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AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 25 November 2021

Session 6



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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 25 November 2021

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

## General Question Time

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Good morning. I remind members about the Covid-related measures that are in place, and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is general questions. In order to get in as many people as possible, I would be grateful for short, succinct questions and answers to match.

### Ventilation in Schools (Funding)

1. **Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has issued related to the funding of ventilation in schools. (S6O-00446)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** A Scottish Government funding package of £10 million for the delivery of CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring in schools was confirmed with Convention of Scottish Local Authorities leaders at the end of August. That was in addition to the £90 million of funding that was previously provided to local authorities for Covid logistics, which was made available for use for a range of purposes, including improved ventilation.

In allocating funding to local authorities, we set out that the additional £10 million should be used only for the intended purposes, in line with Scottish Government guidance. Those purposes comprise the purchase and installation of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors and funding of associated additional staff, training or consultant resource requirements. After those elements have been prioritised, funding may also be used to contribute to the costs of any required remedial action that has been identified by CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring.

**Foyso Choudhury:** I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer. Will the Government publish the inspection criteria used to confirm whether classrooms have adequate ventilation?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** The guidance is quite clear on that issue, and it is a matter for local authorities to work with the professional staff that they have in that area to ensure that the monitoring has been undertaken correctly. The situation will vary, depending on the type of monitor that the local authority chose, but we are

supporting local authorities to ensure that they use the monitors correctly; indeed, local authorities are supporting one another. Following monitoring, it is for the local authority to undertake any required remedial action; again, such action will depend on what the monitoring showed up and is taken on a case-by-case basis.

I am happy to make the material from the Scottish Government on the allocation of funding and our guidance available to Foyso Choudhury in writing, if he has not already seen it.

### Zero Direct Emissions Heating (New-build Properties)

2. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will bring forward the date of 2024 for requiring zero direct emissions heating within new builds. (S6O-00447)

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** The Scottish Government recognises the crucial need to take rapid action to reduce emissions associated with heating our homes and buildings.

We recently reaffirmed our commitment to introduce regulations for zero direct emissions heating within new builds from 2024 in our heat in buildings strategy. That is faster than the United Kingdom Government is moving and it is faster than some expected. Our current review of building regulations for 2022 also includes provisions that will support the changes that are planned for 2024.

**Willie Rennie:** Does the minister share the concern of local Scottish National Party councillors in north-east Fife, who were powerless to prevent gas boilers from being installed recently in 30 new affordable homes in the village of Springfield, and who will be powerless to act for another three years if the SNP Government refuses to change the rules? Why is the Government waiting until 2024, when there is a climate emergency now?

**Patrick Harvie:** As I said, we are cracking on with that work as rapidly as we can. I am glad that Willie Rennie is enthusiastic about pushing us further. If we were to say that we would complete the work by tea time, some people might still be outraged that we were not completing it by lunch time.

I hope that that is not what is happening here, because what is necessary to achieve that work is not simply about bringing in a regulation. It is about working with the supply chain; it is about working with the skills involved so that we can go from a few thousand installations a year to hundreds of thousands installations a year by the end of the parliamentary session; and it is about working with our electricity networks so that they

can cope with the increased demand on them that that work will result in.

Our heat in buildings strategy has been well received, and it is well recognised that it is more ambitious than that in the United Kingdom, in relation to both zero-emission heating and energy efficiency. We need to tackle both as fast as possible.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Earlier this week, the Prime Minister said that new homes and buildings will be required to install electric vehicle charging points from 2022. Does the Scottish Government have similar ambitions?

**Patrick Harvie:** I am sure that if Mr Johnson wanted to respond to our consultation on the reform of building regulations, he would be very welcome to do so, and that we would give his suggestion all due attention.

### **Grouse Moor Management Review Group (Recommendations)**

**3. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its progress with implementing the recommendations of the grouse moor management review group. (S6O-00448)

**The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan):** Implementing the grouse moor management group's recommendations remains a priority for the Government. As our 2021-22 programme for government set out, we will bring forward legislation in this parliamentary session.

Since publishing our report, ministers, officials and NatureScot have met with stakeholders to develop proposals for a licensing scheme, and NatureScot has established a task group to progress recommendations, including on licensing and muirburn, which met on 23 November. We have also commissioned a report on the impact of medicated grit, which was published by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency in November 2020. We have been engaging with the bodies that are involved in monitoring and regulating its use, and we will continue to do so.

**Mark Ruskell:** It is clear that work has started at long last on this important area. I raise also the related issue of extending the powers of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to enable it to tackle the wildlife crime that we see in many areas of Scotland. It has been 10 years since that was first proposed, and I believe that the minister is the seventh minister to consider action in that area. When can that work begin?

**Màiri McAllan:** As Mr Ruskell is aware, we have legislated for a task force to consider the

scope of the powers. Our Bute house agreement ensures that the task force will be able to report and that any recommendations that we agree to and which require legislation will be reported in time to be included in legislation on grouse moor management.

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** A key concern around grouse moors is the scale of trapping of other species through snaring. Can the minister tell us whether the animal welfare issues with the use of legal snares will be included in the snaring review, and when that review will report?

**Màiri McAllan:** I answered a recent question in Parliament about snaring from one of Mr Smyth's colleagues. The rules on snaring in Scotland are the tightest in the United Kingdom, but I have made it clear that, when they are reviewed—I think that that will be at the end of this year, but I will correct that if I am wrong—I will see that their scope is extended to include a potential ban on snares.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):** In thanking the minister for recently meeting with me and senior members of the Scottish Gamekeepers Association, can I ask her to reaffirm to Parliament that the Scottish Government recognises the value to the rural economy of country sports, which are carried out professionally, as they have been and will continue to be, given the excellent professionalism of gamekeepers in our country?

**Màiri McAllan:** I am happy to confirm that the work that we are undertaking in grouse moor management is not intended to, and will not, put an end to grouse moor management in Scotland. Mr Ewing knows that because, in the months of September and October alone, after I met with the League Against Cruel Sports, OneKind, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the Revive coalition and the Scottish Raptor Study Group, I sat down with him and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association and we discussed those issues at length.

I feel very strongly that we should pursue policy in consultation with those who lives and livelihoods are affected by it, and I will continue to do that.

### **Flood Mitigation Schemes (Funding)**

**4. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to support the funding of flood mitigation schemes. (S6O-00449)

**The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan):** We are committed to providing an extra £150 million over the next five years for flood risk management, in addition to the £42 million that we provide annually to local authorities.

**Miles Briggs:** Residents in areas that I represent in Stockbridge, Comely Bank, Ravelston and Craighleith have been hit by significant flooding in recent years, because of urban waste water issues. However, the Scottish Government's funding mechanism operates on the basis of river flooding. Does the Scottish Government plan to review that funding mechanism to make sure that Edinburgh is given a fair funding deal to carry out mitigation projects to prevent future flooding?

**Màiri McAllan:** The flood risk management strategies that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency co-ordinates on behalf of all bodies responsible for flooding consider all those matters. They consider whether an area is urban and they consider the rurality of an area. They also consider sources of flooding risk, whether those come from a river, the sea or surface water. That is embedded in the work that SEPA does, and the Government is committed to funding the priority projects that SEPA puts forward in the flood risk management strategies, so long as they are viable.

## **Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (Phase 2 Consultation)**

**5. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the laying of national planning framework 4, whether it can provide an updated timescale for the consultation on phase 2 of the strategic transport projects review 2. (S6O-00450)

**The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey):** STPR2 will create the evidence base for future transport investment decisions in Scotland for the next 20 years. Given the link between land use and transport, it has been fundamental that STPR2 takes cognisance of the spatial strategy set out in NPF4.

Work on STPR2 is proceeding well and the intention is to publish recommendations for investment in the new year, followed by the appropriate statutory consultation period. That will be done in a way that enables it to be concluded before the local authority pre-election purdah period begins.

**Emma Roddick:** I thank the minister for his answer and look forward to seeing more detail in the weeks to come. Does the minister acknowledge the need to promote freight transport by rail, particularly for long-distance journeys, in trying to reducing transport emissions?

**Graeme Dey:** Emma Roddick will appreciate that, given the processes that we are going through, and out of respect for the stakeholders, I will not give too much detail at this stage. However, there is no doubt that getting freight on to rail will be a priority as we seek to decarbonise

transport. That will, of course, involve investment in infrastructure.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** In phase 1 of STPR2, the Government pledged to carry out an audit of all lorry parks and rest areas near trunk roads in Scotland. What progress is being made on that and will there be any investment for improvements?

**Graeme Dey:** I will write to Graham Simpson with details on the first part of that question. We are in detailed discussions with the freight sector about a variety of subjects, including the location of lorry parks and the appropriate charging infrastructure that might be needed for them.

**Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** The NPF4 includes a statement that

"All local development plans should manage the use and development of land in the long term public interest",

which is the accepted purpose of planning. However, the draft framework does not set out steps to apply that public-interest principle during the decision-making process, when planning applications are being decided. Will the Scottish Government set out a process for decision makers to follow to deny planning permission if they deem that a development would be unacceptable on the ground of public interest?

**Graeme Dey:** A very clear set of criteria are deployed in the context of STPR2. Those are the criteria that we use.

## **Deferred Entry to Primary 1 (Funding for Early Learning and Childcare)**

**6. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide further details of its plans to entitle all children whose school start is deferred to access funded early learning and childcare in their deferred year. (S6O-00451)

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey):** Positive progress is being made on delivering the commitment to offer funded early learning and childcare for all children whose school entry is deferred. The legislation will take effect from August 2023, as per the timetable approved by Parliament on 3 February 2021. A pilot programme is already under way in five local authorities. To support local authorities in preparing for full implementation, we are investing £8.9 million to enable five additional local authorities to join the pilot from August 2022.

The Scottish Government is commissioning an evaluation of the pilot approach. That research will support local authorities with full implementation by evaluating approaches to policy implementation and parents' perceptions of the process. We

anticipate that full evaluation findings will be published in spring 2023.

**Fulton MacGregor:** Will the minister provide further information on how the pilots are progressing? Will she outline how the Government intends to communicate the change in order to ensure that all families, in the pilot areas and more widely, are aware of their deferral rights?

**Clare Haughey:** The pilot is progressing well, with all participating authorities supporting families with their new entitlement. The new pilot sites were announced recently, and local authorities are leading communication at the local level. Our ParentClub website has been updated to give clear information about deferral rights to parents and carers in pilot areas and other authorities.

We ask local authorities to consider parental communications when applying for the year 2 pilot places, and communication is a key priority for our deferral working group, which will meet on 30 November. We will use that opportunity to share practice and support local authorities with their local communication plans. The meeting will also allow us to gather useful practice to share more widely ahead of the full roll-out in 2023.

#### **Reaching 100 per cent Programme (Progress)**

**7. Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made towards the R100 commitment to superfast broadband for all. (S6O-00452)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes):** The reaching 100 per cent programme commitment is being delivered through our R100 contracts, the R100 Scottish broadband voucher scheme and on-going commercial coverage. Despite telecoms legislation being reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament, which is often forgotten, the Scottish Government is investing £579 million in R100 contracts, with the UK Government contribution being just £33.5 million. Work is well under way across all the contracts.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I have been contacted by a number of constituents in Aberdeen Donside who it is expected will not be connected to the superfast network prior to the 31 December 2021 deadline. My constituents have been advised that they might be connected in 2022, but they have received no guarantee of when it might happen.

Over the past year, we have seen how important a superfast connection is. I would appreciate it if the cabinet secretary would provide assurances that the Scottish Government will engage with residents in affected areas who have yet to be connected to ensure that they are aware of a timescale for the work being completed.

**Kate Forbes:** Although contract delivery for some premises in the Aberdeen Donside constituency is scheduled to take place after the end of this calendar year, the R100 Scottish broadband voucher scheme offers a voucher worth up to £400 to enable constituents to secure an interim superfast connection, thereby ensuring that everyone can access superfast broadband by the end of 2021. Where our online address checker currently shows a delivery date of 2022, it will be updated to reflect greater detail on delivery timescales, once survey work has been completed on the ground. We will continue to engage with communities across Scotland as part of the R100 programme.

#### **Social Care Workers (Pay)**

**8. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will allocate funding in its 2022-23 budget to enable social care workers to be paid at least £15 per hour. (S6O-00453)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes):** As Jackie Baillie will know, the Scottish Government budget for 2022-2023 is currently in development and will be published on 9 December. We are fully committed to reviewing pay and conditions for the social care workforce.

**Jackie Baillie:** The Scottish Government has received some £4.6 billion in extra funding from the United Kingdom Government for the next budget. The cabinet secretary and I discussed pay for social care staff in the previous budget round. At that time, she was concerned about continuing revenue funding. Given that that is no longer a problem, what is preventing the Government from increasing wages for low-paid social care staff?

**Kate Forbes:** It is not like Jackie Baillie to unquestioningly accept a Tory press release on our budget. As she will know, this year's budget is as challenging as ever, in the light of the fact that there are no Covid consequential. In fact, the allocation does not accept that Covid continues to have an impact on our health and education services and on local government.

When it comes to social care workers, I agree on the importance of valuing their work, which is why this year we have provided funding of £64.5 million to deliver the living wage, and why last month we committed funding of up to £48 million to lift the hourly rate for social care workers from £9.50 an hour to at least £10.02 an hour. That is in sharp contrast with what social care workers in England and Wales face, most of whom are paid the national living wage of £8.91 an hour.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes general question time. Before we move to First Minister's



question time, I invite members to join me in welcoming to the gallery His Excellency Mohammad Sarwar, the governor of Punjab. [Applause.]

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Violence Against Women

**1. Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Today, we stood together in a minute's silence to mark international violence against women day. Tragically, in Scotland, more and more women each year become victims of crime. Last year saw the largest year-on-year rise in the number of domestic abuse charges, and the number of sexual crimes has more than doubled since 2007. We know that women suffer those horrific crimes far more than men do. It is the first task of this and any Government to keep the public safe. Does the First Minister have confidence in her Government's ability to keep women across Scotland safe?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I am not complacent about the risks and the threats of abuse, harassment and often very serious violence that women are subjected to in Scotland and around the world every single day. That is why, with a sense of great regret that it is necessary, I welcome the United Nations international day for the elimination of violence against women and the 16 days of action that will follow.

I do not believe that any Government in the United Kingdom or across the world is doing enough to protect women. Of course, the source of violence against women is men who commit those acts of violence. I do, however, believe that this Government is taking important action. For example, Douglas Ross rightly pointed out the increase in reports of domestic abuse, but that has come about partly because we extended the law to classify more examples of behaviour as domestic abuse. It is to the credit of the Parliament that it did so, and it is an important step forward. It means that behaviour that was not previously criminalised is now criminalised. We have also increased funding for the organisations that work on behalf of women. It is also important that courts treat seriously the actions that lead to convictions.

I believe that the Scottish Government and Parliament are taking important steps forward, but I believe even more strongly that there is much more still to be done.

**Douglas Ross:** I absolutely agree that much more still needs to be done.

Last week, I raised the case of Esther Brown. She was raped and murdered by a criminal with a long and appalling history of violence against women. Just this morning, we heard that arrests have finally been made in connection with the

murder of schoolgirl Caroline Glachan, which took place more than 25 years ago. She was found dead on the morning of her mother's 40th birthday.

Another tragic loss of life that we have raised numerous times in the chamber is that of Michelle Stewart, who was murdered in 2008 near her home in Ayrshire. Just a few weeks ago, her sister Lisa wrote to the First Minister's justice secretary to ask for an update on Michelle's law, which is a series of reforms to toughen up the justice system that my party supports. Specifically, Lisa asked about the tagging and GPS monitoring of those who have committed serious and violent crimes but who are released on licence. She said that the former justice secretary, who is speaking to the First Minister right now, committed to having a scheme up and running by November 2021. With one week to go, will that promise to a grieving family be kept?

**The First Minister:** First, in relation to the arrests that were reported this morning, in common with all members, I cannot comment on the substance of that matter, but it is an important indication that, no matter how many years pass after a horrendous crime is committed, those who are responsible will be brought to justice whenever possible. On this day in particular, that sends an important message.

On Michelle Stewart, I will ensure that the letter that has been written receives a full response. We have taken forward a number of reforms in response to calls that were made in the wake of that and other tragic cases. I will write to Douglas Ross about the progress and timing of the reform that he is asking for, and I will place the letter in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

I do not want to say definitively that this is the case here, but everybody in the chamber knows that certain commitments and certain strands of work have unavoidably been affected because of what, collectively, we have been dealing with over the past two years. However, those are important measures that we need to continue to take or to keep our minds open about taking, in order that we do all that we can to keep women safe, to ensure that those who commit acts of violence against women are brought to justice and to deal with much more effectively in that future than society has done in the past the underlying cause of violence against women, which is the behaviour of some men in our society.

**Douglas Ross:** I will appreciate any response that I get from the First Minister in a letter or in any other way, but a promise was made to a family who have gone through the worst of circumstances, which none of us can imagine, and, with less than a week to go, it sounds as though that promise is not going to be kept.

That is not the only promise to the Stewart family and others like them that has been broken. Just a few weeks ago, Lisa Stewart said this about her sister's murderer:

"We get no warning that he is out in our local area. What happens if we come across him; is any thought given to the victims?"

Again, that is not an isolated example. Victims are routinely left in the dark about where the criminal who ruined their lives ends up and when they will be let out. Right now, around 4,500 criminals who are serving sentences of up to 18 months for crimes including sexual assault and domestic violence have a release date that their victim could be told about. That means that there are 4,500 victims of crime who could be informed of when the offender in their case will be released from prison. How many of those victims have, in fact, been notified?

**The First Minister:** The reason I said that I would write in detail to Douglas Ross and make the terms of that letter available in SPICe—which, in effect, will make that information available publicly—is that I want to make sure that I give proper, detailed answers on the very important points that he has raised. We are taking forward work on all those strands. It is the case—this frustrates me as much as it frustrates other politicians, although, of course, it does not frustrate us nearly as much as I know it will frustrate the families of victims of crime—that the reforms in question are often complex reforms that have to be done properly in order that our overall justice system performs in the way that we want it to.

For example, part of the work on notification has involved making changes to the victim notification scheme to ensure that victims receive proper notice when that is appropriate—so that, for example, there is the ability for victims to be notified when people are on parole. I want to make sure that we set out in detail where all the different strands of that work have got to. I do not believe that it is the case that we are not taking forward important changes and reforms in this area—we are. Rightly, we have talked about those changes and reforms many times before in the chamber.

I know that I speak on behalf of many people—many women, in particular—across the country when I say that there are few issues that I care more passionately about than doing everything possible to keep women in our society safer from the violence that, too often, women are subjected to. There is more that we need to do, and there is more that we are doing. The issue is one that I take extremely seriously, and I know that that view is shared across my Government and, indeed, across the Parliament.

**Douglas Ross:** The First Minister said that victims have to have proper notice. The answer to my question, which was about how many of the 4,500 victims of the offences that I mentioned have been notified, is 37. At the moment, 37 of those victims are aware of where the offender in their case is and when they will be released. Less than 1 per cent of those victims know when the criminal who ruined their life will get out.

How can women who suffer the most horrific crimes and their families feel safe when they are kept in the dark about the release of dangerous offenders? They have no idea of whether, when they are walking down the street in their own community, they might come face to face with their attacker.

The justice system is stacked against victims. We have to change that to prevent another case such as what happened to Caroline Glachan, what happened to Esther Brown and what happened to Michelle Stewart. When will the First Minister's Government finally take the action that is desperately needed to keep women safe from such crimes?

**The First Minister:** Those are important issues. I do not believe that it is a fair representation of the justice system to say that it is stacked against victims. However, I do believe that the justice system, like all parts of society, must change to respond better to the needs of women who are subject to violence. I readily accept that responsibility.

The Government is taking forward a range of changes and reforms because some of what Douglas Ross has cited is not good enough. Victim notification is one of those areas. I do not say that they are in the majority, but it is important to say that some victims of crime do not want that information, for reasons that are important to them. It is important that, in all of those things, the needs and wants of victims are to the fore and that the justice system is responsive and not defensive. We must always look at how we reform and change the justice system to address those legitimate concerns.

My final point in no way downplays the issues that we are discussing. The justice system responds to crimes after they have been committed, and it must do so appropriately and effectively. This applies not only to Scotland but globally: we all have a duty to do much more to prevent violence happening to women in the first place. That means profoundly changing the culture that exists in many countries.

I am glad that the issue has been raised, given what today represents. I accept my responsibility in Scotland to ensure that all those issues are addressed and that we take forward the changes

and reforms, because we all have a duty to do everything that we can to keep women as safe from violence as possible.

### Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

2. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** Last week, I raised the case of Andrew Slorance, who died in the Queen Elizabeth university hospital in Glasgow after contracting a fungal infection, Aspergillus, that is linked to water and the environment. After raising that in the chamber last week, I was contacted by a senior clinician at the hospital, who revealed that there was another case of Aspergillus in a child cancer patient at around the same time and in the same ward as Andrew. Tragically, that child died.

When a hospital reports a serious infection such as Aspergillus, a red report should be filed and the health secretary informed. Did that happen? Was the First Minister aware of that death? What action was taken?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I will look into that specific issue and I will come back to Anas Sarwar. Those are important issues. I do not have the details of the case that he raises, but I will make it a priority to look into that.

Since last week's exchanges, and after serious concerns were raised by Louise Slorance, Andrew's wife, the Government has taken further action. Those concerns require full and proper investigation. I have written to Louise Slorance today to confirm the initial actions that are being taken in the light of the concerns. Those actions include an independent external review of Andrew's case notes.

Regarding the more general concerns about Aspergillus infections at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, the health secretary has asked Healthcare Improvement Scotland to carry out a wider review. Any necessary action will be taken as a result of those strands of work.

On the additional case that Anas Sarwar has raised, I undertake to look into that as a matter of urgency and I will write to him once I have had the opportunity to do so.

**Anas Sarwar:** That sounds like a no. What is the point of a Scottish Government oversight board? The First Minister says that there will be a review. Waiting for a public inquiry, or talking more about process, will not save people's lives. That response is simply not good enough. Public inquiries and reviews did not prevent the deaths of Andrew Slorance or that child from Aspergillus.

Most devastating of all, infections are still happening right now. A second clinician, who is afraid to speak out because of bullying and intimidation, has told me that, in the past two

months, another child acquired a waterborne infection, as Milly Main did, and died. That is another case in the past two months and another dead child. Holding answers are no longer good enough. This is gross negligence. The First Minister must act now, stop infections and save lives.

**The First Minister:** Let me say very clearly and bluntly that it is really important that no clinician should fear bullying or intimidation in coming forward.

**Anas Sarwar:** They have been.

**The First Minister:** Anas Sarwar says that they have been, so it is incumbent on me as First Minister to say clearly that that will not be tolerated in our national health service. When concerns are raised, it is important that there is proper and full investigation to determine whether there are relationships between infections—a considerable amount of work to reduce the incidence of which is under way on a daily basis in the national health service—and people becoming seriously ill and dying.

It is important to say that proper investigation is under way so that we establish the facts, which will inform the actions that require to be taken. That is vital. It is also vital to recognise that it is absolutely correct that processes are established to ensure proper wider investigation and scrutiny. That is why the independent review and the case note review that were undertaken previously, and now the independent statutory public inquiry, are important. However, it is simply not the case that nothing else is being done while we await the findings. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is right now at the highest level of escalation of the health board performance framework; it is at stage 4, which is often referred to as special measures. That means that a significant amount of work is under way to address infection in hospitals and reduce the incidence of infection.

These are important matters. However, when concerns are raised, it is really important, and it is not about trying to deny responsibility, to say that real and serious investigation to establish the facts is important. I hope that Anas Sarwar will accept that. *[The First Minister has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]*

**Anas Sarwar:** That answer is simply unacceptable and complacent. Milly Main died in 2017. Two months ago, there was a similar infection in a child, who lost their life. Hiding behind process will not bring people back to life or stop infections right now. I remind the First Minister that she has been in charge of this scandal from start to finish. This has happened, and continues to happen, on her watch.

Right now, the health board is attempting to deflect blame on to clinical staff. This is a failure of leadership. The health board has failed, the Scottish Government oversight board has failed and, frankly, the First Minister continues to fail. Staff are being bullied and intimidated now. I have been raising the issue in the chamber for years and I have heard the same answers and excuses. Infections are happening now. Patients are dying now. Last week, the cause of Andrew Slorance's death was revealed; this week, we hear of the death of two children. Another week of dithering and inaction simply will not cut it. The First Minister should sack the leadership of the health board today, sack the oversight board today, and use her emergency powers to take control of that hospital. How many more families will have to be devastated before the First Minister does the right thing?

**The First Minister:** Sacking a health board does not change overnight the practice in a hospital. That is why the actual work has to be done. When concerns are raised about the cause of someone's death, it has to be properly investigated so that the action that is taken as a result of that is the right action. It is not right to say that no action has been taken over four years.

Anas Sarwar says that I should use my emergency powers to take control of the hospital. As I said, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is at the highest level of escalation, and will remain there while all the issues are investigated and action is taken. *[The First Minister has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]*

These are serious matters, which all of us should take seriously. However, we do not do justice to the families concerned if we simply call for action that is not based on proper investigation, proper scrutiny and proper consideration. That is the duty of Government, and the duty that we will continue to take seriously.

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to supplementary questions.

### English Channel (Deaths)

**Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** In light of the appalling loss of life off the coast of France yesterday, will the First Minister make the strongest possible representations to the United Kingdom Government to do whatever is required to prevent such needless tragedies from happening again?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I take the opportunity to express my deepest sympathies at the loss of 27 lives in the English Channel yesterday. It was a tragic and shocking loss that will be felt deeply not just here in the UK but across the world. Those seeking refuge are

human beings. They are driven out of desperation into boats crossing the channel and by a lack of humanitarian alternative routes.

I believe that it is important that those issues are addressed and done so with the needs of human beings in mind. We should be working together to ensure that those seeking refuge get protection from exploitation rather than punishment or criminalisation. They need rescue, not diversion back into treacherous waters. Scottish ministers have repeatedly called for a much more humane approach to asylum, and we will continue to do so in the wake of this dreadful tragedy.

### Long Covid

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** A constituent in my region has contacted me in distress, as her 16-year-old vaccinated daughter has now contracted long Covid. She is struggling to access treatment for the condition and has been absent from school since September. Her general practitioner wrote to NHS Forth Valley and was advised that it could not treat her, as

“they do not support Long Covid”.

That is a shocking situation for any constituent and any child who feels that they are being abandoned by the health system. What action can be taken to ensure that the situation is rectified as a matter of urgency?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I have not seen the terms of the correspondence from NHS Forth Valley that the member refers to, but obviously all health boards have a duty to support patients who have long Covid. We have made significant investment to develop services for people with long Covid, including children, whose needs will often be very particular. It is, of course, for clinicians to determine the correct treatment and services, but if the member wishes to write to the health secretary with details of the constituent’s case, I know that he will look into that and respond further.

### Care Home Deaths (Publication of Statistics)

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The examination of deaths in care homes where residents were admitted without being tested deserves to be illuminated with good and timely statistics, without manipulation from Government ministers, but we know that two ministers interfered to delay the publication of a report. Does the First Minister not understand that suspicion about interference is swirling around, and that the best way to deal with that suspicion is to publish the report into care home deaths now?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I absolutely do not accept that characterisation and

I think that it does a great disservice not to Scottish ministers but to those who are working hard—and have worked so incredibly hard over the past months—in Public Health Scotland.

Public Health Scotland has made it absolutely clear that no data was withheld. Data on deaths in care homes was incorporated into the “Discharges from NHSScotland hospitals to care homes” report that was published on 21 April. Of course, deaths in care homes, in common with all aspects of the handling of the pandemic, will be the subject of the independent inquiry, and we will shortly announce further details of that.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** As we have heard, the report on care home deaths due to Covid was not published prior to the election. The First Minister is aware that there was no barrier to Public Health Scotland publishing that report then, as its own guidance states that it can publish information even in an election, so it seems that the report was suppressed for political reasons. We know that secrecy and spin are at the very heart of the Scottish National Party, but they seem to have infected Public Health Scotland too. Why did it need to protect the SNP Government? Will the First Minister ensure that the report is now published?

**The First Minister:** That is a slur on the good people who work in Public Health Scotland day in and day out, trying to help their country through—*[Interruption.]* Jackie Baillie referred to Public Health Scotland’s reputation, as well as that of ministers. I readily accept criticism of ministers in the chamber—that is a proper part of the democratic process—but those working in Public Health Scotland do not deserve that, and I put on record my thanks to them.

I am not sure whether Jackie Baillie heard the terms of my answer to Willie Rennie, but let me repeat it. Public Health Scotland has made it clear that no data was withheld. Data on deaths in care homes was incorporated into the “Discharges from NHSScotland hospitals to care homes” report that was published on 21 April, which, if memory serves me correctly, was before the election.

### Child Disability Payment

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** Can the First Minister give an initial update on the roll-out of the child disability payment?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Social Security Scotland began accepting applications for the child disability payment on Monday, following a successful pilot in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross, and the Western Isles. That is another important milestone in the devolution of social security powers for disability benefits. Statistics on uptake will be published in the normal manner, but initial

information shows that it is going well. That is important, and I encourage anyone listening who thinks that they might be eligible for that payment to make inquiries and apply.

### **Out-patient Appointments (NHS Tayside)**

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** NHS Tayside has raised serious concerns about missed out-patient appointments, with 1,846 people failing to attend last week alone—almost 10 per cent of bookings. Given the implications for cost, delayed treatment and waiting times, what action is the Scottish Government taking to encourage people to attend their national health service appointments?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We encourage people to attend the appointments that they are given. We know, largely because of the Covid experience, that there are significant waiting times both for out-patient and for in-patient elective care. It is therefore very important that, when people get appointments, they attend those appointments. If they cannot attend those appointments, they should contact their health board to rearrange, so that that slot can be allocated to someone else.

We will always take steps to encourage that but, more fundamentally, we are taking steps, backed by significant investment, to increase the overall capacity of the NHS, to ensure that more appointments are available and we can start to tackle the backlog in waiting times that has developed over the past two years.

### **Rape Crisis Scotland Report (Response)**

**3. Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to Rape Crisis Scotland's "Survivor Reference Group Police Responses in Scotland Report". (S6F-00500)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We welcome the publication of the report by the survivor reference group and commend the courage of those who have come forward to share their experience. We will consider the findings in the report, although some of its recommendations are an operational matter for Police Scotland. We are determined to ensure that the justice system responds better to the needs of survivors in Scotland, and we will continue to prioritise support for victims of sexual crime, as well as work to identify ways to prevent offending in the first place. We recognise the key role that advocacy services such as Rape Crisis Scotland play in helping victims to come forward and engage with the justice process, which is why we fully fund Rape Crisis Scotland's national advocacy project.

**Maggie Chapman:** I thank the First Minister for that response and acknowledge how seriously she takes the issue.

Today is the international day for the elimination of violence against women, and we will be debating that later. Sexism and misogyny remain entrenched in our society, and the rise in reports of domestic abuse and sexual crimes should ring alarm bells for us all. The Rape Crisis Scotland survivor reference group report reveals concerns about how reports of domestic violence and sexual crimes are dealt with by police. It makes it clear how important understanding and awareness of trauma is both for justice and for recovery. It also makes it clear that survivors of colour, or those from different cultural backgrounds, are least able to access justice.

In the First Minister's view, what can we all do to ensure that our criminal justice system does not prevent minoritised and marginalised women in particular from being given fair and equal access to pursue justice?

**The First Minister:** First, we have to recognise what Maggie Chapman has outlined. All women suffer sexism and misogyny in some way, shape or form at some point in their lives. Unfortunately, too many women suffer very serious violence, abuse and harassment. Within that, though, women of colour and other minority groups not only suffer disproportionately but, in some cases, find access to justice even more difficult. That is something that all aspects of the justice system have to take very seriously. I know that Police Scotland does take that seriously and will take very seriously the recommendations for it in the report.

This is something that, at all levels, all of us must do more to address, in order that the next generations of girls growing up in Scotland and around the world do not suffer the same as those who have gone before them.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I have previously raised the often tortuous journey of women who are navigating their way through the judicial system and who have been brave enough to come forward and report when they have been victims of sexual crime. That includes the retraumatisation and secondary abuse heaped upon them by the continual retelling of their story to the agencies involved. Does the First Minister agree that it is imperative that victims have full confidence in the reporting process and that the judicial system treats them with dignity and compassion? Will she commit to reviewing those procedures to ensure that victims feel able to approach the police without delay or hesitation, because, all too often, that is not the experience that is being reported?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I absolutely agree with that. We must ensure that women have the confidence to come forward, that they feel that they will be appropriately treated when they come forward, that their concerns and reports will be taken seriously, that all due process will be applied and that their needs will be treated sensitively and sympathetically.

As politicians, we all have a duty, when we are talking about these things, to ensure that how we talk about them does not inadvertently put women off coming forward. All parts of the justice system need to consider the processes and systems that they have in place, ensuring that that is not just rhetoric but is reality. I know that the Crown Office and the police take that seriously, and I know absolutely that it is something that the Government takes very seriously.

We are funding a number of the organisations that work directly with women to support them through the criminal justice process. In the first 100 days after the re-election of this Government, we directed new funding to rape crisis centres and domestic abuse services to help cut the waiting lists in specialist support services.

Across all parts of our justice system and all parts of society, there are many things that all of us need to do to ensure that the experience of women is improved when they suffer violence and abuse. Of course, we must do more to prevent that in the first place.

#### **Transition to Net Zero (Nuclear Power)**

4. **Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's position is on whether nuclear power is an essential part of Scotland's transition to net zero. (S6F-00522)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Scottish energy strategy, which was published in 2017, confirmed the Scottish Government's continued opposition to new nuclear power stations under current technologies. Significant growth in renewables, storage, hydrogen and carbon capture means that they provide the best pathway to net zero by 2045 and will deliver the decarbonisation that we need to happen across industry, heat and transport.

We believe that nuclear power represents poor value for consumers, as is strongly evidenced by the contract awarded by the United Kingdom Government to Hinkley Point C nuclear power station in 2016, which will result in energy consumers subsidising its operation until 2060. To date, the project costs for Hinkley have soared from £18 billion in 2016 to £23 billion today, while the first generation from the site is not expected until June 2026, six months later than planned.

**Bill Kidd:** The people of Scotland have consistently voted for a Government that does not support the creation of new nuclear power stations. In the light of the comments made by the leader of Scottish Labour on nuclear energy, does the Scottish Government consider it necessary that taxpayers fund the creation of new nuclear power, given the time and the significant costs associated with it, when Scotland is already a renewables powerhouse?

**The First Minister:** I absolutely agree with Bill Kidd that we have to invest in the energy sources that will get us to net zero while delivering the best deal for taxpayers and energy consumers. Renewables, storage, hydrogen and carbon capture provide us with the best pathway to net zero—not an easy pathway, but the best pathway—by 2045. Nuclear power is a really bad deal for the bill payer, and that is before we take account of the fact that waste is incredibly difficult to deal with.

I have already spoken about the increased costs of Hinkley Point C. Internal analysis shows that, in 2030 alone, Hinkley could add almost £40 a year to a consumer's bill, while the equivalent offshore wind farm would reduce consumer bills by £8 a year. Let us invest in the clean sources of energy that will get us to net zero and deliver a better deal for bill payers now and in the future.

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** I look forward to the publication of that internal research.

Hunterston B stopped recruiting apprentices three years ago. Torness is moving towards the end of its life under present conditions. What does the First Minister say to all those apprentices who should be learning the skills and the technology and who should be leading Scotland forward in its economic recovery?

**The First Minister:** I want to see massive opportunities for apprentices, new workers and workers who are already employed in oil and gas and nuclear in the low-carbon, green technologies of the future, including in renewable energy, where Scotland has vast potential, in hydrogen and in carbon capture, which has unfortunately been dealt a blow by the UK Government in the Scottish context.

Those are the sources of energy that we should be supporting and investing heavily in, because they are better for our environment and they will offer jobs and opportunities for young people now and in the future. That is what the Government is behind. I hope that the whole Parliament will get behind that, too.

### **Access to Postal and Banking Services (Vulnerable Customers)**

**5. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what discussions have taken place between the Scottish Government and the postal and banking sectors regarding the continued access to everyday services, particularly for rural, digitally excluded and vulnerable customers. (S6F-00519)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Access to banking and postal services, particularly for rural communities and vulnerable or digitally excluded consumers, is vital. Any reduction in branch numbers raises concerns regarding the ability to access such services.

The regulation of financial and postal services is reserved to the United Kingdom Government. Scottish ministers are therefore restricted in our intervention. However, we regularly engage with the financial services sector, and I will re-emphasise the importance of the issue when I convene the Financial Services Advisory Board shortly.

We have made it clear repeatedly to the UK Government and Post Office Ltd that they have a duty to ensure that existing postal services are maintained rather than reduced.

**Jamie Greene:** The First Minister will be aware that more than half of local bank branches in Scotland have been lost since 2010. Customers were sent to post offices for their everyday banking instead. However, we are now losing many post offices, too. In my region alone, we have lost post offices in Greenock, Irvine, Port Glasgow and Wemyss Bay.

I appreciate that temporary measures have been introduced in some areas. That is most welcome. However, it is unclear what the long-term plans are, particularly for rural and elderly customers, for whom such services are vital, as the First Minister rightly pointed out. I appreciate that such decisions are commercially driven in many cases.

What constructive and positive conversations could the Scottish Government and the UK Government have with those sectors and local communities to ensure that no one is left behind?

**The First Minister:** The Scottish Government will continue to engage with financial services companies and the Post Office. As I reiterated today, we will raise the issue with the Financial Services Advisory Board at its next meeting.

I have had discussions, as have my ministers, about how those services can best be delivered, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that people have equitable access. Those decisions are often commercially driven, but it is important that

businesses remember the wider needs of their customers and consumers.

On discussions with the UK Government, I would be delighted to be joined by Jamie Greene in asking the UK Government to do more to better regulate financial services and postal services in that area. Perhaps he can make those representations alongside the Scottish Government. If the UK Government is not willing to do that—it has not been so far—perhaps it could devolve the powers to the Scottish Parliament so that we can build on the consensus that clearly exists here and do something about it ourselves.

**Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** More must be done to support post office provision not only in rural communities but in town centres. The town of Port Glasgow, in my region, has no post office, which is remarkable in a town of almost 15,000 people.

When post offices close, community groups and local development trusts often wish to take the services on but cannot get off the ground due to funding or resourcing issues. Will the First Minister look at how we might better fund community capacity to offer such services and retain them in communities?

**The First Minister:** We will always look at that. We already look at how we can support communities to take assets into community ownership—not just in this area, but more generally. That is a constructive way that the Government can use its powers and resources.

However, as is so often the case, the Scottish Government frequently ends up being called upon to put a sticking plaster on the actions—or inactions—of the UK Government. Perhaps the Opposition member will join those of us in the Government in asking why it would not be better to take those powers and responsibilities into the hands of the Scottish Parliament, so that we can tackle some of the root causes, instead of constantly having to provide a sticking plaster in response to the actions—or inactions—of the Tory Government at Westminster.

### **Illegal Export of Household Waste**

**6. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government’s response is to a Scottish Environment Protection Agency investigation uncovering the single largest illegal export of household waste from Scotland, resulting in Saica Natur UK Limited being fined £20,000. (S6F-00501)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** That kind of behaviour is totally unacceptable. The company’s actions were illegal and



environmentally damaging. They also undermine Scotland's wider recycling efforts. The prosecution sends a clear signal to everyone that waste must be managed responsibly and sustainably.

As it did in that case, SEPA routinely carries out proactive inspections at Scottish ports and loading sites to ensure compliance with the strict waste shipment regulations. SEPA will continue to prioritise the regulation of waste exports from Scotland to ensure that the environment is protected. It is, of course, for the courts to decide what level of fine is appropriate in any case.

**Monica Lennon:** I pay tribute to the SEPA officers involved in detecting that serious and, frankly, disgusting environmental crime. What were supposed to be bales of waste paper included used nappies, period products, dog excrement and plastic packaging. Dozens of those containers were intercepted in Antwerp and in transit to China.

I appreciate that the fine is a matter for the courts, but does the First Minister agree that £20,000 is a paltry fine for that filthy crime and that we need more robust punishment in order to deter such crimes? What action will the Scottish Government take to ensure that our regulatory and legal frameworks are fit for purpose and that we can show leadership on environmental justice and fulfil our moral and legal obligations not to export our pollution to other countries?

**The First Minister:** It is important to say—I think that Monica Lennon recognised this—that that case is a sign that our regulatory framework is working. It is a credit to SEPA that that illegal export of waste was intercepted and identified and that there was a prosecution and a punishment fine.

It is for the court—for the sheriff, in this case—to decide the appropriate level of fine. I know that the sheriff in the case highlighted some of the reasons why the fine was set at that level. There is a possible sentencing range, so the fine could have been much higher than that. However, it is for the sheriff to take account of the circumstances and decide what is appropriate. Although we all want to see such cases appropriately dealt with, it would be really wrong for me to second guess the sentencing decisions of any sheriff or judge in the country.

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Given that 98 per cent of plastic waste is not recycled here, will the First Minister back Scottish Conservative calls to reduce waste exports and create jobs by building a new recycling plant for plastics in Scotland?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We want to take a range of actions to ensure that we reduce waste and increase recycling. In fact, just

last week, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity announced the first of the investments from the £70 million recycling improvement fund to increase the quantity and quality of recycling. That marks the beginning of one of the biggest investments in recycling in Scotland.

We will continue to consider suggestions, wherever they come from, so that we fully play our part in reducing and appropriately dealing with waste in Scotland. That is an important part of fulfilling our environmental imperative.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Gillian Mackay.

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** Apologies, Presiding Officer. I think that the request was for an earlier question.

#### **Millbrae Care Home (Covid-19 Vaccinations)**

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware that, in December last year, 11 residents at Millbrae care home, which is in my constituency, were mistakenly given a saline solution instead of the Covid-19 vaccination. I understand that the situation was quickly rectified by NHS Lanarkshire and that no harm was caused to residents, but can the First Minister offer reassurance that that incident was an isolated case and that all the affected residents and their families were offered the appropriate support at the time?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, I am able to offer that assurance. I know that the health board has apologised for any distress that was caused by the incident at Millbrae care home, and I can confirm that the health board gave an assurance to us at the time that no harm was caused. All the affected residents, along with their families, were notified, and they received the appropriate vaccine on the same day, with no adverse effects. Vaccinators in the health board area were made aware of the error, with incident reporting being strengthened in the Lanarkshire system, and measures were put in place immediately by health boards to prevent any similar incidents in the future.

#### **Covid-19 and Flu Vaccinations**

**Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** Several of my Lothian constituents have written to me to complain about the Covid-19 booster and flu vaccination roll-out. One constituent who wrote to me said:

"I have been on the NHS website to try and book a flu and Covid booster jag but there are no appointments in either Armadale, Bathgate or Livingston for the foreseeable future. Can you help?"

Will the First Minister help my constituent? What measures will be put in place to ensure that the flu

vaccination and Covid-19 booster roll-out is faster, to outpace the delta variant and ensure that we will not head into winter with vulnerable people left unprotected?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** It is really important that, as I said in my statement earlier this week, we continue to accelerate the pace of the vaccination programme. We have had concerns raised about the roll-out in Lothian, and officials have been engaging with NHS Lothian, which is making improvements in that regard. More appointments—not simply in Lothian, but countrywide—are being made available through the online booking system every day. I encourage people, if they are about to pass the 24-week point since their second dose, to go online to book their booster and their flu vaccine. I did it myself yesterday and, in doing so, I saw the number of appointments that were flowing through the system.

It is the case that the vaccination programme is going well. We are the most vaccinated part of the UK, and I think that we are running as fast as the delta variant in that respect right now, but we cannot be complacent. We need to get as many people as we can vaccinated with first, second, third and booster doses, and flu vaccines, as fast as possible, and we are making that an absolute focus every day.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes First Minister's question time.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Earlier, the First Minister said:

"Greater Glasgow and Clyde is ... at the highest level of escalation".

That is simply incorrect. I am genuinely surprised that she got it wrong, given that she was formerly the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is at stage 4 of the escalation framework. The highest level is stage 5, which involves the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care using ministerial powers of intervention under the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978. The last time that those powers were used was in 2018, to remove the chief executive of NHS Tayside.

The First Minister is wrong. Will she correct the record, and will she now act before families are devastated by the loss of loved ones?

**The Presiding Officer:** The member will be aware that the content of members' contributions is not normally a matter for the chair. A mechanism exists by which members can correct any inaccuracies.

## Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-01994, in the name of Gillian Martin, on carbon capture, utilisation and storage as part of Scotland's net zero ambitions. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the Scottish Government's ambitious target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, its interim target of 75% reduction by 2030 and its strong support for the Scottish cluster of proposed carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) projects; understands that the UK Government's evaluation process scored the Acorn Project in Aberdeenshire as the most deliverable project in the UK; notes the calls on the UK Government urging it to change its decision regarding investing in CCUS in Scotland and award the Scottish cluster Track-1 status as part of a wider strategy to achieve as much carbon storage as possible; recognises what it believes would be the impact on the north east in particular of the UK Government failing to support the Scottish cluster; believes that this is a pivotal moment for CCUS on the decarbonisation pathway; notes the advice from the Climate Change Committee on the importance of CCUS toward reaching Scotland's net zero commitments, and believes that this is a view shared by many industrial partnerships.

12:49

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** In bringing the debate to the chamber, I intend to allow a good airing of the extremely strong case for the Scottish Cluster, and the Acorn carbon capture, utilisation and storage project, which is a pivotal component of it, to be given track 1 status by the United Kingdom Government as soon as possible. However, I want to make it absolutely clear from the outset that none of my remarks in any shape or form suggests that the two projects that have been given support by the United Kingdom Government—HyNet and the East Coast Cluster in England—do not deserve the status that they have been given. They absolutely deserve it.

My argument is that, in order to respond to the climate emergency, we need the Scottish Cluster to be given track 1 status too. In fact, just last night, at the meeting of the cross-party group on oil and gas, convened by my friend Fergus Ewing, Deirdre Michie of Oil and Gas UK went even further.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** Is it not the case that, if George Osborne had not pulled the funding from the Peterhead carbon capture project in 2014, the technology would be up and running by now?

**Gillian Martin:** Jackie Baillie has made a very good point. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Jackie Dunbar, I think.

**Gillian Martin:** Did I say Jackie Baillie? I meant Jackie Dunbar. I apologise to them both.

Jackie Dunbar has made a really good point. I will never forget the sense of betrayal that the people of Peterhead, in particular, felt—as did industry partners in Shell and other companies—when the feet were cut from under that project.

Deirdre Michie said:

“We should be throwing the kitchen sink at this. There’s no point in taking bets on a winner. We should be giving all five projects equal support.”

We also need to wake up to the fact that our current power, heating, transport, construction and manufacturing systems still emit more CO<sub>2</sub> than is in the targets that we aspire to. Until we have drastically reduced those emissions—it is by no means an overnight process—we can reduce their harm by capturing them and, in many cases, using them as materials for other things.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** If we “throw the kitchen sink” at carbon capture and storage, where will the public funds come from to crowd in investment in renewables? Surely we need to make choices about which technology we wish to deploy public money to, in order to get the biggest bang for our buck and the biggest cuts in carbon emissions.

**Gillian Martin:** I agree, but only to a certain extent, because it is not either/or but both, combined. As long as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are out there, from industries that may be finding it really difficult to decarbonise, we need to have some way of capturing that carbon. That does not preclude our doing the things that the member has mentioned. He and I have had this conversation before.

Everything around CCUS is backed up by the Climate Change Committee, which, in its advice to both the UK and Scottish Governments, has stressed that CCUS is a key requirement in meeting our climate change targets.

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** I am afraid that I have taken two interventions.

Those targets are of course in line with the Paris agreement that we signed up to and with the commitments that have been made at subsequent United Nations climate change conferences of the parties, including this year’s, in Glasgow.

The Climate Change Committee’s 2019 net zero report states:

“Given its strategic importance in achieving ... decarbonisation,”

CCUS

“is a necessity for a net-zero target.”

The committee’s chief executive, Chris Stark, said:

“The Acorn project is a slam dunk, in my view, for support.”

**Tess White:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** I have already taken two interventions; I will not be taking any more.

Of course, another very important thread is the just transition for our workers as we reduce our reliance on burning oil and gas, over time. That issue is not just for the north-east; families all over Scotland are reliant on oil and gas, and on their supply chains, for their incomes, either directly or indirectly. A project such as Acorn, situated in Peterhead, in the constituency of my colleague Karen Adam, will be well served by the talent pool that we already have in the north-east. That is another significant argument for its being put into track 1 immediately.

We have what is possibly the most concentrated transferable skills base right on our doorstep, as well as universities and local companies that can enable the innovation that will surround the project. I am aware of a few university-led projects, which have ready-to-go uses for the captured carbon, including one whose representatives came to speak to me a couple of years ago, which will convert the carbon into fire-retardant bricks for house building.

In economic terms, the Scottish Cluster will contribute, on average, £1.4 billion gross value added per year, up to the year 2050. If the cluster proceeds on track 1, job creation will begin as early as 2022, and the construction phase alone will support 7,000 jobs. Once completed, the cluster will support an average of 15,000 jobs per year until 2050, and that is a significant number of jobs.

Longer term expansion of the cluster would unlock further economic benefits, by safeguarding industrial jobs across the UK, particularly in those sites that are otherwise hard to decarbonise. So many people get that, including my Conservative friend and north-east colleague, Liam Kerr. In a very good article in *The Press and Journal* in August, he wrote:

“As the UK looks to demonstrate global leadership on low-carbon technologies ahead of COP26, I’m calling on MPs and MSPs to back the Scottish cluster.

With its energy expertise and heritage, existing infrastructure, and ready-to-deliver projects, Scotland is in an ideal place to start this next phase of our net zero journey.”

I hope that he will join me in urging his party at the UK level to listen to his words, because Liam Kerr is absolutely right, and he can bank that.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am genuinely very grateful for Gillian Martin’s words and I do not disagree with a lot of what she has said today. Crucially, Gillian Martin will acknowledge that, so far, the UK Government has backed Acorn with £31 million. Is she aware of how much the Scottish Government has backed Acorn for?

**Gillian Martin:** That is probably a question for the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, but my point is really to ask the UK Government why it is kicking the project into the long grass when it has already put that investment in, because there is no time to waste.

On hearing the news that the Scottish Cluster had been kicked into the reserve list by the UK Government, Sir Ian Wood did not mince his words either. He said:

“This decision makes little economic or environmental sense and is a real blow to Scotland.

Scotland is the most cost-effective place to begin CCUS in the UK given the capacity for CO<sub>2</sub> storage in the North Sea and the existing oil and gas infrastructure available”.

One of the reasons why the Acorn project is so vital is that it has the capacity to store carbon from industrial sites across the UK, including Ineos at Grangemouth and Project Cavendish at the Thames estuary, as well as more local sites, such as Peterhead power station. In fact, there are already memoranda of understanding in place between Acorn and emitters across the UK.

In her intervention, Jackie Dunbar was right to flag up the history around CCUS, and that is another betrayal in that respect.

I have run out of time because I have taken too many interventions, so I will finish now.

We cannot make the same mistake again; regardless of party, we must all urge the UK Government to give the Scottish Cluster track 1 status immediately—for the sake of just transition and thousands of livelihoods but, most of all, for the sake of our drive to the net zero targets that we all signed up to.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am conscious of the number of people who want to speak in the debate and I am keen to get everybody in. If members want to intervene, they should make an intervention rather than comment from a sedentary position.

12:58

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I thank Gillian Martin for bringing this important debate to members’ business today.

The carbon cluster remains an important project for the UK Government, so I very much hope that the project will go ahead as quickly as possible.

However, the Scottish National Party position on carbon capture is, frankly, ridiculous, because it seems to assume that we have a choice between only carbon capture, or oil and gas. I have to tell Gillian Martin that that is a false choice. Carbon capture works hand in glove with the oil and gas industry, which is leading the way in new technologies that are associated with carbon capture utilisation and storage.

**Gillian Martin:** Can Douglas Lumsden point to any part of the speech that I have just given where I have made that assertion?

**Douglas Lumsden:** It is more the position of the SNP, rather than Gillian Martin. As we heard last week, the First Minister wants to stop not just Cambo oil field, but all new oil fields. Members should think about the impact that that would have on jobs in the north-east.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** Now that is a betrayal.

**Douglas Lumsden:** That is a betrayal—quite correct.

Although reckless, the SNP position is not as absurd as that of its Green partners, whose website states that the Scottish Greens will:

“Oppose public investment in carbon capture and storage as it is unproven and the vast majority of projects are linked to enhanced oil recovery.”

However, thanks to a couple of ministerial cars and a bump in salary, I am sure that the Greens’ principles will be thrown out the double-glazed, well-insulated window. Perhaps the member should send a letter to her Green colleagues and try to get them on board for the carbon capture project, because we need carbon capture and new oil and gas developments.

Gillian Martin’s own constituent, former First Minister Alex Salmond, commented on the issue only this week. He stressed the need for new oil and gas developments and how vital they are for the north-east. He said:

“Without it, then it is not just farewell to tens of thousands of north-east of Scotland votes for the SNP.

Much more seriously, it’s Mossmorran no more, Grangemouth no more, St Fergus no more—and independence no more.”

He knows that the SNP is betraying the north-east. I would urge the SNP members for the north-east

to call on their party to stop the constant talking down of the area and the energy industry, and to get behind the industry and start protecting the 100,000 jobs that are at stake.

The *Press and Journal* reports today that recovery in the north-east is falling behind recovery in the rest of the country. It is time for the SNP to focus on the day job and to start understanding the realities of the situation that we are living in.

Cutting oil and gas exploration means that we will have to import more, and vital jobs will go elsewhere. Instead of offering solutions, the SNP simply adopts the usual grievance politics of blaming Westminster, with no proposals or ideas of its own.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Douglas Lumsden:** No, I do not have time—sorry.

Carbon capture is a fantastic initiative for the north-east, in partnership with the industries that have brought wealth and prosperity to our region. Carbon capture is possible to do while protecting vital jobs, meeting our net zero commitments and working with industry. I want this project to go ahead and I am confident that it will.

However, the SNP grievance project focuses on talking down the project, as if it is somehow game over. Whether or not the Government supports the project, it is highly dependent on external, private investment and the SNP's constant cries of grievance are putting that investment at risk.

The north-east deserves better than this failed coalition of chaos that turns its back on the north-east at every opportunity. The Government's failure to invest, engage or support the north-east is a disgrace. It prefers to play grievance politics rather than engage, and that is to the detriment of Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Karen Adam, who will be followed by Paul Sweeney. Ms Adam joins us remotely, and has around four minutes.

13:02

**Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I thank Gillian Martin for lodging the motion for debate. The Westminster decision to relegate Scotland's Acorn project to the second division is an illustration of its misunderstanding of the potential of the Scottish energy industry. It is also a betrayal of future generations, as we witness what has been called

“the terrifying march of climate change”.

It would have been a case of third time lucky, with the first attempt having happened 20 years ago and the second, in 2015, being the £1 billion UK-wide carbon capture and storage competition, which was cancelled by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, George Osborne. Even in 2018, the UK Government admitted that the then infant Acorn demonstrator project had merit. Perhaps if a proposal to build a Peppa Pig World in Peterhead had been on the table, we might have had a different outcome.

I may jest, but this is no laughing matter and neither is investment in a just transition, needed to secure jobs and transfer from the inevitable wind-down of the fossil fuel sector. The experienced and hard workers of the energy sector in the north-east deserve security. The north-east as a whole needs this investment, which will undoubtedly benefit Scotland and the world, as we potentially lead the way in just transition and innovation in the carbon capture and sequestration industry.

I have had recent meetings with Acorn, both prior to and following the recent decision. I am convinced that Acorn will roll up its sleeves and prove Westminster wrong, one way or another. This will not be the end of its story, or Scotland's story. It is not easy to forget that, at the beginning of this year, Ineos and its joint venture partner at Grangemouth, PetroChina, committed to developing Scotland's first CCS project with Acorn. In July, it was announced that the Acorn CCS project had agreed to partner with Ineos and Petroineos at Grangemouth to capture and store up to 1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2027. If the Tories will not support Acorn, I am confident that there will be others who will do so. As Energy Voice commented, if they do not support it, perhaps it will be time to say to Acorn,

“get on with it and tell the Tories to take a hike.”

Once again, so much opportunity is being left in the long grass in what seems like punishment. My predecessor Stewart Stevenson said,

“we've had enough of stalling—the UK government must now get on with delivering the project at Peterhead.”

To all intents and purposes, it has failed yet again. It is difficult to be objective when we see that the preferred bidders are two competing projects in what can only be described as red wall territory.

To add pain to the loss of jobs and socio-economic advantage, and injury to the despair and betrayal felt in and around my constituency, we are left without any meaningful explanation as to why the Acorn project has not been chosen in the top league. It is perceived as a purely political decision. The industry has observed:

“Objectivity? Er, that got lost somewhere.”

It is also worth repeating what Sir Ian Wood, another stakeholder, whom I met not long ago, said:

“Scotland is the most cost-effective place to begin CCUS in the UK given the capacity for CO<sub>2</sub> storage in the North Sea and the existing oil and gas infrastructure available to repurpose for CO<sub>2</sub> transport and storage”.

Energy Voice reports that Sir Ian

“also urged Westminster to rank Acorn alongside the winning, so-called Tier One projects.”

I finish by speaking up for my constituents who have voiced their anger at the decision, the thousands of jobs not created and a huge missed opportunity. Acorn will keep the door, and the ear, open to Westminster, I have no doubt. However, if we adopt the tone of the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26—in Glasgow, we do not have plenty of time to make a real and meaningful difference. Opportunities must be seized. We must live adventurously. Others will not wait while Westminster drags its heels. It should just get on with the investment and do the right thing for the people that it claims to have broad shoulders for.

13:07

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank the member for Aberdeenshire East for bringing this vital debate to the chamber and for emphasising how critical the Acorn project is to Scotland achieving its net zero target by 2045. That is why the Climate Change Committee described it as

“a necessity, not an option”.

The UK Government's announcement last month that the Acorn project would not be selected in the first round of plans for carbon capture and storage was surely galling for all of us to witness. The cluster is widely regarded by industry leaders as providing the most comprehensive business plan, and the UK Government's announcement was widely condemned. Sir Ian Wood described it as “deeply disappointing” and urged the UK Government to think again.

The carbon reduction benefits are clear. The proposal would also have seen more than 26,000 workers being transitioned out of the oil and gas sector into lower carbon alternatives over the next 10 years, which is a crucial aspect of achieving climate justice for workers. We all know how important the transition away from fossil fuels will be if we are to meet those targets, but we also know the importance of providing a just transition for workers. That is why the decision is particularly galling and disheartening.

Focusing on energy production, Peterhead power station is Scotland's largest and only

thermal generator. If we do not have the ability to capture carbon and we are not able to decarbonise the grid, that will put in jeopardy Scotland's ability to meet the 2045 target for net zero. As an interesting adjunct to the debate about nuclear power during First Minister's question time, if we do not decarbonise the base load, we will be in a really difficult position.

Perhaps we should not be surprised by the decision, given that the Conservatives rowed back on the commitment, spelled out in their 2015 manifesto, to the £1 billion carbon capture and storage programme that was proposed for Longannet and Peterhead. This year, we have seen the Tories break their promise on tax rises and rip up manifesto commitments on protecting the triple lock on pensions. Now we have this broken promise in the wake of COP26. It is hardly surprising, but it is certainly shocking. It is not just the broken promises and clear disdain for the Scottish Cluster that are galling; it is the potential cost implications that go along with that.

**Stephen Kerr:** Has Paul Sweeney actually seen the criteria against which the various projects were scored and ranked?

**Paul Sweeney:** I have examined the criteria, which is why I am all the more perplexed at the decision that was made.

**Stephen Kerr:** Have you seen the scores?

**Paul Sweeney:** I have seen the scores, and I am perplexed at the artificial rationing of resource and investment. We need it to all happen concurrently, not sequentially. That is the biggest problem. We are trying to advocate the benefits of pooling and sharing resources in the United Kingdom, so it really does not help when this sort of thing happens. Someone, somewhere in Whitehall, particularly in the Treasury, will surely have seen the political implications and made it clear that the Scottish Cluster had to be a priority.

It is because of the chancellor's dogmatic adherence to the cap on capital investment of 3 per cent of gross domestic product that the investment has been rationed in this way. When UK borrowing and the debt burden that the country faces are at their lowest in history, why on earth would we not pump investment in now to unlock huge multiplier effects to increase employment and gross value added for the Scottish economy?

It is a one-way bet and it is baffling that the Conservatives have not seized the opportunity. I urge them to reconsider their position, because we really need the UK Government to look again at this. The decision will hamper long-term investment in the Scottish Cluster that is desperately relied on, and it will harm our chances of reaching our net zero target while providing a just transition for workers.

We need all five UK carbon capture and storage projects that are in the pipeline to happen simultaneously and now, not just HyNet and the Teesside Humber East Coast Cluster. Scotland has 60 per cent of the UK's storage potential, so it makes sense to have a carbon capture and storage presence in Scotland. I urge the Scottish Conservatives to speak to their colleagues in Westminster to ask them to reverse the decision. That is the right thing to do for our economy and climate ambitions. If the Conservatives had any real ambitions for Scotland, it would be a no-brainer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am conscious of the large number of members who still want to speak in the debate, so I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

*Motion moved,*

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

*Motion agreed to.*

13:12

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):** This debate is one of the most important of our time, so Gillian Martin is to be congratulated on bringing it to the chamber. I thank members from virtually all parties for attending yesterday evening's meeting of the cross-party group on oil and gas. It was really informative, and I hope that we can work together across the chamber to promote objectives on which, increasingly, we should be able to find consensus. Part of that consensus must be that the Scottish Cluster, or the Acorn project—perhaps improved and with more emitters and more CO<sub>2</sub>—must go ahead if we are to achieve net zero targets.

However, it must be said that the UK Government record on CCS is one of a consistent breach of promises. Those promises were first made by ministers in respect of Longannet, then, in 2014, by Ed Davey and David Cameron, who visited Peterhead power station to announce that that would be the CCS scheme site. As I recall, it was an announcement with a fanfare of trumpets of veritable Wagnerian volume, with them patting themselves on the back for what they were about to do for Scotland. Now, with Acorn, we have number 3 for CCS in Scotland—we are once, twice, three times a loser under UK Government decisions. That is the record of fact, but there is a fourth opportunity and we must grasp it.

**Liam Kerr:** Will the member give way?

**Fergus Ewing:** I think that the member might be interested in what I have to say.

We should work with experts in Scotland such as Scottish Carbon Capture & Storage. As the minister will know, when I was in his position for five years, I worked with people such as Professor Stuart Haszeldine, a world leading scientist who, with Dr Emma Martin-Roberts and Dr Stuart Gilfillan, published a report earlier this month that said, in short, that if we proceed at the current rate, we can capture only 10 per cent of the CO<sub>2</sub> that we require to capture to meet net zero. I was not the brightest boy in the class, but I never went into an exam saying, "I am determined to achieve 10 per cent". That is not ambition; it is capitulation.

So, what do we need to do? I say with all sincerity and with absolute conviction that we need to do a number of things. We need a successful, working and thriving oil and gas sector. Without such a sector, we cannot deliver CCS. The oil and gas sector has the expertise; no one else does. If we accept that CCS is a sine qua non of reaching net zero—everybody except those on the fringes accepts it—we need an industry to deliver it. We should recognise that the North Sea operators, led by OGUK, have set a world-class standard, setting out to cut emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, cutting flaring and methane, and using the most carbon-friendly and least-emitting practices. As Sir Ian Wood said, if we stop domestic production, we will import more gas from Qatar, costing 59kg of emissions per tonne as opposed to 22kg per tonne. We will increase, not reduce, emissions.

We must go ahead now with the Acorn project. If the Prime Minister does not listen to this debate, and if he says no for a fourth time, he will be committing an act of betrayal worthy of Cassius and Brutus in the assassination of their great friend, Julius Caesar. The Prime Minister is fond of quoting Latin phrases. The last word on the tombstone of CCS in Scotland must not be, "Et tu, Boris."

13:16

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I start by saying how pleased I am that the SNP agrees with so much Conservative policy on carbon capture. Like us, the SNP supports the technology, wants it to play a part in net zero, and believes that it can help to create a just transition in the north-east. With common goals, it makes sense to collaborate. It was therefore deeply disappointing to see the SNP do the opposite this week. Instead of working together on carbon capture, the SNP issued a needlessly hostile letter to Scottish Conservative politicians. Full of confrontational language, it was more a political rant than a sincere attempt at dialogue. It is bizarre to target colleagues who share common ground.

To be clear, I was disappointed that the fantastic Acorn bid did not place higher, as were my Scottish Conservative colleagues, but the bid is still live.

**Gillian Martin:** What interaction has Maurice Golden had with the decision makers in the UK Government about his disappointment?

**Maurice Golden:** I have had no interaction with the UK Government. I know that some of my colleagues have represented us on that. It is, however, important to note that I do not have a reporting mechanism to the UK Government, I am not accountable to the UK Government, and I have no bosses in Westminster, other than when Douglas Ross is there. To suggest otherwise is absolutely outrageous.

The British Government is still engaging on the Acorn project, and that is all the more reason to work together to get it over the line in round 2. Why, then, is the SNP trying to pick a fight? Let me explain. Its hostile letter is not really about carbon capture, net zero, or the north-east; it is just a tacky public relations stunt to whip up grievance at Britain and divert attention from SNP failings.

For starters, why is the SNP targeting Scottish Conservatives? We support carbon capture. It is the Greens who oppose it. The Greens would shut down the Acorn project in a heartbeat. Where is the SNP letter to the Greens? Better yet, why does the SNP not use its energy to come up with a clear industrial road map to support carbon capture. Professor Stuart Haszeldine has already warned about the lack of such a road map and made it clear that the British Government is forging ahead on this.

We know that the British Government is serious about a low-carbon future. Members should look at the North Sea transition deal, which is cutting emissions, supporting up to 40,000 jobs, and investing up to £16 billion in new technologies, including carbon capture. The same cannot be said for the SNP. Its innovation and targeted oil and gas decarbonisation plan puts a paltry 100MW cap on floating offshore wind innovation projects, whereas the figure for the rest of the UK is 300MW. The SNP's failure to act will put Scottish projects at a disadvantage and risks costing the north-east its pre-eminence in renewables.

That is the sort of foot-dragging failure that the SNP is trying to hide. Its £100 million green jobs fund took more than a year to pay anything out, it has delayed the deposit return scheme and its active travel target will not be met for 290 years. We can add to that its failure to meet the recycling, biodiversity and renewable heat targets. On emissions, it has failed three years in a row. When

will SNP MSPs stand up to their Holyrood bosses, who continually fail to tackle climate change?

I make it clear that the Scottish Conservatives want to tackle climate change and want carbon capture to succeed; we most certainly want the north-east to succeed. If the SNP shares those goals, let it ditch the cheap public relations stunts and work with us for the common good.

13:21

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I thank Gillian Martin for raising the topic for debate. From her role as convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee in the previous session, she will be aware of the cross-party concerns that the committee expressed unanimously about a reliance on CCS to cut Scotland's emissions by a quarter by 2030. In fact, the committee went further and, in its report on the climate change plan, which was published only in February this year, called for the Scottish Government to produce a plan B alternative. As we head towards the beginning of a new climate change plan cycle next year, I hope that the minister is aware of the pressing need to come up with that plan B.

Capturing carbon emissions and storing them underground appears, at face value, to be part of the solution, but the unfortunate reality is that, so far, the history of CCS deployment has been one of overpromise and underdelivery—

**Gillian Martin:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mark Ruskell:** I would like to finish my sentence.

That is at a time when we need technology that can be rapidly and cost-effectively deployed in the next eight years.

I will certainly give way to Ms Martin, if I can get the time back.

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

**Gillian Martin:** Does Mark Ruskell agree that the failure of CCS has been to do with not the technology but the fact that funding has repeatedly been withdrawn from it?

**Mark Ruskell:** No. I think that the global context is that there has been a technical failure with the capture of emissions. That is just the reality. I will say more about that later in my speech.

The key test is whether CCS accelerates a phase-out of fossil fuels to keep us to a rise of less than 1.5°C or whether it just builds in dependence that delays a just transition while diverting and crowding out investment in renewables.



I will offer an example that relates to the blue hydrogen that would be produced from the carbon storage element of the Acorn project. The current plans are to blend blue hydrogen, at a rate of 20 per cent, into the gas grid, but the question that begs is about the other 80 per cent of the fuel mix, which will continue to be natural gas that will be burned in boilers with no carbon abatement. At the point in the next decade when we should be scrapping gas boilers, we would be extending our dependency on a gas grid and gas fuel, with blue hydrogen as the enabler.

The argument that will be made in reply is that we are talking about a transition and that, in the future, we will be able to switch from blue hydrogen to green hydrogen, which is made from renewable energy. I get that, but green hydrogen will be a precious and highly sought-after commodity that will be used to fuel the steel furnaces of Europe. I hope that Scotland will have a serious role to play in that, but it would be an expensive low-grade use of green hydrogen to use it just to heat our homes.

There are critical questions to be answered about the effectiveness of CCS. A recent report by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research showed that the scale of deployment that would be necessary to reduce emissions in line with our climate targets has not yet been demonstrated anywhere in the world. Projects around the world have received billions in public investment, but with pretty minimal success.

In fact, right now, CCS global capacity is 0.1 per cent of annual global emissions per year. Not only are these technologies underdelivering, but capacity is not intended to increase significantly until 2030. Deployment takes six to 10 years from construction to completion, by which point our emissions targets will already have been missed.

There are critical questions that we need to ask of, and which need to be answered by, Government. For example, what guarantees will there be with regard to the capture rate for plants that will feed into the Acorn project? What about the huge energy requirements to power CCS, which risk causing more emissions than will actually be captured?

It has been a couple of weeks since COP26, and, yes, the eyes of the world are on Scotland, with a demand for meaningful change. However, we need to cast a critical eye particularly on strategies and solutions that come from the boardrooms of oil and gas corporations, which, to be honest, have spent decades denying even the existence of climate change. We just need to have a bit more critical thinking about the deployment of these technologies.

13:25

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I thought that it would be helpful to clear up certain areas where some members seem to have misunderstood crucial facts. First of all, Karen Adam said that this was a political decision, but she appeared unaware that there were objective criteria for approval that all bidders knew and pitched to.

Paul Sweeney said that the Acorn project had the most comprehensive business plan. Given that it is unlikely that he can have seen and compared all the scoring involved, it might be somewhat difficult to substantiate that claim. In any event, he appears to be unaware that only one of the criteria pertained to how far along a project might be.

Among what were otherwise very fair and measured comments, Gillian Martin suggested that the UK Government might have betrayed the north-east. However, as I pointed out in my intervention on her, the UK Government has already backed the Scottish Cluster with £31 million. If Karen Adam had really been listening to the people whom she purports to have met, she would have known that the UK Government continues to work with the partners. Indeed, SSE Thermal has reported that it is engaging with the UK Government and its Scottish Cluster partners. Far from kicking this into the long grass, the UK Government has told the Acorn partners to keep working towards going live and has continued in regular meetings between Storegga Geotechnologies executives and ministers in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Treasury to move the project on.

The Scottish National Party's constant griping and politicking are really not helpful, and its position has been rather undermined by its coalition with a party whose manifesto explicitly rejects the idea of CCUS. If it were up to certain Government ministers, we would have no carbon capture projects at all. I heard no public protest—not one—from any of the SNP members when their tawdry deal was being stitched up, and I heard no public dissent from north-east SNP members when Sturgeon performed a handbrake turn on Cambo and signalled her willingness to throw the north-east oil and gas industry over a cliff. That is betrayal.

**Stephen Kerr:** Will the member give way?

**Liam Kerr:** Very briefly.

**Stephen Kerr:** The member is making an excellent speech and is clearly in command of the subject. He mentioned the £31 million that the UK Government is investing in the project, but how much has the Scottish Government put in?

**Liam Kerr:** I am very grateful for the intervention. I will hear what the minister has to say in his response, but to the best of my knowledge, the Scottish Government has put in zero pounds.

The important thing about the investment is that this is all part of a bigger picture. Acorn, like the oil and gas industry, needs investment, especially external foreign private investment. *[Interruption.]* I think that the minister would do well to listen to my comments. Getting that investment requires stability collaborative working and integrity, not manufactured grievance and division in both the Parliament and the media.

I want to make one other point. Karen Adam mentioned the SNP's much-trumpeted £500 million just transition fund. I have submitted around 10 parliamentary questions on the matter to the minister, and I have found that the fund is just a soundbite. There are no details about when, where, to whom, from whom or from what it will be paid. We do not even know which budget it is coming from. The contrast with the UK Government's £16 billion North Sea transition deal—which is, yes, 32 times larger than the SNP's soundbite and is planned to deliver 40,000 new energy jobs—could not be starker.

There is also the energy white paper, the 10-point plan, previous and on-going investment in offshore wind, carbon capture and, as announced yesterday, £20 million for tidal energy. That has been shown to attract around £15 billion of private investment—which satisfies the point that Mark Ruskell made in his intervention on Gillian Martin. That is what Kwasi Kwarteng meant when he said that the UK delivers “Plans, not platitudes”. It is time for the SNP to do the same.

I say to the SNP: enough—enough of the grievance, the division and the misinformation. Let us work together with the UK Government, partners and the industry to make Acorn happen.

13:30

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I, too, thank Gillian Martin for securing this important debate.

My constituency of Aberdeen South and North Kincardine has oil and gas running through its veins, so I am invested in Scotland's journey to net zero and in the opportunities that carbon capture and storage will bring to my constituents.

Our global population continues to grow; so does energy demand; so do carbon dioxide concentrations; so, too, do global temperatures. There are different schools of thought on how we get to net zero, one of which involves a suite of technologies including the capture and storage of

carbon dioxide emissions produced through power generation and other industrial processes.

Carbon capture and storage is not a new technology. One of my constituents recently reminded me that CCS has been used in enhanced oil recovery since at least the 1970s, using captured carbon to reinject and boost reservoir pressures. For some time now, carbon capture and storage has been the subject of on-going focus as a vehicle by which skills from the oil and gas sector can become a force for good in supporting Scotland to meet its climate change obligations.

**Douglas Lumsden:** Does the member agree with the First Minister, who said that there should be no new oil and gas developments?

**Audrey Nicoll:** My interpretation of what she said is that, until the appropriate climate compatibility assessments are undertaken—and given that the original licensing was many years ago—there should be no new progress on that until that point. That is my interpretation.

According to the “UK Offshore Energy Workforce Transferability Review”, which was published by the Robert Gordon University, 90 per cent of oil and gas industry jobs have

“medium to high skills transferability”

into net zero industries, not only by virtue of the industry's experience in implementing and operating large offshore infrastructure projects, but through its extensive knowledge of subsurface technologies, reservoir management and the transport and storage of substances.

Oil & Gas UK's “Energy Transition Outlook” report outlines a total capacity to hold 78 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> under the North Sea and the Irish Sea, which is about 190 times greater than the UK's annual emissions of 400 million tonnes.

There are, of course, challenges, too. Friends of the Earth has expressed concerns about the positioning of carbon capture and storage as a climate solution. There is also the matter of linking education providers, training organisations and the private sector more effectively.

In his research on North Sea carbon capture, Dr Abhishek Agarwal of the Robert Gordon University highlights challenges with carbon pricing and infrastructure and with the industry leadership of CCS, rather than leadership by Government. However, he also concludes that

“CCS is both desirable and feasible”.

In that regard, the Scottish Cluster that we have already heard a great deal about is working to unlock access to one of the UK's most important CO<sub>2</sub> storage resources, through repurposing existing oil and gas infrastructure. It is therefore

hugely disappointing that, despite the potential for the Scottish Cluster to support an average of 15,000 jobs per year to 2050 and £1.4 billion a year in gross value added, it was selected as a reserve cluster by the UK Government, compromising our ability to take crucial action now to reduce emissions, not just in Scotland but across the UK.

The Scottish Government has committed £500 million to a new just transition fund for the north-east and Moray over the next 10 years, and is calling on the UK Government to match that investment.

**Liam Kerr:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** She is just concluding, Mr Kerr.

**Audrey Nicoll:** Like many members here today, I will continue to urge the UK Government to match that funding commitment, and I urge the Scottish Government to continue reflecting its commitment to net zero by using all its powers to support carbon capture and storage opportunities as part of our just transition.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I encourage members to stick to their four minutes from now on.

13:35

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** When I read Gillian Martin's motion on carbon capture, utilisation and storage, I had no hesitation in supporting it. I support the view that carbon capture is a crucial tool that can be used as part of the broader solutions that are needed to reach net zero in Scotland. We cannot kid ourselves that carbon emissions will stop altogether, nor can we pretend that reaching net zero will be a simple process. We will still require large-scale energy-intensive processes, including cement production, chemical processing, hydrogen production and power generation. We must also consider the carbon that is produced by agriculture and transport.

To reach net zero, we will have to massively reduce the amount of carbon that enters the atmosphere, and I support measures to make that happen, but we also have other means at our disposal to reach net zero targets, and carbon capture is just one of them. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change fifth assessment report states that it would cost 138 per cent more to restrict a rise in global temperatures to no more than 2°C without carbon capture and storage. That shows that although not producing carbon in the first place may be more ideal, using carbon capture can help to balance

the environmental impact with economic concerns as we move to reaching net zero emissions.

The technology has come a long way. Carbon capture and storage technologies can capture more than 90 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from power plants and industrial facilities. Scotland has much potential to play a major role in the advancement of the technology and we cannot fall behind the rest of the world as projects elsewhere expand. Two days ago, Singapore announced targets to capture at least 2 million tonnes of carbon. We have the potential to be at the forefront of demonstrating the benefits of this technology, especially given that there are only 27 operational commercial carbon capture and storage facilities in the world. That is why, when I saw the news that the UK Government was not supporting the decision to invest in carbon capture in Scotland at this stage, I, like many other members, was dismayed.

**Liam Kerr:** That is a bizarre assertion. The UK Government clearly supports the technology, but made that decision on objective criteria. Does the member acknowledge that?

**Alex Rowley:** People were astounded at the decision given the progress that has been made. The member should be honest, accept that, stand up for Scotland and make the case, as the rest of us are trying to do.

I am happy to support the Scottish Government in its calls for the UK Government to reverse its decision and invest in the Scottish Cluster as a national priority. Had that been done the first time around in 2014, when the UK Government also did not invest, we would be well on our way to making carbon capture fully established in Scotland and, in turn, the UK would be further on its way to meeting its climate targets.

Given that we have just had COP26 here in Scotland, it is good that the issue is back at the forefront. We have to recognise that carbon capture is only one tool that we have at our disposal, and there is no question but that we have to reduce carbon production, which means pursuing greener energy, greener production methods and greener processing. We also need to expand woodland and restore peatlands, both of which play a major role in storing carbon and have a clear, long-term future.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You will have to conclude now, Mr Rowley.

**Alex Rowley:** There is much that we can and should do. I hope that the UK Government will recognise that Scotland has an integral role to play.

13:40

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

I will start on a note of consensus: the Scottish Conservatives' position has always been that carbon storage will play a vital role in the transition to net zero. That is all the more important after agreement was reached on article 6 of the Glasgow climate pact in relation to international carbon markets.

One of the other fundamental takeaways from the Glasgow COP was the absolute necessity for Governments to work together and for constructive engagement between Parliaments, politicians, the public sector and the private sector. That is where I take issue with the SNP's approach to the debate. To suggest that the UK Government has utterly betrayed the north-east is not only factually wrong but counter-productive to our collective efforts to transition to net zero. To be frank, it is playing politics with the climate crisis and the future prospects of the Scottish Cluster.

UK Government support for the north-east and the renewables sector in Scotland speaks for itself.

**Gillian Martin:** Will Dean Lockhart give way?

**Dean Lockhart:** I have only four minutes. If the Scottish Government wants to hold a full debate on the matter, I would be happy to give way in it.

The UK Government introduced the North Sea transition deal, investing up to £16 billion in the sector and region and supporting more than 40,000 jobs. Only this week, the Whitelee green hydrogen storage project was announced. It is the first of its kind in the UK. Also this week, the UK Government announced £20 million a year for the development of tidal stream electricity. That is more support for the sector in Scotland.

**Mark Ruskell:** Will Dean Lockhart give way?

**Dean Lockhart:** I do not have time.

Let us not forget that that investment is all on top of the UK Government saving 75,000 jobs and 10,000 businesses in the north-east during the pandemic, thereby helping the north-east economy to keep going in the face of the global pandemic.

The UK Government has already invested significantly in the Scottish Cluster and continues to support it. It made it clear that the cluster will be central to the future of carbon storage in the UK. Already, £31 million has been invested in the project and we will hear from the minister shortly whether that is £31 million more than the Scottish Government has invested in it. The cluster is now first reserve and on track for further investment. All that was underpinned last month by the UK Government announcing a £10 billion low-carbon

hydrogen energy plan—the most ambitious in the world. That plan will secure the future of carbon storage throughout the UK, including in the north-east.

That massive investment by the UK Government stands in stark contrast to the Scottish Government's track record in the renewables sector. The Scottish Government promised to deliver 130,000 jobs in that sector, yet only 20,000 were delivered. It lost tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on the Pelamis and Aquamarine wave power projects. It has also put at risk £600 million of Scottish taxpayers' money to prop up Sanjeev Gupta's GFG Alliance, all for the sake of creating just 44 jobs. When it comes to the much-vaunted £500 million just transition fund, many people in the sector fear that it is just a headline announcement and will go the same way as the mythical publicly owned energy company—that it is all spin and will never see the light of day.

Listening to the debate, the ultimate irony is the concern that SNP members express about saving jobs in the north-east just a week after Nicola Sturgeon announced opposition to the development of the Cambo oil field. In effect, that announcement confirmed that the SNP-Green coalition wants to close down the oil and gas sector in the north-east, thereby losing 100,000 jobs and the massive technical expertise of workers and businesses throughout the sector, and requiring Scotland to import oil and gas in the future.

**Gillian Martin:** Talk about soundbites!

**Dean Lockhart:** Someone said "soundbites", but I have said precisely what their colleague Fergus Ewing highlighted would happen if the Cambo development did not go ahead.

Let us stop playing politics with the climate crisis and let the Scottish Government work with the UK Government to transition Scotland to net zero.

13:44

**Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP):** I congratulate Gillian Martin on bringing the debate to the chamber, and I commend her for once again standing up for her constituents and for the wider north-east. She is a doughty campaigner for them, and that shone through in her contribution today. I support the case that she made for the need to support carbon capture and storage in the north-east, in addition to the projects that are already in receipt of track 1 support. After discussing that, I will move on briefly to our net zero ambitions.

As we have heard today, the Scottish Cluster's Acorn project was the most advanced project of those submitted to the UK Government. That assessment is not mine, nor the Scottish

Government's—the UK Government scored St Fergus as the most deliverable carbon capture project anywhere in the UK. The infrastructure is already there, as is the workforce. Everything is in place, so it is crazy that the Scottish Cluster has been left behind. Although that is not the end of CCS in the north-east, it certainly makes it much harder to deliver. In addition, it puts at risk jobs—up to 20,000, to be exact—as well as the decarbonisation of Grangemouth, which is Scotland's largest industrial emitter.

To add insult to injury, the reserve status that Acorn has apparently achieved gives no guarantee of future support, and still cuts the cluster out of any future potential Treasury funding streams, lending of last resort or gaining storage liability. That means that the Scottish Cluster is now at a clear disadvantage. That is bad news for the north-east and for our net zero ambitions, and the Tories know it.

This is not the first time that we have been let down as a result of short-sighted UK Government decisions. As Fergus Ewing said, we remember Longannet, and the £1 billion funding that was promised for CCS in Peterhead in the run-up to the 2014 referendum, only for David Cameron to renege on that promise the following year, once that one area of constitutional difficulty was out of the way—

**Liam Kerr:** Will the member give way?

**Neil Gray:** I am sorry—I would give way, but I am conscious of the time strictures that the Presiding Officer has already imposed.

The UK Government must urgently review its decision on the Scottish Cluster and provide the Acorn project with the necessary support as quickly as possible.

It must also review its decisions on the provision of support in other areas in order for us to meet our net zero targets. Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced £20 million to support marine tidal technology. On the face of it, that sounds great, but in reality the UK Government is about to miss another good opportunity. The UK, and Scotland in particular, is already home to that technology, which is potentially game-changing for the energy sector. The tidal industry has the potential to generate £1.4 billion for the UK economy and support 4,000 jobs. Just as importantly for our net zero objectives, it is predicted that tidal stream technology will provide 11 per cent of the electricity not just for Scotland, but for the UK—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry, Mr Gray.

That is enough chuntering, Mr Kerr. In a moment, you will have an opportunity to make a speech of your own.

Please continue, Mr Gray.

**Neil Gray:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The support that the UK Government has offered is less than a third of what the industry requires. As with carbon capture, the tidal stream industry has been let down, when we need to do all that we can to encourage its swift expansion.

In the meantime, the UK Government, while it is £50 million short for the tidal industry, which is based in Scotland, is committing billions to new nuclear power stations. If it does not invest now, we will lose the investment, the technology and the jobs. Alan Brown, Stephen Flynn and Ian Blackford continue to make the case at Westminster for both CCS and tidal stream. I hope that the Scottish Tories can join them in standing up for those crucial Scottish industries and make the case for them both to the UK Government.

13:48

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate Gillian Martin on bringing the debate to the chamber. She gave an excellent speech, except for the last few words of the final paragraph. I also thank Fergus Ewing, who gave an excellent speech—again, except for a few choice words mixed in along the way.

However, when it comes to Karen Adam and Neil Gray—honest to goodness me. I include in that Neil Gray's comments about the tidal stream sector, which are so misguided that it is almost unbelievable.

I disagree completely with the motivation behind today's debate, which has become apparent from the contributions from certain members of the SNP. The conversation about the UK Government's support for CCUS clusters should focus on the environmental benefits that they will provide. Sadly, I am afraid that the motivation for today's debate comes directly from the SNP's one-page playbook on stoking up—

**Gillian Martin:** Will the member give way?

**Stephen Kerr:** I wish that I could. Honestly, the member has no idea how much I would love to give way, but unfortunately I am not allowed to.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are perfectly able to take an intervention, Mr Kerr, although you will still be restricted to four minutes.

**Stephen Kerr:** Exactly—see?

The debate is all about stoking up grievance. That is the SNP's one-page playbook: stoking up grievance against the UK Government. That

narrative is and has always been false. Rather than have the SNP's inward-looking approach, our efforts to protect the climate must focus on co-operation. We must work together with our partners across the UK and countries around the world. COP26, which was hosted by the UK Government in Glasgow earlier this month, showed the challenges and frustrations involved in co-operation, but it also showed that, through hard work, patience, determination and co-operation, things can and will get done. Co-operation produces positive outcomes that put us on the path to protecting our planet.

It is in the same spirit of co-operation and with the determination to do what is best for our planet that I approach the debate and the motion. As part of the UK Government's net zero strategy, four CCUS clusters will be operational in the UK by 2030. This is a world-leading development, and I am amazed, though not entirely surprised, to hear the Greens talking about the need for us to be so conservative and not take any strides forward as no one has ever done this sort of thing before. I am afraid to say that the attitude shown by Mark Ruskell shows exactly why the Greens are on the fringes of political debate in this area.

Two of the clusters will be operational by the mid-2020s and the other two by 2030. Last month, the UK Government's energy minister, Greg Hands, announced that the first two clusters will indeed be East Coast Cluster and HyNet, but the Acorn project in Aberdeenshire has been designated as a reserve site in the first phase and will continue to receive UK Government support. Being designated as a reserve site also leaves Acorn in a promising—and, I would say, advantaged—position to be selected for full support in the second phase.

Determining which clusters would be selected was always going to be a competitive process based on objective criteria—and, by the way, I would say that Paul Sweeney has certainly not seen the scoring in that respect. Although it was disappointing to learn that the Acorn project would not receive the full support that we all wanted it to receive in the first phase, it is fundamentally misleading and self-defeating for the SNP to say that the UK Government has abandoned Scotland. All the language about betrayal and all the other stuff in the letter that was sent to us were outrageous.

The important thing is to meet the carbon goals that we all agree on, not necessarily what part of the country or what order the projects appear in. When carbon is captured and stored, we all benefit, no matter whether we are in Scotland, England or any other part of the world. Reducing carbon reduction targets to tit-for-tat, pork-barrel

politics is to betray the science that sits behind all this. We must act locally and think globally.

I sense that you are about to tell me that I have no more time, Presiding Officer, so I will conclude simply by saying that I hope that the Acorn project will be part of the second phase and will get full support, and we will work across the chamber to that end. The technology deserves our support. It can make a major contribution to our carbon reduction targets, and it deserves more than SNP grievance and spin.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Kerr. I apologise to those who spoke later in the debate for having to curtail their time a little—the debate was heavily oversubscribed. That said, I will protect a bit of time for the minister to respond to interventions, if he so wishes.

13:53

**The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead):** I thank Gillian Martin for lodging this motion on carbon capture, utilisation and storage and for highlighting a technology that will play a crucial role in helping Scotland to decarbonise and reach our world-leading statutory emissions targets by 2045.

Ms Martin rightly and eloquently highlighted the consequences of the recent UK Government failure to award the Scottish Cluster, led by the Acorn project in Aberdeenshire, track 1 status and funding in its recent cluster sequencing process. Although the cluster was previously considered to be the most advanced and deliverable CCS project in the UK, it was rejected by the UK Government. As Sir Ian Wood said, that was like leaving the best player on the subs' bench. It is fair to say that the public, industry, the Scottish ministers and many others were shellshocked by the decision, and I honestly hoped that today we could all stand together and say that it was a serious mistake that must be corrected without delay.

Gillian Martin has also drawn attention to the north-east of Scotland, the home of oil and gas and a natural home for CCUS development and deployment. The UK Government's decision risks the just transition to good green jobs that the region urgently needs and which members across all parties keep calling on the Scottish Government to support.

The Scottish Government supports CCUS as a means to decarbonise industry and as a vital tool to achieve Scotland's emissions targets.

**Liam Kerr:** To go back to the north-east industry, Fergus Ewing rightly pointed out that, when Acorn is up and running, it will need a supply

of oil and gas. Does the minister support Nicola Sturgeon's view of future oil and gas, or Alex Salmond's position on future oil and gas?

**Richard Lochhead:** I am about to come to that theme. Alex Rowley mentioned the importance of COP. I spent two weeks of my life at COP, and I saw ministers from the UK and Scottish Governments, tens of thousands of people from across the world and non-governmental organisations saying together that the planet is burning and that we have to take faster action, be braver and be bolder. Yet, in the debate, the Conservatives, and Liam Kerr as the Conservative net zero spokesperson, have been attacking the SNP Government for saying that we should transition away from fossil fuels in Scotland and play our role in saving the planet.

Our 2045 net zero target is based in part on advice from the UK Climate Change Committee, which describes CCUS as a "necessity not an option", as Gillian Martin said. Significantly, the CCC pointed to Scotland's CO<sub>2</sub> storage potential in recommending the date of 2045.

**Maurice Golden:** I am heartened to hear that the SNP will finally meet targets, specifically the 2013 household waste recycling target of 50 per cent. Will the minister confirm that that will be met next year?

**Richard Lochhead:** Just last week, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity gave a statement to the Parliament on the circular economy. In response to the many attacks from members on the Conservative benches on Scotland's climate change record, I say that we have reduced emissions more in percentage terms than the rest of the UK has. However, we do not get one word of credit from the Conservative members for Scotland's progress towards meeting our climate change targets.

As many members have said, CCUS is an important transition opportunity for Scotland's mature oil and gas industry, and it can utilise the existing skills and expertise of those across Scotland to transition to a low-carbon economy. The livelihoods of significant numbers of oil and gas workers in Scotland are at stake. Recent figures show that the oil and gas sector currently supports around 70,000 jobs in Scotland. The Scottish Cluster, which we are debating today, could support an average of 15,100 jobs from 2022 onwards.

**Fergus Ewing:** With regard to the future operations of the North Sea oil and gas operators, does the minister welcome the opportunity that now exists to build a consensus across almost all parties that the forthcoming climate compatibility checkpoint—which, I understand, the UK Government, having consulted on it since last

September, is introducing—offers an opportunity to demonstrate that future production can continue, provided that it meets the high standards that, I hope, will be the outcome of that consultation, and will enable the 70,000 jobs to continue for the foreseeable future?

**Richard Lochhead:** On several occasions, the Scottish Government has asked the UK Government that it be involved and included in the conversations about the compatibility test for future oil and gas fields in the North Sea. Following COP, anyone would think that that is a sensible position to take, and that the green light should not be given to any fields until we have seen the compatibility test applied.

I will return to the issue of jobs, which is crucially important to the debate. At the moment, there are 70,000 jobs in oil and gas, with the Scottish Cluster and the Acorn project likely to create 15,000 jobs from next year onwards. To put that in context, the number of green jobs that are put at risk by the failure to support that project, which is one of many projects that are happening, represents more than 20 per cent of existing jobs in the oil and gas industry.

The UK Government's decision means that some of those employment opportunities will be delayed or even lost. The UK Government's failure to support the Scottish Cluster is a blow to our net zero ambitions and to the people of Scotland, particularly communities in the north-east of Scotland that are so dependent on energy transition. We have announced £500 million just transition funds for the north-east and have asked the UK Government to help by matching that. We are also supporting those in carbon-intensive industries with a skills guarantee.

**Liam Kerr:** Does the minister agree with the former SNP golden boy Fergus Mutch, who said in *The Press and Journal* just today that the just transition fund is

"a drop in the ocean"?

**Richard Lochhead:** That is why we want the UK Government to match it. I am glad that the member agrees with the point, and I hope that he will make representations to the UK Government to that effect.

The Acorn project is at the heart of the transition for which everyone is calling for support. Scotland has vast potential for CO<sub>2</sub> storage in the North Sea and remains the best-placed nation in Europe to deploy CCUS. The Scottish Cluster projects clearly present the best opportunity to develop industrial emissions reductions at scale by the mid-2020s.

As Gillian Martin said, when asked about the UK Government decision, the chief executive officer of

the Committee on Climate Change, Chris Stark, stated that the Scottish Cluster seemed a “slam dunk ... for support”, noting that:

“we should be able to get a third project going and that the Scottish project would be a really good candidate for that.”

**Stephen Kerr:** Does the minister also agree with Chris Stark’s comment that the UK Government’s announcement

“is a substantial step forward that lays out clearly the government’s ambitions to cut emissions across the economy over the coming 15 years and beyond”,

factoring in the fact that there will be further announcements?

**Richard Lochhead:** Chris Stark said that the Scottish Cluster was a “slam dunk ... for support”, but of course it did not get that support in the announcement from the UK Government. I hope that today we can all rally round and ensure that we get the Scottish project included in track 1 as soon as possible. The fact is that Acorn is expected to store over 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year by 2030, which is roughly 10 per cent of Scotland’s current emissions, and it plans to take that up to 20 million tonnes by 2040.

In conclusion, the UK Government’s decision not to award the Scottish Cluster track 1 status is illogical; shows a clear lack of ambition; represents a huge missed opportunity for green jobs in Scotland, particularly in the north-east of the country; and shows a lack of leadership on climate change. Ian Wood, again, described the decision as making

“little economic or environmental sense”

and

“a real blow to Scotland”.

I therefore urge all the parties to heed Gillian Martin’s advice and stand together to make the case that this project is essential for Scotland to meet its net zero ambitions and to deliver green jobs as part of the energy transition, particularly in the north-east of Scotland. We need the mistake of the Acorn project’s rejection to be corrected as an absolute priority so that we can get the project off the ground, get going and get the transition under way to help Scotland meet our net zero targets.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate.

14:02

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Portfolio Question Time

### Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** Good afternoon. I remind members that Covid-related measures are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is portfolio question time on constitution, external affairs and culture. I ask members who wish to request a supplementary question to press their request-to-speak button or indicate that in the chat function by entering the letter R during the relevant question. As ever, I make a plea for short and succinct questions and answers to get in as many members as possible.

#### Northern Ireland Protocol

1. **Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has made to the United Kingdom Government in relation to the potential implications for Scotland of the on-going dialogue between the UK Government and the European Union regarding the Northern Ireland protocol. (S6O-00438)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** Scottish ministers are concerned about the continuing lack of progress in the talks between the United Kingdom Government and the EU in respect of the Northern Ireland protocol. I, and fellow Scottish Government ministers, have repeatedly urged the UK Government to approach the on-going discussions with the EU seriously and constructively and to meaningfully include devolved Governments in that process.

If the UK Government were to trigger article 16 of the Northern Ireland protocol, that would have profound and deeply damaging consequences for every part of the UK and could result in a disastrous trade dispute with the EU. It is one of the most irresponsible things that could be done right now in the face of Covid and other Brexit implications.

**Jim Fairlie:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the UK Government’s needless and reckless confrontation with the EU has made it even harder to find constructive solutions to the problems that are created by Brexit, such as those experienced by the Scottish agriculture and food sector?



**Angus Robertson:** I agree with my colleague. The hard Brexit that the UK Government chose, which removes us from the single European market and from the customs union, is being pursued irresponsibly during a global pandemic. It is causing significant economic damage in Scotland. In the first half of 2021, Scotland's food exports to the European Union were 14 per cent lower than in the equivalent period in 2019. That compares with a 3 per cent drop in food exports to non-EU countries over the same period. Scottish goods exports fell by 24 per cent in the latest year to June 2021, compared to the equivalent period in 2019.

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** Last Thursday, the Irish Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, said:

"Where there is a will, there is a way, and I think both sides just need to knuckle down and get it resolved."

Last week's talks were intensive and constructive and there is continuing momentum in the discussions. Will the cabinet secretary explain why the First Minister's tone suggests that she wants the talks to fail and why she has downplayed not only the UK but the Republic of Ireland in her recent media commentary?

**Angus Robertson:** I do not recognise the Conservative member's characterisation. In my conversations with Lord Frost, I have repeatedly impressed on him the need for a positive relationship with the European Union. I very much welcome the comments made by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, about that issue.

The ball is in the UK Government's court. As the member and her colleagues will remember, it was the UK Government that signed the Northern Ireland protocol and described the deal as "oven-ready". It is they who are calling it into question. I urge the member to impress on her colleagues the need to find a resolution, because the impact on Scotland's economy will be devastating if article 16 is triggered.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Tess White has a supplementary question.

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress in relation to—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that there is an element of confusion, Ms White. I understood that you were pressing your button for a supplementary to this question. We will get to your question.

We move to question 2.

## **Covid-19 Recovery (Aberdeen Cultural Sector)**

**2. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will support the cultural sector in Aberdeen to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00439)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth):** Since the pandemic started, we have provided £4.9 million in emergency funding to the culture, heritage and events sector in Aberdeen. That includes support for grass-roots music and performing arts venues and organisations engaging with local communities and young people through culture and museums. We remain committed to working with the sector to support its recovery, and will continue to engage with the sector to ensure that.

**Douglas Lumsden:** A quick search shows that the following venues received Scottish Government funding towards their refurbishment projects: the Scottish national gallery in Edinburgh, the Scottish Maritime Museum in Irvine, the Scottish national portrait gallery in Edinburgh and the Burrell collection in Glasgow. However, the Aberdeen art gallery, which was museum of the year last year, did not receive one penny of funding from the Scottish Government. Will the Scottish National Party Government put its hand in its pocket and finally commit to help fund the Aberdeen art gallery?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I very much welcome Aberdeen art gallery's outstanding achievement as winner of the Art Fund museum of the year award and as one of the winners selected as part of the 2021 Civic Trust award. The Scottish Government is of course always willing to consider new funding requests at the planning or business case stages for significant cultural and community projects. However, I am not aware of a direct approach from Aberdeen City Council to the Government to fund the refurbishment of the gallery during those stages, as would normally have been standard practice for funding requests. I am more than happy to meet Douglas Lumsden to discuss the matter in further detail.

**Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** What extra financial support will be given to support small theatres in Aberdeen and in my home city of Edinburgh, which have been devastated during the Covid-19 pandemic?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are widening it out, but I am sure that the minister can cope with that.

**Jenny Gilruth:** We are somewhat.

In response to Mr Choudhury's question, which I think focuses on theatres and support for the cultural sector in Edinburgh, I note that further

information is forthcoming in relation to that. He will be aware of the substantial support that the Government has announced, which focused earlier this year on support for cultural and performing arts venues. Further funding will be available. We still await outstanding consequentials from the United Kingdom Government from the announcement back in March of this year. We have received £9 million of the £40 million of culture consequentials. That funding would very much help in that endeavour.

I am happy to discuss any detailed projects in which Mr Choudhury may have an interest, with regard to how we further support the sector, because I recognise the continuing challenges that the theatre sector in particular faces at this time.

### **Beyond Borders Scotland Women in Conflict 1325 Programme**

**3. Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support the Beyond Borders women in conflict 1325 programme. (S6O-00440)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** The Scottish Government is providing funding of £300,000 for the 1325 women in conflict fellowship programme in 2021-22. The programme was inspired by United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which emphasises the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peace keeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. The programme is delivered by Beyond Borders, a Scottish third sector human rights law organisation with a strong track record of working with the United Nations on international conflict resolution and related issues.

**Kaukab Stewart:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that, if Scotland is to fulfil its aim to be a good global citizen, it must approach international challenges in a holistic and connected way and that, by supporting this programme, the Scottish Government acknowledges how vital gender equality is to conflict resolution and climate justice?

**Angus Robertson:** I agree entirely with my colleague. That is why we are committed, through the Scottish Government's programme for government of this year, to increase our international development fund from £10 million to £15 million, and why the new climate change element is included in the 1325 fellowship programme.

The increase in international development funding will finance a new £500,000 women and girls empowerment fund for partner countries to

take forward work to ensure that women and girls are safe, equal and respected. That will be launched next year.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** In 2019, I led a debate on resolution 1325 and women, peace and security in which I highlighted the invaluable role of women as conflict negotiators, which is largely because women focus on housing, food and water security instead of solely on military security. Will the cabinet secretary give further detail on any additional plans specifically related to the Scottish Parliament and Government that will support and enable women to become conflict negotiators, particularly in the middle east?

**Angus Robertson:** In taking a holistic approach to international challenges, we are committed to policy coherence for sustainable development. Therefore, in the programme for government, we set out that we would reconstitute a ministerial working group on PCSD to lead on our ambition to align domestic policy objectives and activity with our international development objectives when engaging with the global south.

We believe that Scotland has a key role in peace and reconciliation. By the end of 2022, we will establish a peace institute. We have also recently trebled our assistance to climate justice. We will ensure that those initiatives are heavily informed by developing a feminist approach to foreign policy and that gender equality is at the heart of our approach to conflict resolution and climate justice.

### **Covid-19 Recovery (Arts Sector)**

**4. Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how it is supporting the arts sector to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00441)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth):** Since the pandemic started, the Scottish Government has provided £175 million to the culture, heritage and events sector. Further rounds of the culture organisations and venues recovery fund and the performing arts venues relief fund provided emergency support to organisations, supporting opportunities for cultural engagement. We remain absolutely committed to supporting the culture sector's recovery.

**Stephanie Callaghan:** With 22 per cent of musicians planning to leave the industry, community organisations such as Uddingston music club, which is in my constituency, are critical to maintaining and nurturing talent by providing local musicians with the chance to perform in front of live audiences. What support can the Scottish

Government provide to community organisations such as Uddingston music club?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Community organisations such as Uddingston music club in Stephanie Callaghan's constituency play a vital role in supporting musicians at grass-roots level and they provide a platform that gives access to music. Critically, as she alluded to, they also support local artists. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting community activity through our culture collective project. We have provided £750,000 to a new Scotland on tour fund, which will bring live music into the heart of communities. I recommend that Uddingston music club contacts Creative Scotland to discuss further potential opportunities for support, such as through Creative Scotland's open fund.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I was recently contacted by a small mobile cinema business that operates in the Highlands and Islands regarding concerns about Covid vaccination passports. Although it will be relieved by the First Minister's statement this week, it will still be worried about the future. Given the critical role of the small cinema sector—either mobile or otherwise—in bringing films to rural communities, what engagement has the Scottish Government had with it on vaccination passports and Covid recovery in general?

**Jenny Gilruth:** The cabinet secretary and I have regular conversations with the sector more generally. I meet regularly with the theatre sector.

The member spoke specifically about an issue regarding mobile cinemas. Yesterday, I met the chair of the event industry advisory group, Peter Duthie, at the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow, and I recognise some of the challenges. If the member has a contact for the individual concerned, I would be more than happy to discuss in detail some of the challenges that the member has spoken about.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** What work has the Scottish Government done to assess the viability of and the need for additional support for venues, given the pandemic's impact on the number of people attending theatres and cultural venues, its impact on reduced incomes and the huge impact that it has had on reserves?

**Jenny Gilruth:** The primary way in which we gather information is, as I alluded to in my response to Mr Cameron, through the event industry advisory group, which tells Government directly what support it requires. I met the group two weeks ago and I will meet it again in two weeks' time. It is hugely important that the events industry has that direct access to ministers regarding the support that it requires. I am more than happy to work with it, as we continue to do on

an on-going basis. The pandemic continues to present real challenges to the sector, as the member spoke to, and it is important that the Government hears those challenges and, critically, acts on them. If there are specific issues that the Government should be aware of, I am more than happy to discuss them with the member in further detail.

At this moment, we have quite a robust process in place with the event industry advisory group, which, I can tell the member, is not exactly shy in coming forward with its views on the Government's role.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 5 comes from Pauline McNeill, who is joining us remotely.

### **Covid-19 Recovery (Music Industry)**

5. **Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support the music industry to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00442)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth):** Since the pandemic started, we have engaged closely with the music sector, including with the Scottish commercial music industry task force and the Music Venue Trust, to understand the impact of the pandemic on the music industry and to provide tailored support.

We remain committed to working with the music industry to support its revival, including, as I mentioned, through the new £750,000 Scotland on tour fund, which supports opportunities to bring new concerts to venues across Scotland.

**Pauline McNeill:** The minister will be aware that one in three jobs in the music industry has been lost as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. According to figures that UK Music released last month, 69,000 jobs across the United Kingdom were wiped as a result of the devastating impact of Covid, with a natural impact on Scotland. The majority of workers are self-employed and many were not eligible for Government support. Thousands have now left the sector—that is a really key point.

Will the minister indicate whether the £40 million that was announced on 11 May has been fully allocated? How will the Scottish Government ensure that financial assistance reaches the freelance musicians who are still in the sector, many of whom could not benefit from the Government schemes?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Pauline McNeill is absolutely right to say that the music sector has been one of the hardest hit by the impact of the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, the sector worked pretty

creatively to overcome that. A number of artists provided virtual concerts, for example, but that is not a replacement for real live music.

Support so far has included £6.2 million to support grass-roots music venues, £17 million to support creative freelancers and more than £21 million to support cultural venues.

On future Government support, I have invited the Scottish commercial music industry task force and the Music Venue Trust to a round-table discussion with the cabinet secretary and me on 15 December, to discuss how the Government can support the music industry in its recovery from the pandemic.

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** Anecdotally, it would seem that audiences in music and theatre venues are still able to enjoy all the joys of the Scottish cultural sector while adhering to important public health measures such as mask wearing and the vaccination status app. The pandemic is not yet over, but does the minister share my optimism that Scottish artists and audiences are finding their feet again after an incredibly difficult year?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I very much share Marie McNair's optimism. The cabinet secretary and I have spent a lot of time, in the past few weeks and months, getting out there and meeting the sector in person, and it has been fantastic to see the recovery work. We very much welcome the return of audiences to theatres and music venues, and I applaud the many theatres and music venues that have been complying with the Covid-19 guidance and regulations.

I know that the recovery will take time and that many audiences remain cautious about returning. We need to acknowledge in our recovery work that there is still hesitancy out there. However, I am really keen to work with the cultural sector to encourage the safe return of audiences to theatres and music venues while recognising that, as we have heard, we will continue to face challenges right into the winter months.

**Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con):** Scotland's screen industry is growing every year—a development that we can all welcome. However, film production is only one aspect; screen-related music production is another. The Royal Scottish National Orchestra is developing plans to become a go-to centre for soundtracks, so my question for the minister is whether the Scottish Government has done any research on the percentage of Scottish musicians and composers whose music features in Scottish film and digital productions. What is being done by the Scottish Government to increase that percentage, and what action is being taken to open up that market to smaller

soundtrack producers outside Glasgow and Edinburgh?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Sharon Dowey asks a specific question about our research into the percentage of Scottish composers. I do not have that information in front of me, but I can certainly ask my officials for it.

The member raises an important point, which is essentially how we, in Government, drive the creation and establishment of talent in Scotland. I am really hopeful that the new project from the RSNO is able to do that, but I will come back to the member with a bit more detail.

### **United Kingdom City of Culture 2025 (Stirling)**

**6. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting Stirling's bid to become UK city of culture 2025, following its inclusion in the longlist for selection. (S6O-00443)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth):** I send my best wishes to Stirling for reaching this stage of the UK city of culture competition. The competition is run and funded directly by the UK Government, and Stirling is the only Scottish bid to be longlisted.

My officials are currently working with Creative Scotland and VisitScotland to look at options to support the Stirling team, which has a really fantastic story to tell. We will be able to give more information on that in the coming weeks, and I have asked my officials to follow up on that directly with Claire Baker.

**Claire Baker:** I very much welcome the minister's comments about Stirling. Achieving city of culture status would bring significant benefits to Stirling and the country more broadly, and I hope that we can all get behind the bid.

The minister will be aware that Dunfermline and St Andrews are bidding for city status as part of the Queen's platinum jubilee, next year. What can the Scottish Government do to support their bids and recognise the history, culture and ambition of those important Fife towns?

**Jenny Gilruth:** On Claire Baker's original point, Stirling has a really rich cultural offer. I was in Stirling on Tuesday, when I met representatives of Historic Environment Scotland at the Engine Shed. Whether it is the built environment or Scotland's rich history, there is much to be celebrated in Stirling—and I again wish Stirling the very best of luck.

Claire Baker asked a specific question about Dunfermline and St Andrews and their bid for city

status. Let me get back to her on both of those points. She will recognise that, like her, I am a Fife MSP, so I do not want to declare an allegiance to one or the other, but it is hugely important that we support regeneration in those communities and that we recognise the importance that city status could bring to each of them. I will get back to her with a bit more detail regarding what the Government might be able to do by way of support for both those projects.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** I welcome Stirling's inclusion in the United Kingdom city of culture longlist, and I hold high hopes for Stirling's chances.

Would the minister reflect with me, however, on how regrettable it is that Scottish cities are no longer eligible for the equivalent European Union accolade, the European capital of culture—an initiative that was brilliant in Glasgow in 1990 and that could have given Dundee a similar boost in 2023?

**Jenny Gilruth:** It is deeply regrettable that we can no longer participate in the European capital of culture programme. The programme has cultural, reputational and economic benefits, as Glasgow holding the title in 1990 demonstrated. I think I might have been there in 1990, although I was a very wee girl at the time. Other Scottish cities cannot now grasp that opportunity, as Dundee had hoped to do. In spite of EU exit, the UK Government could have sought to negotiate on-going membership of the scheme, which sits within the EU's creative Europe programme, but it chose not to, for reasons that remain unclear. That is, of course, deeply regrettable.

### Culture Strategy (Progress)

**8. Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress in relation to "A Culture Strategy for Scotland". (S6O-00445)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** Since the culture strategy was published, in February 2020, we have launched three new innovative programmes: the culture collective, arts alive and creative communities. Together, those programmes are supported by more than £8.3 million of Scottish Government funding, and they are working to empower communities to develop cultural activities, to bring creative residencies to educational settings in areas of multiple deprivation and to use cultural projects as a positive diversion from criminal activity. We have also launched the national partnership for culture, which will be providing recommendations to ministers on the sector's recovery and renewal by the end of this year.

**Tess White:** The indicators for the national outcome for culture are currently using data from two years ago to measure performance, making it very difficult to assess the impact of the culture strategy and the Scottish Government's interventions to strengthen the sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the importance of the arts and culture sector to the north-east's economy and economic recovery, can the cabinet secretary suggest when the data is likely to be made available?

**Angus Robertson:** The aims and ambitions of the culture strategy remain relevant—I hope that we agree on that. We have discussed that directly with the sector, which continues to support the strategy's vision and guiding principles. However, we recognise the severe impact that the pandemic has had on the culture sector, and we now need new policies and actions to realise the strategy's aims and ambitions in a post-Covid world—for example, on health and wellbeing, on education, on economic development and on the net zero economy. My officials are considering that as a key part of their work on sector recovery and renewal, and we will publish an update on that work early in 2022.

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** Can the cabinet secretary comment on the progress that is being made in embedding culture across portfolio areas to unlock the sector's full potential?

**Angus Robertson:** We are having very positive discussions across Government on ensuring the embedding of culture and the arts right across Government policies. That is proceeding well. What is proceeding less well, however, is the funding that Scotland should be receiving for its cultural expenditure. Unfortunately, I need to confirm to the member that we have still received only £9 million from the United Kingdom Government out of the £40 million of consequential that were announced for Scotland for this financial year. We are still seeking clarity from the Treasury on why the £40 million has not yet been passed on to us. We will continue to press the UK Government to deliver the remaining £31 million so that it can be passed on to the sector in full.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio question time. I will allow a short pause to enable front-bench members to take their seats safely before we move on to the next item of business.

## Violence against Women

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and the Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-02267, in the name of Shona Robison, on international day for the elimination of violence against women.

14:56

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison):** I will start by saying clearly and unequivocally that across the Scottish Parliament we stand united—as we always have done—in our condemnation of violence against women and girls in Scotland and around the world.

Today's debate marks the annual 16 days of action campaign to tackle gender-based violence around the world, as well as the global campaign's 30th anniversary. I am sure that we can all agree that we would prefer to be marking the anniversary of such violence being at an end, rather than having to use this anniversary as a way of shining a light on an issue that remains pervasive across the world.

This year in particular we will all have in mind certain events. We all watched the scenes in Afghanistan a few months ago with horror and concern. Although we are worried about all citizens under the control of the Taliban, we know that the lives and human rights of women and girls in particular have been impacted and changed. I stand with all those who do not want to see, and are campaigning against, a return to the oppression that women previously faced.

This year, we also have in mind the tragic losses of Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry. As high-profile cases, their deaths exposed the pervasive and corrosive nature of men's violence against women. However, so many murders do not get noticed or have the spotlight of media coverage. As this is a global campaign, I also mourn the countless other women around the world who have also lost their lives at the hands of abusive men. It is appalling.

Given that so many murders do not get noticed, it is appropriate that, as a mark of respect for all these women, the Scottish Parliament visibly marked the day with one minute's silence, which took place earlier. I thank all those who observed that silence across the Parliament campus.

The landmark 2019 United Nations global homicide study has illustrated the gendered nature

of the issue by showing that 87,000 women were killed by men around the world—mostly by men in their own family or by their partners. I am deeply appalled and concerned that the risks to women and children affected by violence and abuse increased during the pandemic. I am sure that I speak for all of us in the Parliament in saying that that is shocking and absolutely unacceptable.

This year's campaign focuses on the dual themes of femicide, or the gender-related killing of women, and the links between domestic abuse and the world of work, in recognition of the many women who have lost their lives as a result of male violence. Is it not upsetting and deplorable that, in 2021, we need a global campaign to highlight femicide in societies across the world? It does, however, provide us with the opportunity to explore what more we can do to change that.

The simple and unpalatable truth at the heart of the abuse and violence that women and girls face is that it continues to be underpinned by women's inequality and the attitudes and structural barriers that perpetuate that inequality. Covid-19 has exacerbated and shone a spotlight on what was already there. That is why we, as a Government, have relentlessly focused on ensuring that women and children get the help that they need, and we are clear that tackling domestic abuse and all forms of gender-based violence remains a key priority and that, without ending women's inequality, we will never completely rid Scotland of violence against women and girls.

I pay tribute to and thank those individuals and organisations, including Women's Aid and Rape Crisis networks, that continue to work tirelessly in challenging circumstances to support women and children who are affected by gender-based violence. I also pay my respects to the life of Emma Ritch, who was executive director of Engender and who died in July. Her contribution to our understanding of violence against women as a consequence of women's inequality has been immeasurable. She is sadly missed. [*Applause.*]

In recognition of the vital work that is carried out by third sector organisations, including those at the front line, we are continuing to build on years of investment in specialist services and ensuring that they are equipped to handle the additional pressures of the pandemic. Within the first 100 days of the Government, we allocated new funding of £5 million to Rape Crisis centres and domestic abuse services to help to cut waiting lists and to ensure that those affected can access the support that they need more quickly. That comes on top of £5.75 million that was allocated in 2020-21 to help the redesign of front-line services.

As part of our £100 million three-year commitment that was announced in this year's programme for government, we created a new

delivering equally safe fund to provide £19 million each year over the next two years to organisations that offer new and innovative ways to aid recovery and encourage primary prevention work. I am delighted that we have recently confirmed allocations to 121 projects from 112 organisations that work to provide services and prevent gender-based violence.

We recognise the paramount importance of high-quality and sustainable service provision and the need to re-examine existing funding arrangements, and we have listened carefully to the concerns that have been expressed about the current funding landscape. That is why we are taking forward our strategic funding review of national and local specialist services for women and children experiencing gender-based violence. We want to ensure that there is more strategic alignment of resources to ensure better outcomes for women and girls who are affected by violence and abuse.

Our commitment is to undertake essential root-and-branch reform of front-line services to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector. Work around the review will be progressed during 2022. I want to ensure that it is robust and that it delivers results that are transformational and can change lives. That is important work, and I can announce that I have decided not to chair that review and that the Scottish Government will not chair it; instead, that role will be given to an independent chair. We will finalise the details of the review and who will chair it in the new year.

Let me be clear. Effectively tackling and challenging gender-based violence, outdated stereotypes and societal attitudes is not the responsibility of front-line organisations only. It is incumbent on everyone in our society—particularly men—to take action to prevent such behaviour and to work together to achieve success. Overwhelming evidence shows time and again that it is male violence that is perpetrated against women. Research from last year’s “Femicide Census” report shows that, in the United Kingdom, a woman is killed by a man every three days. On average, 62 per cent of those women will be killed by a current or former partner.

I say again that it is the responsibility of men, as role models for their sons, to stand up and challenge those abhorrent behaviours and attitudes, and to challenge their brothers, fathers, grandfathers and friends when they hear such views. It is not the responsibility of women and girls to modify their everyday behaviour in order to stay safe. Ben Macpherson will say more about that in his closing speech.

That is why prioritising prevention and working together with partners is essential if we are to achieve our aim of a strong and flourishing

Scotland where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that help to perpetuate it. Our equally safe strategy, which is co-owned with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, continues to have a decisive focus on prevention. It seeks to strengthen national and local collaborative working to ensure effective interventions for victims and those at risk, and it contains a clear ambition to strengthen the justice response to victims and perpetrators.

A refresh of our equally safe delivery plan, in order to build on the many achievements of the previous iteration, will shortly commence. Once again, we will work with our partners to develop an updated delivery plan to meet the needs of where we are now and continue to ensure that we take a holistic approach to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls.

Since we published “Equally Safe: A Delivery Plan for Scotland’s strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls 2017-21” in November 2017, we have made real progress in delivering on the 118 actions that it included. Of course, in order to fully deliver on the ambitions of our equally safe strategy, we need to prevent violence, abuse and discrimination from happening at all. That is why our strategy is connected with our wide ambitions for women’s equality, and that context is why we place so much emphasis on the importance of our primary prevention agenda. Our equally safe at school project, which was developed with Zero Tolerance and Rape Crisis Scotland, applies a whole-school approach to tackling gender inequality and gender-based violence in schools, equipping and empowering young people with the knowledge that they need to navigate consent and healthy relationships.

We are also focusing on workplaces and their role in driving change, which has been highlighted through this year’s other 16 days of action theme, which is domestic abuse and its links with the world of work. Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims. As part of our equally safe in practice project, we have collaborated with Scottish Women’s Aid on the launch of a new framework that will ensure that workforces across Scotland have a better understanding of domestic abuse, sexual violence and the norms and cultures that perpetuate it.

That builds on our work with Close the Gap to develop the equally safe at work programme, which is an employer accreditation programme that works with local authorities to incorporate gender equality in their internal policies. Scotland’s police and justice partners continue to prioritise domestic abuse cases, and we are working hard to ensure that victims receive the most appropriate response and support in the justice system.

Our gold-standard Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 has strengthened the law and continues to be positively received by the public and partners, and by Police Scotland, which now has greater opportunities to tackle the issue. This year, we brought forward legislation on domestic abuse protection orders through the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021.

However, gender-based violence is not limited to domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, and I am saddened that other forms have emerged over the past 30 years. We recognise the increasing level of online abuse and the disproportionate impact that it has on women and girls. I, and many of my colleagues in this place, unfortunately have first-hand experience of such abuse. There is no place for it in a modern society, and we will work with partners to ensure that victims can access justice as effectively and swiftly as possible.

As I mentioned, our current delivery plan is due to run until the end of the year, which marks an opportune moment for us all not only to reflect on progress so far, but to think about what the equally safe strategy might look like in the future, in terms of both strategic ambition and plans for delivery. In addition, the independent review of funding and commissioning of front-line services will provide an opportunity to create the conditions for a potential transformation of the current funding landscape. We will take forward further engagement on both those pieces of work over the next few months.

Although we have achieved a lot, in particular in the Scottish Parliament on a cross-party basis, a lot remains to be done. A world without violence is possible and that is what I want for my daughter, who is now an adult herself. I urge us all to work together, from constituency, to committee, and across the chamber, to do all that we can to eradicate violence against women and girls in Scotland and to play our part in eradicating it around the world.

I move,

That the Parliament marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which this year reaches its 30th anniversary; notes that the 2021 campaign focuses on the dual themes of Femicide and Ending Domestic Abuse in the World of Work; reaffirms its commitment to continue to work collaboratively from constituency, to committee, to chamber, to eradicate gender-based violence; agrees that only by prioritising prevention, can there be an end to violence against women and girls; gives thanks to the organisations and individuals that support women and children affected by gender-based violence, including the Women's Aid and Rape Crisis networks; notes that gender-based violence, which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, is a function of gender inequality and an abuse of male power and privilege; recognises that there is an increasing level of online abuse and the disproportionate

impact this has on women and girls; agrees that in order to effectively tackle gender-based violence, society must challenge the outdated gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women and girls that enable it to continue; further agrees that it is clear that women and girls should no longer have to modify their everyday behaviour in order to stay safe; unites in its condemnation of violence against women and girls in all of its forms, in Scotland and around the world, on which it speaks with one voice; mourns all the women around the world who have been killed by men this year, including Sabina Nessa, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, and Sarah Everard, whose murders showed how fragile the veneer of safety for women can be, and notes, as a mark of respect, the one-minute silence held in their honour.

15:09

**Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con):** Today marks the 30th international day for the elimination of violence against women. Society has come some way to recognising the need to protect the rights of women. However, much more needs to be done to end gender-based violence forever.

We have heard from the cabinet secretary that violence against women and girls is an abhorrent human rights violation and that we must redouble our efforts to prevent that abuse from recurring and to support those who fall victim to violence. The Scottish Conservatives fully support the efforts by the Scottish and UK Governments as they continue to eradicate violence against women and girls in this country and in others around the world. I am pleased that members can unite today, and it is to the credit of the Scottish Parliament that it marks this day each year. It is also right that, although we work collegiately on the issue, Opposition groups continue to effectively scrutinise the work of the Government to ensure the best possible outcomes for women and girls.

I put on record my thanks for the wonderful work that is undertaken by organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland. Having liaised with them to assist constituents, as a councillor and as an MSP, I know the incredible care and support that they give to women and children.

Today, we must remember those who have tragically died as a result of gender-based violence: Esther Brown, Michelle Stewart, Sabina Nessa, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman and Sarah Everard. The cabinet secretary rightly pointed out that many names have not been mentioned today; we must reflect on that and remember those women, too. Those women should never be forgotten and should be a driver for parliamentarians to do—and to legislate—better.

We also recognise that gender-based violence is a worldwide issue and that we must continue to educate and learn from each other, if we are serious about ending gender-based violence



against women. Around the world, every day, 137 women are killed by a member of their family. Haunting statistics by UN Women estimate that, globally, more than half of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by intimate partners or family members. More than a third of the same group of women were killed by their current or former partner. If anything, those statistics show just how fragile women's safety can be, especially when they are in the company of someone they trust.

Unfortunately, it is not just domestic abuse that women and girls suffer. We know that at least 200 million women and girls who are alive today have undergone female genital mutilation. FGM is a huge and widespread issue. I know that the Parliament is committed to ending the practice here in the UK. I and my colleagues fully support that.

Although violence against women is a worldwide issue, we cannot ignore what happens at home, here in Scotland. The latest domestic abuse statistics show that the number of incidents recorded by Police Scotland has been rising for more than four years. Scottish Government figures show that, between 2015-16 and 2019-20, there was a rise of 4,803 cases. That is a stark increase.

Domestic abuse cases in North Lanarkshire, an area that I represent as an MSP and as a councillor—I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests—are also a cause for concern. For 2019-20, North Lanarkshire was the area of Scotland that had the third-highest level of recorded domestic abuse cases.

That simply cannot go on. Behind each number is a mother, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a niece or a friend; we must not forget that when we are looking at statistics on gender-based violence.

Aside from domestic abuse, sexual crimes are also at near-record levels. We have all noticed the recent reports of spiking by injection. That has been raised in the Parliament and it must be tackled, in order to protect women when they are trying to enjoy an evening out at a bar or nightclub. I appeal to businesses that have kits that test for spiking: please make those available to women, free of charge. I know that some are already doing so, and I commend them for putting in place measures to protect women from violence and abuse.

The Scottish Government and COSLA have worked together to produce the equally safe strategy to tackle gender-based violence. I fully support its intentions to eliminate the systemic gender inequality that lies at the root of violence against women and girls, through a relentless focus on prevention.

Combined with the Domestic Abuse Protection (Scotland) Act 2021 and the Female Genital Mutilation (Protection and Guidance) (Scotland) Act 2020, that work strengthens the law to protect women and girls from abuse. However, much more can be done, and it is important to outline the measures that the Scottish Government can take to further strengthen legislation in order to eliminate gender-based violence.

For example, the latest domestic abuse legislation does not include provision for all victims to register to find out when their abuser will be released from prison. At present, the victim is able to sign up for the victim notification scheme only if the offender is sentenced to 18 months or more behind bars, so fewer than 1 per cent of victims have been given advance warning. A strong argument could be made for those who have suffered domestic abuse to be made aware of when their abuser will be released. That would allow them to mentally prepare for it, because it can be daunting, and many victims feel that they are constantly looking over their shoulder.

Michelle's law is linked to that and would prevent convicted killers from returning to the same community as those who are affected by their crime. During First Minister's question time today, Douglas Ross raised the implementation of Michelle's law. A promise was made to the Stewart family members, but they are still waiting for the implementation of that very important law, which will help protect victims of crime. I understand that the First Minister will formally respond to my party leader's questions and will make that document public, but families who are still seeking justice need those additional protections now. Therefore, I ask the cabinet secretary to implement the law on time and fulfil the Scottish Government's promise to bring it in, in order to strengthen the protection for families who have, tragically, lost a loved one to violence.

Another way to strengthen legislation to favour the victim—and not the perpetrator—of violence against women would be to allow the courts to issue a whole-life order. As we know, Sarah Everard's killer was, rightly, issued with a whole-life order and, although it will be of small comfort to her family and friends, significant punishment was passed for the horrific crime that was committed. The Conservatives believe that that punishment should exist in Scotland, in order to give proper sentences to those who commit the most heinous of crimes.

Similarly, the not proven verdict should be abolished. That has been backed by organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland, which has also called on the Scottish Government to make that important change to judicial law.

Those are just some of the changes that the Scottish Government could make to strengthen the rights and protections of women and girls across Scotland.

Before I close, I will mention the impact that domestic abuse has on children and young people. Children are often the forgotten voice in domestic abuse cases, because they are usually very young, so might not be at a stage of maturity where they are able to describe the level of violence that they and their mother have endured.

The court and legal processes can be stressful for young people, and the experience can detrimentally impact their mental health and ability to communicate with and trust others as they grow up. I believe that there needs to be a wider discussion on the specific impacts on children and young people who are involved in domestic abuse cases and what the Government can do to support them, especially as they need to live with the outcomes of the cases.

Today is a day of remembrance, but it is also a time for parliamentarians to refocus our efforts and work together to eliminate violence against women. Behind every gender-based murder, domestic abuse incident, recorded FGM case or sexual assault is a loved one, who has fallen victim to or is living with the consequences of violence.

We must continue to bring in legislation to strengthen the rights of women and children—all MSPs of all political parties can unite behind that.

15:19

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of interests: I am a previous board member of Engender Scotland and a current member of the GMB.

I thank the cabinet secretary for bringing this important motion to Parliament today and I pay tribute to all the women and girls who have, tragically, lost their lives at the hands of violent men. I also send love, strength and support to other women who are experiencing or are at risk of violence right now.

I also thank the countless individuals, activists and organisations that continue to fight tirelessly for women's equality and for a world that is free from gendered violence. There are too many to name them all, but I highlight the on-going work of Close the Gap, Zero Tolerance Scotland, Rape Crisis Scotland, Women's Aid and Engender. I would like to take a moment, too, to reflect on our friend, colleague and activist Emma Ritch, who was an incredible and outstanding activist for women across Scotland, and we miss her dearly.

For women, gendered violence is part of our daily lives. It exists in our economic and social structures, our culture, our workplaces and our institutions. Violence is woven into the very structures of our society, and is the cause and consequence of women's inequality. Approximately one in three women worldwide will experience intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Research this year has revealed that the majority of Scottish women have been sexually harassed or assaulted.

Violence is particularly prevalent for women from minority groups. Some 83 per cent of trans women have experienced a hate crime at some point in their lives. Ethnic minority and migrant women face higher levels of domestic homicide and abuse-driven suicide. Disabled women are twice as likely to experience men's violence as are non-disabled women. A study that was conducted in the region of Glasgow, which I represent, showed that, of the participating disabled women, 73 per cent had experienced domestic abuse and 43 per cent had been sexually assaulted. Those statistics are horrifying. It is vital that our approach to tackling gendered violence is intersectional and that it pays attention to the various and often overlapping forms of inequality and discrimination that women face.

Sadly, violence against women and girls is on the rise. The outbreak of Covid-19 and the lockdown measures that it necessitated have led to an alarming increase in violence against women and girls around the world, and in Scotland, too. New figures reveal that the number of charges related to domestic abuse that were reported to the Crown Office last year were the highest since 2016. Femicide—the murder of a woman by a man due to gender-motivated factors—is also highly prevalent in our society today. It is estimated that, in the UK, on average one woman is killed by a man every three days, and many of those cases involve the use of overkill. The tragic murder of Sarah Everard shone light on the extreme reality of violence against women and femicide. It also revealed that the very institutions that are supposed to keep women safe are not only failing to do so, but often perpetrate and participate in acts of gendered violence.

Much more needs to be done to keep women safe and to root out sexism, violence and corruption. Crimes of rape and attempted rape in Scotland have the lowest conviction rate of all types of crime. In 2019-20, there were 2,343 rapes and attempted rapes reported to the police, but only 130 convictions. That is not good enough. The Government must do more to ensure that those crimes are properly prosecuted and that victims get the support that they need.

Limitations on jury trials because of the Covid-19 pandemic, including for rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse cases, have significantly increased procedural delays and the access to opportunities for justice, with the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service now having an estimated backlog of almost 50,000 trials. Delays exacerbate the stress of victim survivors, impact on their ability to give evidence, reduce confidence in the criminal justice system and pose significant barriers to justice and safety. The Scottish Government must act now to address that.

It is also imperative that the Government properly records data on gendered violence. The Scottish Government does not document femicide as a standalone crime, nor does Police Scotland categorise any crimes as femicide. Instead, it is included in wider homicide statistics, despite its intrinsically gendered characteristics and motivations. The work of the Femicide Census in recording data is invaluable, but the Government needs to also record its own data. Failing to do so can mask the severity of the crime and make it harder to properly prosecute and eliminate. It is also important to recognise that a legal response is not the only way to tackle gender inequality and violence.

We have come along way, and I recognise the measures that have already been taken by the Parliament, but there is so much more that we must do. We must commit to eradicating poverty, rooting out gender stereotyping in education, increasing women's participation and representation in public life, ensuring the provision of affordable childcare, and developing social security policies that promote women's safety and financial independence.

More action needs to be taken to ensure women's equality in the workplace, too. The Government and local authorities can and must do more to narrow the gender pay gap and end women's triple burden of labour. Employers also have a responsibility to tackle gender inequality. I commend the work of the better than zero campaign in organising against precarious work and, in particular, for its support of women travelling alone at night.

I also highlight the incredible work of trade unions in Scotland in organising women workers to fight for better pay and conditions and against workplace discrimination. Among other things, for example, the GMB is doing incredible work organising care workers in its fight for £15 campaign.

Local authorities, too, must do more to tackle gender inequality and violence. They must ensure that women's equality is embedded in their work and services, and do everything in their power to make local streets and communities safe for

women. Clyde 1's #LightTheWay campaign calling for safety lighting in Glasgow's parks is one example of how local authorities can protect women from potential violence. The Government must properly fund and support local authorities to do those things.

People with the power to effect change must not abdicate the responsibility to protect and promote women's rights. To look away from the grim reality of gendered violence is to facilitate it. I call on the Government and all of us in the Parliament and in the chamber, particularly the men, to use these 16 days of activism as an opportunity to redouble our efforts to tackle violence against women. Let us use our position and our platforms in Parliament to do all we can to reform our institutions and culture to being ones in which women and girls are respected, protected and safe.

15:26

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a trustee of Shetland Women's Aid.

I, too, pay tribute to Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland and other services and individuals across Scotland for the good work that they do, not just on international day for the elimination of violence against women, but every day. It is worth saying again that 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the global 16 days of activism campaign. It has been 30 years, and, each year, the debate exchanges statistics that are unacceptable and horrific, as Pam Duncan-Glancy stated.

The World Health Organization estimates that about one in three women worldwide will, in their lifetime, be subjected to

"either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence."

It is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights, and we know that Covid has impacted on women's equality progress across the globe.

Earlier this year, Jess Phillips MP, the UK shadow minister for domestic violence and safeguarding, read out the names of the 118 women who had been killed in the preceding year and in whose case a man had been convicted or charged as the primary perpetrator. It took her a little over four minutes and the list did not include the names of the women referenced in the motion, who were tragically killed after March this year.

The number of domestic abuse incidents reported by Police Scotland has risen for the fourth year in a row, with one in four women in Scotland experiencing domestic abuse in their

lifetime. Domestic violence is a plague that not only affects women but impacts whole households. Children are tragically caught in it, too. It was seeing the lifelong impact of domestic abuse on children and the financial abuse of women that drew me into my voluntary trustee role.

I know that all speakers in the debate are striving to ensure that women and girls across the globe and closer to home can live their lives free from fear. Scottish Liberal Democrats have previously called for—and we do so again—the establishment of the new commission to look at ways of preventing men’s violence against women and girls in all its forms, to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all levels of government. Along with providing increased training for those who work in education and on the front line in public authorities, we can work together to build better public understanding of the drivers behind violence against women and take action to eradicate it.

The media, including social media, has a significant role to play in how it reports violence against women and girls. The subtle—and sometimes not so subtle—headline victim shaming must cease. We have known for too long about drinks being spiked on nights out, but the relatively new phenomenon of needle spiking hit the headlines recently. It is shocking. Rather than lessening its impact by giving it the almost jokey term of “spiking”, let us call it out for what it is: the intention of a perpetrator to render someone incapable so that they can sexually assault and abuse them. It happens predominantly but not exclusively to young women.

As has been mentioned, lockdown forced abusers and the abused to spend most of their time at home, when, previously, there might have been hours of respite. However, work is not always a safe haven. The Close the Gap briefing indicates that three quarters of women who are subjected to domestic abuse are targeted at work. Unsurprisingly, perpetrator tactics such as sabotage, stalking and harassment affect women’s performance at work, levels of absenteeism and job retention.

I was pleased that Shetland Islands Council received a bronze accreditation during the pilot of equally safe at work, and I encourage other employers to participate in that innovative programme, which requires demonstration across six standards and aligns with women’s workplace equality.

The Government’s motion refers to “prioritising prevention”. The equally safe fund is welcome, but it is for a two-year term. I wonder whether the Government would consider extending that term to

three years, as that would benefit further prevention work.

There is so much more behind gender-based violence against women and girls, globally and at home, as other members have eloquently voiced and will voice after my speech.

My thoughts are very much with people who are currently experiencing domestic abuse. There is help out there if they are able to reach out.

15:31

**Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** I express my disappointment that there are not more men in the chamber today. [*Applause.*] It gives me no pleasure to speak in the debate, because, in this day and age, we should not need to have it.

Over the years, women have been given lots of advice. They have been told not to walk home alone and not to dress too provocatively or show too much skin. They have been told to mind their drinks while out socialising and not to get too drunk. They have even been given secret codes to tell bar staff what to do if they feel in danger. They have been given all that advice in order to protect them from the threat of male violence. Now, it appears as though the new threat is a syringe.

It is not a young man’s generational thing; it is a multigenerational, classless, continuous thing that needs to be faced up to. Recognising international day for the elimination of violence against women and girls tells us that it is a global issue, but the danger in focusing on the global perspective is that we risk failing to ask the most fundamental question of all: what do we do right here and now? When I say “we”, I mean men and boys. Why is it that we think that the solution to male violence is to tell women and girls how to protect themselves from us? The most obvious answer is surely to stop the behaviour that hurts them in the first place.

If, from today’s debate, we manage to get any message out, we need to get the message across to men that we are responsible for our actions. During the marches after the rape and murder of Sarah Everard, I read a banner that said, “Why don’t you just stop killing us?” Let us think about that for a second. Well, that message has clearly not been heard, because more than 80 women have been killed by men since March.

I am not asking how many more women have to be killed before we start to do something about it. I say that we should start to do something right now and for real. It is not an issue for somewhere else; it is an issue in every town and city right here, in Scotland. We must look at ourselves, how we behave and how we teach the next generation.

As a boy, I was taught to treat girls in the same way as I would want my sisters to be treated. However, that life lesson did not fully arm me with the knowledge and understanding that we should teach all our young men and boys about what it is to be a female in our society. It does not matter whether she is someone's mother, daughter or sister; what matters is that she is someone. My daughters and wife explain to me the turmoil and fear that a girl feels when she is walking home and a random guy calls out or wolf whistles. It is even worse when there is more than one male and, with safety in numbers, they egg one another on to check her out. They never seem to understand why their compliment is not welcomed or why fear kicks in for a lone female as she walks home at night and a man walks behind her or, worse, crosses the street and starts walking towards her.

This is, of course, when people start to chip in with the "not all men" argument, but how does someone who has grown up learning to fear males know that a man is safe? She does not. It is on us. It is men's responsibility to create the space to allow that fear to be dispelled. That means being fully mindful of how our actions, however innocent, could be interpreted.

We teach our children from an early age that unwanted male attention is acceptable. If a wee boy pulls a pigtail, hits a girl or tries to steal a kiss, we tell the wee girl that he is showing that he likes her rather than telling the wee boy that his behaviour is wrong and explaining to him that, if he likes the girl, he does not get her attention by hitting her. Even at that early age, we are setting out the societal norms that are entirely skewed towards females accepting male dominance and violence as a form of affection or endearment, and we are saying that the refusal of females to accept those advances is somehow a breach of male entitlement. As we grow, the lads mentality and male entitlement grow with us. Society accepts them as the norm.

The distance between laddish banter and sexual violence is far shorter than we are prepared to believe, and we need to challenge and change that culture. The Police Scotland video campaign "Don't be that guy", born out of the murder of Sarah Everard, is a good start to the conversation. It is an easy phrase to adopt in male company, and it can quickly change the direction of a conversation that is going the wrong way.

I recently read a book by Brené Brown, who talks about challenging someone who has gone over the line. Her argument is that the discomfort of challenging that lasts about eight seconds, whereas the feeling of allowing behaviour that flies in the face of our own values to go unchallenged never goes away. From experience, I can say that she is right on both counts.

However, while a man calling out the behaviour of other men will lead to a few seconds of discomfort for us, for a woman that discomfort comes with fear that she might just have entered an unsafe situation that could lead to aggression and violence extremely quickly. That is the real-life experience of many women in these situations, and it should not be.

In every facet of society—in schools, colleges, universities, sports clubs, sports stadia, the workplace, this Parliament and, just as important, the home—it is up to us to change that culture. We can legislate and set punitive sentencing for domestic, sexual, physical or psychological abuse, but all that is doing is treating a symptom and not the cause. We need to stop the abuse before it starts.

We must recognise that what we males see as harmless fun can be frightening to a woman. We must teach our boys and girls that those cute wee behaviours are not cute; they are the future of a continuing patriarchy, and the lad's lad mentality is dangerous because it leads to tacit approval of the escalation of sexism and misogyny to, more seriously, domestic abuse, assault, rape and even murder. That means that we males have to look in the mirror, ask ourselves some serious questions and, as my daughter rightly pointed out, feel that personal discomfort of recognising something in ourselves, or something that we might have said or done—a joke, a bit of banter or whatever it wis—and accept that it is no longer, and never was, acceptable. It is up to every one of us right across the country to recognise—and we do—the behaviours and comments that cross the line, and, for the sake of the safety of women and girls, when we see it or hear it, to call it out and take that eight seconds of discomfort and say, "Don't be that guy."

15:38

**Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** I am grateful to be contributing to today's debate, but it gives me no pleasure to do so.

The eradication of violence against women is a subject that is particularly close to my heart, as a woman, mother, aunty and daughter. I am sure that that is being felt strongly across the chamber today. Violence against women and girls is a fundamental human rights violation. No woman or girl should live in fear of abuse.

The past 18 months have been torturous for some women. During the pandemic, the number of sex crimes reported in Scotland soared to a six-year high. I welcome the Scottish Government's equally safe strategy, and I am pleased about the increased levels of funding that are being dedicated to ending violence against women and

girls, and to supporting them as they leave the most horrific circumstances.

I would like to thank the national and local community outreach organisations, whose workers are true heroes in this crisis. Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and Zero Tolerance—the list goes on—are all working tirelessly to ensure that Scotland is a safe place for women and girls.

Even though it is 2021, when equality and fairness are being discussed more openly than ever before, too many women are still hidden in darkness, living in fear of abuse, violence, rape and sometimes even death. If they ask for help, they are ignored. If they try to run away, they are caught. If they try to report it, they have no one to turn to, or, even worse, they are told to keep it a secret.

Data from the Scottish crime and justice survey for 2019-20 showed that only 22 per cent of victims and survivors of rape, and 12 per cent of women who were victims and survivors of other types of sexual offence, reported it to the police. We cannot ignore that fact, as it might indicate a huge lack of trust between victims and the wider justice system.

More must be done to ensure that victims feel safe enough to report incidents to the police, that they do not fear repercussions as a result of reporting their abusers and that they feel listened to. We can support victims by ending automatic early release, so that every criminal must face a parole board before being released early.

I am very conscious of the fact that many reports of abuse will never see the light of day. Sadly, that is all too common in many black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. A recent survey by Sikh Women's Aid revealed that 70 per cent of the women who were surveyed had experienced domestic abuse and that nearly half had been abused by more than one abuser. Even more distressing is the fact that most victims knew their abuser and nearly half the incidents took place at home.

Research has also shown that BME and migrant women face higher levels of domestic homicide and abuse-driven suicide. Sadly, 50 per cent of the BME specialist refuges across the UK have closed over the past decade. Such refuges have been a safe haven for most BME women. The specialised services that they provide are a vital lifeline for those women, as they understand cultural and societal norms. Many victims in the male-dominated or honour-based cultures fear bringing shame to their family or community. Sadly, in some cases, when the victim reaches out to a family member, the family member also fears being isolated from the community.

As we continue our pursuit of the eradication of violence against women, we must engage more closely with BAME communities and specialised services to find out how we can best support victims from backgrounds where different cultural and societal norms exist. We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach to tackling the issue. As someone who comes from a BAME background, I know that the current support is not fit for purpose. Women are not only afraid of the abuser; they fear rejection by the family and the wider community. A service that offers support to one woman might not necessarily be the right one to provide support, or even advice, to another.

First, we must ensure that victims can trust that, when they report domestic or sexual abuse, they know that their abuser will not walk away on automatic early release. Secondly, we must engage with BAME communities to ensure maximum outreach to better educate children on appropriate behaviour, gender equality and how to spot signs of violence against women and girls; to ensure that victims feel safe in reporting cases of domestic and sexual abuse; and to raise awareness of the support that is available to them. That is key to the prevention of domestic and sexual abuse.

No one here today should have to talk about eliminating violence against women and girls. Such violence should not exist in the first place.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** I call Elena Whitham, to be followed by Pauline McNeill.

15:44

**Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** As a former Scottish Women's Aid worker, I pay tribute to all the women and children I supported over a decade and who allowed me into their lives. It was a really big privilege to be in that position. It is my duty to speak here today to amplify the voices of the women and children across Scotland and the world who endure men's violence and coercion, and of those who have been victims of femicide.

I have been a feminist activist since 6 December 1989. I remember that day like it was yesterday. I had come home from school, trudging through the drizzly snow just like on any other Montreal winter day and was busy with homework with the television on in the background when a news report cut in and an unfolding act of misogynistic horror tattooed itself on my very soul.

A self-styled anti-feminist had walked into the École Polytechnique engineering school in Montreal, ordered the separation of men from women, and, in the space of 45 minutes, shot

dead 14 women, injuring another 10 women and four men, before turning the gun on himself.

His suicide note was clear:

“Feminists have always enraged me.”

“I have decided to send the feminists, who have always ruined my life, to their Maker.”

He was enraged that those women dared study engineering, a career path that was denied to him due to his apparent lack of aptitude, but, to his mind, was denied to him by those women, who took his rightful place.

The magnitude of what happened that day was underscored for my 15-year-old self the following morning when I woke at 6 am to deliver my *Montreal Gazette* newspaper round. I was confronted by a graphic image of one of the dead women slouched on a cafeteria chair, her dinner left untouched on the table beside her. I delivered my newspapers in a daze, with tears streaming down my face. Little did I know that, four years later, we would debate the use of that image in my journalism ethics class. To this day, I am divided on whether it was a stark and brutal reality check, or whether it was blatant sensationalism.

Closer to home, CountingDeadWomen, which is a campaign on Twitter, is, today, bearing witness to the women who have been murdered in the UK so far this year. Naming a woman every five minutes from 8 am this morning will take more than 11 hours to complete. That is a staggering 126 women murdered at the hands of men. That clearly demonstrates the absolute reality of the patriarchal system that still operates here and across the world. That reality includes recent horrific murders, FGM, spiking attacks, online misogynistic abuse, rape culture and so-called honour killings.

In the decade when I supported women and children experiencing domestic abuse in North Ayrshire, it became crystal clear to me that we must prioritise prevention work while continuing to ensure that specialist support services are available across the country.

In 2014, I was dismayed when the contract held by North Ayrshire Women’s Aid was put out to tender, resulting in the loss of several key aspects of our work, including specialist addiction and children’s services. We see the same issues at play in other areas of Scotland. I strongly believe that there must be exceptions to procurement policies so that the best possible specialist support services are available when women reach out for help. I look forward to the outcome of the front-line service review that the cabinet secretary announced earlier.

According to Close the Gap, Covid-19 has disproportionately impacted women’s often

precarious employment and has had far-reaching implications for women’s experience of work. Many victims and survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women have experienced significant barriers in accessing specialist services and support. Additionally, their experience might have been exacerbated by isolation and a lack of access to informal support networks.

Employers have an essential role to play in ending violence against women. The on-going crisis has provided opportunities for employers to reassess their employment policies and practices, so that they are more inclusive of women’s needs and experiences. I remind members of my entry in the register of members’ interests. As a councillor, I was proud to help develop domestic abuse policies for employees and tenants of East Ayrshire Council.

I am also heartened to hear of Close the Gap’s equally safe at work employer accreditation scheme, which has been piloted in seven local authority areas across Scotland. Such schemes complement our bold national equally safe strategy, our world-leading, gold standard domestic abuse laws, and other endeavours such as the far-reaching independent report that was published by Scottish Women’s Aid and the Chartered Institute of Housing. The report makes urgent recommendations that social landlords use a human rights-based approach to improve housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse by prioritising their safety over the rights of perpetrators.

Today, I also think of Michelle Stewart, whose life was horrifically cut short in my constituency when she was only 17. I also think of a constituent who contacted me recently to reveal that she is continually abused from prison by phone by her abuser.

Those cases, and the pressures that are placed on the justice system during Covid, highlight just how precarious women’s access to justice remains and how important it is that the needs of families are considered at all points in the judicial journey. That is an area that I will campaign on during my time as an MSP.

Finally, it is my firm belief that the continued commodification of women’s bodies has a direct impact on our collective safety. We cannot look at commercial sexual exploitation and pornography in a vacuum and pretend that they have no bearing on the treatment of women in society at large.

My children have grown up in an era in which the most extreme forms of pornography are available in the palm of their hands 24/7. The rise in the number of women’s deaths by choking

during sex is terrifying, and the pressure on young people to conform to that unrealistic and extremely gendered and dangerous portrayal of sex is damaging beyond belief. Daily, women are trafficked around the world for men to purchase. As long as that demand continues unfettered, we all continue to be at risk.

15:51

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank Shona Robison—the cabinet secretary—Pam Duncan-Glancy and Meghan Gallacher for their excellent front-bench contributions, and other members for their excellent speeches in the debate thereafter.

I sincerely believe that we are witnessing a watershed moment: the realisation that violence against women and girls is ingrained in our society and that the high-profile cases of murdered Sarah Everard, Bibaa Henry and Libby Squire must make us question deeply why one woman is killed every three days in the UK.

Misogyny, sadly, is everywhere. It is in our police armed response units, the military, our schools and our workplaces. It is there for our young women, who are only beginning to get an insight into the prevalence of sexual harassment in what is becoming known as rape culture, which was mentioned earlier by Elena Whitham.

This week, the Criminal Justice Committee heard the testimony of female victims of sexual assault who have been utterly failed by the system, which is full of delay and poor treatment. That is utterly shocking. In one case, it took a full year to get the DNA result that was the evidence that was required for the woman's case.

With the advent of terms such as “rape culture”, and when sexual violence against women is excused in the media and popular culture, can we really claim that we have made real and significant progress in addressing the root causes of male power, abuse and control of women? In fact, few people would disagree that we are discussing a very depressing picture today.

We know that it is not only Scotland's problem; it is a global issue. That is why the World Health Organization has described it as

“a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights.”

It is an issue that cuts across justice, social attitudes, equality and human rights.

We must tackle the root causes of male attitudes and male violence against women. It comes in many forms; from sexual harassment, domestic abuse and revenge pornography to female genital mutilation, human trafficking, child brides, stealthing, rape and femicide. The list goes

on. I do not think that there has been a time where parents have been more concerned for their daughters' safety. Other members have talked about the recent horrific crimes of spiking, including bodily spiking of women, which renders them unconscious for reasons that we know only too well.

I support the call of Meghan Gallacher in relation to what our clubs and hospitality sector should be doing to keep women safe. The advent of smartphones and social media has meant that teenage girls are often under pressure from boys to send nude photographs of themselves. That was highlighted in a recent report by Ofsted in England, which states that it has become the norm in schools. Across the 32 schools that were inspected, nine out of 10 girls said that unsolicited explicit pictures or videos were sent to themselves or their peers very often.

The report states:

“It's alarming that many children and young people, particularly girls, feel they have to accept sexual harassment as part of growing up”.

Will the cabinet secretary reflect on whether we need to look at Scottish schools to see whether we have an alarmingly similar trend?

Boys and young men need to be brought into the debate. As Jim Fairlie excellently said in his speech, men must take responsibility for their behaviour. In Zara McDermott's recent documentary, she talked to young men and found out that their first experiences of watching pornography can be when they are as young as nine or 10. Many boys' first understanding of what sex is like is gained through the internet and pornography that shows an unrealistic and often violent representation of sex.

I am sure that we agree that we need more programmes in schools that teach young people about consent and aim to prevent violence in dating and relationships. I commend the work of Rape Crisis Scotland, which has worked with over 10,000 young people over the past six months on a programme that allows pupils to explore and better understand the issues.

Cybercrime has doubled in the past year and now accounts for an estimated one in three sexual crimes. Those crimes include revenge pornography and online harassment and abuse, which has risen sharply in recent years. Research by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children shows that the number of reported cases of predators abusing children after contacting them online has risen by 78 per cent in just four years.

The United Nations declared a shadow pandemic, as women across the world faced being stuck with their abusers, unable to get help or



respite. Since the pandemic began, two thirds of cases that are waiting to be heard in our High Court are sexual crimes. I was shocked to learn of that figure, in the past few months. There are also around 32,400 trials outstanding in the sheriff courts, including many domestic abuse cases.

The Lord Advocate herself has described the court backlog as “an enormous problem”. In a recent committee session, she spoke about

“the extraordinary numbers of sexual violence cases that are waiting for trial and the impact that that has on the most vulnerable members of our community and of society, who require the protection of our courts.”—[*Official Report, Criminal Justice Committee*, 3 November 2021; c 7.]

Of course, she is talking about women and girls. We need to look at specific ways to reduce the backlog, because it is placing a disproportionate burden on women and children.

We must work together to ensure that by the end of this sixth session of the Scottish Parliament we are on the path to permanent change, and not just in the justice system. We must strike at the heart of men’s violence against women and be brave enough to tackle it at all ages and at all stages in our schools and our education system. We must begin a reversal of the trends in these horrific crimes, otherwise we, as politicians, will not have done our jobs.

15:57

**Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP):** It is a pleasure to follow that excellent speech from Pauline McNeill. Like the cabinet secretary and others today, I am thinking of all the women who have lost their lives to men and those who continue to suffer abuse from men here and around the world.

I wanted to speak in this debate to raise the two main issues that concern me in terms of making sure that we are doing all that we can to tackle violence against women and girls. On the first, which is why we are still seeing violence against women, I will speak as a man, a husband and a father of three girls and a boy. I hope to rise to the challenge that was rightly set by the cabinet secretary and Pam Duncan-Glancy in their excellent speeches. In the second, I will speak as a local MSP who is concerned about local proven domestic abuse services.

Others have already talked about what drives abuse and violence against women and girls, who is killing them and whose behaviour needs to change in order for the violence and killing to stop. It is men. Those of us men who say, “It’s not all of us; not all men are the same”—as I have seen in response to my social media posts today—completely miss the point, as Jim Fairlie said in an excellent speech. It is true that not all men kill or

abuse women, but it is also true that when women are killed or abused, they are killed or abused by men.

Indeed, it should shock, anger and shame all of us and give us renewed focus to tackle violence against women when we know that, as Elena Whitham said in her incredibly moving speech, the @CountingDeadWomen Twitter account is today, on the international day for the elimination of violence against women, publishing the names of all the women who have been killed by men in the UK so far in 2021. It started tweeting a woman’s name every five minutes from 8 am, and it will take it until 7 pm to publish the names of all 126 women who have been killed by men in the UK this year. How much longer would it take to recognise the 87,000 women who are killed around the world, as the cabinet secretary highlighted?

We need action to stop that, which is why I welcome Police Scotland’s new “Don’t be that guy” campaign. The abuse of women—the killing of women—does not come from nowhere. It comes from unacceptable behaviour being tolerated, left unchallenged and allowed to progress. The “Don’t be that guy” campaign involves all of us challenging the behaviour of others. That can sometimes be difficult, but it is not nearly as difficult as it is for the women who are suffering the abuse.

We must commit to stopping the casual sexualisation and misogynistic abuse that are masked in apparent jest, which in so many of the cases that are listed in the motion was the starting point for the male perpetrators.

The second issue that I want to raise continues the prevention theme and is about local domestic abuse services for my Airdrie and Shotts constituents. For years, North Lanarkshire Council has been looking to restructure domestic abuse services, which was of major concern to Monklands Women’s Aid. When Alex Neil was the constituency member of the Scottish Parliament and I was the local member of the UK Parliament, he and I worked closely with Monklands Women’s Aid and the Women’s Aid’s other groups in North Lanarkshire to try to stop the council tendering for domestic violence services. For more than 40 years, Monklands Women’s Aid had been successfully meeting the needs of the women and children in Airdrie, Coatbridge and beyond. Women’s Aid services are the grass roots and, as such, they have been founded, developed and run by women for women. Domestic abuse is their core focus, and they continue to overperform year on year in their attempt to meet the demand for Women’s Aid’s specialist services, which work according to gendered analysis, at the local level.

North Lanarkshire Council undertook a review of all domestic violence services, including statutory,

public and third sector provision. The review identified gaps in statutory provision, specifically in relation to services for men. As a result, the council chose to enact procurement activities to widen and meet broader equalities duties. In doing so, it sadly disregarded the voices of the women who use Women's Aid's services, as well as the recommendations in the document from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Scottish Women's Aid, "Good Practice in Commissioning Specialist Domestic Abuse Services", which stresses the alternatives to commissioning specialist women's aid services. The new service provides services to men and women. In doing so, the council became the first local authority in Scotland to defund proven grassroots services. The result was the loss of 70 per cent of the capacity of Women's Aid's local services.

What has baffled and angered me in equal measure is that, by meeting a need—a much smaller need, for services for men—and lumping gendered services together, North Lanarkshire Council has jeopardised the trusted route that the women who manage to find the courage to flee an abusive relationship recognise, which is their local Women's Aid centre. That is a perfect example of well-meant policy being misinterpreted at the local level to serve a broader equalities need and, by doing so, harming those who are most at need—women.

There was absolutely no need to pursue that course of action. North Lanarkshire Council could have set up and funded a dedicated service for male victims, if there was a demand for it. Figures that I have received from North Lanarkshire Council show that the new service that it has procured has received substantially fewer contacts than Women's Aid's groups in North Lanarkshire. Local women who need domestic violence support are voting with their feet and—just as we warned—they have no desire, unless they are automatically referred by the local authority, to use a service that they do not see as being a dedicated service for them.

Although Monklands Women's Aid has seen its funding cut substantially, demand for its services has sadly risen by approximately 20 per cent in the same period. As Meghan Gallacher said in her excellent contribution, North Lanarkshire is the area of Scotland with the third-highest prevalence of domestic abuse. If it had not been for the Scottish Government's equally safe fund, I fear that Monklands Women's Aid would have had to shut its doors. I have nothing against Sacro, which delivers North Lanarkshire Council's new service, and I am sure that North Lanarkshire Council is well meaning with that procurement, but I cannot see how, when the current tender comes to an

end, the council can do anything other than fund services that meet demand.

I am also concerned that we should recognise the danger of erroneous gathering of statistics that are based on flawed categorisation, and how that skews the understanding of need and the subsequent dissemination of resources.

If we are to tackle gender-based violence, we have to support gender-based domestic violence services. We have to change male behaviour, and we must stop expecting women like Sarah Everard to constantly change their lives in order to protect themselves from men. As we know, in Sarah's case, even her mitigations were not enough.

If we do not give women safe and trusted places to go to flee escalating domestic abuse, violence against women will continue. That is why I say to men, but also to local authorities, "Don't be that guy".

16:04

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** Before I begin, I refer to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that, pre-election, I worked for a Rape Crisis centre.

Once again, I thank all those involved in supporting and advocating for survivors of gender-based violence. It is heart-wrenching work, but it is so, so important. I acknowledge and remember all the women and girls who have lost their lives because of gender-based violence: those that have been named in the motion and around the chamber today, those known to us, and those who are unknown and unnamed, here in Scotland and around the world.

I echo the cabinet secretary's comments about Emma Ritch. Emma made Scotland a better country for women and girls, and we miss her.

We should not have to be having this debate today. We should not have to have a 30th anniversary of the international day for the elimination of violence against women. We should not be in the situation, in the 21st century, where our society and our culture are still so deeply unequal. That we are here at all should be a source of shame for us all.

One in three women have been abused in their lifetime. When things are tougher than usual, such as during a pandemic, the numbers of victims and survivors increase. A recent report from UN Women, based on data from 13 countries since the pandemic, shows that two in three women reported that they or a woman they know experienced some form of violence and are more likely to face food insecurity. Even more, if not all, women have experienced some form of gender-based oppression, coercion, financial insecurity or

street harassment. We can expect the incidence of abuse and violence to rise as we face significant other crises—climate disasters, humanitarian crises and conflict.

As the same UN Women report shows, only one in 10 women said that victims would go to the police for help. We will be speaking more about justice and policing issues in next week's debate, I am sure, but earlier today at First Minister's questions I raised the Rape Crisis Scotland survivor reference group's report on police responses to survivors. I did so because police dealings with survivors of sexual crimes tell us, among other things, just how entrenched sexism and misogyny are in our institutions and our society, how important understanding and awareness of trauma are for justice and recovery, how equality matters, and just how vital intersectionality is.

We still live in a deeply unequal and patriarchal society where the abuse of power causes life-changing, and sometimes life-ending, physical and mental harm. We should not accept that as inevitable. Violence against women can and must be prevented. It can and must stop.

Stopping that violence will mean transformational action across many sectors: justice, health, education, policing and culture. It means securing long-term—not piecemeal—funding for survivor-centred support services and the women's rights agenda. Fundamentally, it means tackling the root cause of violence and oppression: inequality. That inequality fuels harmful social norms and leads to the implementation of policies that have disproportionate impacts on women, as Covid has made abundantly clear. Indeed, the UN estimates that Covid could set back women's equality by a quarter of a century.

We cannot assume that Scotland is immune to this. We women are not yet adequately protected from misogynistic behaviours and sexualised harassment. Gender-based violence happens to a majority, if not all, of us women. It costs us money. It wastes our time and energy. It makes us fearful. It changes how we use public spaces. It makes us consider what we say and do, and what we do not say and do not do. It exhausts us. It kills us.

We have a moral obligation to act. As parliamentarians, we must ensure that our policies and practices do not exacerbate gender-based violence or negatively impact women. We must take seriously the mechanisms that we have in place to scrutinise what we do. For example, equalities impact assessments must never be just a tick-box exercise. We also need to see the connections between different areas of policy and to understand that a well-meaning policy in one area can have devastating consequences in

others, both in Scotland and further afield. Policy coherence matters.

It is not only in our policy making and scrutiny that we require to act. We need wholesale culture change. Preventative measures play a key part in that. Once again, I would like to recognise the prevention, education and awareness-raising work that is undertaken across our schools and communities by many of the same organisations that support survivors of violence: Scottish Women's Aid, Close the Gap, Zero Tolerance, Engender, Rape Crisis Scotland and all the rape crisis centres.

We also have a role to play in that culture change. I challenge all the men in the Scottish Parliament and all the men MSPs who are role models in their communities to look critically at their behaviour. All men have a responsibility in this: a responsibility to act, to check their behaviour in social, private and intimate settings and to call out sexist behaviour and language whenever they encounter it, including in their own heads. I am pretty sure that all the women in this chamber can recall behaviour by some of the men in this chamber that made them—us—feel uncomfortable. It is not good enough. You men must do better.

Gender-based violence is a public health issue and it is a women's rights issue. When we talk about tackling the inequality that women face and standing up for women's rights, we must include all women—trans women, disabled women, women of colour, poor women, old women and girls. Only with an intersectional approach to tackling gender-based violence will we create a better world.

16:11

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** I ask members to think about three questions. Do you feel safe when you walk out of the Parliament building in the evening? Do you feel safe going out for a bite to eat on your own? Do you feel safe getting public transport home? For me, and I imagine most women in the Parliament, the answer to those questions is no.

A 2016 survey found that 35 per cent of women in Scotland do not feel safe walking in their own neighbourhood. Sadly, there is good reason for their fear. Women face threats every day that, thankfully, men seldom need to worry about. At home, at work and on a night out, the threat of sexual violence perpetrated by men is a clear and present danger.

As the cabinet secretary highlighted, it is horrific that one woman is murdered every three days in the UK. To put that figure in context, in one year in the UK, the same number of women will be killed

as the total number of people murdered by terrorists in the UK this century. Compare the focus and funding that anti-terrorism receives—and rightly so—to the lack of emphasis on preventing violence against women.

One in three women in the UK experience some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. I have no reason to believe that the situation in Scotland is much different. In my constituency, in the five years to 2019, the number of recorded sexual crimes has increased by 75 per cent to 258 incidents.

Recently, many constituents have contacted me with complaints about spiking. The initial police messaging was less than I had hoped for. I welcome the focus that Keith Brown, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans, has put on the issue. He stated:

“We should be absolutely clear that women are not to blame. Any suggestion that women are in the wrong place at the wrong time, is utterly wrongheaded. The onus and responsibility should be put squarely at the feet of men, who must take responsibility for their behaviour.”—[*Official Report*, 28 October 2021; c 4.]

It has been good to hear men in this chamber talk about changing our culture. Jim Fairlie’s speech was excellent, as was Neil Gray’s. As others have touched on, despite recent advances, the attitudes of men must change. Misogyny is deep rooted.

The Scottish Government continues to support front-line services that aid survivors of violence and that focus on prevention. In the programme for government, the Scottish Government pledged to invest more than £100 million to support front-line services and focus on the prevention of violence against women and girls from school onwards over the next three years. The figure includes the enhanced delivering equally safe fund, which has been increased by £12 million to £38 million.

It must, however, be accepted that it will take many years to significantly change male attitudes. In the meantime, we need practical action. Engender has highlighted that women need

“to do ‘safety work’ when navigating public space”

and that

“Women change the way they use public space, including public transport and streets, to manage safety risks and avoid men’s violence.”

Violence and the threat of violence hold back economic growth in urban areas and limit women’s mobility and access to public space, education and economic, political and social opportunities, and their ability to move into higher-paid or more secure jobs. Open space and buildings are seldom, if ever, designed with the safety of women as an objective. National planning framework 4 is

currently open to public consultation. We could really make a difference in that area. I would like a specific commitment to new design standards that are approached specifically from the point of view of preventing violence against women.

Women typically use public transport more than men do because of their lower socioeconomic status. Far more thought must be given to routes, staffing levels and improved connections to ensure that women are safe. Safe, inclusive and well-planned public spaces, infrastructure, urban surfaces and transport can reduce the violence and harassment that women and girls face and increase access to economic opportunities. Modern Scotland should demand nothing less.

“Orange the World: End Violence against Women Now!”, which is this year’s UN theme for the 16 days of activism, emphasises the urgency of the need to eradicate men’s violence against women. We need to consider effective prevention and responses to tackling women’s inequality with men across all areas of life. Let us start making those changes now.

16:17

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in this debate, which is, as we have seen today, on a subject on which all parties can unite. I acknowledge that we have heard many powerful and excellent speeches, and I will, of course, support the Government’s motion.

Every year, international day for the elimination of violence against women marks the start of 16 days of activities against violence against women and girls. We have already heard that this year is the day’s 30th anniversary.

This year, the focus of the campaign will be on strengthening the worldwide response to violence against women by advocating for strategies that we know are effective in stopping it. It aims to ensure that women and girls have the opportunity to participate in democracy around the world. Initiatives along the lines of the ask her to stand campaign have a role to play in that promotion. However, it is clear that there is much more to be done to increase the number of women and girls in positions of power.

This year’s campaign also emphasises the impact that the pandemic has had on the worldwide problem. There are many risks associated with violence against women and girls, including poverty and isolation, which have been exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social media have a role to play. Online abuse has exacerbated things and become a massive problem. Sadly, UN Women has already reported significant increases in violence against women

and girls in countries such as Cameroon, Kenya and Thailand. Further data on other developing countries will be available soon. I fear that we will see a repeat of that pattern.

However, the sad truth is that Scotland has not been immune from the effects of the pandemic in this regard. We know that, in Scotland, domestic abuse charges are now at a five-year high, with an average of 91 cases per day over the past year. Alarming, organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland have reported huge increases in demand for their front-line services since the start of the pandemic. To that end, I welcome the additional £5 million of funding that has been committed to support those front-line services, because—as many members have said today—they are vitally important and are a lifeline to some individuals.

Organisations in my region, such as Fife Women's Aid and Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project, have received such funding, and they work tirelessly to ensure that people are protected. However, as many of those organisations have told us, the effects of the pandemic will be felt for many years to come, and they will inevitably need financial assistance to support them in future.

We also know that there is a massive court backlog of around 7,000 cases of domestic violence against women and girls. Around 70 per cent of those cases involve sexual violence. Some victims currently have to wait up to three years between reporting their abuse and seeing their abuser in court. Scottish Women's Aid has warned that, because of the length of time that the process takes, we risk women losing confidence in the justice system. I hope that I am wrong, but I fear that I am right, in saying that the backlog will continue as we progress.

However, although domestic violence is a global and a Scottish issue, it is, for me, a personal one. As a three-year-old child, I witnessed the devastation and traumatic impact of the violence to which my mother was subjected by my father, and that has never left me. She accepted the abuse for years and blamed herself, before she had the courage to take her three small children out of that situation before she became a statistic and lost her own life. However, many women do not have the courage to do that. They find it very hard to leave an abusive partner or an abusive relationship.

This devastating situation needs to be discussed in Parliament, and we need to be debating it this afternoon. It is to the Parliament's credit that, every year, we have taken time to deal with the problem. However, although I welcome the Parliament debate this afternoon, it is disgraceful that we continue to have to debate the issue. Although the debate itself is important, it is

positive action that is required to change people's attitudes. In that regard, the onus is on us all, as politicians and as men, and across society, to tackle the issue. The issue covers many aspects of society, including culture, race and inequality, and only through society acting as a whole can we finally eliminate the violence and ensure that women and girls can live without fear and trepidation, wherever they are and whatever they are doing.

16:23

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** In 2016, when I was a member of Parliament, I spoke in the House of Commons about being raped at the age of 14. Too little has changed. In the immediate aftermath, I received thousands of cards, letters and emails. Simultaneously, I received extensive abuse on social media, almost always from men. After my speech, I made a complaint to Police Scotland. The perpetrator was identified and charged but not prosecuted, due to the passage of time. It was never reported in the press.

Making a police report was difficult. I learned why some facets of my adult character were as they were. When I described my very varied career to Police Scotland, the police explained to me that my workaholic habits were entirely understandable, because when someone like me starts running, they keep running. Many women, however, run into the arms of an abusive partner, drugs or drink.

The police also helped me to understand why my disclosure in such a public arena, in which I was being constantly scrutinised and briefed against, was a rational action. It is common for women to disclose after a significant life-changing or shocking event, such as the loss of a child or partner—and, often, after years of silence and denial. Disclosure was me finally standing my ground. I was naked from the inside out, and all I had was that small internal voice that whispered, "Hear me."

I learned that freezing, rather than fighting or fleeing, had become a learned behaviour. I understood how I had repeated that freezing during other events. The victim's guilt and shame that I carried is, regrettably, quite normal.

The process was difficult for me and my family, as we came to realise the extent to which I had masked my pain. I went through a process of grieving for the innocent girl that I had been, and the uncluttered woman that I might have become. However, I refuse to have my voice shut down ever again.

Multiple studies help us to understand how trauma forges different neural pathways and how

future life events can add trauma upon trauma. That makes true recovery difficult.

All around the world, women are raped, beaten, abused, subjected to genital mutilation, sold into slavery and prostituted. Data from the UN tells us that, globally, almost one in three women have been subjected to violence from an intimate partner, generalised sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life. Fewer than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort, such are the taboos against speaking out.

Women and girls together account for 72 per cent of all human trafficking victims globally. Girls represent more than three out of four child trafficking victims; most face a life of sexual slavery. Sex-based violence is a major obstacle to universal schooling and the right to education for girls. Recently, we have seen that at first hand in Afghanistan. Not only has the Covid pandemic enabled more crime against women; it has disproportionately affected them economically, thus placing them more at risk.

The me too movement brought solidarity to women, in the sharing of common experiences about the use and abuse of power; however, it has not brought change. Historically, our state systems were developed by men, for men. Our law, our business practices and so on are now being replicated by artificial intelligence algorithms that are, ironically, embedding sexism further. The advances that women have made feel elusive. Women, as a sex class, are constantly under threat, and many feel that our hard-won rights are being challenged. The fact remains that countless women were, like me, attacked because of their sex.

Sexist and misogynistic behaviour is common in politics, and we cannot pretend that our Scottish Parliament is immune. Scotland's lion is rampant in one area—that of casual entitlement—despite huge efforts by Government and by multiple agencies.

Sexual violence is not confined just to some. It affects lesbians, gays, straight people and trans people; women, children and men. However, the perpetrator is almost always a man. Good men—that majority of decent, loving and caring men that I know exists—have a critical role in helping to effect the changes that we so desperately need. Whether in the face of casual sexism, a joke that the female target does not find amusing, or more blatant misogyny that tries to shut down women's voices, society needs us all, including men, to shape the change that we still so desperately need to see. We must all commit to making that change.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** Mercedes Villalba is the final speaker

in the open debate. I remind colleagues who have participated in the debate that they need to be in the chamber for closing speeches. Ms Villalba, you have around six minutes, please.

16:29

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Today, we mark the 30th international day for the elimination of violence against women. Despite some progress having been made, it is clear that gender-based violence is still the lived reality for too many women across the world.

We see that in the Covid-19 pandemic, humanitarian crises, conflicts and climate disasters, which are all causing an increasing threat of violence to women and girls, so I welcome the UN's UNiTE to end violence against women campaign and the 16 days of activism, which are focused on preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls around the world. I welcome the Scottish Government's motion that highlights the need for the Parliament to renew its shared ambition to tackle gender-based violence.

However, there is clearly still more work to be done to make that ambition a reality. Gender-based violence, whether it is domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, stalking or harassment, remains deeply rooted in our society. Recent figures, which were published in September, found that there were more than 33,000 charges of domestic abuse in Scotland last year. That was the highest number of charges reported since 2015 and represents an almost 10 per cent increase in one year. There were also more than 1,000 stalking charges last year. Yet those figures represent only instances of gender-based violence that were reported and where charges were brought. The truth is that too much of the gender-based violence that is suffered by women and girls in Scotland goes unreported.

Therefore, it is clear that there is more that we must do in Scotland and that there are policy changes that we could make now. We must teach our young people and children to respect each other's bodily autonomy. Girls should not be expected to internalise misogyny, and boys should not grow up with a sense of entitlement over others. In our public services, we must look to increase awareness of gender-based violence among staff and strengthen training for them to support women and girls. We must address the concerns that women and girls have for their safety, by carrying out safety audits of public spaces to ensure that they are well lit, welcoming and accessible.

We also have to acknowledge the role of the police in women's safety. The motion refers to the

murder of Sarah Everard, who was murdered not just by a man, but a man who was a serving police officer. Women and girls are told to turn to the police in times of crisis, but Sarah Everard's murder has damaged trust in the police as an institution. Statistics show that Sarah's murderer is not an exception, but a symptom of the institutional sexism that still exists within the police. At least 15 serving or former UK police officers have killed women since 2009. More than 40 police officers and staff in Police Scotland are being prosecuted over offences that include sex crime, assaults and domestic abuse. Rape Crisis Scotland published a damning report of the experiences of survivors of rape and sexual assault, which exposed the systemic sexism that still exists in Police Scotland's ranks.

That is why it was so concerning that Police Scotland's international development and innovation unit had been undertaking work with the Sri Lankan police, including how to tackle gender-based violence. Given Police Scotland's poor record, how could anyone argue that that unit was best placed to promote good practice internationally? In spite of its supposed aims, the unit's activities in Sri Lanka failed to change the attitude and culture of gender-based violence that is rife in the country. A Sri Lankan police spokesperson was recently quoted as confirming that the force would not take cases of intimate partner violence to court, so it is no surprise that campaigners feared that Police Scotland's work was providing political cover and legitimacy for the human rights violations, including gender-based violence, that occur in Sri Lanka.

The chief constable has now made a welcome announcement that there will be no further deployment of Police Scotland officers to Sri Lanka during the remainder of the agreed period, which ends in March 2022, and that Police Scotland will not seek to renew its engagement to support policing in Sri Lanka when the current period ends. That is a victory for campaigners, who will write to the chief constable in the coming days to seek a written confirmation of that decision, and I hope that they are provided with that.

However, members should note that the U-turn comes in spite of the inaction of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans. If the Scottish Government had wanted to demonstrate its willingness to take all necessary steps to tackle gender-based violence, the justice secretary should have supported the calls for Police Scotland's contract with the Sri Lankan police to be terminated and not renewed. There is no point in a justice secretary who does not stand up for human rights, yet that is exactly what we have in Keith Brown.

I conclude by acknowledging that all of us in the Parliament want to tackle gender-based violence and that it is the responsibility of us all to push the Government to do more to help achieve that. We must educate our children and young people if we are to address deep-rooted attitudes and behaviours, we must improve the support that is offered to women and girls by our public services and we must make our public spaces safe for women and girls. It would be a mark of the failure of all of us in the Parliament if people looking back in 30 years' time concluded that we had said all the right things but failed to deliver the action that was needed to eliminate violence against women and girls.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to closing speeches.

16:35

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** In closing for Scottish Labour, I share the sentiment that has been expressed in the debate and I add my voice to other members' voices.

Not only is violence against women sadly still a major concern in 2021, but it appears to be getting worse in Scotland and around the world. If anyone imagines that it is becoming a thing of the past, they are sorely mistaken. The cabinet secretary and Meghan Gallacher opened by mentioning the shocking statistics, from the UK and around the world, and others across the chamber emphasised them. This is a pandemic.

We know that in the UK this year at least 126 women have been killed by men, or that a man is the principal suspect in their death. How can we look at those numbers and think that there is not a serious problem in our society with the way in which men view and treat women? Whether it is domestic violence, sexual harassment or rampant misogyny, women continue to be the target of far too many men's terrible behaviour and aggression. I agree with Maggie Chapman that if we cannot understand how serious that is and address the root cause, we do not deserve to be standing here. A big step towards addressing that root cause is exposing those parts of our society that apologise for and normalise the violence. Many of them are key parts of our establishment and seem to think that they are immune to the problem. Michelle Thomson, Pam Duncan-Glancy, Pauline McNeill and Mercedes Villalba talked about that.

There could not be any greater example of the dangers that women face across the UK than the terrible murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer, who used his authority to subdue and kidnap her. In the wake of that event, women naturally felt particularly vulnerable and angry. Yet at a peaceful vigil to remember Sarah and to

protest the police's failings in London, officers pinned down and arrested many protesters under Covid regulations. To even consider that a normal or rational thing to do is evidence of stone age thinking by supposed pillars of our society. It was done by the very service that is there to protect us, to women who were responding to one of the police's own killing a young woman. Who has been held responsible? The Metropolitan Police commissioner continues to be in post, despite those events, while some of the women at the protest have been made out to be criminals. How am I supposed to tell young people in my region—or, indeed, my own daughter—that this is a safe country for women, when that is the headline news and that is the police response? Something needs to change, and it needs to change quickly.

Often the institutional response to what I and many other women regularly see is minimal, to say the least. We have heard from others that Rape Crisis Scotland has highlighted how Police Scotland's responses to rape allegations are riddled with poor communications, outdated attitudes, and lengthy and unclear proceedings that leave survivors feeling isolated and anxious. Is it any wonder that so few women come forward and report those crimes?

Another issue mentioned during the debate, which is part of the same problem, is the fact that women now feel that they have to boycott clubs and bars up and down the country in response to serious concerns about increases in drink spiking. For years, those concerns have been met only with public relations campaigns and awareness-raising approaches, but how many people are convicted of spiking drinks, or of similar activities, in Scotland—a charge known as “drugging”? Over the past three years, where there is data available, the answer is that no one has been charged, so either all those women are making up the problem or the crime is not being detected at all. If that many men were saying that they had fallen victim to spiking, I wonder whether the statistics would be the same.

Every woman who is a victim of violence must be treated equally and fairly by an establishment that understands, or at least seeks to begin to understand, what they have gone through. That begins with accepting that it is a serious problem that we do not have under control. It means direct engagement with grassroots organisations, health and recovery charities and, as Pam Gosal rightly said, right across, and sensitive to, all our communities. It requires institutions such as the police to open their eyes and ears to what is going on.

I thank Jim Fairlie for his comments about men joining in with the debate and I thank Neil Gray, Jim Fairlie and Alexander Stewart for their

excellent and thoroughly worthwhile contributions. We needed to hear them. We need to deal with the sorts of attitudes that we expose young men to, and that encourage a culture of entitlement instead of one of respect—a point that was raised by the cabinet secretary. If we can approach the problem as both a criminal justice issue, and as a societal issue that is mixed in with the way in which some men think it is acceptable to behave, we can begin to tackle it. Until then, it will just be more PR stunts and not enough serious change.

I finish by repeating what Pauline McNeill said: if we want things to change, we need to be brave. All of us need to be brave.

16:42

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** We have heard some powerful speeches in the debate. Each year, as we mark the international day for the elimination of violence against women, we agree that more must be done to create an equally safe society in Scotland and around the world, but progress to protect the physical, sexual and psychological safety of women and girls has been painfully slow.

We have been reminded that the number of domestic abuse charges is at a five-year high. Sexual crimes are still at near record levels. Mercedes Villalba highlighted the number of stalking charges. The increased reporting of those crimes is, of course, welcome, but it demonstrates how pervasive they are.

Just this week, author J K Rowling posted on social media that she has

“now received so many death threats”

that she could

“paper the house with them”.

Dr Marsha Scott, the chief executive of Scottish Women's Aid, told the Criminal Justice Committee earlier this year:

“If you are asking me what outcomes we have seen for women and girls since the first strategy or, indeed, since the equally safe strategy, my response is, sadly, that we have seen very few.”—[*Official Report, Criminal Justice Committee*, 22 September 2021; c 3.]

The reality is that women feel that their safety is still under siege.

In March this year, Sarah Everard did everything she could to protect herself as she walked home. She walked through well-lit streets. She wore bright clothes and running shoes. She texted her boyfriend to let him know she was leaving. Sabina Nessa had been walking to a pub less than 10 minutes from where she lived. The cabinet secretary highlighted the women who have lost their lives this year from violence, including Sarah



Everard and Sabina Nessa. For hundreds of thousands of women across the UK, it all feels far too familiar.

Women, with their extraordinary strength, tenacity and resilience, are not victims—far from it. However, too often, we are victimised. Somehow, a narrative of victim blaming—that we bring this on ourselves by the way that we dress and act—has become entrenched. We hear that women, not the perpetrators, must modify their behaviour. It simply should not be like that. Women should not have to be fearful as they go about their everyday lives, but they are. They have every right to be angry.

It gets worse, not better. Evelyn Tweed, Meghan Gallacher and Beatrice Wishart highlighted the serious issue of spiking, which has once again come to light in recent weeks, including in my region of north-east Scotland. Women are covering their glasses on a night out, they are wearing thick fabrics to prevent a needle penetrating, or they are choosing to stay home.

However, for some women, home does not always offer the safety and sanctuary that it should. Alexander Stewart described the traumatic experience of watching his mother being abused when he was a young boy. His experience is a painful reminder that violence perpetrated against women has many victims and that its legacy endures over many years.

The cabinet secretary has already mentioned the UK-wide Femicide Census, but its findings should be repeated again and again. Home is often the least safe place for women. Between 2009 and 2018, 888 women were killed in the UK by their current or former spouse or intimate partner. That is 62 per cent of the total number of women who were murdered over the 10-year period. As we have heard today, women were most commonly killed at home.

The Covid-19 pandemic has only made the situation worse. During the pandemic, specialist black and minority ethnic organisations in Scotland have observed significant decreases in referrals for BME women experiencing extended family abuse and enforced servitude. Those women have not been able to make contact with such services because of stricter controls on their freedoms, with family members much more likely to be at home. There are also concerns that the pandemic has prevented women from reporting cases of FGM and seeking medical help.

Pam Gosal, Alexander Stewart and other members have stressed the importance of lifeline support services for women.

Pam Duncan-Glancy said that violence against women is woven into the structure of our society, and she emphasised that disabled women are

twice as likely as non-disabled women to experience men's violence.

Jim Fairlie highlighted the issues of male dominance and entitlement.

Drawing on extensive experience, Elena Whitham emphasised the problems that abused women face in accessing informal support networks. She raised serious concerns about the dangerous portrayal of sex in pornography.

Maggie Chapman raised the issue of harassment and the fact that women are not protected from misogynistic violence. She said that violence against women is a women's rights issue.

Neil Gray said that men need to modify their behaviour.

I am pleased that there is consensus in the chamber today. To quote Pauline McNeill, when it comes to male power and abuse, "The list goes on."

Michelle Thomson showed courage in sharing her story of abuse in a very powerful speech.

The Scottish Conservatives have pushed for the introduction in Scotland of whole-life sentences, which is the sentence that Sarah Everard's killer, Wayne Couzens, was handed several weeks ago in England. All other parties have resisted it.

Today, Douglas Ross highlighted the lack of progress with Michelle's law and the importance of victims being forewarned that an offender in their case will be released.

MSPs are in agreement that the safety of women is in a precarious position. Women look to us, in the Scottish Parliament, to represent them and advocate for them. I sincerely hope that, over the next 12 months, with a Parliament that is 45 per cent women, we will find a way to rise to the challenge.

16:49

**The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson):** First, I thank all colleagues who have given remarkably thoughtful, moving, courageous and emotive contributions this afternoon. Summing up the debate will be very challenging because of the sheer power of what has been said.

Before I refer to what members have brought up during this important debate, and give some thoughts of my own, I want to mention one person who is absent: my colleague Christina McKelvie, the Minister for Equalities and Older People. She has been a mainstay of this debate and of tackling its subject, as well as a driving force of the progress that we have made in addressing its

blight on Scotland. We wish her well in her recovery and look forward to welcoming her back from medical leave.

As we have heard during the debate, violence against women and girls is a blight on our country as well as globally. Today we remember all the victims and we reaffirm our collective determination to do more to tackle violence against women and girls in all its forms.

Part of that is about legislation. One of the most important things that we did in the previous parliamentary session was pass the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, giving the police greater powers to tackle this insidious crime. We also passed the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021, which, when it comes into effect, will provide the police and courts with new powers to make emergency orders that are designed to protect people who are at risk of domestic abuse from someone they are living with. Also, the independent working group chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, continues to look specifically at misogyny and explore whether there should be a stand-alone offence to tackle misogynistic behaviour.

I appreciate that a number of members, particularly Meghan Gallacher, raised points about the criminal justice system, and I am sure that my colleagues Keith Brown and Ash Regan will explore those in more detail during next week's debate.

Some members have rightly given their thanks and praise to all the organisations that are working to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls, and to support victims. Elena Whitham made a particularly moving contribution on that. The Scottish Government recognises that and, in the past 18 months, we have invested an additional £10 million to allow the rapid redesign of services and address backlogs, and to support organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance. Pam Gosal also talked about the specific organisations that are working in minority communities. I know that from my experience of working as a constituency MSP with Sikh Sanjog, Shakti Women's Aid and Saheliya, to name but a few.

As part of our £100 million investment, which is a three-year commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, we have also created a new delivering equally safe fund of about £19 million each year until 2023, and have recently confirmed allocations to 121 projects from 112 organisations that are working to provide key services and prevent gender-based violence. The longer funding commitments that Beatrice Wishart mentioned will be considered as part of the front-line services review that the cabinet secretary talked about.

One of the most significant points that was raised today was about how to change our culture. I spoke earlier about how we miss Christina McKelvie today, but in her absence, I feel privileged to have the chance to speak in the debate. As colleagues Jim Fairlie, Neil Gray, Alexander Stewart and others, as well as the cabinet secretary, emphasised, men, as allies, need to speak up and act. The fault and cause of violence against women and girls lies with men.

Although some men—the perpetrators—are more to blame, all men are responsible. Collectively, we are responsible for the society that we live in and the underlying prejudices, sexism and misogynistic societal attitudes that are still far too prevalent. It is only by prioritising prevention that there can be an end to violence against women and girls.

As the motion states, gender-based violence, which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, rape, harassment and sexual violence,

“is a function of gender inequality and an abuse of male power and privilege”.

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of toxic masculinity, the commodification of women, porn culture and an immoral set of attitudes, including a sense of sexual entitlement, that are still held by too many men in our society and around the world. It is men who have created the injustice and imbalance in our society today, so men have an ethical and urgent necessity and responsibility to lead the change that we need to see, with solidarity, empathy and in partnership, to bring about the better society that we need to create. That needs to be done across the generations. In that regard, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Malcolm Chisholm, who has been and continues to be a really strong voice on the issue.

It is clear that, for us as guys—by which I mean men—the problem is ours, all of ours: younger and older men, friends and partners, brothers, fathers and grandfathers. If we are to address the problem in the way that we need to, the change that is required needs to be societal, behavioural, cultural and systematic. If we are to effectively and comprehensively tackle gender-based violence, society must challenge and alter the still-too-prevalent outdated gender stereotypes and social attitudes towards women and girls that enable it to continue. Men need to look in the mirror—and to do so critically, as Maggie Chapman rightly emphasised—and to ask how we do better, individually and collectively.

We need to stand up more often to what we hear and see other men say and do, as Jim Fairlie emphasised. We must do so with courage and conviction to change minds, challenge behaviour,

champion equality and call out misogyny. As men, we must do better at challenging and criticising ourselves and one another, and not just in person but online. We must do so because—this is important, as was rightly emphasised during the debate—women and girls should not have to modify their everyday behaviour in order to stay safe.

Men, the onus is on us to modify our collective behaviour and to do so in a way that is more sensitive to the situation that women around us face, day in and day out. As the recent Police Scotland campaign highlights, we have to not be that guy who is sexist, that guy who is abusive, that guy who is misogynistic or that guy who harasses women and girls; we also have to not be that guy who ignores such behaviour. That is why, today, I have signed the White Ribbon pledge, and I encourage other men to do so, too, because we can and should do more, proactively.

Men and guys, today and for the next 16 days and beyond, let us be that guy who does more to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls; let us be that guy who calls out his mates when he hears or sees sexism, misogyny, abuse or harassment; let us be that guy who modifies his behaviour to make women feel safer; let us be that guy who plays a part in bringing about the change in culture that we need; and let us be that guy who makes a positive difference in his circles of influence and in everyday life.

Today, as a Parliament—as one—we mark the international day for the elimination of violence against women and girls, which begins the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

We are united in condemnation of violence against women and girls in all its forms, in Scotland and around the world, and speak with one voice. We reaffirm our commitment to working collaboratively to eradicate gender-based violence.

We call on all of Scotland to do the same, so that together we eradicate violence against women and girls across our country: in our communities and workplaces, in bars and nightclubs, in homes, in the streets and online and in all the places where sexism, harassment, misogyny and abuse are still far too prevalent.

As others have said in this remarkable debate full of moving speeches, we must and will do more. I urge Parliament to support the motion in that sense of solidarity.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is decision time. There is only one question to be put as a result of today's business.

The question is, that motion S6M-02267, in the name of Shona Robison, on the international day for the elimination of violence against women, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which this year reaches its 30th anniversary; notes that the 2021 campaign focuses on the dual themes of Femicide and Ending Domestic Abuse in the World of Work; reaffirms its commitment to continue to work collaboratively from constituency, to committee, to chamber, to eradicate gender-based violence; agrees that only by prioritising prevention, can there be an end to violence against women and girls; gives thanks to the organisations and individuals that support women and children affected by gender-based violence, including the Women's Aid and Rape Crisis networks; notes that gender-based violence, which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, is a function of gender inequality and an abuse of male power and privilege; recognises that there is an increasing level of online abuse and the disproportionate impact this has on women and girls; agrees that in order to effectively tackle gender-based violence, society must challenge the outdated gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women and girls that enable it to continue; further agrees that it is clear that women and girls should no longer have to modify their everyday behaviour in order to stay safe; unites in its condemnation of violence against women and girls in all of its forms, in Scotland and around the world, on which it speaks with one voice; mourns all the women around the world who have been killed by men this year, including Sabina Nessa, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, and Sarah Everard, whose murders showed how fragile the veneer of safety for women can be, and notes, as a mark of respect, the one-minute silence held in their honour.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

*Meeting closed at 17:01.*

## Correction

Nicola Sturgeon has identified errors in her contribution and has provided the following corrections.

*At Col 15, paragraph 5*

*Original text—*

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is right now at the highest level of escalation of the health board performance framework; it is at stage 4, which is often referred to as special measures. That means that a significant amount of work is under way to address infection in hospitals and reduce the incidence of infection.

*Corrected text—*

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is right now at the second highest level of escalation of the health board performance framework; it is at stage 4, which is often referred to as special measures. That means that a significant amount of work is under way to address infection in hospitals and reduce the incidence of infection.

## Nicola Sturgeon

*At Col 16, paragraph 3*

*Original text—*

Anas Sarwar says that I should use my emergency powers to take control of the hospital. As I said, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is at the highest level of escalation, and will remain there while all the issues are investigated and action is taken.

*Corrected text—*

Anas Sarwar says that I should use my emergency powers to take control of the hospital. As I said, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is at the second highest level of escalation, and will remain there while all the issues are investigated and action is taken.

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

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