeane Freeman:** On the contrary, I absolutely apologise to patients who are waiting too long for the treatment that they deserve—this is not the first time that I have done that in the chamber—but I do not accept that our plan and strategy are not working.

What we need to understand is what I said in the waiting times improvement plan—it is there in black and white: we will focus on those who are waiting the longest. In consequence of doing that, as of the end of March this year, the number of on-going waits—those waiting the longest for in-patient and day case treatment—has been reduced by 8.5 per cent. That is the first quarter in nearly three and a half years where there has been such a reduction. A consequence of focusing on those waiting the longest is that those who are introduced into the waiting times will wait a bit longer. The plan makes clear in a graph that, inevitably, the trend goes in that direction before it starts to improve. That is where we are. Nonetheless, that is not acceptable for any of our patients who have to wait longer, and that is absolutely the focus of the waiting times plan. We will continue to see improvement. Right now, we are on track to be exactly where we said we would be in October this year.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Allegations of fraudulent use of previous Government waiting time improvement funds are under investigation in NHS Lanarkshire. Is the cabinet secretary aware of any such issue in NHS Grampian or any other health board, and can she provide an update on the Lanarkshire situation?

**Jeane Freeman:** No other board has raised these matters with us. Of course, all boards are very aware and are looking to ensure that, whatever has happened in NHS Lanarkshire, they have the right mitigation procedures to ensure that they are not vulnerable in that way. Nonetheless, the Lanarkshire situation is the subject of on-going investigation and, until it is concluded, I cannot comment further on it.

#### **Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (Staff Car Parking)**

**6. Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with NHS Lothian regarding staff car parking at the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh. (S5O-03295)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** Our discussions continue with NHS Lothian on this matter, which both the board and we take seriously. The board has taken steps to increase and manage availability of spaces,

creating an additional 334 car parking spaces, which will be available from 9 July this year; introducing controls to limit car park use to those accessing health services and staff with permits; undertaking discussions with travel providers on service provision to try to make sure that public transport is more appropriate for that site; and promoting a pan-Lothian lift-share programme. The board will continue to engage with patients and staff and we will continue to be in touch with them to see what more in the way of constructive ideas for initiatives might be taken forward.

**Jeremy Balfour:** I have been contacted by a number of constituents who are employed at the hospital. Many are shift workers who are concerned about the cost of parking at work and about their safety travelling to and from work since the parking permits were revoked. Will the cabinet secretary therefore agree to refund the cost of parking?

**Jeane Freeman:** This matter has been raised with me previously by another member, Ms Grahame. We continue to discuss with the board the allocation of staff permits and the difficulties that might have arisen over changes in those. I am happy to update Mr Balfour as those discussions are concluded.

#### **Out-of-hours Urgent Care (Fife)**

**7. Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on out-of-hours urgent care in Fife. (S5O-03296)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):** I can advise Annabelle Ewing that Fife health and social care partnership is still in the process of engaging with the community and hopes to take proposals to the next integrated joint board meeting at the end of June.

**Annabelle Ewing:** Although I appreciate that it is important that all representations be duly taken into account, I am nonetheless concerned that matters are dragging on. Assuming that the Queen Margaret hospital in Dunfermline will be one of the sites that are selected, when will the new out-of-hours urgent care regime come into effect?

**Jeane Freeman:** I understand the member's frustration, and I also understand that there are still a number of processes to go through before this matter reaches a satisfactory conclusion. However, I have received assurances from the health and social care partnership that, assuming that there are no further unplanned delays, the new out-of-hours regime should be in place before the winter this year.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We will have a very short supplementary from Willie Rennie.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** An innovative solution has been developed for north-east Fife in St Andrews, which means that people will not have to travel to Kirkcaldy unless there are exceptional circumstances. However, there has been no provision overnight in St Andrews for a year now. The decision has been delayed twice. Can the minister give us a guarantee that there will be no further delays?

**Jeane Freeman:** No, I cannot give that guarantee. I am of course aware of the innovative solution there, given that the Scottish Government played a major role in brokering it. I am grateful to Mr Rennie for recognising that—I think. The board, the local authority and, importantly, the IJB need to be given the time to go through the proper processes in order to get it right. I cannot guarantee that there will be no further delays, but both the IJB and the relevant partners are very aware of people's anxiety about this issue and their desire to see the conclusions. The IJB and partners are equally aware of my desire to know that they are moving in the right direction. I hope that, when they meet in June, they will be able to conclude on those proposals.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We will have a quick supplementary from Claire Baker.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will know that part of the delay was caused by the participation request that was granted by NHS Fife. It was the first time that the legislation that provides for such requests has been used by an NHS board. Will she commit to reflecting on the experience of individuals who went through that process? As it was the first time that it has been used, NHS Fife had to seek legal advice about whether it was appropriate.

**Jeane Freeman:** I will be very happy to have further discussions with NHS Fife about the experience and to hear from those who went through the process and consider what more we might do.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We will see whether Ms Gilruth knows what “quick supplementary” means.

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is vital that the IJB continues to engage with communities and residents in Glenrothes to develop their plans further?

**Jeane Freeman:** Ms Gilruth has raised an important point. I agree that, although an IJB may not be able to meet every request of a local community, I expect it to clearly demonstrate how any plans that it brings forward have been shaped by engagement with that community. If nothing else, that is a matter of simple respect towards the communities that any IJB serves.

## Hospital Meals (Nitrites)

8. **Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it has taken to reduce the amount of meat containing nitrites that is being served in hospitals. (S5O-03297)

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** All hospital food must meet national food, fluid and nutrition standards. Under the NHS Scotland procurement framework, all suppliers must adhere to all relevant requirements, including those under the Food Safety Act 1990, as amended, and Scottish, United Kingdom and European Union food safety regulations.

**Liam Kerr:** The fact remains that it has been four years since the publication of a report that linked processed meat nitrites and bowel cancer. Does the minister agree that that type of food should be nowhere near hospital menus? Instead, high-quality food that is produced here in Scotland should make its way into Scottish hospitals.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Liam Kerr might want to speak to some of the high-quality food producers in Scotland that use nitrites, which are in line with food safety rules and guidelines. On this issue, Scotland has led the UK by setting a minimum standard for our hospital food, which all has to meet the food, fluid and nutrition standards, as I have said. They take account of the latest scientific advice on the amount of red and processed meat that can be consumed for a healthy balanced diet, which is already no more than 70g of red and processed meat in a day.

## Communities and Local Government

### Child Poverty

1. **Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to tackle rising levels of child poverty. (S5O-03298)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** Scotland is the only United Kingdom country to have set statutory targets for reducing child poverty. Our tackling child poverty delivery plan outlines the concrete actions that we will take to deliver progress on those targets, and our first report, which is due next month, will set out in more detail the progress that we have made.

We are taking that bold action in the face of the UK Government's cuts and austerity, which have seen the Scottish budget reduce by £2 billion in real terms since 2010-11 and will see £3.7 billion cut from social security spending by 2020-21—risking the progress that we have made.

**Alex Rowley:** All the evidence and projections suggest that child poverty in Scotland will continue to increase. Although I accept the point that Aileen Campbell made about the actions of the Tory Government, which is supported by the Tory members here, the level of poverty is rising and the Scottish Government has tools available to address that. For example, Oxfam Scotland argues that it is time to fast-track Scotland's income supplement. Will the Government look to use its powers and bring a statement to this Parliament, setting out what it intends to do in the short term to stop the unacceptable increase in child poverty in Scotland?

**Aileen Campbell:** As I said in my initial response, I will update Parliament next month with a progress report on the tackling child poverty delivery plan. In that plan, we committed to the introduction of the income supplement. Again, I will update the Parliament on the progress that we have made on that. Alex Rowley should also recognise what Professor Philip Alston said:

"Devolved administrations have tried to mitigate the worst impacts of austerity ... But mitigation comes at a price and is not sustainable."

With the powers that we have and by investing the resources that we have, we are doing what we can to soften the blows of Tory austerity, but it is not always sustainable to do so. We must raise the debate and make sure that we are in a position to pursue our own policies to tackle the social problems that exist in Scotland.

We will continue what we are doing to mitigate and soften the blows of what the UK Government is doing at Westminster. We will continue to use our powers to help children to have the best chance and the opportunity to flourish. We can do that in partnership, but austerity comes fairly and squarely from Westminster, as it recognises.

### **New-build Social Housing (Dumfries and Galloway)**

2. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the level of new social housing building in Dumfries and Galloway. (S5O-03299)

**The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart):** Local authorities have the statutory responsibility to assess housing need and demand in their areas and to set out how requirements for housing will be met in their local housing strategies. Dumfries and Galloway Council produced its LHS in 2018, supported by a housing need and demand assessment that the Scottish Government agreed was robust and credible in 2016. In this parliamentary session, the Scottish Government will provide over £91 million for affordable housing in Dumfries and Galloway,

and around 800 homes for social rent are expected to be delivered.

**Colin Smyth:** One of the challenges that the region faces in developing new housing is infrastructure restrictions. Developments in areas such as Gretna, Gretna Green and Springfield have been limited and challenging because of issues with access to the water supply. Likewise, in the Lockerbie area, there have been challenges over access to waste water treatment works. Will the minister look into those issues to see what can be done across the Government to ensure that Scottish Water invests in the infrastructure that is needed to continue housing growth in those communities?

**Kevin Stewart:** I do not have to look into those matters, because I know exactly what is going on. There has been a huge amount of co-operation between Scottish Water, Dumfries and Galloway Council and some of the housing associations—particularly Cunninghame Housing Association—to resolve the problems that exist in Gretna. I hope that a solution can be found to all of those problems through that continued partnership working.

My expectation is that, in other areas around Dumfries and Galloway and around the country, Scottish Water, which has moved a large number of staff to look at front-line services and deliver homes and businesses across our country, will make sure that any barriers are taken down. That works particularly well when there is co-operation, and I thank Dumfries and Galloway Council.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Given that the previous Labour Government in Scotland managed to build only six houses in four years, will the minister join me in congratulating Dumfries and Galloway Council and local housing associations including Loreburn Housing Association on the high level of accessible housing that they are providing to people across Dumfries and Galloway?

**Kevin Stewart:** Since 2007, this Government has delivered 1,782 social houses in the Dumfries and Galloway area, with many more to come during this parliamentary term. I am very pleased that we currently have folk on site in Kirkconnel, Dumfries and Annan. In Dumfries, there are numerous sites. I would like to see the delivery of many more specialist houses.

I have told local authorities that they should use the affordable housing supply moneys to meet the needs of the people in their area, and long may that continue. I understand, from recent visits to Dumfries and Galloway, that 15 per cent of housing on the site in Annan—which, if I remember rightly, is the former Carrs Billington site—is wheelchair accessible.



### **Scottish Land Commission (Land Development)**

#### **3. Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):**

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish Land Commission's recent call for a "fundamental rethink" on the approach to land development. (S5O-03300)

**The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart):** We welcome the Scottish Land Commission's report and will carefully consider its recommendations. Our reforms could fundamentally reposition planning as an enabler of high-quality development, particularly if Ms Beamish and others continue to work with me to get the Planning (Scotland) Bill back on track at stage 3.

**Claudia Beamish:** I note the minister's remark about the Planning (Scotland) Bill. The report calls for a collaborative approach and for the Government to accept the need for more public sector-led developments, so that the risks and rewards of development can be shared between the public and private sectors. Does the minister agree that that need is very important? What action is he able to take to facilitate more public sector-led development including ensuring that the right skills and resources are available to local authorities

"to administer and drive the right outcomes"?

**Kevin Stewart:** I have been told to be succinct, so I will not touch on everything that Ms Beamish said. We accept in principle all the recommendations in the report, and, as Ms Beamish knows, we are already committed to a significant programme of work, through the Planning (Scotland) Bill, to get that absolutely right. Ms Beamish can be assured that we will work with planning authorities, the development industry, the Scottish Land Commission, the Scottish Futures Trust and others to draw up proposals to address the recommendations in the report. As Ms Beamish well knows, I am all in favour of co-operation.

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

On that note, will the minister agree to cross-party talks as we take forward that important work?

**Kevin Stewart:** As Mr Simpson well knows, because I am meeting him in about 20 minutes, I am happy to talk with members from all parties.

### **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Meetings)**

**4. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met COSLA and what was discussed. (S5O-03301)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** Ministers

and officials meet COSLA representatives regularly to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland. As part of that on-going engagement, I have regular meetings with the president of COSLA to discuss issues of common interest. Our last such meeting was on 13 March, when we discussed a number of issues including Brexit preparations, and we will meet again on Monday of next week.

**Jackie Baillie:** On Monday of next week, will the cabinet secretary discuss the recent increase in local authority charges for social care, which has been breathtaking? In Scottish National Party-controlled West Dunbartonshire Council's area, the cost of community alarms has increased by 100 per cent. Vulnerable older people are cancelling the service because it is simply unaffordable—more than 200 of them have done so in the last month alone. Will the cabinet secretary work with COSLA to initiate a Scotland-wide review of social care charges to ensure that they are affordable, and invite West Dunbartonshire Council to think again?

**Aileen Campbell:** I invite Ms Baillie to write to my office with the details and I will ensure that they are passed on to the relevant cabinet secretary so that we can engage in the round. I know that local authorities have been treated fairly in the budget process and that they will be given an increase in their resource budget when Parliament passes the budget. Perhaps the discussion that Ms Baillie needs to have is with her local authority.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 5 has been withdrawn.

### **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (Visit to the United Kingdom)**

**6. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the report on the fact-finding visit to the United Kingdom by the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. (S5O-03303)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** We welcome Professor Alston's report, which is a devastating analysis of the UK Government's austerity measures, describing the policies pursued since 2010 as retrogressive and in clear violation of the country's human rights obligations. The special rapporteur described the UK Government as being "determinedly in ... denial" with regard to poverty in the UK.

The role of national Governments should be to tackle poverty and inequalities, and not to cause the deep damage that is outlined in the report. The Scottish Government agrees with the special rapporteur's assessment that the UK Government must reverse the many policies that it has pursued that are increasing poverty and inequality and imposing regressive measures.

**Colin Beattie:** I note that the special rapporteur pointed out that Scotland is mitigating the worst impacts of UK Government austerity, but that

“mitigation comes at a price and is not sustainable.”

Does the cabinet secretary agree that if the UK Government does not reverse its harmful policies, it is time that Scotland had the powers to do so itself?

**Aileen Campbell:** Yes, I do. As I said to Alex Rowley, we have invested £125 million to soften the blows of Tory cuts and austerity. Mr Beattie is also right to mention that Professor Alston said that

“mitigation comes at a price and is not sustainable.”

However, we cannot mitigate the £3.7 billion gap in welfare spending that has been caused by the UK Government's cuts. I would far rather that we pursued an approach to welfare and social security that was based on dignity and respect. The building of a new social security system gives just a glimpse of what we can do with the powers that we currently have. Just imagine what we could do in the future that we could create if we had the normal powers of an independent country to help us to care for those who need it most.

### **Glasgow City Council (Meetings)**

7. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Glasgow City Council and what was discussed. (S5O-03304)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including Glasgow City Council, to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

In relation to Glasgow City Council, I was delighted to see that equal pay settlement offers started going out to claimants last week. The unfair treatment of many female employees at the council was allowed to go on for far too long, and I welcome the action that the council has taken to resolve it.

**Johann Lamont:** Is the cabinet secretary aware that Glasgow City Council's education committee

passed a motion calling for primary 1 tests to be scrapped and that, this month, the full council agreed that teachers should be able to make their own decisions regarding testing and, indeed, passed a vote of no confidence in its education convener? What advice would the cabinet secretary give to Glasgow City Council on implementing that democratic decision? When will her Government start listening and respect the decision of the Parliament that primary 1 testing should be scrapped?

**Aileen Campbell:** I will ensure that the points that Ms Lamont has made are passed on to the relevant department that deals with education matters. However, I point out that Glasgow City Council endeavours to improve outcomes for the children who are in its care, and to ensure that they have good, high-quality education—I know that my colleagues in Glasgow City Council take that commitment very seriously indeed.

### **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Local Government Finances)**

8. **Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government finances. (S5O-03305)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell):** The Scottish Government regularly meets COSLA to discuss a number of issues, including local government finance.

**Neil Bibby:** The SNP and the Greens in this Parliament are proposing that local government be given the power to raise revenue through the workplace parking levy. Earlier this year, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work admitted that no economic analysis had been done on that policy. Has such analysis now been done?

**Aileen Campbell:** We are supporting an agreed Green Party amendment to the Transport (Scotland) Bill that would introduce a power to enable local authorities to introduce a workplace parking levy, but it is important to recognise that that would be a valuable additional tool for local authorities that chose to use it. It would not be mandatory. Also, it is in response to the on-going climate emergency, which has been talked about and discussed for some time and which now requires action to follow it. [*Interruption.*]

I am sure that there will be much more engagement on the issue as the Transport (Scotland) Bill passes through the Parliament, but if Mr Smyth wants to tackle climate change, he should look to see what he is actually going to do, as opposed to carping from the sidelines.

## Wind Turbine Construction (Fife)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17425, in the name of Richard Leonard, entitled "Build them at BiFab". I call Richard Leonard to speak to and move the motion.

14:41

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Let me begin by declaring an interest. I am a proud member of both the trade unions that represent the workers who are employed at the BiFab yards in Fife and at Arnish point.

Let me declare another interest at the start. I have been privileged in my life to work for the Scottish trade union and labour movement, representing working people across Scotland. They have taught me a lot. It has been a great education, and they are the people who drive me on when the going gets tough in politics. So much can be achieved by working women and men through industrial organisation and industrial action, but so much more can be achieved through political organisation and political action, which is why we have brought this debate to Parliament today.

Let me make it abundantly clear that Scottish Labour stands shoulder to shoulder with the Fife workers at the construction yards in Methil and Burntisland and fully backs the Fife ready for renewal campaign, which calls for the work that was promised to the Fife yards to be delivered to them.

I first visited the yard at Methil more than 20 years ago, when it was owned by RGC Offshore. In those days, it was bidding for oil and gas contracts in the North Sea. The union convener was the late and much missed Jock Kilbane. The industry was beset by famine and feast, with full order books one year and empty order books the next, and the yard was in dire need of investment.

When I went back to visit the yard 18 months ago, I was shocked to see that there had been little capital investment in the intervening quarter of a century; that although the contracts that were sought were now in the emergent offshore renewable energy industry rather than in the hydrocarbon energy industry, it was still a tale of famine and feast; and that the industrious workforce, caught in this market failure and failure to plan, were enduring a prolonged period of famine. They deserve so much better than this. As in the oil years, they are bidding for contracts on the United Kingdom continental shelf and in Scottish inland waters but seeing the work go to yards overseas. It is as though we have learned nothing.

We used to lobby UK energy ministers for intervention, asking them to act and correct the uneven playing field. The unions are doing that again with Claire Perry, but we should not have to keep fighting the same battles over and over again. It is as though we have learned nothing.

Now, of course, we have this Parliament and an opportunity not simply to protest, but to govern; not simply to lobby about the economy, but to plan the economy; and not simply to pass motions, but to take action.

If ever there was a case for proving the need for a Scottish industrial strategy that was made in Scotland, this is it. Here we have millions of pounds of public expenditure through subsidies and levies from consumers being invested in renewable energy to harness a natural resource, but there is no public accountability and, all too often, too little economic benefit.

Our economy should not be a democracy-free zone. Companies such as EDF should not be exempt from responsibility. Promises made should be kept. Communities such as those in Fife should benefit directly from the jobs dividend that renewable energy should bring. There is no point having a green industrial revolution or a green new deal if the new deal is the same as the old deal, if the outcomes of the new deal are the same as the outcomes of the old deal, and if the green industrial revolution ends up simply being driven by the market, in which transnational corporations can sell out working people in Scotland and offshore jobs to the far east.

If, on the other hand, the green industrial revolution means that an interventionist state acts on behalf of the people and our industrial communities so that we go beyond the market, I declare myself to be a revolutionary. If it is simply a revolution of the market and more laissez-faire economics all over again, I declare myself to be a counter-revolutionary.

It will be nothing short of a betrayal if the work on EDF's offshore wind farm Neart na Gaoithe, which will be worth up to £2 billion and located just 10 miles off the Fife coast, is sent around the world to Indonesia. That work has the potential to create 1,000 green jobs in Fife, fulfilling the promise to the hundreds of skilled former BiFab workers who stand ready to work. For EDF to send those jobs elsewhere would be a betrayal not only of those workers but of an entire community and of Scotland's commitments on climate change. As I have said previously in Parliament, the Scottish Trades Union Congress put it well when it said that the transportation of those structures from south-east Asia back to Scotland would generate emissions equivalent to an extra 35 million cars on the road. What does that do for the climate emergency?

In the midst of the climate crisis, we must send a clear message to EDF: if it wishes to be part of Scotland's renewable energy future, it must stand by the promises that were made to the communities and workers of Fife. Meeting the challenge of the climate emergency requires more than words. We must match our ambition with action.

When it comes to our response to the climate emergency, the driving force of change is first and foremost determined by who owns and controls our economy, so we have to ask whether our economy, our systems for producing energy, our transport systems and our use of land and agriculture are operated purely for profit, or whether they are planned for the common good. That is the fundamental question that we must ask, and it should be central in the consideration of the award of all renewable energy job contracts. We will not secure the transformative change that we need to see by leaving it all to market forces.

Those who need further convincing should read the hard-hitting report entitled "Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs", which was presented to the STUC at its congress in Dundee just last month. I quote from the opening pages of that report:

"the STUC is absolutely committed to building a low-carbon economy and meeting climate change targets. However, we are criticising the failure of industrial policy to ensure that workers, businesses and Government in Scotland benefit from Scotland's natural resources."

Scottish Labour is clear: for us, it is not just a failure of industrial policy, but a complete failure of Governments—British and Scottish—to develop an industrial strategy in the first place.

The BiFab workers are now feeling all too keenly the effects of what happens when, as a nation, we do not make every effort to ensure that it is the people who benefit from our natural resources, rather than private profit.

The owners of the NnG contract are EDF, the French state-owned energy company and nuclear giant. EDF is one of the world's largest producers of energy, with revenues in 2018 of around £60 billion. It promotes its better plan for "sustainable and responsible energy" and "Building stronger communities". The EDF renewables website says:

"We also use companies local to a wind farm during the development of a site, whenever possible, to ensure the local economy benefits from its build too."

Unfortunately for the BiFab workers, it seems that, in this case, EDF is all talk.

We cannot repurpose the Scottish economy and deliver the green new deal that is needed without a serious step change in how we do things. Old ideas about rolling back the state and privatisation simply no longer cut it when it comes to how we

plan our economy and so meet our climate targets.

If we are serious about climate change, why would we accept that the construction of turbine jackets for renewable energy wind farms that are only 10 miles off the coast of Fife should be shipped around the world, when there is a skilled local workforce that is unemployed but ready and willing to take up the task?

Making that a reality would involve an innovative state. It would mean the Scottish Government using its powers of procurement and planning to make sure that low-carbon developments such as the EDF project, which could benefit thousands of people in Fife, bring economic benefit to local communities.

There is a growing restlessness across all generations, and a rising determination, which this Parliament must reflect, on the need for urgent action to tackle the climate change challenges that face us. I am optimistic that we can achieve the transformative change that is required, but achieving a planned and just transition to green jobs requires us to take action now—today—to ensure that these jobs are here for tomorrow and the future.

That is why, today, we unequivocally back the Fife ready for renewal campaign, and why a Scottish Labour Government would ensure full trade union involvement in economic and industrial planning. We back the calls for a review of the contracts and the supply chain process of the offshore wind sector deal, to ensure that it brings significant work to the Fife yards during the construction phase of all those projects.

That is why I urge the Scottish Government to join us today in calling on EDF to rethink its decision, to invest in the communities, workforce and people of Fife, and to invest in those skills and a future for those yards. Let us make sure that those jackets are fabricated at BiFab.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Fife - Ready for Renewal campaign calling for work to be delivered to the Fife construction yards in Methil and Burntisland; notes that EDF's Neart Na Gaoithe (NnG) Offshore Wind Farm, worth up to £2 billion, will be located 10 miles off the Fife coast, as well as Inchcape and Seagreen offshore wind farms, worth further billions; further notes that hundreds of skilled, former BiFab workers in Fife stand ready to work; believes that continuing public support for Scotland's climate change targets requires that people see local community benefit from the transition; congratulates the trade unions, community groups and environmental organisations that have come together to fight for a green energy revolution that brings benefit to workers and communities; believes that it would be bad for the climate if turbine jackets had to be shipped from overseas, and calls on the Scottish and UK governments to support the Fife - Ready for Renewal campaign and to review the contracts for difference and

supply chain process as part of the Offshore Wind Sector Deal to ensure that it brings significant work to the Fife yards during the construction phase of all projects.

14:54

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** I welcome the opportunity to publicly discuss our support for Scotland's offshore wind sector and the action that we are taking to maximise Scottish supply chain content. I also welcome the constructive approach of both the Labour Party and the STUC to the debate, and I will try to maintain that consensus throughout. I refer all members to our energy strategy, which includes ambitions on supply chain and local content.

It is important that we do not let developers off the hook today, because I believe that they are watching.

The debate offers us a timely opportunity to send, as a united Parliament, a strong message to the sector on the subject of fabrication and industrial jobs as we make this just transition. We all know the opportunity that we face. The waters around the UK currently have the largest installed capacity of offshore wind anywhere in the world. The offshore wind sector deal sets out an ambition to see offshore wind contributing up to 30GW of capacity by 2030, and the UK Committee on Climate Change stated that the UK might need up to 7,500 offshore wind turbines by 2050 in a net-zero world.

We therefore agree with the view that the UK and Scotland have not been securing the levels of economic benefits and jobs that we deserve from these projects. However, despite key powers lying outwith our control, this Government is determined to maximise the job opportunities and economic benefits in Fife and across Scotland. That is exactly why I chaired a supply chain summit at the start of this month, bringing together Governments—although I was disappointed that the UK Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth was not in attendance, despite her assurance that she would be—unions, offshore wind developers and supply chain representatives. At that summit, I made the position of the Scottish Government clear.

I will address my proposed actions shortly, but first I wish to deal specifically with BiFab. The Scottish Government's on-going commitment has given BiFab the best possible chance of winning contracts and securing new work. We have provided strong support to DF Barnes since its acquisition of BiFab. However, we have been clear from the outset that there remains hard work ahead in order to secure the long-term future of the company. BiFab is a competitive yard with a highly skilled workforce.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** Scottish Enterprise has invested in the yards over a number of years. Can the cabinet secretary advise members whether it will continue to invest in the yards in order to modernise and upgrade fabrication facilities?

**Derek Mackay:** Meetings will be held with a range of stakeholders and partners to try to enable further investment in the yards. Of course, that investment must be state-aid compliant, as long as we are complying with those rules as part of the European Union. However, I am looking for every possible opportunity to allow further investment by Scottish Enterprise in the yards, and we will, of course, continue to explore those opportunities and seize them as and when they arise.

I am particularly concerned about reports of low-tender bids from outside the UK. Those bids suggest that those companies, alongside other supply chain companies in the sector, are not on the level playing field that we try to comply with during these processes. I have repeatedly engaged with industry stakeholders, including EDP Renewables, EDF Renewables, SSE and tier 1 contractors to emphasise the importance of using the Scottish supply chain, and I will continue to do so.

I remain cautiously confident that contracts will be secured for BiFab that will see work return not only to Arnish but to Methil and Burntisland, and I repeat the pledge that the Scottish Government will do everything possible to support those yards.

Returning to the summit, members of the offshore wind sector have committed to undertaking a strategic capability assessment of fabrication in the UK to ensure that we fully understand the actions that are required by all parties to overcome the key barriers that are faced by the supply chain and the issues that they say are difficult.

In relation to Scottish content, I believe that the sector has let us down, and I will not be simply hoping for improvement. That is why the Scottish Government is exploring a range of potential regulatory instruments, levers and powers that we will seek to use. The Scottish ministers are working with Crown Estate Scotland to explore ways by which the new ScotWind leasing round can incentivise the use of the Scottish supply chain.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Can the cabinet secretary explain why that measure was not put in place in previous rounds? Why are we not seeing Crown Estate leases reflecting the need for local content?

**Derek Mackay:** The powers have just been devolved to the Scottish Parliament. We are therefore using new devolved powers that we did

not have when previous contracts and consents were awarded. Now that we have those powers, I propose to explore their use to achieve the outcome that I hope that we, as a Parliament, will unite on today. I propose to use the ability to do those things—which we did not have before—to achieve that outcome; although exploration is required, I think that there is a willingness to use the powers in that fashion.

We are also reviewing the process for the submission and approval of offshore wind decommissioning programmes. Once Marine Scotland has received a decommissioning programme, certain securities for decommissioning more than £2.5 million require approval by the Finance and Constitution Committee of the Scottish Parliament. If the committee is content with the financial liability and the measures that are in place to reduce that liability, it can approve the decommissioning programme, which will then be submitted to the Scottish ministers for final approval. However, I am determined to ensure that both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have clear sight of the overall costs and benefits to the public purse—including those in the supply chain—when considering the financial liability that the Scottish taxpayer may ultimately carry. In other words, if the Scottish taxpayer is to provide financial guarantees, we expect developers to deliver for the Scottish economy in return. That demonstrates our commitment to explore all the policy levers at our disposal to increase local content from energy projects in Scotland—a real just transition.

However, given our lack of devolved powers in the area, the UK Government must also act. The UK Government's contract for difference supply chain process provides an ideal opportunity to hold developers to account and to give clear assurances to the UK supply chain. That will be essential if the target of 60 per cent UK content by 2030—which was committed to in the offshore wind sector deal—is to be achieved. The UK Government must show the path to get to that policy ambition with the levers that it has.

The UK Government must consider current and future CFD allocation rounds to ensure that the project owners and developers deliver, and if they do not, there should be repercussions. The CFD process should also be reviewed to ensure that it delivers value for money for the whole economy. Although the competitive process has driven ever-lower prices for electricity, it has encouraged a race to the bottom that will inevitably see work go to yards outside of the UK—that is not acceptable. Supply chain companies themselves have a role to play, and I commit Scottish Enterprise support to allow them to up their game and collaborate and focus on the opportunities together.

I hope that members are assured of the new steps that we are taking to ensure the success of BiFab, and the wider supply chain in Fife and right across the country, enabling them to take full advantage of the opportunities that are presented by the offshore wind industry in Scotland and beyond. If we unite as a Parliament, I am sure that the industry will watch and respond accordingly.

I move amendment S5M-17425.3, to insert at end:

“, and recognises the efforts of the Scottish Government to bring together trades unions, the UK Government and industry representatives at a summit on 2 May 2019 to ensure that all opportunities are taken to deliver supply chain work in Fife and across Scotland.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I advise members that if they take interventions, I will let them make up their time until I run out of time—that speaks for itself.

15:03

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

I start by referring to my entry in the register of interests in relation to a smart meter company that is based in England.

This is an important debate on the future of BiFab and renewable energy projects in Scotland. We will vote for both the Labour motion and the Scottish National Party amendment today. We also firmly support the STUC's Fife ready for renewal campaign.

The Scottish Conservatives share the real concerns of the STUC, BiFab and other stakeholders that the sponsor of the NnG project—EDF—plans to subcontract the manufacturing of wind turbine jackets overseas, rather than place the work with yards in Fife. Those concerns come at a critical time for the project, which is worth more than £2 billion, is located less than 10 miles from the coast of Fife and will generate enough electricity to power a city the size of Edinburgh. The Scottish Conservatives are clear that there are compelling reasons to bring the jobs and investment to Fife. The yards in Methil and Burntisland are ready for the work, which could create jobs for up to 1,000 people and unlock much needed growth and investment in the Fife region. The workers in Fife have the proven skills and experience to deliver on the project, and DF Barnes—the owner of BiFab—has the global experience to deliver.

Another vital consideration is the carbon emissions involved in having turbine jackets shipped from 7,000 miles overseas to Scotland instead of their being built just 10 miles from the wind farm.

For those reasons, the Scottish Conservatives agree with calls that have been made across the

chamber, and we will join the other parties in calling for the manufacturing of the turbine jackets to take place in Fife.

We also call on the Scottish Government to follow through on the undertakings that it gave following the supply chain summit on 2 May. At that summit, the cabinet secretary said that he would use every lever and power at his disposal to ensure that Scotland's renewable supply chain will benefit from the expansion of offshore wind energy in Scottish waters. That could include attaching supply chain conditions and incentives to procurement contracts, leases and other project approvals granted by the Scottish Government.

In his speech, the cabinet secretary did not really go into specific actions that he would take now to ensure that work is placed at the Fife yards or how the Scottish Government will change its policy to secure more Scottish content, including changing procurement practice and policies in Scotland.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member give way?

**Dean Lockhart:** I was going to say that I look forward to hearing about more concrete actions from the cabinet secretary, but it looks like he is about to explain how he will ensure that more work is given to the yards in Fife.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have a little formal thing to say. Both of you should not be standing at the same time.

**Derek Mackay:** I am particularly eager, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It does not matter whether you are eager—you do not do that.

**Derek Mackay:** Point taken, Presiding Officer.

I have raised two key areas. We have been exploring exhaustively all the powers that we could use, and the new elements relate to decommissioning—specifically, what has to be put to the Parliament—and the use of the Crown estate, which has been devolved to Scotland. I cannot use some of the other things that have been suggested, but I am determined to use what is within our competence, and I will seek consensus in the Parliament to progress with those things as we explore them, to make the culture of expectation about investment in Scotland real and meaningful, rather than simply wait for the sector to deliver. Those are the two key areas that I have outlined.

**Dean Lockhart:** We will work together with the cabinet secretary on those areas. I appreciate that some powers came to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government recently, but that begs the question: what has the Scottish Government

done to secure more work with the powers that it has had for a long time?

I make it clear that the UK Government also has responsibility for securing more work in the supply chain, and we are calling on it to take steps to encourage EDF to award work to the Fife yards and elsewhere in Scotland. I have written to the UK minister in order to meet her to explore what actions can be taken.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Dean Lockhart:** I would like to make a bit of progress, but I will give way a bit later.

The risk that the turbine jackets will be built overseas is the latest example of how the Scottish Government has failed to realise the potential in the renewables sector. Earlier, we heard about the GMB report, which sets out a history of broken promises to the renewables industry in Scotland. The report shows that over the past decade, there have been many promises of a jobs and manufacturing bonanza in the sector. In 2010, the SNP's low-carbon economic strategy promised 130,000 jobs in renewables by 2020.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dean Lockhart:** No. Let me continue.

Alex Salmond proclaimed that Scotland would become the

"Saudi Arabia of renewable energy".

In reality, according to the latest Office for National Statistics figures, there are just more than 21,000 full-time jobs in renewable energy in Scotland. That is fewer than 20 per cent of the jobs that were promised.

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dean Lockhart:** I am sorry; I have only seven minutes.

We also have a negative balance of trade in the low-carbon and renewables sector in Scotland: we import £230 million more than we export. That shows that the manufacturing base in Scotland is not benefiting from the growth in renewable energy.

The failure to realise Scotland's potential in renewables has also been evident in the Scottish Government's track record of investments in the sector. In 2014 and 2015, we saw the failure of the tidal wave companies Pelamis Wave Power and Aquamarine Power, with the loss of more than £40 million of taxpayers' money. Those failures show—other members have highlighted this—that the Scottish Government lacks a clear long-term

strategy for the renewables sector in Scotland. The most productive action that the Scottish Government can now take is to work together with the UK Government under the industrial strategy, the clean growth strategy and the offshore wind sector deal to maximise opportunities for the sector in Scotland.

According to DF Barnes, the owner of BiFab, the UK Government's sector deal is a laudable initiative, and it welcomes the commitment to achieve 60 per cent of UK content in projects. The UK sector deal also provides visibility on future contracts for difference auctions, with support of more than £0.5 billion being available and the next auction coming on stream later this month. That is in addition to the subsidies that the UK has provided to the renewables industry, which total some £52 billion since 2010. The UK sector deal also commits to increasing UK content to 60 per cent, increasing exports fivefold to £2.6 billion by 2030 and increasing the representation of women in the sector to one third by 2030.

**Derek Mackay:** Does Dean Lockhart support conditionality being attached to contracts for difference under the wind sector deal to ensure that local supply chain content is guaranteed, rather than just hoped for?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are now in your last minute, Mr Lockhart.

**Dean Lockhart:** The UK minister who is responsible for the deal has made it clear that each CFD must be looked at on its own merits. We should not put in place a blanket system of conditionality. As the cabinet secretary knows well, that is not how the sector works.

The renewables sector in Scotland has benefited from the significant financial support of the UK Government and from the billions of pounds in subsidies through CFDs. However, as we have heard, that support has not translated into the jobs, manufacturing opportunities and investment that the SNP promised. That is because, as we saw clearly earlier today, the Scottish Government has only one priority, and it is not the renewables sector in Scotland.

I move amendment S5M.17425.2, to insert at end:

“, and further calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to take advantage of the opportunities under the Offshore Wind Sector Deal, which builds on the UK's global leadership in offshore wind, maximising the advantages for the Scottish offshore wind sector from the global shift to clean growth.”

15:11

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I thank the Labour Party for securing the debate. This subject reflects Scotland's climate

emergency, and it is where rhetoric meets reality and where communities and workers are either left behind in the fossil age or become the leaders of the renewables revolution under a green new deal. We all know the lessons of history, from the decimation that was caused by the closure of coal mines in the 80s to the alienation of communities, which the Brexiteers so cruelly parasitized in the EU referendum.

Communities in Fife are now crying out for a just transition to a bright future, whether that involves phasing out Mossmorran, reconnecting with rail in forgotten towns or ramping up low-carbon manufacturing. The Greens back the Fife ready for renewal campaign, and it would be an utter scandal if EDF constructed a wind farm just a few miles off the Fife coast, in sight of Methil, where former skilled workers at BiFab have to walk past a mothballed yard every day on their way to try to find new work. Where is the climate justice in that? Where is the just transition? If EDF cannot support jobs in the very communities that host its developments, we should hit the company where it hurts, including through divestment campaigns.

Two years ago, we were hopeful that the pipeline of wind farms on the horizon would deliver jobs at BiFab. It was just a matter of bridging the gap for six months and keeping finances afloat during a traumatic few years for the company before contracts would flow once again. However, there has been a co-ordinated attempt by state-backed contractors to manipulate procurement rules and lock BiFab out of the work. Such companies are acting against the spirit and the detail of their energy consents, which demand local content and local jobs.

Alongside those of the consenting bodies, the role of Crown Estate Scotland, as the landlord, is critical to finding a way to resolve the betrayal. Therefore, I am pleased that the recent offshore wind summit zeroed in on the Crown Estate's role, and I very much welcome the cabinet secretary's comments about his desire for ministerial direction in that regard.

However, we need to learn lessons, because state-backed companies will always find it easier to accept financial guarantee risks. They are able to accept losses, with a strategic eye to longer-term growth in markets, and they can bear the risks in jumping on the back of new markets such as floating wind. We also need a state that can create those new markets, that invests and shares in the rewards of investment and that takes the lead in crowding in finance from the private sector. The state needs to carry the risk, particularly in the early development of new technology, but it must not fall into the trap of socialising all that risk only to step back and watch the rewards become wholly privatised.



**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** I am conscious that the Arnish yard in my constituency has had some more positive news, but does the member agree that, to ensure the future for that and other yards, we need to maximise apprenticeships and other training opportunities into the long term?

**Mark Ruskell:** Absolutely. Linking in education and apprenticeships will be critical to the green new deal that we need to create in Scotland. That is very much the case in Fife. I have met so many exciting young people coming through Fife College who are looking to get into the renewable energy industry but who are simply not finding the apprenticeships that will carry them into those careers.

The great Labour pioneer Tom Johnston would be spinning in his grave to see the dismantling of the state as the thinker, researcher, planner, financier, builder and operator of our energy infrastructure in the UK, with the legacy of his revolutionary hydro board, which was established under Churchill's government, deregulated and flogged off. It is clear that the future is wind, and the deployment of offshore wind will need to grow, with the project pipeline at least doubling by 2030. Within 10 years, wind will be providing the lion's share of the energy that we will need to heat, to travel and to power our society, and we need to plan out exactly what that means at the sort of granular level that can deliver investor confidence.

However, it is no good Scotland being the Saudi Arabia of the renewables revolution if the kit to power it is being built in Saudi Arabia. There are still issues that need to be resolved in the offshore wind supply chain. Like Richard Leonard, I first visited the Methil yard some time ago—back in 2004—and I remember being handed a tatty photocopied Scottish Enterprise marketing leaflet about the site and its investment potential. The reality is that the level of Scottish Enterprise investment needed in simple things such as a concreted hard standing and paint shop just has not happened. Our yards should not be oil and gas museums; they need facilities that are capable of producing at a bigger scale, 24/7, 365 days a year. Investment in and the doubling of production at CS Wind in Campbeltown should give us the confidence to bash on with the ambitious investment that is needed in all parts of the sector.

The role of the courageous state is to make things happen that otherwise would not, and there are so many opportunities that lie ahead. I will pick just one: the UK Committee on Climate Change said that moving the ban on the sale of new fossil cars forward to 2030 was a no-brainer, and even Michael Gove indicated to me at a recent meeting of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee that the UK's target date is

under review. However, are we acting fully on the opportunities that will come from that? Are we focusing on developing the next generation of charging technology here in Scotland? What about the vital role that electric vehicles and home battery usage will play in feeding back into the grid at peak demand? There are technologies and energy services to be developed that can spin out of academia, even though venture capital and markets might at the beginning be cautious to invest in such new areas.

The strategic thinking, detailed planning and co-ordination that are needed have to come through a green new deal for Scotland to maximise all these opportunities. The climate emergency demands a level of transformative ambition that has never been seen before, but it must come with hope, a just transition and livelihoods for the workers at BiFab.

15:17

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Given that Neart na Gaoithe will be 10 miles off the coast of my constituency and that, at the other end, we have the Methil and Burntisland shipyards, this issue is important to Fife. Indeed, it is important to Scotland, too.

Andy Kinsella, chief executive officer of Mainstream Renewable Power, which applied for permission for the wind farm at Neart na Gaoithe, said:

“we can finally focus on delivering the very significant benefits this project brings to the Scottish economy and its environment.”

According to Mainstream's economic breakdown of the project, an estimated 500 jobs would be created in the three-year build phase and at least £550 million of the total project cost would be spent in the Scottish supply chain. The company also expected a further £1.8 billion to be spent in operating and maintaining the array over the projected 25-year lifetime, as well as the creation of around 100 roles, and it set up the Neart na Gaoithe coalition, which was made up of about 60 organisations that supported the development. Alan Duncan, the spokesman for the coalition, said:

“This means the only major infrastructure project that is ready to build in Scotland next year can now go ahead, creating 2,000 jobs for each year of its four year construction process as well as hundreds of long-term permanent jobs.”

Mainstream then commissioned a Fraser of Allander institute report that estimated that NnG would contribute 0.6 per cent of gross domestic product—or £827 million—to the Scottish economy over the project's lifetime, creating thousands of jobs during the construction phase

and more than 230 operations and maintenance jobs for the 25-year lifetime of the wind farm.

The carrots were dangled. Local people were encouraged to speak up. There were adverts in the local and national newspapers and local politicians such as me were put under pressure and courted. Ministers were put under considerable pressure to support the NnG scheme. Now is the time for the new owners to deliver for Scotland. The obligations and promises made by Mainstream were inherited by EDF, which should deliver now, as we were promised. If that does not happen, that will be a huge mistake for EDF and for the industry more widely, because it will send a message very loud and clear that its promises mean absolutely nothing.

EDF is rumoured to be awarding the contract for constructing the jackets for the huge turbines to the Italian industrial giant Saipem, which would manufacture them in Indonesia, on the other side of the planet. The environmental footprint of shipping those massive structures right the way round the world would be significant. It is supposed to be an environmental project, so why on earth would we construct them so far away and commit so much energy to get them here in the first place?

**John Mason:** Is the member relying on EDF's good will or does he feel that more pressure should be put on it and that what he asks for should be a contractual commitment?

**Willie Rennie:** Yes, there should be a contractual commitment. It is a mistake not to have one. Similar things have been done in contracts in other parts of the energy sector, so I simply do not understand why on earth it has not been done for this contract. The loss to the local economy would be significant.

Of course the BiFab yards need to be upgraded and investment is required. Efficiency and capacity need to be improved so that the yards can cope with the demands of the NnG contract. Change is required to ensure that the yards are ready not just for this contract but for other contracts in future.

Gary Smith speaks with great clarity on the issue. Before the latest problem occurred, he said:

"promises made by politicians a decade ago over Scotland's renewables industries will amount to nothing more than a puddle of snake oil."

He went on:

"we don't have the 'Saudi Arabia of renewables' we were promised".

Importantly, he said:

"the taxpayer pours billions of pounds of subsidies into an industry that lines the pockets of other countries and private financiers, instead of redistributing wealth into our own communities."

If the contract goes abroad, real anger will be felt in the communities of Fife. The disconnect is real. How do we ensure that Scotland does not lose out again?

**Derek Mackay:** For any investors and developers that are investing in Scotland or planning to do so and that are watching and listening to the debate, will Willie Rennie agree that it would make their lives easier if they would just invest in Scotland and then they would not be getting the berating that they are getting this afternoon?

**Willie Rennie:** That is right. They should listen very carefully. They should not make bold promises and put adverts in newspapers right across Scotland, encourage ordinary working people and communities to back their plans and then ship the jobs abroad. They should never ever do that if they want those contracts in future. There is a big lesson for them to learn.

That is why we support the Fife ready for renewal campaign. The work should be awarded to Fife and Scotland, because that is what we were promised.

15:24

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I welcome the debate. The future of the Fife construction yards in Methil and Burntisland is important to me, and I have had a relationship with the workforce and their trade unions since I was first elected to Parliament. My first regional office was in Methil, just along Wellesley Road from the Fife energy park, where BiFab is located.

I first visited BiFab at a time of prosperity for the company with the then member of Parliament Lindsay Roy and the then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband. Over the years, I have witnessed the ups and downs of the business, the struggle for global competitiveness in the renewables manufacturing sector and the tenacity of a company that was determined to compete at a challenging level to secure work for the yards. There have been strongly mounted campaigns over the years, and there have been times when the workforce has been greatly reduced. During such times, I have worked with members of the GMB and Unite at Methil to apply political pressure, and I have garnered political support by working with my fellow MSPs and the Scottish ministers.

For me, this is not about saving a company for its shareholders or about increasing its profits or company profile. My involvement with and commitment to the yards are for the excellent workforce, whose employment is important to Methil, Levenmouth and Fife, and for providing the cornerstone of a positive economic future for the

area. If any area in Scotland should benefit from the growth of the renewables sector, this area should, as it has a proud history of manufacturing, a strong industrial heritage and a skilled workforce, but it is too often hampered by underemployment, in-work poverty and a lack of opportunity.

When BiFab was on the brink of collapse, in November 2017, the march on Parliament was a powerful demonstration of the passion and the commitment of the workforce, their families and their community. I recognise the role that the Scottish Government played in the company's continuing to operate and its ability to complete its work for the Beatrice contract, which was vital for the reputation of the company and the workforce. The rescue package enabled the takeover of the company by DF Barnes, and I very much welcome the positive relationships with the new owners that are reported by the trade unions. I recognise the new owners' commitment to making a success of the business and securing work for the Fife yards. However, it is hugely frustrating and damaging for the local economy that the yards are sitting empty. The work that has been secured at Arnish is welcome and demonstrates the ability of the company to gain work, but there is capacity to take more work at the yard—and, crucially, we need to see employment in the Fife yards.

I will briefly mention Scottish Enterprise. BiFab leases the yard from Scottish Enterprise, and there is a need for investment in the infrastructure of the yard. Over the years, there have been discussions about that. I understand the commercial relationship that exists, but there is an opportunity to add value and there is a workforce who are capable of delivering the yard improvements if the Scottish Government, through Scottish Enterprise, would commission the work.

I acknowledge the recent summit that was held by the Scottish Government and the round-table session that was held by the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee. Our motion calls on the Scottish and UK Governments

“to review the contracts for difference and supply chain process as part of the Offshore Wind Sector Deal to ensure that it brings significant work to the Fife yards during the construction phase of all projects.”

Concerns have been raised about the weaknesses of the deal. If the deal is to deliver—not only to reduce emissions, but for our communities—it needs to set conditions that work will be secured in the UK and, in particular, that it will support the Scottish market, in which we are seeing growth and a pipeline of projects.

**Derek Mackay:** I make the point again that CFD is reserved to Westminster. It is for us to consent, but we cannot attach conditions when we do so. However, conditionality could be attached to CFD.

Doing so may come at a cost, but it would be welcome for Scottish investment. Would the Labour Party join us in calling on the UK Government to allow such conditionality in contracts for difference, which could be absolutely pivotal in ensuring work for Scotland?

**Claire Baker:** I accept the cabinet secretary's points, and I recognise the role of the UK Government in the matter. However, the summit that he held brought together the UK and Scottish Governments, so I ask the Scottish Government to apply any pressure that it can to make the sector a better one for Scottish companies to compete in.

We need to show greater ambition for expansion in the sector and ensure that our skilled manufacturing base sees the benefit of it. We cannot continue to see companies take advantage of Scotland's natural resources but not invest in the people of Scotland and our communities.

The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee's evidence session outlined the problems that BiFab faces as it competes in what is often described as a tangled mess of contracts and payments. The witnesses expressed clear concerns over the abuse of state aid rules and the lack of a level playing field. Serious questions were asked about the status of consent letters from Marine Scotland and about the subsequent failure to see the conditions, which were described as “expected” and “likely”, realised. As the Government has explained, the devolved Crown Estate powers present us with opportunities and we need to make the best use of them.

The bitter disappointment of losing out on the Kincardine and Moray contracts means that the yards in Fife are lying unused. Workers have not been in the yards for a year—the yards have been mothballed and have become a symbol of missed opportunity and stilled potential. However, that has not dampened the commitment of the workforce and their trade unions. The launch of the Fife ready for renewal campaign deserves the support of us all.

The idea that EDF will award the contracts for wind turbine jackets for the NnG offshore wind farm, which sits off the coast of Fife, to Indonesia and that those jackets will be shipped thousands of miles to Scotland is just not acceptable. That people in Fife will see the wind farm from their windows but get none of the economic benefit, even though they are paying into the project, is completely unacceptable. I urge EDF to do the right thing and honour the commitments that it has made to local investment to support the Scottish industry. In return, it will find a highly skilled, committed workforce and will be able to demonstrate a commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and prove its green credentials.

A significant majority in Parliament recognises that, around the globe, we are facing a climate emergency and that we, in Scotland, have an important role to play in tackling climate change. Changing our economy and reducing our use of fossil fuels is critical to that. We support a zero-carbon economy, and our renewable output is a huge factor in achieving that, but our communities and our workforce have not been feeling the benefit of that transition.

When the Fife energy park opened, there was optimism and the promise of well-paid, highly skilled jobs that would re-energise Levenmouth and Fife. However, as the STUC report “Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs” shows, fewer than a third of the jobs that were promised in Scotland have been delivered. That is a poor legacy for the industry so far. We all need to take responsibility for doing business differently, and EDF could take a lead by ensuring that these valuable green jobs come to Fife. I urge it to do so.

15:31

**Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** I am pleased to have been called to speak in this important debate. As the MSP for Cowdenbeath, I am 100 per cent behind the BiFab workers, whose skills are second to none. I am also very pleased to note that the Scottish Government has, once again, reiterated its commitment to stand by BiFab and to strain every sinew to secure a long-term future for the yards.

It is precisely because of the intervention by the Scottish Government, in addition to the extraordinarily impressive fight by the BiFab workers themselves, that BiFab still exists. I submit that the Scottish Government is no mere bystander as far as workers are concerned; indeed, it has the backs of workers in Scotland. Whereas the UK Government is now entirely engulfed in Brexit chaos and Tory Party leadership machinations, we, in Scotland, are fortunate to have a Government that is getting on with the job, and the job that it is doing in connection with BiFab is to fight for the work, the jobs and this growing industry in Scotland.

In that context, the BiFab campaign Fife ready for renewal, which was launched recently by the GMB, Unite and the STUC, is to be applauded, for it is vital that supply chain work comes to BiFab. Of key importance in that regard, in the short to medium term, is the EDF NnG offshore wind farm, which is to be located just 10 miles off the Fife coast. It would surely be as nonsensical as it would be an absolute travesty if BiFab did not receive the work for the wind turbine jackets for this significant infrastructure project. Much has been made of the environmental cost of transporting the jackets from Indonesia—which is

rumoured to be in the mix for the contract—back to 10 miles off the Fife coast. Surely, the environmental costs must be factored into the overall total cost of the project over its lifetime.

Last week, I wrote to the chief executive of EDF, making those very points. I stressed that the BiFab yards at Methil and Burntisland are ready and able to take on the work. I also highlighted the importance of that work to the Fife economy. I took that up with the cabinet secretary, too, for it is, to my mind, imperative that people in Scotland see the maximum benefit from the new generation of renewable energy technologies that are now coming on stream. It cannot be the case that we might miss out on what should be a major boost for, in the case of the NnG project, the Fife economy, and, in the case of other projects, Scotland as a whole.

The supply chain must work hard to seek opportunities by, for example, making strategic investments and considering appropriate collaborations when putting in tenders for contracts. I am pleased to note that the Scottish Government is committed to maximising the sector and that its recently convened special summit involving key developers and suppliers was a success. It is a pity that the UK energy minister was not able to attend, but I know that the trade unions were there.

I understand that the industry has agreed that collective action is needed to ensure that supply chain companies are well positioned to benefit from upcoming offshore wind projects. I also understand that the industry accepts that a bit of a sea change is needed to meet the ambitious 60 per cent local content targets that the UK has set in its offshore wind sector deal. On that key point—about which the cabinet secretary posed a very pertinent question to both the Conservatives and the Labour Party—without conditionality and the contract for difference process, how on earth will we get those large companies to do that? This is not a game that we are playing; this is people’s livelihoods. We must have conditionality in the process. It is nonsensical not to have it, and I am disappointed that the Tories, in particular, have just disregarded that proposition.

It is essential that the Scottish Government continues to work with the trade unions and others, as well as with the UK Government, to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of the renewables manufacturing bonanza that we all wish to see. Although I understand that, further to the summit, the UK Government is to look again at the contract for difference and supply chain process, it is essential that conditionality is ensured. It is a pity that this Parliament does not have that power—what a difference we could make to drive the industry forward.

I commend the unstinting efforts of the GMB, Unite and the STUC, and I commend the BiFab workers, whose skills, commitment and impressive dignity are the best adverts for the future of the yard. This contract is vital for the workers, for the company and for Fife. I know that the Scottish Government will continue to do everything that it can to secure the work, and I welcome the cabinet secretary's pledge to that effect, which he has stated again this afternoon. Today, our Parliament in Scotland is sending a strong message: EDF should honour the promises that it made and bring this vital work to Fife.

15:36

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** I ask members to note my entry in the register of members' interests relating to renewable energy and manufacturing.

Considering that the SNP recently announced that it is stepping up its action to combat climate change, I am sure that the Scottish Government will be keen to implement actions that will support our renewable energy sector as much as possible. I welcome the opportunity, in this debate, to promote our offshore wind sector and to state the importance of our renewable energy industry's contribution to the Scottish and UK economies. It is important that skilled workers such as those at BiFab are employed, so that we can boost our local economy and, importantly, retain skilled workers in Scotland.

However, disappointingly, the SNP Government is still dragging its feet. Although it will say in every media release that it intends to invest in tackling climate change and in our renewable industry, the action is lacking.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Alexander Burnett:** No, thanks.

Both the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill simply do not go far enough in their ambitions.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alexander Burnett:** No. I think that we have heard enough from the SNP about its priorities today.

In the case of the Fife ready for renewal campaign, we cannot escape the fact that constructing parts for Scotland's offshore wind farms halfway round the world and transporting them here would have a carbon cost. Transport emissions are barely falling and made up a third of Scotland's emissions in 2016.

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) rose—**

**Alexander Burnett:** We need to take bigger steps by ensuring that local companies are awarded contracts to reduce our impact on the climate. Not only that; we need to boost our local economy and provide jobs for skilled workers. The sector has shrunk in every quarter for the past two years, shrinking by 3.5 per cent in the last quarter alone, which is the largest fall on record.

Last year, in a debate on apprenticeship week, I noted the importance of encouraging people into the sector.

**Derek Mackay:** What about Alex Rowley?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, cabinet secretary, but I am chairing the meeting.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alexander Burnett:** No.

We will soon have a shortage of workers, with more than half of those in the industry reaching retirement age.

As we will hear from many members today, this is about more than just one firm; it is about the wider environment for businesses and the need for us to do better in supporting it. Scottish Renewables noted that offshore wind expansion will provide huge potential for hundreds of supply chain companies, ports and communities that all feed into those offshore projects.

The offshore wind sector is one for Scotland and the UK to be very excited about, and its UK content is expected to reach the target of 50 per cent by 2020. It is currently at 48 per cent, which is a 5 per cent increase on the 2012 figure, which shows that it is moving in the right direction. Earlier this year, the UK energy minister announced the offshore wind sector deal, which will further reduce emissions and protect the environment. That is a landmark agreement between the UK Government and the offshore wind sector, and it is suggested that the UK could reach 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030.

**Alex Rowley:** In the public gallery today, there are workers who have been competing against state-owned companies from overseas. There is not a level playing field. There is a view that, while they have been trying, the UK Government has been sitting on its hands. Will Alexander Burnett push the UK Government to intervene, to put the resources in and to create a level playing field?

**Alexander Burnett:** We are all aware that there are state aid restrictions on investment.

**Derek Mackay:** That was my point.

**Alexander Burnett:** Maybe after Brexit, there will be opportunities to give support. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, you may show passion but I warn you to keep a lid on it.

**Alexander Burnett:** There will be not only investment of up to £250 million in building a stronger UK supply chain but social equality commitments such as increasing the representation of women in the industry to at least a third. With an expected increase in the number of green jobs in the industry from 7,000 today to 27,000 by 2030, that is a great deal for the UK. Importantly, a significant number of those jobs are expected to be in Scotland. We need the SNP to show its commitment to the renewable energy sector, to support businesses such as BiFab to gain contracts, to encourage companies such as EDF to recognise its environmental impact and to take bigger steps in its ambitions to combat climate change.

Scotland currently has the lowest rate of economic growth of any country in the EU and the lowest rate of jobs growth of any region or nation in the UK, and there has been no improvement in our productivity level since 2007. As a country, we have so much to offer but we are not showing it. We have the tools to make those statistics change, and I believe that Scotland can be back on top. Thanks to the UK Government, in 2019-20, Scotland's budget is increasing by £521 million in real terms, with the block grant rising by 1.7 per cent. Therefore, there can be no excuse that the SNP does not have the resources to help. I ask the SNP Government to invest in our climate change economy and to use that extra cash to stick to its commitment to maintain Scotland's reputation as a global leader in tackling climate change.

I am disappointed but not surprised that, so far, it has been all talk and no action. I hope that the SNP is determined to tackle the climate emergency that our generation faces and that we can work together to achieve our ambitious climate change targets.

15:42

**Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP):** I do not want to get involved in party politics on this subject, but the speeches from Tory members this afternoon have been appalling and have shown no commitment to Scotland whatsoever.

**Dean Lockhart:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alex Neil:** I am not taking any interventions from Tory members.

Yet again, Scotland has to beg multinational companies to get control over our own resources. This is not the first time that we have been in this situation. Thirty and 40 years ago, the Scottish people did not benefit from the great wealth from the oil in the North Sea—not just in relation to the revenue, but in relation to the jobs, the technology and the order book. We never got our fair share. To be fair, the Labour Government of Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan tried to rectify that by creating the Offshore Supplies Office and the British National Oil Corporation—not to go and beg, but to take ownership of our resource and turn it into wealth creation for Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom.

One of the first things that the Thatcher Government did when it came to power was to sell off the BNOC and get rid of the Offshore Supplies Office. The consequence of that was that we never realised our full potential from oil. Here we are again—history is repeating itself. We have a massive asset in the North Sea, which, as the cabinet secretary said, has huge potential for wind power generation. We are not reaping the benefit of that because we do not have the power to impose conditionality. If the Parliament had that power, we would have a clear majority to impose conditionality and that would solve the BiFab problem almost overnight.

However, we do not have that power and until we get it we have to look at other ways to address the situation. That falls into two categories. First, we have to fight, ideally on a united front, for the BiFab workers and their families. If that means that in the meantime we have to beg EDF, we have to beg and try to persuade it. We have to try to get the energy minister in London to exercise her power while we maximise the use of our power. We should do all of that and I think that most members in this chamber are agreed.

Secondly, we have to make sure that Scotland never gets into this position again. If we look back at our history with hydro power—that huge resource that is concentrated in the north of Scotland—as Mark Ruskell said, we did not wait for some EDF from another country to manage and develop our hydro resource; we did it. Tom Johnston set up the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board during the war at the most difficult time to get the money to do that.

I say to the Scottish Government: if we are not going to get the powers that we need, let us look at repeating the model of the hydro board and set up a Scottish national renewable energy company. It should not just bid for contracts from big multinationals but develop the wind farms onshore and offshore, take control of the whole process and use that power to buy in the resources of BiFab, give BiFab and other Scottish companies

their orders and build up an export industry in wind farm development, in terms of the technology and all the rest of it. We should mobilise our resources. We have vast pension funds in the public sector in Scotland and we should get them to invest in that kind of dynamic process—in a new national company to manage, own and develop our wind power capability. Then we will not need to go and beg.

The other thing that we should do, in addition to all the excellent work that the Scottish Government has already done both with BiFab and in its general development of renewables, is to review every power that we have including planning powers, legislation relating to emissions control, environmental powers and financial powers to look for every possible way to secure the work for BiFab in the meantime and to make sure that in the longer term we are never treated like this again. Our people are entitled to benefit from our natural resources. Let us unite behind a practical programme to make that happen.

15:48

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I agree with the majority of what comrade Neil said, because

“As the windiest country in Europe, we should be angry and embarrassed that every single turbine around us has been imported.”

Those are the words of the former UK energy minister Brian Wilson, and he is right. We should be angry: angry that we have empty yards here in Scotland that are very able to produce and deliver the platforms for the offshore renewable projects that are being built off the coast of Scotland. We have seen contracts to provide those platforms being placed with companies in Belgium, Spain and the United Arab Emirates while Scottish yards lie empty and Scottish workers struggle to find jobs.

The trade unions Unite and the GMB say that they simply want to see a level playing field. Both have previously criticised the failure to deliver renewable supply chain benefits to Scottish yards and workers. They have said that the jobs of the future, which are critical to delivering the green energy revolution and a sustainable planet, are being carved up by big businesses that do not care about Scottish workers, our communities and our future—and they are right.

That is why the Parliament must unite behind ensuring that the next big Scottish renewables project—an offshore wind farm worth a staggering £2 billion, which will be located less than 10 miles from the Fife coast—brings jobs to Scotland and to Fife. As others have said, it seems that the owners of the site, EDF, the French state-owned energy

company, have a preference for awarding the contract to build the platforms to manufacturers on the other side of the world, in Indonesia. That would seem to be madness, given that, as Richard Leonard has pointed out again and again, it is estimated that bringing the structures from there would involve more than 300 journeys, which could generate emissions equivalent to those of 35 million cars on the road.

Surely that makes a mockery of any claims of being focused on tackling the climate emergency, and such hypocrisy must be not only exposed but brought to an end. We cannot have a situation in which workers are told that they have to pay the price for a greener climate while the speculators, multinationals and state-owned foreign companies rake in the profits. Let us be clear: as Richard Leonard has said, Scottish firms are not benefiting fully from the opportunities that are available in the renewable energy sector. That was shown in the STUC’s report “Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs”, which highlighted that less than a third of the jobs that were promised in Scotland’s renewable energy sector have been delivered.

The trade unions are working with communities in Fife and across Scotland, and their message is clear: we have our own better plan for EDF, which would work for Fife, Scotland and our planet. It is really simple: we should build the turbine jackets in Fife. The yards here are ready and waiting to get started on work that could create jobs for more than 1,000 people, unlocking much-needed investment and growth for our future. That would be good news for local communities and our economy. If the bulk of the wind turbine jackets were to be built in yards just 10 miles from the wind farm, it would mean less shipping and significantly fewer carbon emissions over the lifespan of the project. That would be more good news for our environment and for the future of the planet. Fife is ready for renewal and the NnG project is the opportunity that we need. We have the yards and the skills, and the communities are ready to play their part in tackling the climate emergency. EDF must think again and do what is right for Fife, Scotland and our environment.

To all the parties in the Parliament, I say that we need a proper manufacturing strategy for Scotland, in which the state plays a key role in securing the aim that we supposedly agree upon: a just transition. There is no reason that we cannot have a local or regional benefits agreement model in place for the Scottish energy sector, as is done in Canada, and even here in Scotland through the community benefit clauses in local government procurement contracts.

In concluding, I reiterate that the plan put forward by Unite and the GMB, which would help to secure jobs in Fife and be better for our planet,

is the right one, and that the Parliament should support it. Let us build the new turbine jackets in Fife, find a way to jump-start the renewable supply chain in Scotland properly, and reap the benefits of a new green industrial revolution for a new generation.

15:55

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** I welcome the Labour Party's motion, which asks Parliament to support the Scottish Trades Union Congress's Fife ready for renewal campaign. I fully support that campaign. I also welcome the cabinet secretary's commitment to BiFab and the support that the Scottish Government has given and will continue to give to the company's Methil and Burntisland yards, both of which are in my constituency. The ready for renewal campaign highlights the benefits that the securing of contracts in the renewables sector would have for BiFab, its staff and the local communities of Methil and Burntisland.

I thank the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Unite and the GMB for their continued work with the Scottish Government and BiFab's owner—the Canadian fabrication company DF Barnes—to help to secure the future of the BiFab yards. Their continued message of positivity through difficult times for the company and its workforce has helped to keep momentum and focus on the Fife fabrication sector.

The need for new contracts to revitalise the yards has been deeply felt across my constituency. There has been a great impact on the local economy, particularly in the community around BiFab's Methil yard, where 41 per cent of individuals live in one of the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland. That is more than twice the figure for Fife as a whole. The yard is vital in creating local employment and providing employees with highly sought-after skills. Even more important, it brings local young people into modern apprenticeship schemes in a skill sector that is transferable to engineering sectors across Scotland and even the global manufacturing industry.

I have visited the yards a number of times during my terms in office, and I have learned at first hand from employees there about the importance of the employer to the local area and the difference that employment in highly skilled and well-paid positions makes to the lives of those who live in this area of multiple deprivation. The sooner that BiFab's 1,200-strong workforce can return to the yards in Methil and Burntisland, the better.

The lack of contracts also has knock-on effects for the many local businesses that serve the

yards, from suppliers and transportation services to local accommodation and plant hire. Those businesses have all missed out on revenue due to the lack of contracts and employment.

Renewable projects such as the £2 billion NnG offshore wind farm, which, once constructed, will generate enough energy per year to power the whole of Edinburgh, only add to the important role that manufacturing plays in the Scottish economy. The NnG wind farm would continue to support and enhance the Scottish manufacturing and fabrication sector, and that in turn would create highly skilled jobs and boost the economy of both the local area and Scotland as a whole.

Scotland is a world leader in renewable energy and we have the most ambitious emissions reduction targets of any nation, but there is no sense in striving for greatness in those areas and not capitalising on the opportunities that they create. They have the potential to benefit the entire Scottish manufacturing supply chain, to breathe life back into yards such as BiFab's and to give hope back to the communities that they support. The Scottish Government, along with the UK Government, must use all the available powers to maximise the ability of Scottish companies such as BiFab to benefit from contracts that are awarded in the renewables sector.

Many of my constituents ask me why BiFab is not winning contracts. The answer is simple. How can we expect it to compete with companies such as Navantia, which is allowed to run at a loss by its Spanish Government owner and can therefore offer prices that are far below what can be offered by a Scottish company that strives at the very least to break even while producing high-quality work that is done by well-paid employees? We cannot expect BiFab to tender for and win contracts when it is not competing on a level playing field.

The Scottish Government's strong support for BiFab is the reason why we are able to debate the topic today. Without the Government's intervention in the company and its commitment to BiFab's sustainability, there would not be the hope for the future of the company that exists today. By becoming a minority shareholder, the Government brought the company back from the brink of closure. Additional investment from the well-established DF Barnes has revitalised the vision for the Burntisland and Methil yards to maintain consistent contracts and become the stable employers that they once were.

The First Minister has personally visited the yards and the people on the ground who are fighting to keep the fabrication industry alive. The Government has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to the yards, and I, as well as a large



number of my constituents, appreciate that continued support.

I am aware of the investment that Scottish Enterprise has put into the Methil yard to modernise it and update the facilities to keep up with the demands of modern fabrication. BiFab now needs that support to result in new opportunities for fabrication and construction in the marine renewables and energy sector in Scotland, because it is in Scottish taxpayers' best interests and because the people of Methil and Burntisland desperately need the morale boost of a newly awarded contract.

The Scottish manufacturing supply chain must see the benefit of the Government's commitment to renewable energy and emissions reduction, and the billions of pounds of contracts that that commitment will bring. The sector's highly skilled workforce must be given the opportunity to contribute to that cause and to benefit from creating a better and more sustainable Scotland. Employment from the renewable sector will benefit the BiFab yards in Methil and Burntisland, as well as the wider manufacturing and fabrication sector across Scotland.

EDF Energy has a moral duty to support the Scottish supply chain and grant the economic benefit of the production of the NnG wind farm to the very area that it will call home. After all, once the NnG wind farm is complete, EDF will make billions of pounds of profit during the site's lifespan. It would be a shameful mark on Scotland's industrial history if BiFab received no work as a result of the country's commitment to carbon neutrality and investment in the renewable energy sector.

16:01

**Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests and the fund with energy industry holdings.

Today's debate comes as Scotland builds its renewable energy sector in onshore and offshore wind, solar and hydro power. Many of those energy initiatives are realised through competitive international contracts, and it is through a spirit of collaboration that the industry has seen huge development over the years.

However, our economy is struggling. The Government's labour productivity statistics show that Scotland has not improved its productivity in global league tables since 2007, and growth is forecast to be slower than that of the UK as a whole from 2020 to 2023.

Add to that the threat to BiFab in Fife and people could be forgiven for thinking that this is

just another example of a sector trying to grow under tough economic conditions. However, last week, Parliament was made aware that fewer than one third of the jobs in Scotland's renewable energy sector that the SNP Government promised have been delivered.

Nevertheless, Scotland's renewable energy sector has strong support from a number of industries and corporate bodies that are committed to seeing the country continue to lead the way in creating a greener and more energy-efficient world. Scotland's growing capacity for renewables has translated into a significant increase in renewable electricity output, which more than tripled between 2007 and 2018. Turnover from renewable energy activity in 2017 was approximately £5.5 billion and, perhaps most significantly, the renewable energy sector accounts for 17,000 jobs across Scotland.

Such growth is supported by industry bodies including Scottish Renewables and initiatives such as the offshore wind sector deal, which was implemented by the UK Government. That deal pledges to drive the transformation of offshore wind generation, boosting the productivity and competitiveness of the UK supply chain.

**Derek Mackay:** Can Mr Bowman name a single legal measure that we could have taken that we have not taken that would have secured work for BiFab or any other yard?

**Bill Bowman:** Proving a negative is a difficult exercise. The Government has to work with the UK Government to find areas in which measures can be implemented.

Despite the Scottish Government's pledge to help our renewable energy sector grow, we are seeing the consequences of a lack of structural investment and industry foresight, which leaves our Scottish renewable industries at a disadvantage compared with European competitors.

Furthermore, it is not just the workforce that is affected. Local businesses are also feeling the squeeze, which makes the example of BiFab about more than just one firm. It is about the wider environment for businesses and the SNP Government's failing approach to the economy.

The example of BiFab is depressing on many fronts. The overlooked yards are a devastating situation for the local economy. They are ready and waiting to get started on work that could create jobs for more than 1,000 people, unlocking much needed investment and growth for the region's future.

Parliament shares the concerns of the STUC, which understands that little of the work fabricating jackets for wind turbines will come to Fife. It is

encouraging to see the efforts of Scottish Enterprise, which has invested in hard-standing infrastructure and piling works along the Fife quayside, and GMB Scotland and Unite, which have launched the ready for renewal campaign. Those efforts will help to ensure that construction of parts for Scotland's offshore wind farms do not happen halfway round the world.

Our renewable energy sector is crying out for help to fulfil the demands that we place on it. Feedback given to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee highlighted a lack of

"an industrial strategy ... for offshore wind and ... more broadly for the whole renewables sector".—[*Official Report*, Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee; 23 April; c 18.]

It is crucial that we start to grow our economy and put infrastructure in place to allow the renewable energy sector to reach its potential. However, that can only be achieved through a change in mind-set.

The motion focuses on Fife, but the offshore wind farms are in range of the Forth and Tay ports. In my region, Dundee and Montrose have the credentials to be considered for oil and gas decommissioning work and the construction and maintenance of wind farms. We need to include such facilities in a joined-up approach to supply-chain management.

Last year, Dundee City Council's leader said that he hoped to bring £1.8 billion in investment to the city to build 54 turbines. However, the First Minister admitted to the STUC conference last month that the Government has not been as successful in winning contracts as it had hoped.

It is a long time since the Tay was home to many of the finest wood, iron and steel shipbuilding workshops in the world. However, the strategic positioning of Dundee, along with the need for high-quality construction jobs in the wake of difficulties elsewhere, makes it an ideal place to build and decommission renewables.

We want to see Scotland at the forefront of new jobs in renewables, but the SNP Government's muddled approach to supporting businesses puts that at risk. We on the Conservative benches are proud to be part of a UK that is reducing emissions faster than any other G20 country—by 29 per cent in the last decade alone.

Scotland was once the workshop of the world. With more involved direction and financial support, we can continue to lead the way as the renewable energy innovator of the world.

16:06

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** I start by offering support to our friends in Fife from everyone in Inverclyde. We whole-

heartedly support the campaign to get the work and jobs in Fife. It is so important for Scotland's industrial strategy and for its industrial future as well. I say that because—as colleagues will know—in my community in my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency, we have gone through a huge amount of change over the years.

In 2014, Ferguson Marine Engineering in Port Glasgow closed down and it was the support of the Scottish Government that actually brought that shipyard back to life. When I talk to people in my constituency, they absolutely understand the importance of manufacturing for Scotland's economy, but also for Scotland's future.

Part of the motion before us from the Labour Party highlights the emissions that would be generated by potentially transporting the final product from Indonesia to 10 miles off the coast of Fife. The issue is similar to one raised by the heritage rail sector in the UK—I admit, on a very much smaller scale—because coal for that sector is shipped from Columbia over to the UK. Thankfully the level of coal being shipped has reduced, because the sector itself is reducing the amount used in its particular rail engines, but the situation is similar.

I cannot understand the whole idea of shipping the jackets over to Scotland; the emissions that that would generate would fly in the face of what the final product is for—to help the environment.

I want to touch on a second point. Richard Leonard spoke earlier about wanting an interventionist state. Were it not for the Scottish Government in 2014, Ferguson Marine Engineering would not have come back into being and Liberty Steel would not be operating in Lanarkshire. There have been many examples—

**Richard Leonard:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Stuart McMillan:** One moment, if I may. There have been many examples of the Scottish Government helping either to bring an industry back or to save an industry.

A further example from my constituency is Texas Instruments in Greenock. A task force was set up and joint working between the Scottish Government and Inverclyde Council enabled some type of solution to the issues that it faced to be found.

**Richard Leonard:** We applaud the defensive rescues that have been mounted by the Scottish Government in relation to steel, aluminium, Ferguson's and so on. However, does the member accept that there is a need for a forward-looking industrial strategy that is not just defensive and reactive but is proactive?

**Stuart McMillan:** That is one of the things that the Scottish Government has been doing in recent years—it has been planning ahead. I do not know whether Richard Leonard saw the recent announcement of the £14 million advancing manufacturing challenge fund. That money is supported by the European regional development fund. Richard Leonard and I are actually on the same page on this issue, and we do not have to fight about it. The Scottish Government is doing the work that Richard Leonard is asking it to do.

I was genuinely disappointed by the contributions from Dean Lockhart and Bill Bowman. If that was them attempting to take a team Scotland approach, I do not know what they are like when they are trying to be oppositional. I was surprised by the tone.

**Dean Lockhart:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Stuart McMillan:** One moment.

At the outset, Dean Lockhart stated that his party was going to support the motion and the Scottish Government's amendment. However, he and Mr Bowman went on to tank the Scottish Government in their speeches. As I said, that was disappointing. I grew up in Port Glasgow and, as a child, I witnessed the decline of the shipbuilding industry and most of the industry in my community. Like many thousands of kids in my community, I was affected by that, and it was really disgusting to hear some of the comments that were made today.

I will take the member's intervention.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr McMillan is in his last minute, so it had better be a short intervention.

**Dean Lockhart:** Just to clarify, most of our comments were based on the GMB's report, "Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs". They were not comments from us; they reflected the views of stakeholders on the failures of the Scottish Government in the renewables sector.

**Stuart McMillan:** Once again, selective comments from the Conservative Party—very much so.

I know that I speak for my community when I say that my constituents will want the work to go to Fife. It is a good thing for Fife, it is a good thing for Scotland and it is certainly a good thing for Scotland's industrial future. I am sure that that is something that every single person here—even the Tories—can agree on today.

16:12

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Neart na Gaoithe—the power of the wind—

could stand for more than just a way of generating electricity; it could become a symbol of energy transition, too, if the operator of the wind farm in the Firth of Forth chooses to make it so. That operator is EDF—Électricité de France. As we have heard, it is a state enterprise from another European country, and, like Equinor from Norway and Vattenfall from Sweden, it now plays a major role in offshore wind in Scotland.

Of course, Neart na Gaoithe is not EDF's only interest in Scottish renewables. The company operates onshore wind farms from Sutherland to Galloway, among a total of 35 sites across the UK. On the Isle of Lewis, EDF has developed plans for major onshore wind farms. One of them has been taken forward with the community landowner, Stornoway Trust, through Lewis Wind Power, and the other, in Uisenis, is being taken forward by the owners of the Eishken estate. Only last week, Lewis Wind Power applied for a new consent for the Stornoway wind farm, precisely in order to make it more able to compete with offshore wind farms such as Neart na Gaoithe in the North Sea.

The Isle of Lewis is particularly relevant here for two reasons. First, the planned site of the Stornoway wind farm is close to the Arnish fabrication yard, operated by BiFab, so EDF is already well aware of BiFab from a Lewis as well as a Fife perspective. Secondly, the success of Lewis Wind Power and all other renewable developers in the islands depends on being able to sell power to customers right across the British mainland, which is going to happen only when Lewis is connected to the GB national grid.

I met EDF last year to discuss the strategic importance of islands' wind in meeting renewable energy targets for Scotland, the UK and the European Union. I have made representations to Ofgem on behalf of Scottish Labour, and I know that the Scottish Government and others have done precisely the same.

We all agree that the regulator, Ofgem, needs to be more ambitious in supporting renewable energy development in the Western Isles, and that it needs to endorse plans for an interconnector from Lewis to the mainland that can carry 600—rather than just 450—megawatts of renewable electricity. We have argued for a larger capacity interconnector because we want to stimulate and encourage more renewable energy on the islands—not just large-scale onshore wind, but potentially wave energy and community renewables as well. EDF wants that, too. Of course, it also has a commercial interest in securing the means to carry future additional power to the British mainland. There is nothing wrong with that commercial interest, but allying commercial interests with policy objectives cannot be a one-way street.

EDF is itself a state-owned enterprise. It wants to work with Governments and political parties to take forward policy objectives that converge with its own commercial interests. That is fine, but it also needs to use its commercial clout in support of wider policy objectives that will benefit the renewable energy sector as a whole. That is what we are calling on EDF and other renewable energy developers to do today. As the STUC put it last week, a company that has benefited from development consents and that seeks political support on policy issues also needs to be a company that does the right thing. The right thing in this context is to maximise the economic benefits of renewable energy by placing major fabrication contracts with Scottish yards. In the case of Neart na Gaoithe, that means the BiFab yards at Methil and Burntisland.

As Richard Leonard reminded us, over many years, Burntisland Fabrications in Fife and Lewis Offshore at Arnish were major suppliers of offshore infrastructure for the oil and gas industry. Those days are gone. When Lewis Offshore ran out of work, it was bought out by BiFab; and when BiFab ran into trouble, it was bought out by DF Barnes. DF Barnes is also a company with years of experience in oil and gas fabrication—in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere—and it has made a conscious decision to diversify into offshore renewables here in Europe. That choice deserves support and, even more than the company, the workers at BiFab deserve support—not just from Government, but from the renewable energy sector itself. That has to start with EDF at Neart na Gaoithe and with tier 1 contractors such as Saipem, which has also been mentioned today.

It is difficult to see how transporting offshore production jackets from East Asia to the Firth of Forth could be more profitable than fabrication here in Scotland, unless the terms and conditions of the workers in Indonesia are truly dire and workplace safety non-existent. That can hardly be the right thing to do. If production in East Asia on that basis really is price competitive, it will only undermine other fabrication yards that do the right thing, not just in Britain but across the European Union. I hope that ministers are seeking to cooperate on those issues with not just the UK Government but the EU, because there is an interest in preventing the undermining of commonly accepted working conditions.

Ministers in the Scottish and UK Governments have real clout in their relationships with offshore wind developers, as onshore and offshore licensing authorities. I was pleased to hear much of what Derek Mackay had to say. Governments need to work together to develop a shared strategy for offshore wind that requires not just warm words about local content, but actual delivery. If, in spite of some of things that we have

heard today, ministers in both Governments can take a joined-up approach, and if, as a result, EDF chooses to do the right thing, Neart na Gaoithe can also be Neart airson Math—the power of the wind, and a force for good.

16:19

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Scotland is a country of engineering and innovation. Scotland's engineering and manufacturing past was the bedrock of employment for generations of people—from the bridges that we have built all over the world, and the ships that we have built that have sailed all over the world, to the oil and gas platforms that give so much work to the people in my constituency and beyond—and it has engendered experience that we have exported all over the world.

We are now on the next wave of engineering and innovation, with our pressing need to create more renewable energy. As we address the climate emergency, we will need to stop burning hydrocarbons, and to heat our homes and to power our transport with clean energy. It is estimated that demand for clean electricity will therefore at least double, and we are committed to that power coming from renewables.

I fully support the Fife ready for renewal campaign, and I fully agree with the calls for the associated manufacturing work that will produce the Inch Cape Offshore Ltd and Seagreen Wind Energy Ltd offshore wind farms to be won by local firms including BiFab.

My constituency, of course, contains the Aberdeen offshore wind farm, which is currently producing enough clean electricity to power hundreds of thousands of homes—I think that it produces 70 per cent of the needs of Aberdeen city every day. However, it has been well documented that the wind turbines and subsea structures that make up that wind farm were manufactured elsewhere. It would be a great shame if the workers and people of Fife found themselves to be unable to benefit directly from projects off their coastline. I whole-heartedly agree that importing hardware from across the world is completely at odds with our efforts to reduce the emissions that we want to avoid, as we move towards a low-carbon future that is powered by that hardware.

We should be doing everything in our power to squeeze every last drop of economic activity out of large infrastructure projects, for local workforces. If we do not have the appropriate power, we should be campaigning together to have it devolved to the Scottish Parliament. In the meantime, we should work together to get the UK Government to do the

right thing. I am delighted to hear that the Scottish Government will use the powers that are now in place through the recent passing of the Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019 to incentivise the supply chain for such projects being in Scotland.

The ability to harness the economic potential of the renewable energy revolution with the onshore wind farm subsidy, contracts for difference, contract conditionality and energy taxation lies with Westminster. The cabinet secretary has outlined the implications for Scottish manufacturers of management of those powers being at UK level. In doing so, he schooled Dean Lockhart on those matters.

I share Stuart McMillan's frustration about the Tory speeches. He might be disappointed; I am just completely bored with them. I am of the same generation as Stuart McMillan; my parents were at the sharp end of what the Tory Government did to manufacturing in Clydebank in the 1980s.

I pay tribute to the work of the energy journalist Dick Winchester, who writes for Energy Voice and has long been a campaigner to get manufacturing of renewables infrastructure based in Scotland.

In many ways, what has happened with BiFab is a watershed moment. If things do not change, local companies will lose out time and again, as we fulfil the wind infrastructure needs of the future. Conditionality is not completely in our gift, but maybe it should be, for all our sakes.

As well as lamenting the missed manufacturing opportunities of the Aberdeen offshore wind farm, Dick Winchester has pointed to the development of projects including the Batwind project, which involves a battery-based energy system. The technology comes from Younicos—a German-American technology company. Dick Winchester has pointed out that there are companies in Caithness that could have won that contract. Places throughout Scotland should be able to share in the potential that exists. Heaven help us if that is left to the Tories.

The Scottish Government's welcome and speedy commitment to reducing the emissions that have caused the climate emergency provoke mixed feelings in my part of Scotland. I have to be honest about that. I am on record as having talked in the chamber about the potential economic and social implications that a transition away from burning of oil and gas could have for the hundreds of thousands of north-east people who make their living from exploration for and production of hydrocarbons, or in the supply chain. The transition must be just, managed and invested in. Both Governments have to do that.

The establishment of the just transition commission by the Scottish Government is of huge importance to the north-east. I cannot

overstate how important it is that the relevant skills of people in the north-east and Fife be harnessed in the transition to renewables, and that serious efforts be made to ensure that we transition justly and fairly. The prizes are there. There are massive opportunities, and we do not want them leaking out of Scotland.

**Mark Ruskell:** I agree on the importance of the just transition commission, but is it important that it is put on a statutory basis to stop the Tories decommissioning it and getting rid of it if they are ever in government in Scotland?

**Gillian Martin:** Mark Ruskell knows my feelings about that, because I sit with him on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. I am not completely convinced that putting the commission on a statutory basis would make much difference. I would like the Government to be held to account for what happens with the just transition commission.

I gently suggest to Labour that it, too, should be mindful of the fact that the Aberdeen wind farm was awarded €40 million of funding from the European Union. With a hard Brexit on the horizon, the loss of such funding could mean that large renewables projects are put in jeopardy, along with the jobs that come with them. Let us work together to avoid that situation.

16:25

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Fife ready for renewal campaign, which seeks to secure for BiFab the contract for production of wind turbine parts.

We recognise the need for more renewable energy, as part of a balanced mix of energy sources, to help us to cut emissions. We are clear that central to that aim is that we ensure security of supply, affordability and decarbonisation. With the right investment in innovation, and with cutting-edge technology in our renewable energy sector, we can ensure that we meet our renewable energy targets while also creating jobs. That is the vital point that we are discussing today. We are talking about jobs, the economy and the livelihoods of people in Fife and other parts of Scotland. I pay tribute to BiFab's workforce for the work that it has done to support the economy across Fife and other regions.

Given that we are seeking to tackle climate change, it seems to be rather ironic that many of the parts for renewable energy sources such as offshore wind farms are being built halfway around the world and then transported to Fife. That makes no sense to anybody: many members have talked about the nonsensical situation in which we find

ourselves. Transport emissions remain high, and made up a third of Scotland's overall emissions back in 2016. When we have, here in Scotland, a company such as BiFab that has the capability and capacity to build parts for wind turbines, and which supports local jobs and communities, it seems to be completely mad for us to even consider having production take place elsewhere, given that the wind farm will be located just 10 miles off the coast of Fife.

As we have heard, some people fear that without the contract the survival of the yards will be in question, and that the associated jobs in the area will be lost. To that end, we support the calls for BiFab to be awarded the contract for wind turbine parts, so that they are built at home. It is important that we have discussions with the Scottish and UK Governments, so that we can encourage EDF Renewables to ensure that work on the offshore wind farm is possible and practical.

It is encouraging that the campaign that has been built up includes community groups, the workforce, elected representatives from the council, the Scottish Parliament and other places, and environmentalists. I pay tribute to the trade unions, which have worked together to put on pressure. We acknowledge that they have made a massive impact, and all of us have worked alongside them to put pressure on EDF Renewables to consider its decisions.

The Scottish Government has a role to play in the campaign, and the cabinet secretary has said that that role is being taken seriously—rightly so. The Scottish Government has a stake in BiFab, so the taxpayer has a stake in BiFab, which is an important point to acknowledge. Therefore, the Scottish Government has an obligation to ensure that the future of BiFab can be secured. As politicians, we have an obligation to do all that we can to help, including by holding discussions with UK Government ministers about what can be done.

It would be naive of us to think that the debate is about one single firm, because it is not. The Government in Holyrood is presiding over the wider economic environment, and we have heard about the difficulties that have been encountered and the decline that has taken place in some parts of Scotland, which has caused continual disruption across many sectors.

Our growth is forecast to be slower than growth in other parts of the UK until 2023, and we have the lowest growth of any country in the European Union. Over the past decade, we have had the lowest jobs growth of the regions of the UK, and there are some worrying trends in the economy, as far as the Scottish Government is concerned. In particular, it has failed to ensure—

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member give way?

**Alexander Stewart:** No. I want to make some progress.

Back in 2010, the then First Minister claimed that the offshore wind industry would create 20,000 jobs in Scotland over the following 10 years, but those jobs have not materialised. The Government has also claimed that it has supported renewable energy financially, but some companies have had to go into administration because it removed all its public funding back in 2014, while other companies have had to reduce their workforces.

We must acknowledge that everybody is not getting this right; there is fault on both sides, and we need to work together for the communities that we represent. The UK Government is committed to going further, and its offshore wind sector deal will bring £250 million into the sector, and is forecast to quadruple the number of jobs and to increase global exports fivefold.

The Scottish Conservatives have supported, and will continue to support, the efforts that have been made with our energy mix with regard to our economy, and we recognise that offshore wind farms are a vital component of that work. Given our attempts to reduce emissions, it simply makes no sense to commission parts for wind farm development from halfway around the world.

It is up to us all to support BiFab and ensure that the yards, the jobs and the communities that depend on both are looked after. I again pay tribute to the GMB and Unite for all their work. We must do all that we can to support and secure Fife and its economy, and the UK Government and the Scottish Government must play their parts.

16:31

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I add my voice to the many that we have already heard in support not only of BiFab, but of local businesses in general getting as much work as they can.

I agree with a number of Richard Leonard's remarks, including those on the failure of the various owners of the BiFab facility over the years to make a plan, and his suggestion that profit rather than the common good has been the driving factor.

I also agree with a number of points that Derek Mackay made. It is encouraging to hear that the Government is exploring the powers of, for example, Crown Estate Scotland, as we now have control over the Crown estate, and that, if there are to be Scottish guarantees in the future, there must be benefits to the local economy. However, as the cabinet secretary said, the UK Government

has more levers and powers in this area, especially in relation to CFD.

The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, of which I am deputy convener, held a round-table evidence session on BiFab on 23 April. At that meeting there was certainly a strong suggestion that some overseas operators are, in effect, being allowed to run at a loss every year. Indeed, it was claimed that 35 per cent of turnover could be in the form of a loss. If that is the case, it is not surprising that our businesses are unable to compete. That is certainly state aid, as far as I understand the term.

It has also been suggested that if other countries can bend the rules, so should we. I agree that we should be neither naive nor particularly legalistic in our approach, when other people ignore some of the rules or, at least, interpret them in a more relaxed fashion. However, I also argue that the rules are there for a good reason, so surely the best solution is for everyone to follow them, and for the EU or whomever to ensure conformity.

In its briefing for today's debate, Scottish Renewables has said that the

“procurement processes are tightly governed by UK and European legislation and are focused on providing the best possible value for money for Scottish and UK energy consumers.”

When I asked at the round-table session whether it is part of Scottish Enterprise's role to follow up such matters and to complain when state aid rules are being broken in other countries, the answer that I got was a bit on the vague side. D F Barnes, which was represented at the session, pointed out that in Canada, for example, there are penalties; if local benefits are not delivered as promised, somebody has to pay.

However, in this country, there seems to be very little comeback if local organisations and individuals do not get the benefits that they have been promised. In that regard, I was a bit disappointed by some of Dean Lockhart's comments. If I heard him correctly, he said that the UK Government should “encourage” EDF. The cabinet secretary intervened on him, but Dean Lockhart avoided saying that there should be a commitment or that the UK Government should force a commitment, which was somewhat disappointing. When I intervened on Willie Rennie, he agreed that there should be binding conditions, although Claire Baker suggested that we “urge” EDF. I say that if we had the power, we should do a little bit more than just “urge” it. However, one of Alex Neil's many good points made it clear that we just do not, at the moment, have the power to impose conditions.

The EU regulations exist to protect decent businesses from unfair competition, and to protect taxpayers from paying over the odds for contracts for someone's cronies. We can all think of times in the past when, in this country and others, contracts were awarded not on the basis of the cheapest price or even best value, but because there was an unhealthy close link between those who were awarding the contracts and those who were awarded them. Whatever happens with Brexit, we must not throw the baby out with the bath water and go back to those times. We need to strike the right balance; there must be fair competition and value for money on the one hand and, on the other, we must absolutely support local businesses and jobs. Lewis Macdonald made the relevant point that workforce pay and conditions in other countries must be a factor in that.

I think that we agree that we need to focus on what we are best at. It has often been said that we cannot compete in mass producing the cheapest products—food, engineering products or anything else—but we can compete at the top end with the best innovation and the most specialised high-quality products. That is what we believe BiFab and others can do. The briefing from Scottish Renewables gives the example of CS Wind UK in Campbeltown, where a £27 million investment in 2016 has upskilled the workforce and improved the equipment so that it can now produce best-in-class turbine towers for the UK and Europe, and has doubled its productivity between 2017 and 2018.

I was disappointed by some of what Bill Bowman said. When he was intervened on, he failed to suggest what steps the Scottish Government could take, or should have taken, to do more on the issue. I suggest that it is his party's commitment to an unrestricted free market that has caused a lot of the current problems. For example, Scottish Power was privatised: it could have been a state-owned player.

There is a lot of agreement today. I hope that we will stay in the EU and be part of the single market, but perhaps we need to look more closely at what our competitor countries are doing, and either challenge their behaviour or learn from it.

16:38

**Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** It is clear that the level of involvement, or lack of involvement, of Scotland's businesses in Scotland's renewables supply chain is a matter of concern and anger across the chamber. As we have seen in the debate, the issues that BiFab faces are set within a wider context of problems with how we support the

energy sector, and those problems go beyond the ones that are detailed in Labour's motion.

As Scotland's onshore wind sector grew, with significant support from the public sector, it became clear that much of the work was not falling to businesses here at home. People are rightly concerned that we risk the same thing happening in relation to offshore wind. As we look to the future, the clear worry is that Scotland will serve as a base for renewables and that Scottish research will make great strides in developing the energy technologies of the future but businesses here simply will not benefit as they should.

It would be foolish to ignore the fact that we operate in a global marketplace. Competition is healthy. It helps to drive down the wholesale cost of energy and provides benefits that can carry over to the consumer. However, when major projects are taking place in our own back yard, people will reasonably ask why much of the manufacturing work is done overseas, with the jobs being created there.

**Stuart McMillan:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** I would like to make progress.

We have heard of the expertise that exists in Scotland, much of which is the legacy of our oil and gas industry, which has been reasonably successful in creating skills, jobs and industry in several parts of the country. It appears that we all agree that Scottish businesses should be able to win the contracts, build up local supply chains, create jobs and provide benefit to their communities, yet, despite assurances, it seems that yards are lying empty while work begins elsewhere.

Although this is not a committee debate, the work of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee is significant in relation to the discussion. Other members have touched on some of the committee's activities, but it is important to reflect on what it has done to bring together representatives from across the sector. When we met them, we heard about a number of issues. There was confusion about the application of state aid rules in the industry—the businesses felt that some competitors were not complying with the rules as they and, it seems, enterprise agencies understood them. When additional support is given elsewhere, we risk creating an unlevel playing field—as the cabinet secretary rightly called it—with competitors having undue commercial advantage. Equally, although panellists acknowledged that there was a responsibility to challenge breaches, there did not seem to be a great deal of clarity over how to do so or who would do so.

The committee was provided with a written update from the cabinet secretary on the supply chain and fabrication work that was identified by the Scottish Government following the offshore wind summit at the beginning of the month. That was welcome, particularly the recognition of the need for a collaborative approach by the Scottish Government and the UK Government, as both the cabinet secretary and Dean Lockhart mentioned. However, those commitments must be matched by detail and action.

Although specific problems exist in BiFab, the Scottish Government's approach to supporting business clearly has a far wider impact on our economy. Not only is it in the renewables sector that we are seeing skills and capacity go to waste, it is in the renewables sector that we are seeing opportunities to build a strong domestic supply chain lost, time and again, through a lack of preparation and joined-up thinking.

**Stuart McMillan:** On that point, surely Jamie Halcro Johnston has to agree that, when Government policy ensures that there is a vast reduction in training, such as apprenticeships, as happened in the 1980s, there will be a shortage in the workforce when there is a change in the economy and there is more opportunity to build in the manufacturing sector.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** The responsibility for apprenticeships and skills and training has been with this Parliament since 1999. Will Mr McMillan clarify his point, as I do not want to misrepresent him?

**Stuart McMillan:** I will explain briefly. In the 1980s, Government policy changed, and apprenticeships were scrapped and the youth training scheme was brought in, which was nowhere near the quality of apprenticeships. Therefore, how can we build ships and wind turbine jackets when there is a shortage of people in the workforce to go and do the job?

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** Mr McMillan is arguing that apprenticeships were lost 40 years ago and, in the period since, somehow our hands have been tied. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Order, please.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** That is a nonsensical position. The SNP members today have focused on what they cannot do and have said nothing about what they can do.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** No, I will not. We have heard a lot from the cabinet secretary speaking from a sedentary position. I would like to get on.



**Derek Mackay:** I am speaking from a standing position.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** Well, the cabinet secretary should be in a sedentary position, because I am still standing.

In his speech, my colleague Dean Lockhart noted the concerns of various stakeholders around the Neart na Gaoithe project off the coast of Fife and the compelling reasons for bringing jobs and investment to his region. The economic impact would indeed be transformative; the skills are there and the environmental case is clear.

Looking wider, Alexander Burnett spoke about the pressing need to support the renewables sector to combat climate change. He also rightly highlighted the need to build the skills that are required for the future, if we are to have a successful industry in Scotland, which is a point that was heard by the committee.

As Willie Rennie and other members highlighted, in order to supply green energy machines in this country, parts of the machines are being shipped from the other side of the world. Claire Baker and Alexander Stewart spoke passionately about the impact of such decisions on their areas and Claire Baker talked about her visit to the site. I visited the site many years ago with former Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Ted Brocklebank, not long after the Kværner yard had closed, when the impact was still being felt.

As I said, there has been no shortage of SNP speakers today, but it was rather left to Alex Neil and to John Mason to talk about ideas, rather than just the limitations.

Scotland has the potential for billions of pounds' worth of investment in renewables, stretching forward for decades to come. In my region, Orkney and Shetland are looking not simply at wind energy as part of the changes around remote island wind but into the future at innovations in wave and tidal energy. Both communities have previously shown how the oil and gas industry sector can make a significant difference to our remote communities.

Now, communities across the Highlands and Islands stand ready to take advantage of the potential opportunities for renewables. It is right that those communities benefit and that direct and supply chain jobs accompany renewable energy. By taking advantage of the superb facilities across Scotland, particularly those in the Highlands and Islands, where former oil and gas yards are ready for use for manufacturing, fabrication and servicing offshore renewables, we can help rebalance the central belt focus of Scotland's economy.

It will be disappointing if the Scottish Government cannot work to seize these

opportunities and if we see another industry based in Scotland but not built in Scotland. If we are to lose out on future investment, sustainable jobs and the chance to boost some of the communities in Scotland that need it most, that really will be a tragedy.

16:45

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** This has been for the most part a valuable and timely debate, highlighting the importance that the Parliament places on harnessing Scotland's tremendous offshore wind resource to decarbonise our energy system in line with Scotland's energy strategy. It has also highlighted the strength of the resolve across the chamber to achieve a fair share of the economic benefit of the construction and operation of offshore wind installations.

My colleague Derek Mackay outlined the routes that Scottish ministers, Crown Estate Scotland and Marine Scotland are exploring to further support the Scottish offshore wind supply chain. I do not know whether Jamie Halcro Johnston just switched off or was out of the chamber, but he clearly was not listening to the cabinet secretary's speech.

I will close for the Government by discussing the work that is being undertaken through our reinvigorated industry working group. Before that, though, I emphasise our view that the UK Government must show greater leadership in areas where powers are reserved, such as securing local content through the contracts for difference mechanism, which is the main route to market for offshore wind, both fixed and floating, and which is a power that is reserved to the UK Government.

The offshore wind sector deal is welcome, and I will speak more about it in a moment. However, I gently point out to all the Conservative speakers that energy policy is fully reserved. It is the UK Government's action that led to the axing of renewables obligation certificates, the axing of Scotland's ability to set Scottish ROCs, the removal of the feed-in tariff regime, the axing of the minimum for the marine energy sector, which was promised by David Cameron and axed by Theresa May without a general election, and the recent restriction on the renewable heat incentive. Therefore, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives about support for the renewable energy sector.

**Dean Lockhart:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I will not take an intervention from the Conservatives. Mr Lockhart

refused to take an intervention from me, so he should please sit down.

Mr Burnett talked about inaction, but in 2018 Scotland generated the equivalent of 74.6 per cent of our electricity from renewables, while the UK generated less than 30 per cent from renewables, so I ask Mr Lockhart and Mr Burnett who is showing leadership on renewables.

As John Mason highlighted, Bill Bowman was not able to identify one clear step that we could have taken to do more to secure procurement of a Scottish supply chain with the powers that we had prior to the Crown Estate being devolved. The cabinet secretary outlined how we are now using those powers to our advantage.

We are ensuring that the Scottish industry is able to take full advantage of the opportunities that are presented by the sector deal through restructuring what was previously known as the offshore wind industry group to create the more strategically focused Scottish offshore wind energy council, which I now co-chair with Brian McFarlane of SSE. That group provides a forum for representatives of all areas of the sector to lead key work streams, which will ensure that the work of SOWEC is aligned to the deal and will ensure that Scotland's strong existing and potential supply chain offer is recognised.

The supply chain element of SOWEC will champion the two Scottish supply chain clusters and explore ways of strengthening and expanding our supply chain to increase local content in future offshore wind projects. Although SOWEC is largely shaped around the sector deal ambitions, it can of course also react to any other industry issues as and when they arise.

Conservatives members are seen to have a total disconnect from the process of the CFD. The CFD support mechanism, which I remind them is run by the UK Government, theoretically offers significant opportunities for our talented workforce and supply chain companies such as BiFab, CS Wind, which we have heard about, and Global Energy Group in Nigg, with three Scottish offshore projects due to bid into the imminent CFD round.

However, UK ministers have created a policy environment through CFD that encourages rapid cost reduction; that might be welcome, but the commercial risk has been pushed down into the lower tiers of the supply chain, with no measures to protect the small and medium-sized enterprises that are worst affected. Scotland has a pipeline of more than 4GW of offshore wind consented in our waters, with further licensing opportunities being considered by Crown Estate Scotland. However, by focusing so clearly on price alone, UK ministers are failing the wider economic interest with CFD. It is vital that UK ministers utilise the powers that

they have to ensure that greater weight is given than at present to supply chain plans that they collect as part of the process when allocating CFD contracts and that they attach conditionality, as the cabinet secretary and others have said.

At present, maximum weight is placed on the price per MWh, which has reached a low of £57.50 per MWh at a time when far more generous funding of £92.50 has been provided as the strike price for new nuclear power in Somerset. There is a clear inconsistency in how UK ministers approach technologies; far greater emphasis on the total value added to the UK economy could be achieved if supply chain plans were reflected and conditionality attached as part of rebalancing between price per MWh and the quality of the bids that are received.

As we have heard, the sector deal that was launched by UK ministers set an industry agreed target of 60 per cent UK content by 2030, which was a key finding of Martin Whitmarsh's supply chain review. Although we welcome the sector deal, we recognise that it will take significant collaborative effort from industry and Governments to ensure that it results in meaningful improvement. However, it is essential that developers uphold their commitment under the sector deal to deliver target levels of local content and we expect to see substantial increases, particularly in the capital expenditure phase of those projects. Supply chain investment under the aligned offshore wind growth partnership is welcome but insufficient in of itself to achieve what we need to achieve.

However—and the Tories should listen to this—the review also recommended that UK ministers should deliver twice the quantum of financial support for offshore wind, with visibility of auctions out to 2030. Given the more recent Committee on Climate Change advice to the effect that the UK now needs up to 75GW of offshore wind by 2050, supporting the supply chain now could net the Scottish and UK economies a far greater return over the longer term.

**Dean Lockhart:** Will the minister give way?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I will not.

Regrettably, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has applied a mere 6GW cap to the next CFD auction, making it unlikely that the full £60 million budget will be accessible to industry. I say also to the Tories: more investment now can mitigate the impact of anticipated slippage in the delivery of Hinkley C.

Without the CFD mechanism delivering a strong and visible pipeline of work at the necessary volume, the offshore wind supply chain will struggle to maintain momentum and increase competitiveness, which would be a missed

opportunity to deploy and develop a supply chain that could compete globally. The UK Government controls that pipeline, and I hope that we have made clear today that there is a role for the Scottish Government and also a role for the UK Government.

The Scottish Government is using all the levers at its disposal to support the sector, and we will ensure that platforms such as the supply chain summit that the cabinet secretary chaired and SOWEC deliver the fundamental changes that are required to strengthen our supply chain and secure the just transition that we all want to see. However, importantly, UK ministers should take the action that is necessary to address the weaknesses in the CFD process and review the process—I hope that we can unite on that today.

16:52

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** The swell in support for climate change action lately has been heartening. I welcome the Scottish Government shifting to a responsible net zero target for the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill. It is exciting to see a growing acceptance from all parties for the need to justify any policy in any portfolio against the climate imperative.

I pay respect to the school strikers and young people around the world who are driving forward public backing for this work and further focusing the minds of politicians. This is a climate and environment emergency, and that message is getting through. However, Scottish Labour cannot emphasise enough that a just transition must be the ultimate driver. Scotland's pathway to the net zero economy must be paved by the labour movement, safeguarding workers and communities and securing new opportunities for the benefit of our new economy across all sectors.

My party is clear on those terms. That is why it has been a year since Scottish Labour set a net zero greenhouse gas emissions target, which the SNP at that point refused, and—inextricably linked—it has also been a year since we called for a statutory just transition commission to serve us well into the future. The just transition partnership, which was formed by Friends of the Earth and the Scottish Trades Union Congress and joined by others, has worked tirelessly to push that message and to make sure that we design industrial policies to that effect. However, the Scottish Government somehow remains unclear as to the need for that, despite considering the merit of the commission being in the climate change bill. The current lifespan and footing of the commission fundamentally misunderstands the concerns of workers and the requirements for a resilient future economy. I was relieved that the Government

agreed to consider a statutory commission, but as stage 2 of the climate change bill draws closer, I am concerned that that concession might be wavering and waning.

Workers and communities must not be thrown to the wind. A short-term arrangement can only be a short-term strategy setter and is not fit for purpose. We need vision and direction setting for the long term. All future Governments need to be held to account until we reach net zero emissions across all sectors. We need clever policy design and support mechanisms so that we come out on the other side with a fairer society.

Scottish Labour supports the Fife's ready for renewal campaign by GMB and Unite, supported by the STUC, and the Parliament is, as we have heard, united in backing them. Along with Richard Leonard, other Labour MSPs and members from other parties, I met shop stewards today from Unite, GMB and the STUC. The workforce stands ready and determined to work on this contract.

Claire Baker, who has worked closely with the Fife yards over the years, has made clear the importance of jobs for Fife and made clear that promises must be delivered. I welcome her analysis today.

Here is a test for the Scottish Government. It is also a test for all members in the chamber—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** A lot of quiet conversations are going on but, cumulatively, the effect is noisy. I ask members to keep their conversations to a minimum.

**Claudia Beamish:** As we have heard time and again in the debate, a Scottish yard sits ready and waiting. It has the skills, the facilities and the labour. Crucially, it holds the opportunity to kick-start decent manufacturing work in the clean energy economy, from which so many jobs have already slipped through our fingers. As Lewis Macdonald said, what are the working conditions in Indonesia?

We have had a fragile promise to consider a statutory just transition commission. We have had votes in favour of a green new deal but no further information. We have been assured that the Scottish national investment bank will have a green investment focus, but will the bill deliver?

The First Minister assured the chamber that she supports the BiFab yard and its workforce, but the workforce has feared redundancy for years and, time and again, contracts have been missed.

When does the Scottish Government expect our manufacturing base to begin to flourish and Scotland's green energy revolution to take off? When will this pattern of offshoring jobs end, if not

now, with a capable company in which this Government is a substantial shareholder?

As Richard Leonard stated, the green revolution must mean an interventionist state acting on behalf of the people and our industrial communities.

The STUC report “Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs” found that past promises of jobs in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy have not been realised, because we have not developed a Scottish supply chain that produces domestic content. Alex Rowley stressed that the unions say that they want a level playing field.

**Derek Mackay:** Some of those issues are not the ones that the stakeholders and trade unions that I have engaged with have addressed with me. Others have chosen to put cost before conditionality of supply chain content coming from Scotland. That change needs to come first from the UK Government. Will the Labour Party support me in taking forward the further actions in relation to Crown Estate Scotland and Marine Scotland that I have revealed today? That will create the culture of expectation for work to come to Scotland.

**Claudia Beamish:** In the case of the NnG offshore wind farm and more broadly, does the cabinet secretary agree that those community and environmental externalities that we all know about must be factored into procurement processes to ensure that Scottish workers and communities benefit from the green revolution? As Richard Leonard stressed, through subsidies and levies, millions of pounds of public expenditure are invested in renewable energy to harness a natural resource, but there is no public accountability and little economic benefit.

Alex Neil is right that everything, from planning to finance, should be reviewed. The cabinet secretary is right that it is important that we do not let the developers off the hook.

I welcome the commitment, if belated, on the Crown Estate licences. Surely that could have been written into the Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019. I also welcome the decommissioning arrangements that were highlighted. However, Scottish Government expectations for the supply chains are not enough. It is public money, and support must not be given if the work is not to be done in Scotland.

The review of contract for difference must be robust and must respect the necessity of investment in Scottish yards. I note the Tory recognition of that need. However, Paul Wheelhouse has stressed that the price alone cannot be the criterion. Inconsistency cannot go on; the quality of the bid must be taken into account.

Lewis Macdonald stressed that EDF and, by implication, other companies in the sector like to have political support when it suits them, but now they need to do their bit. More broadly, he emphasised how important it is that companies moving away from oil and gas into offshore renewables deserve Government support. The renewables sector and EDF are certainly part of that. Both Governments need to develop consenting strategy to tie licensing to UK and Scottish content.

More broadly again, can the cabinet secretary and his colleague John Swinney ensure that the right skills, both initial and transferable, are being identified, so that workers are ready here in Scotland for the green jobs that are here and coming? Scottish Labour is committed to working with a UK Labour Government, when we reach power, to create 50,000 green jobs, and 15,000 of those could—I stress “could”—be in offshore wind. That will be supported by our Scottish Labour industrial strategy in Scotland and we will make sure that that is driven not by the market but by an innovative state, as Richard Leonard stressed.

Changing position on air departure tax was the right thing to do. That policy was calculated to be the equivalent of 30,000 new cars on the road, yet EDF’s plan to manufacture and ship from Indonesia is said to be the equivalent of 35 million cars on the road. The company should be ashamed. Scotland will not hide away from its international responsibility. We are now working together across the chamber to make sure that we reach the ambitious global target of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°.

Those commitments are right and in line with principles of justice for future generations and for the global south. The principle of the just transition must not be left behind in this climate zeitgeist. It is time to support the industries of our future and the workers and communities of today, and that must start with the BiFab contract. Together we can do this.

## Business Motion

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-17431, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 4 June 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business  
*followed by* Committee Announcements  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 5 June 2019

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 1.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Progress on Delivering a Sustainable Aquaculture Sector  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Finance, Economy and Fair Work; Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: South of Scotland Enterprise Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 6 June 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Economy  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 11 June 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Committee Announcements  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 12 June 2019

1.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 1.15 pm Members' Business  
*followed by* Portfolio Questions: Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity; Justice and the Law Officers  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 13 June 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 2.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.15 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time  
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Government Business and Constitutional Relations  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Restricted Road (20 mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 5 June 2019, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer";

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 6 June 2019, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister"; and

(d) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 3 June 2019, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding

Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[Graeme Dey]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The first question is, that amendment S5M-17425.3, in the name of Derek Mackay, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17425, in the name of Richard Leonard, on build them at BiFab, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-17425.2, in the name of Dean Lockhart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17425, in the name of Richard Leonard, on build them at BiFab, as amended, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-17425, in the name of Richard Leonard, on build them at BiFab, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament supports the Fife - Ready for Renewal campaign calling for work to be delivered to the Fife construction yards in Methil and Burntisland; notes that EDF's Neart Na Gaoithe NnG Offshore Wind Farm, worth up to 2 billion, will be located 10 miles off the Fife coast, as well as Inchcape and Seagreen offshore wind farms, worth further billions; further notes that hundreds of skilled, former BiFab workers in Fife stand ready to work; believes that continuing public support for Scotland's climate change targets requires that people see local community benefit from the transition; congratulates the trade unions, community groups and environmental organisations that have come together to fight for a green energy revolution that brings benefit to workers and communities; believes that it would be bad for the climate if turbine jackets had to be shipped from overseas; calls on the Scottish and UK governments to support the Fife - Ready for Renewal campaign and to review the contracts for difference and supply chain process as part of the Offshore Wind Sector Deal to ensure that it brings significant work to the Fife yards during the construction phase of all projects; recognises the efforts of the Scottish Government to bring together trades unions, the UK Government and industry representatives at a summit on 2 May 2019 to ensure that all opportunities are taken to deliver supply chain work in Fife and across Scotland, and further calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to take advantage of the opportunities under the Offshore Wind Sector Deal, which builds on the UK's global leadership in offshore wind, maximising the advantages for the Scottish offshore wind sector from the global shift to clean growth.

## Expanding Scotland's Railways

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-17353, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on expanding Scotland's railways. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the key role that the expansion and improvement of railway infrastructure will play in the decarbonisation of Scotland's transport sector and addressing the climate emergency; considers the Local Rail Development Fund to have been a success and congratulates the nine projects that were awarded funding from the first round of applications, including StARLink in St Andrews and the Newburgh Train Station Group; believes that new railway lines and reopened stations will help to increase passenger numbers, connect rural communities and reduce emissions; understands that a number of groups submitted applications for viable and credible projects, which were unsuccessful in receiving funding; notes the calls for these groups to re-apply to the second round; understands that the Donovan review of train performance highlighted issues, including punctuality on the Milngavie-Westerton line, which are in need of further Scottish Government investment; notes the belief that an expanded rail network is a priority for Scotland, and sends its best wishes to the groups that are applying to the second round of the Local Rail Development Fund.

17:04

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I am delighted to lead the debate, and I thank members from across the chamber for supporting the motion.

I remember that when I first stood for election to Holyrood all those years ago, back in 1999, I fought my way through the undergrowth at the abandoned railway station at Alloa, holding a huge map of the Mid Scotland and Fife region that displayed all the rail lines that had been closed in the Beeching era. It took a leap of imagination to believe that the Stirling to Alloa line could reopen, but it did—successfully—in 2009, through strong leadership from Clackmannanshire Council and the vision of the community.

A decade on from that reopening, it is time to look at the map again and to support communities that have been left to the mercy of deregulated bus companies and the inequality of private car ownership to meet their transport needs. We could be at the beginning of a new golden age for rail in Scotland. I am sure that the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands will wish to talk about the longer, greener, faster trains that are bringing welcome improvements through electrification, but for communities in Fife that were rubbed off the rail map decades ago, such improvements will not deliver the transformational changes that they

need to access work and educational opportunities.

After the opening of the Forth road bridge back in 1964, we had a string of rail closures that isolated communities and brought into sharp relief the transport inequalities of those who have no choice beyond public transport. Now that the Queensferry crossing is open, it is important that new investment in rail can reach directly into the Fife communities that have been left behind. Sadly, however, no rail reinstatement schemes have been commissioned since the current Holyrood Government took charge more than a decade ago. I hope that that will change and that, through the new pipeline approach, we will see robust business cases for stations and new lines being made, matched by capital budgets that can prioritise low-carbon rail.

Over the past couple of years, my team has brought together active rail campaigns, from Kincardine to St Andrews, Newburgh and Levenmouth, to share knowledge and support each other. That work resulted in a report that we published in 2017, which examined how reinstated stations could feed into the Fife circle rather than compete with each other. Communities told us that they were stuck on first base, that the Scottish transport appraisal guidance—STAG—process was very difficult to work through without professional support, and that there were no dedicated funds to lever such support in. In the case of Newburgh, the community had even attempted, unsuccessfully, to squeeze money out of the national lottery fund.

We found that a dedicated stream of funding was needed to support communities in building business cases for rail solutions and testing them to destruction. The idea of a local rail development fund was born out of those discussions. I was very pleased that, following last year's budget talks between the Greens and the Scottish National Party, £2 million was allocated, of which more than £1 million is still to be disbursed in the next round of funding, which closes at the end of June.

In my region, a number of projects were funded, including Newburgh station campaign, which I have already mentioned, and StARLink—the St Andrews rail link campaign. Funding was also granted to the Tayside and central Scotland regional transport partnership—Tactran—for two projects: one to examine the possibility of putting in a station at Bridge of Earn and another on improving rail accessibility in Stirling. Fife Council was also successful in getting funding to complete a study into completing the cross-Forth rail connections. For Newburgh, such funding has reignited the campaign in a community that watches trains pass through the heart of the village every hour, but whose people have to

travel 10 miles to their nearest station. It could reconnect the wider area around Newburgh to employment and education opportunities in Fife and Perth.

In St Andrews, the campaign group, which has been working since 1989 to reconnect the town, can finally take its work to the next level, which is to look at how a branch line and station could alleviate congestion, tackle housing pressures and provide a direct rail link to St Andrews' world-class university and international sporting events.

The Levenmouth rail campaign has also played a central role in supporting the wider development of the rail network in Fife. The interim STAG for the area was published on 17 May. Although it includes a rail link as one of six possible improvements, it still focuses very heavily on buses. Bus services have already been tweaked, but they have not delivered the transformational links that can come with a railway line, nor the clean, fast connections to cities that the local community so desperately desires.

We urgently need that study to progress to the next stage. I would welcome it if the minister could confirm today a timescale for the next STAG stages and the subsequent governance for railway investment projects—GRIP—reports for the Levenmouth line, because the community is getting tired of waiting. I am sure that a number of members who represent Fife will want to talk about that during the debate.

With the forthcoming strategic transport projects review, it is important that community voices around Scotland are heard. In recent weeks, I held workshops in Kincardine and Alloa, which drew in over 150 people, to explore local transport challenges and how a rail reinstatement from Alloa to Dunfermline could provide a solution. I am pleased that Talgo, the electric train manufacturer that has advanced plans to establish a base at Longannet, attended and supported both of those meetings. We hoped that Diageo would provide that kind of commitment over 10 years ago to spur the development of the Levenmouth railway, but so far that has failed to materialise.

The strong messages from those meetings were that access is needed to the east of Scotland, that bus services are poor or non-existent and that communities, especially Clackmannan, felt left behind when the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line was opened for freight. There were strong feelings of dislocation in the west Fife villages and a concern that, while Talgo's plans may open up an electrified line from Alloa to Longannet, there is an urgent need to consider the needs of west Fife villages at the outset.

We could be seeing a rail renaissance in Scotland—and just in time, as the climate

emergency bites and the need for economic regeneration and a just transition is greater than ever. The local rail development fund has helped to spur the early thinking, but it is now time for the Scottish Government to respond and help to get our communities back on the rail map.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have 10 members wishing to speak, so I am afraid that I have to be pretty strict—that is not like me—and keep you to four-minute speeches, please.

17:12

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** I congratulate Mark Ruskell on securing this important debate on expanding Scotland's railways.

This morning, I travelled to Parliament by train. It took 45 minutes to reach Edinburgh from my constituency of Kirkcaldy, and during that time I checked my emails and my social media, wished my constituents a happy birthday on Facebook and chatted with other commuters. By making the journey by rail, I was responsible for the emission of 2.2kg of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere. If I had driven, I would have been responsible for four times that amount.

The Scottish Government has set a world-leading target to achieve net zero emissions by 2045—that is, to have the same volume of greenhouse gases being emitted that is absorbed through offsetting techniques such as forestry. There are a number of ways in which Scotland will achieve that. We will improve energy efficiency in homes, buildings and industrial processes and we will champion the renewable energy potential by creating new jobs and supply chain opportunities, but we will also encourage individuals to adopt greener modes of transport, be it by switching to electric or hydrogen-powered vehicles or by making better use of public transport.

However, individuals cannot make better use of public transport if it does not exist. As many will know, the mass closures of train stations and removal of track infrastructure in the 1960s, which is commonly known as the Beeching axe, led to the closure of 200 stations across Scotland and left some areas entirely isolated from the rail network. Regardless of whether that was the correct decision to preserve the rail network at the time, the closures had a profound effect on areas such as Levenmouth, which sits both in my constituency and in Jenny Gilruth's.

Levenmouth is one of the most deprived areas of Scotland. Historically, coal mining guaranteed high employment and relative prosperity in the area until the decline in the 1970s. First, people lost their railway and then they lost their industry. Now, it is an area of multiple deprivation, with 44



per cent of Levenmouth residents living in one of the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland and one in four children living in poverty. The area also has a low level of car ownership and many residents rely on public transport to do basic things such as travel to work, do their shopping and attend medical appointments.

Today, the Levenmouth rail campaign is fighting for the lost rail line to be reclaimed. The community-run campaign, which was launched in 2014, has been working tirelessly to keep the case for the area's railway to be reinstated on the front burner. The campaign believes strongly that the area's isolation from the rail network is holding it back by limiting employment and education opportunities for locals, which is costing the local economy greatly.

Its most recent breakthrough was the commissioning of a second STAG feasibility study with Transport Scotland, which was released earlier this month. It states that reopening the existing line to passengers and freight would provide direct and quicker access to a range of opportunities and services such as education, culture, leisure, health and employment, and could improve the potential for businesses to locate in the area and for those businesses as well as current employers to attract people with the necessary job skills and experience to work in the area.

Not only is the reopening of the line beneficial to the area, but the overwhelming success of the reopening of the Borders railway only strengthens the case for the reopening of the Levenmouth line. Since the Borders railway opened, the line has opened up employment opportunities, reduced congestion, increased tourism and increased relocation to the area. Given the same opportunity of the reinstatement of its rail line, all those benefits could be replicated in the Levenmouth area.

The benefits of expanding our rail network—or, more accurately, reinstating pre-existing lines—are outstandingly clear. As Scotland works to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045, we must put in place the infrastructure to help our citizens to do their part. More railways mean more passengers and freight, which means fewer vehicles on our roads, creating fewer emissions and causing less congestion.

A railway line is more than a mode of transport. It is a lifeline that connects communities, creates economic opportunities and expands the horizons of those it serves. It can be the difference between someone taking a job or not, starting a business or not, or visiting an attraction or not. In order for them to say yes, we must say yes to creating a public transport network that this country can be proud of.

17:15

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** I add my thanks for the previous speech, because it was an excellent summary of why rail is so important. It is good to hear phrases such as “rail renaissance in Scotland” but, in my few minutes, I want to address some of the issues that rail faces.

We know that domestic transportation accounts for 32 per cent of our emissions and that excludes aviation, so getting more people on to our trains is key to meeting our climate change ambitions. I am sure that members will have a long list of stations and lines that they wish to open, reopen or build new, and I look forward to hearing some of those suggestions. However, as Mark Ruskell pointed out, making a business case for such projects is difficult and complex, and it can even be expensive.

Taking rail enthusiasts and local campaigners up a level to produce robust business cases for large-scale infrastructure projects is no mean feat. Many local authorities are doing so. East Lothian, Fife and South Lanarkshire are using the money to carry out appraisals and STAG reviews, and to assess their transport needs. I hope that that will lead to improvements in infrastructure.

We will no doubt hear that we are moving away from old diesel trains towards new electric trains with new carriages and new lines. Good and welcome progress has been made on that, but electrification is an expensive game to play.

Technology might play a huge part in addressing some of the problems. For example, how do we use electric trains on non-electric lines? I have met stakeholders who sing the praises of using batteries that bolt on underneath carriages and allow trains to go off-grid and reach those vital final few miles of a journey on a non-electrified line. That is not a panacea, but I am keen to hear from the minister what conversations the Government is having with manufacturers of such technology.

Like many members of the Scottish Parliament, we have identified that connecting rural Scotland is important to our growth. Research shows that having a rail station in a rural area means exponentially higher average growth in such areas than is brought about by building stations in urban areas. There is a clear link, but the future will not be easy for us.

The motion refers to the Donovan report. The report is a comprehensive list of recommendations that ScotRail should take on board, but they are the low-hanging fruit and short-term fixes. It is a depressing read, because it is a list of failures on the part of our operator. Progress has been made, but ScotRail admits that reaching all its

performance targets is nigh on impossible within the lifetime of the current franchise.

Like many in the industry, I await the Williams review, which deserves a mention today. The review is setting the scene for wider structural changes in how UK rail will operate. That could include structural changes to Network Rail and the essence of the franchise model itself, which is not serving everyone perfectly. I quote Keith Williams, who is performing the review, because what he says sums up the complexity of the task that we face:

“There needs to be a much stronger focus on passengers ... Passengers must be at the heart of the future of the railway.

And not just the passengers of today, but also the passengers of tomorrow, who will look at rail differently than we do today and hopefully, if we do our job right, as part of a more integrated transport network.”

The expansion of our railways will take many years—indeed decades—and will involve new trains, stations and lines, on top of maintaining our existing infrastructure.

Rail is expensive, and requires huge long-term commitment. Its expansion is a noble ambition, but ambition alone will build not a mile of a track or a brick of a station. The old adage rings truer than ever today: money makes the wheels go round.

17:20

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

There is only one railway station in my constituency; it is in Inverurie, which is just on the edge of the constituency. There is no other rail infrastructure across the whole of my constituency. Further up, Stewart Stevenson’s Banff and Buchan constituency does not boast a railway station at all, or one bit of railway track.

The people in the north-east of the north-east are really left behind when it comes to public transport options. We have our bus service, which is very radial, with all routes feeding into Aberdeen city. For the people of my constituency, and Stewart Stevenson’s, that means that we are largely reliant on our cars. It will not have escaped the notice of anyone in the chamber that we now have a climate emergency. Living in my part of the north-east, I feel that I am very limited in how I can play my part in the reduction of carbon emissions.

We are looking at increased infrastructure for the electrification of cars and the associated charging points, but for a large part of our population, owning a car—particularly a new car—will be forever out of their reach. Those people are consigned to using a bus service that is not particularly fit for purpose.

I thank Mark Ruskell for bringing the debate to the chamber. I will use the opportunity that it creates to ask the Government to consider almost ignoring the surveys that have been done around rail in the north-east; although they rightly look at improving the existing infrastructure and making journeys faster, they never seem to be able to make the business case for reopening the Formartine to Buchan line, even just as far as Ellon. Obviously, it would be better for the line to go as far as Peterhead, but I realise that that would need to be an incremental step.

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

The Government undertook to review all its policies as a result of declaring a climate emergency. In the member’s opinion, could one such review revisit the benefit of spending £3 billion on dualling the A96?

**Gillian Martin:** John Finnie makes an interesting point, because the various routes that go round Inverurie would be looked at for the dualling of the A96. My constituents are exercised about that in a very serious way.

Doing that work was a manifesto commitment, but, as the First Minister has said, she is looking at all policy areas to explore how we can reduce our carbon emissions. I imagine that nothing would be off the table. I will not nail my colours to the mast on what I think that she should do in that particular regard, but as we look at what we should do with our transport infrastructure in the future, I will make the point that rail has to be part of that. It should not just be a case of improving the current rail infrastructure across Scotland; we need to look at areas that are completely left behind and in which people do not have the option of using rail at all.

I want to make one further point. We have 11,000 people in Ellon, and 31 per cent of them work in Aberdeen city. Some people will always use their cars, but I think that if we seriously reach out again to the people of the north-east who do not have the option of rail, and ask them, as we have done before, whether they would use the train, a higher proportion of people would say yes. Tomorrow, I am publishing a survey that will ask that question of people all along the proposed route for the Formartine to Buchan railway, to find out how many people would use it. I hope to take the results of that survey to the Government and to get more evidence that the people of Aberdeenshire would relish the opportunity of taking the train rather than their cars.

17:24

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests, which states that I am the volunteer

chair of the campaign for the reopening of Eastriggs railway station.

I thank Mark Ruskell for lodging his motion and enabling us to have this debate on rail, which is a subject that the Parliament does not discuss often enough. The day-to-day issues around rail performance are often highlighted during question times, not least because that performance is not good enough, but the issues of our long-term vision for rail, how we grow rail and how we meet demand for rail are rarely if ever debated in the chamber, and certainly not in Government time. That is despite the real need to increase the pace of growth.

The motion highlights the role of the local rail development fund in helping to achieve that growth. I support the fund, although it might be a bit premature to describe it as a success at this point, given that only £700,000 of the £2 million has been allocated so far, and given that it is part of a new and untested pipeline process. The real test will be whether that fund and the new pipeline process, which I support in principle, are enough to tackle the current underinvestment in our rail infrastructure and, crucially, ensure that the investment is inclusive of all of Scotland. If the Government is serious about delivering inclusive economic growth, it needs to ensure that there is an equitable share of infrastructure investment. It needs to recognise that making a business case for investment through the STAG process is hugely challenging for rural areas such as my South Scotland region, given their low population catchment.

However, that does not mean that there is no need for new investment in the rail network in south-west Scotland. The current line to the south-west from Glasgow, which runs between Glasgow and Kilmarnock before branching off in two directions—to Stranraer in the west and Carlisle in the east—has lacked investment in the past. That was exposed when the west coast main line was closed due to storm damage and the Nith valley line was used as the diversion. Trains that normally travel at more than 100mph on the west coast main line crawled their way along the diversion route. There is a real need to upgrade that line from a rural to a main line. That includes electrification not just from Glasgow to Kilmarnock, but along the full length of the line.

There are strong cases for new stations along the Nith valley line. Reopening Eastriggs station would give the growing number of people from that area who travel to Annan, Dumfries and Carlisle for work, education and healthcare a positive public transport alternative to the car. The 28 mile stretch between Dumfries and Sanquhar is the longest part of the line with no station, which highlights the need to reopen Thornhill station,

which would improve links between mid-Nithsdale and Dumfries and beyond, as well as to the central belt.

In Ayrshire, communities in Cumnock and Mauchline are making a powerful case, which I fully support, for the reopening of local stations there. Experts show that that could attract hundreds of thousands of passengers a year, boosting the economies in communities with some of the highest levels of unemployment in Scotland.

There are also smaller improvements that can be made. It remains a scandal that there is no disabled access on the southbound platform 2 at Kirkconnel station. In the west of the region, the poor infrastructure linking Stranraer and the ferry port at Cairnryan with the rest of Scotland and the UK is well documented. However, the current railway station in Stranraer sits some distance from the town centre on the pier of the now closed ferry terminal. Exploring the relocation of that station—possibly in the town centre, as part of a wider transport hub—is entirely the type of project that I hope will secure funding from the local rail development fund.

There is a campaign to reopen Beattock station on the west coast main line, which highlights the demand for commuter services to Carlisle and Glasgow and Edinburgh from the area. There are plenty of passenger trains that travel along the west coast main line—the issue is that more trains pass through Lockerbie without stopping than actually stop there.

I have highlighted just a few cases from my South Scotland region in which investment in the rail network would make a huge difference to communities, to the economy and to our environment. I hope that those projects, and others, will receive Government support in the years ahead so that we have a genuinely inclusive rail network that covers all of Scotland.

17:28

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** I thank Mark Ruskell for giving those of us who spend a comical amount of our time dealing with the rail lines in our region a chance to either celebrate recent progress or use the debate as a form of group therapy if such progress is not happening.

Improving our rail network—passenger and freight—is key to tackling the climate emergency. However, it is also key to tackling issues of public health such as air pollution and road safety, and to the social justice agenda, which says that the ability to travel, to reach the wider community and access services should not depend on the ability to run a car. That is certainly an issue across the west of Scotland. The minister might be familiar

with my campaign to redual the Westerton to Milngavie line. Twin-tracked until 1990, it has been a single-track line ever since and is now the only single-track terminating line in the country to run four trains an hour. The line is at maximum capacity, and even slight delays cannot be made up for. That has translated into the Milngavie line consistently being the worst-performing line in Scotland. In 2018, just one in four trains ran on time. The latest figures for this month show essentially the same, with 28 per cent running on time.

Positive changes have happened. For example, trains arriving into Milngavie no longer head straight back out, making use of the second platform for turnover time, and the extension of platform 1 at Westerton station means that a train that is sitting at that platform no longer blocks the junction, preventing other trains from moving on or off the Milngavie line. However, those improvements have not translated into transformed performance—we are still sitting at about one in four trains being on time.

I advocate redualling the line not because it is the only thing that we could think of. I commissioned rail expert and former Network Rail officer, David Prescott, to conduct a technical study of the line. His conclusion was that the Milngavie line is almost unique in seeing passenger numbers fall while usage of the whole network grows. It is so unreliable that local residents are simply giving up. However, they are not getting the bus—we are dealing with cuts to local bus services as well, including the Citybus 15 that travels from Milngavie into Glasgow city centre.

One effect is that those who can afford to are getting into their cars again, which has a knock-on effect of its own. Drymen Road in Bearsden has an acute air pollution issue. It is a designated air quality management area, with a primary school playground at its centre. Our chronically unreliable rail service and cuts to local bus services are making that air pollution worse—pollution that affects the oldest and the youngest in our community the most.

I appreciate that the cabinet secretary met me to discuss the issue, and that he received the report that I commissioned. I also recognise that the Donovan review identified the Milngavie line as needing specific improvements. However, I am utterly unconvinced that anything short of redualling will have the desired effect. A second track would also allow for the construction of the long-mooted Allander station—which we need now more than ever, as another housing development in the area has just been completed.

Delays in Milngavie affect the whole network across west and central Scotland—indeed, as far

as here in Edinburgh. However, they have a particular affect on the lines to Dalmeir, Dumbarton, Balloch and Helensburgh. Only 43 per cent of the trains that travel through Dalmeir are running on time. For the trains that terminate there, the figure drops to just 29 per cent, which is almost as bad as at Milngavie.

Moving further south, neither Paisley Canal nor Largs are mentioned in the remedial plan or the Donovan review, yet both have performance stats that are similarly as poor as those of Milngavie. Although Largs has improved by almost 10 per cent, it is still sitting at under 40 per cent. Paisley Canal has gone in the opposite direction, with performance dropping by 10 per cent over the past two years, with fewer than one in three trains on time. Largs has a second track as far as Hunterston, which was used only for freight—it is not electrified and it is not used now. In addition, given that Ardrossan Harbour's performance is worse than that of Largs, it is likely that the issues are occurring further up the line anyway. Nonetheless, I would suggest that a study into local improvements there would be a strong candidate for the next round of local rail development fund funding. Although Paisley Canal is a little more complicated, given the steep decline there, something clearly needs to be done.

If the minister does not have to hand the details to address the issues on those specific lines, I would appreciate it if he or the cabinet secretary could write to me with further information on what is currently planned or being considered.

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** Will the member give way?

**Ross Greer:** Absolutely.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is not time—sorry.

**Ross Greer:** I look forward to hearing from the minister in his closing remarks.

I realise that this sounds like a shopping list—because it is. My constituents have some of the worst rail lines in the country. Usage is falling when it should be doing the opposite, and we are in the midst of a climate emergency. These are exactly the kind of ambitious capital projects that are required to tackle that emergency head on, and to give Scotland the world-class public transport network that we deserve.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank members for keeping to their time so far, which is excellent. Let us continue that.

17:33

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind):** Thank you very much, Deputy Presiding Officer—message received and understood.

I congratulate Mark Ruskell on securing this important debate and bringing the issue to the chamber. At the very beginning of his speech, he rightly mentioned the shadow of the Beeching report, which hangs over much of the rail infrastructure—or lack of rail infrastructure—in parts of Scotland, not just in rural areas but in many urban communities that lost rail stations during the Beeching era.

My constituency has the rail station of Dyce. Although it is one of the busiest small stations in Scotland, it was one of the stations that were closed as a result of the Beeching report, and it was not reopened until 1984. My office manager—who lives in Lumphanan—asked me whether I would also mention the loss of the Deeside line. I said that there might be a local member who would be willing to mention it, but I do not see any of the local members in the chamber. Therefore, I put the loss of the Deeside line in the north-east on the record as well.

Gillian Martin mentioned the Formartine to Buchan line, which she and I have spoken about in the past, where we agreed on the need for proper appraisal and investment to consider bringing it back into use. I looked at the most recent appraisal and it is true to say that, if one considers it simply as a cold cost-benefit calculation, it does not necessarily make sense on paper for the route to be reopened. However, I believe that there are wider considerations. Indeed, in transport appraisal terms, a positive case is made in the report for the route to be brought back into use. It would have an integral part to play in a wider rail strategy for the north-east. Obviously, there are technical considerations, but the report concludes that it is technically feasible for the route to be brought back into use. It would connect into my constituency through Dyce station and on to Aberdeen if it were simply to follow the previous route used.

**Gillian Martin:** Does Mark McDonald agree that any proposed rail line should include a station at Newmachar so that people in the surrounding area—perhaps people coming off the A947—might be able to park and ride?

**Mark McDonald:** Indeed. I believe that all three options that were assessed included the option of a station at Newmachar. I will make a point about urban expansion shortly. That would be a sensible step to take with the expansion that is taking place in Newmachar and other areas in the A947 corridor. I am sure that, in raising the particular

issue of a station in Newmachar, Gillian Martin does not have an interest as a resident of Newmachar.

I want to highlight the need to look at urban stations. In my constituency, communities such as Bucksburn and Woodside could benefit from an urban station. If we look at the likely development patterns in the city of Aberdeen, we see that Bucksburn in particular is likely to see a significant housing expansion and a significant expansion with the soon-to-be-completed exhibition and conference centre and hotel infrastructure. The opportunity for an urban station perhaps in the area of Stoneywood, Bucksburn or Woodside could have a significant effect in reducing congestion.

We have already seen the Aberdeen western peripheral route take a significant amount of congestion away from the Haudagain roundabout and routes into the city. An opportunity to increase urban rail through the dualling of the line, which has taken place, and the provision of new urban stations may add to that.

A final issue needs to be highlighted. The question of how exactly the £200 million that is identified in the city region deal for the north-east will be spent to reduce rail journey times and improve infrastructure continues to be asked, particularly by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. There are concerns that the money might not be spent in the north-east, which might not be entirely in keeping with the letter of what was agreed when the city region deal was signed. I would be more than happy to meet the minister to discuss that further. Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly raised the issue with me and other local members.

I will stop there, Presiding Officer, in order to avoid incurring your wrath.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much.

17:37

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am pleased to be able to speak in this important debate, and I thank Mark Ruskell for securing it. I will focus on the absolute need for greater investment in the rail network across the south-west of Scotland, which many constituents have contacted me about.

Scotland's railway network is vital in allowing people the freedom to travel accessibly and with ease around our country. The railway does not discriminate on the basis of disability—although I acknowledge that there are access issues at Kirkconnel—and rail travel does not require people to have a driver's licence. As David Torrance

rightly highlighted, rail travel reduces emissions, and rail promotes active travel by, for example, allowing people with bicycles who choose cycling holidays to get from A to B hassle free.

The Galloway and west Dumfries area of the South Scotland region, which I represent, has three key train routes: the Stranraer to Glasgow route, the Dumfries to Carlisle route, and the Dumfries to Glasgow route. All those routes are well used and are relied on by many people who live and work in the area, as well as by those who travel to and from the area every day for work, leisure or study. However, all too often, constituents tell me that they are put off using those routes because the trains are too irregular and outdated, and because the journey times are too lengthy. Attracting people to live, work and study in, and to visit, rural areas such as Dumfries and Galloway is crucial if we are to keep them populated and if they are to flourish. Good transport links and connectivity are essential.

In recent years, we have seen a steady decline in the working-age population across Dumfries and Galloway, with young people leaving the region for employment and education. That has left the area with a skills shortage and recruitment problems, particularly in the recruitment of general practitioners, radiologists and other healthcare professionals. Indeed, in meetings with local businesses, GP practices and NHS Dumfries and Galloway to discuss how we can attract people to live and work in the region, action on the railway network—or on the lack of it—is often described as a top priority on the wish lists of local folk.

At a recent meeting with a local general practice in Dumfries, the GPs told me that they are aware of colleagues who live in the central belt who would be more than happy to work in Dumfries, as well as across bonnie Galloway, if they were not put off by the current state of the rail services and by the underdeveloped road network. The GPs and staff told me that, if the journey time between Dumfries and Glasgow, for example, which is currently almost an hour and 50 minutes, could be reduced with the introduction of faster trains, more highly skilled professionals such as GPs would come to work in our region. That would, of course, be welcome. The same is true for Stranraer. I ask the cabinet secretary to explore options for the electrification of such rail routes in order to reduce travel times. I have also written to Network Rail, which owns the lines, to ask what support it is providing to the Scottish Government to assist with the needed upgrades.

I have been contacted by local action groups about the possible reopening of the Dumfries to Stranraer line, and other groups are lobbying for the opening of Beattock station and even for moving Stranraer station closer to the town centre.

The increased volume of traffic on the A75, which is partly a result of the ferries leaving from Cairnryan, has caused much concern, and people are justifiably frustrated about the road now being so busy. The reopening of the east-west line would also allow people who do not have cars to travel across the region.

I stress to the people of the south of Scotland, who often say that they feel forgotten, that I have not forgotten about them. I will continue to lobby in Parliament for improvements to our region's transport infrastructure.

17:41

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I thank Mark Ruskell for securing such an important and topical debate. It is refreshing to speak about new railways, given the immense opportunities that they present in connecting communities, as the motion says—particularly in rural Scotland, including in my constituency.

Although the debate is not focusing on the efficiency and service of our railways, I want to make it clear from the outset that, if we are to build confidence in, and improve customer satisfaction with, Scotland's railways, ScotRail will need to clean up its act. It is all well and good to have brand new railways such as the Borders railway, but, if the trains do not arrive on time—or even at all—we will not see the benefits in relation to tackling climate change and unlocking business growth.

The debate is timely, because Murdo Fraser lookalike Michael Portillo travelled on the Borders railway during yesterday's episode of his BBC Two documentary series "Great British Railway Journeys". The Borders railway, which serves many of my constituents, albeit that it is outside my constituency, is a fantastic example of how a rural region can be opened up to the central belt and beyond. The railway is the longest domestic railway to be built in the United Kingdom for more than 100 years. The Waverley line, as it is also known, takes passengers through some of the most beautiful countryside in the Borders—it also goes through the Deputy Presiding Officer's constituency.

The original Edinburgh to Hawick line opened in 1849, with the extension to Carlisle opening in 1862. It was known as the Waverley route—it was named after the first published novel of celebrated Scottish Borders resident Sir Walter Scott—and it provided direct rail services between Edinburgh, the Scottish Borders, Yorkshire and London for 107 years.

Ahead of the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, the First Minister promised that a

feasibility study would be undertaken on extending the railway, and I am glad that the UK Government has announced that it would back a full feasibility study into extending the Borders railway from Hawick, through Newcastleton and on to Carlisle, as part of the £345 million Borderlands growth deal. Of course, all of that would not have been possible without Campaign for Borders Rail, which has been determined and hard working from the start.

**Colin Smyth**—*rose*.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I will give way to Colin Smyth.

**Colin Smyth:** Does the member—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Colin Smyth—I would like to keep my job going.

**Colin Smyth:** I am sorry, Presiding Officer. I was just trying to avoid using up too much time.

Does Rachael Hamilton agree that it is important to keep an open mind on where an extension to the Borders railway should go? For example, a route through the town of Langholm would boost the economy in that area.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You will get your time back, Ms Hamilton.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Colin Smyth, of course, champions the railway going through Langholm, but I am championing the railway going through Newcastleton, and I support Campaign for Borders Rail in order for that to happen.

We are so pleased that that manifesto commitment has been delivered, as the extension will bring transformational change to a region that faces significant challenges but that also has massive potential. After all, 14 million people live within two hours' drive of the Borderlands region, but to tap into that potential we need more cross-border connectivity and collaboration. As the deal is jointly financed by the UK and Scottish Governments, progress of the study now depends on Scottish ministers giving permission to proceed. I ask the minister to update us on that, if he can, in his closing speech.

Moving away from the Borders railway to Berwickshire, I am glad that, following a successful campaign by the Rail Action Group East of Scotland—RAGES—the Scottish Government has committed to reinstating Reston station, because, at times, Berwickshire has felt left out. I look forward to that happening in control period 6—between now and 2024. Again, it has been the result of hard work by local authorities. The trains that stop there will then go down the east coast main line, and the whole project will be

crucial in connecting the Borders with Newcastle, York and London.

As we know, new railways are important for our future. Although the Borders has not yet been a recipient of the local rail development fund, it could be in the future, to create further connectivity in what is a very rural area.

I will leave it there, Presiding Officer, as I can see that time is running short.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Due to the number of members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Mark Ruskell to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Mark Ruskell*]

*Motion agreed to.*

17:46

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Mark Ruskell for bringing the motion on a future rail revolution to the chamber for debate, and I declare an interest as a member of the Campaign for Borders Rail.

Expansion of Scotland's railways is a vital step that needs to be taken—after all, passenger use of trains has effectively doubled in the past 20 years. It is clear that people want to use the train, and many Scottish communities are trying to get their services back. However, they are continually being thwarted—partly by the SNP Administration and partly by the challenging and expensive process that is involved.

I recently attended a STAG appraisal consultation meeting on the reopening of Beattock station in my South Scotland region. I saw at the meeting the local rail action group's determination, and its vision in respect of the opportunities that might arise, from tourism to commuting to the contribution that it could make to reducing carbon. There was also a presentation from Moffat high school students that set in stark relief the challenges of not having a station nearby. As they pointed out, if the station were to be reopened, they could travel every day to college or university in Glasgow, Edinburgh or Carlisle. They were also keen to stress that they could go out clubbing and get home again.

I hope that the optimism about people remaining in their own communities will not be crushed by a negative result from the STAG process. Constituents from the area and other parts of South Scotland have stressed the STAG process's ineffectiveness in facilitating reopening of lines

and stations, with local authorities often being forced to waste their scarce funding on repeated STAG applications.

The Scottish Government has now declared a climate emergency—and rightly so—but without robust actions on rail, and despite other actions that have been taken, the declaration rings somewhat hollow. We know that transport, particularly the ever-expanding amount of road traffic, is the main source of climate-changing emissions in Scotland. The answer, therefore, is clear: part of it, which I will focus on, is to give communities back their rail services. There are places—for example, Levenmouth—where tracks still exist but lines remain closed.

The big rail reopenings that were initiated under previous Administrations, including Larkhall station, the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine rail link, the Airdrie to Bathgate line and the Borders railway, have been hugely successful—beyond all projections—but never again must we fail to future proof new lines, as has happened with the Borders railway. At this point, I should say that Scottish Labour is fully supportive of the proposal to extend the Borders railway to Carlisle.

The Scottish Government should continue to reopen lines and stations on our rail network. It is scandalous that millions of pounds of taxpayers' money are being used to subsidise private companies while they cherry pick for profit, cut lines and services and leave communities isolated and alienated.

Scotland needs an integrated publicly owned, and therefore properly accountable, rail network, on which trains run on time and are not cancelled. It also needs a properly regulated bus service, which we will look at for the Transport (Scotland) Bill. We need a network in which people in rural villages can get a bus that connects with a train that will take them onward. Carstairs, for example, now has a vibrant station, although it needs more trains to stop there and a Sunday service. However, the lack of bus connections is an embarrassment.

We need a network on which people can travel between towns and villages with ease for work, to see family and for leisure, and one on which disabled access at stations is a priority and not a vain hope.

We need a network on which there is space and time for rail freight, and on which the profits of the busy routes no longer line the purses of absentee shareholders and foreign Governments, but are used to fund the less profitable but equally important rural routes.

I look forward to hearing the minister's response on how we can have a future rail service that is fit for purpose for Scotland.

17:50

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I congratulate Mark Ruskell on bringing forward the debate.

It will come as no surprise to members that I wish to highlight the best and the most obvious opportunity to expand Scotland's railways—the opportunity to re-establish Leven's railway. The line first opened on 3 July 1854, 165 years ago this summer. Although passenger services stopped in 1969, the line remained open for freight right up until 2001. Today, with the permission of Network Rail, it is still possible to walk the line. Two weeks ago, my colleague David Torrance and I did just that, and were joined by Claire Baker MSP and local councillors Ken Caldwell and Alistair Suttie. The walk was organised by the fantastic Levenmouth rail campaign. Last year, the focus was on the year of young people, so this year the walk has included different primary schools and facts about the history of the railway.

Leven railway is the only proposed new line that I know of that has been through two formal STAG appraisals—in 2008 and 2015. Following my members' business debate on the issue in 2017, the then transport secretary committed to a further options appraisal. The limited options were published two weeks ago, and the final report is to be published by the end of this week. In the preliminary options appraisal, Transport Scotland said that the project would bring “major benefits” for the economy and would provide

“access to key destinations for employment, further education, healthcare and social activities”.

The railway would be hugely important for the Fife economy. We have just had a debate about future sustainability of jobs in Methil. The coal industry, which dominated much of the Fife skyline for generations, is long gone. The need for a joined-up transport system has, arguably, never been greater. Levenmouth is the largest urban area in Scotland that has no direct access to rail. Members should think about that. If they do not know Fife, they should look at a map. Levenmouth is isolated and cut off from much of the investment and wealth that drives the capital city, but that need not be the case.

Up the road from Leven is St Andrews—a town that is brimming with investment. From the university to golf, St Andrews has considerable wealth, compared with other parts of my constituency. The motion explicitly mentions the St Andrews proposals for a railway. I offer my support to the town on that journey. However, for me, the case for Levenmouth is far more compelling because a rail link for Leven could transform that part of Fife: it could transform the life chances of young people growing up there,



bring investment and open the doors for employers.

**Mark Ruskell:** As a regional MSP, I support many of the rail reopening campaigns, but is it not a question of phasing? The Levenmouth project is pretty much ready to go and could be brought forward, perhaps into the current control period, whereas St Andrews might come in a later control period with later investment, because it would be a much bigger project.

**Jenny Gilruth:** I agree with that.

Mark Ruskell's motion also specifically mentions the local rail development fund that the Scottish Government has made available. The fund is certainly welcome, but I was disappointed that the Levenmouth rail campaign was not able to benefit from it because—as the group was advised—the project is too far on. I understand that other campaigns are at different stages, as we have just heard, but I do not want my constituency to miss out on that vital funding, so I would be grateful if the minister could mention how that could be avoided.

Fife is the third most populous council area after Glasgow and Edinburgh, but unlike the cities, its population is geographically spread out, and many Fifers have to commute for work. In my constituency, we also continue to face the real problems that are associated with austerity, with one in three children living in poverty. There is a need for hope for an area that has been cut off from transport links for so long. The situation has been exacerbated since Stagecoach decided to cut the direct Leven to Glasgow bus service with absolutely no consultation of MSPs.

In 2016, the population of Levenmouth was just more than 35,000—it is the fourth-largest settlement in Fife and the 25th largest in Scotland. As we heard from David Torrance, there is lower than average car ownership, which makes the case for public transport that much stronger.

Time is short, but I commend the efforts of the Levenmouth rail campaign for its consistent work to ensure that the line's reinstatement is never off the local political agenda. I see that I have gone slightly over my time, so I will close.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank all members for keeping to their time.

17:55

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** I add my thanks to Mark Ruskell for lodging the motion for debate; it shines a light on our rail industry and its significance to our economy, communities and climate. Early in the debate, David Torrance gave some very good examples of how local rail

projects can help to support the local economy and that point was supported by Jamie Greene and other members in their contributions.

Rail contributes around £1.3 billion annually to Scotland's economy and that is why we have invested an unprecedented £8 billion plus in rail across Scotland since 2007. I acknowledge that there are still challenges, as other members have mentioned, but I do not want to spend time talking about those when there is clearly a focus on many local projects, which I will respond to if possible.

Our investment has resulted in the building of Scotland's longest domestic railway in 100 years, the Borders railway, which I know is close to the heart of the Deputy Presiding Officer because of the work that she did in bringing it into being. It has also been used to add 76 kilometres of new track and five direct routes between our two main cities with 13 trains per hour in each direction, and opened 14 new stations since 2007, many of which have been highly successful, as members have alluded to. I spoke to officials before the debate and I believe that Laurencekirk has been singled out as a particular success and has exceeded expectations.

Unlike other parts of the United Kingdom, and despite the financial pressures that have been imposed on us by the UK Government, we have not cancelled or deferred any rail projects. There can be no clearer signal to our communities, passengers, freight customers, the rail industry and its supply chain of the confidence that we as a Government have in the future of rail, and the importance of its expansion and improvement to the people and communities of Scotland. As Gillian Martin pointed out, it is also important to the decarbonisation of Scotland's transport sector.

**Mark Ruskell:** I acknowledge the success of the projects that have been constructed during the lifetime of the Government, but does the minister share my concern that none has been commissioned during the lifetime of the Government, and that we now need to accelerate the pipeline of projects, otherwise we will run out of projects to build?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I stand to be corrected, but I do not believe that Mr Ruskell's assessment is correct. There is work on-going in Robroyston and other locations across the country, but I am not the lead minister for the portfolio, as Mr Ruskell will appreciate, so I will check the position. A number of projects are coming through in control period 6—I am about to discuss the projects that we have committed to doing in CP6—and a number of investments have been made through CP5 as well.

There is no ring-fenced fund in CP6 and the Scottish strategic rail freight fund is the only fund

that we have for that purpose, but new stations are scheduled for delivery during CP6, including Robroyston, Dalcross, Kintore, Reston and East Linton and the others that were mentioned by Rachael Hamilton in her speech. Improvements are being planned through the Department for Transport's access for all scheme at Anniesland, Croy, Dumfries, Johnstone, Port Glasgow and Uddingston. Therefore, a significant number of projects are happening, but perhaps we have to improve their visibility, given Mr Ruskell's comments. I am sure that Mr Matheson would be keen to engage with him on specific projects.

In relation to CP6 more generally, there have been significant changes in the funding mechanisms, the approach and the project management. We are not only building on the significant investment of CP5, and progressing identified programmes in the next five years that aim to support longer-term capacity needs, we are also taking the industry with us—we hope—as we implement the new pipeline-based approach to rail project development and delivery. Central to that is what is intended to be an integrated, cross-organisational partnership approach.

I will respond to some of the points that have been raised by members, including the interesting remarks about Levenmouth. Clearly, there is still work to progress, but I recognise the strong interest from the members for Fife and from Mr Ruskell with regard to the region.

Transport Scotland is progressing transport appraisal work for the study in line with STAG, and in close collaboration with Fife Council. The study is therefore separate from the local rail development fund. The transport appraisal work will determine whether there is a rationale for progressing the Levenmouth rail link. I have heard about the importance of that link to communities and I take on board Jenny Gilruth's point about the size of the community that it would potentially serve.

I should declare an interest that is not in my entry in the register of members' interests. My sister lives in that area, but, given that I am not involved in the decision, I hope that that will not be a relevant factor.

Transport Scotland officials and Fife Council officers meet, on a monthly basis, Peter Brett Associates, the consultant providing support to Transport Scotland on the study to discuss progress. I assure members who raised that matter that work is on-going on Levenmouth.

On Reston and East Linton, I assure Rachael Hamilton that the commitment made by the Scottish ministers to the delivery of Reston and East Linton stations as early as practicable within control period 6 is unwavering. Detailed design

and timetable analysis is on-going. Until both are completed, no firm date for construction or opening can be given. Rachael Hamilton might know that the east coast line capacity study is due to be published soon; it will inform the construction window that can be used for development of the stations.

Rachael Hamilton also mentioned the Borderlands growth deal. Transport Scotland is working with the team progressing the deal regarding how the work undertaken to date feeds into the transport ask, which includes a feasibility study into a potential extension of the Borders railway. Discussions are on-going regarding the wording of further transport appraisal work in the heads of terms agreement. Transport Scotland is clear, though, that it will continue to work with the Borderlands growth deal team to investigate how the transport ask can be addressed.

Jamie Greene mentioned the Williams rail review, an important piece of work that is being undertaken. Transport Scotland is closely engaged with the review and we pressed for full devolution of Network Rail and full accountability. We accept that if that accountability comes to the Scottish ministers we will be held accountable for decisions, but we are willing to take that political risk, if you like, because we believe that it will significantly help us to have a more co-ordinated approach to rail investment in Scotland.

Gillian Martin raised a point about Ellon in Aberdeenshire and touched on issues that Mark MacDonald also raised about Newmachar and the Formartine to Buchan route. STPR 2 will focus on national and regional issues to deliver national priorities, with a clear alignment with our climate change plan. Regional transport working groups are being established, and I hope that we can keep members informed of that work and, indeed, engage with them.

Ross Greer mentioned Milngavie. I tried to intervene to say that Mr Matheson is meeting East Dunbartonshire Council today to discuss the very scheme that Ross Greer mentioned, which is why he is not here in person. Milngavie is now delivering consistently high right-time departure figures. I appreciate the point that he made about the backlog of perhaps previous problems that arose on the route. I hope that he is beginning to see improvements resulting from the extension of the platform, which he referenced.

There are now more lines in Scotland that are single lines with four trains per hour. That includes routes around Larkhall and Tweedbank. Using single track lines there has worked effectively.

I will finish up, because I am conscious of time and people need to get away.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am not asking you to do this, but if you wish a little more time to answer questions, I will give you it. However, if you have to be away, that is fine.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** Thank you, that is great.

I certainly recognise the common-sense points that members have made about looking at new opportunities such as in relation to the Aberdeen exhibition and conference centre and the Newmachar point that Gillian Martin made. Decisions on those things will be taken by my colleague Mr Matheson. I assure members that we will take away and study all the points that have been made in the debate about potential projects and we will make sure that colleagues in the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland look at them as best they can.

I recognise that Mr Smyth mentioned Eastriggs and other local campaigns and Emma Harper talked about the east-west connections in Dumfries and Galloway and the benefits that rail can bring to south-west Scotland. We certainly recognise the aspirations of communities in all those areas and we would be keen to try to take forward projects through the STPR where we can do so.

The local rail development fund, which has been the subject of discussion, is currently funding 10 transport appraisals from Haddington to Newburgh and Clydesdale to St Andrews. The £2 million fund enables communities to appraise and potentially bring forward proposals aimed at tackling local rail connectivity issues. We recognise that transport appraisal costs can be very significant for local stakeholders and communities and the fund responds to that directly by providing an opportunity to apply for assistance with those costs. It is really pleasing to note the progress that is being made by successful organisations across Scotland. It is a great opportunity. We worked with the Greens in delivering that fund and I am pleased to see that it is beginning to have the effect that was sought.

Given the significant interest in the first phase of the fund, it was relaunched at the end of February, with a remaining balance of up to £1.3 million. There is still time for local stakeholders and community groups—perhaps some of the organisations that were mentioned today—to apply, as applications are welcome until 28 June.

We look forward to seeing the outputs of those transport appraisals, as they will help to inform our future rail investment choices and, importantly, ensure that we do not lose sight of the transport issues that affect our communities throughout Scotland.

*Meeting closed at 18:05.*



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