



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Wednesday 20 April 2022

Session 6



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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 20 April 2022

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Justice and Veterans

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is justice and veterans. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question. I call for succinct questions and answers to match.

#### Community Justice Interventions

1. **Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to support greater use of community justice interventions. (S6O-00958)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** For nearly 15 years, this Government has delivered bold and effective justice reforms with a firm focus on early intervention, prevention and rehabilitation. We are currently consulting publicly on a revised national strategy for community justice, which seeks to build on progress to date and encourage a further shift towards greater use of community-based disposals.

**Jim Fairlie:** Will the cabinet secretary share how the commitments in the Promise implementation plan and the recently launched consultation on policy proposals for the children's care and justice bill support greater use of community justice among children and young people?

**Keith Brown:** As the question implies, we owe it to Scotland's young people, as well as to victims and communities, to promote an evidence-led, progressive and continually improving approach. Both the Promise implementation plan and the consultation on the children's care and justice bill, which will be the responsibility of Clare Haughey, demonstrate our determination to support children who come into conflict with the law through age-appropriate systems and services.

Our Promise implementation plan makes clear that we will end the placement of 16 and 17-year-olds in young offenders institutions without further delay. We are committed to funding care-based alternatives to custody and we are consulting on

new legislation. Our proposals for the children's care and justice bill include raising the maximum age of referral to the principal reporter to ensure that when a child requires the support and intervention of formal systems, age-appropriate support is available through the children's hearings system.

We also intend to enhance the offer to victims and ensure appropriate protection, support and information. Taken together, those actions build on the clear synergies between our youth justice vision, which was published in June 2021, and the justice vision that was published in February. We look forward to expanding the successful whole-system approach and focusing on intensive residential and community alternatives across Scotland.

**Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con):** Prison is often more appropriate than community service for some criminals, but sheriffs' hands are being tied. Retired sheriff Douglas Cusine described the "frustrating inadequacy" of Scottish National Party sentencing policies, which he says will be weakened further with plans to automatically release some prisoners even earlier. On occasion, he has passed community service orders when he thought that prison was necessary. Will Keith Brown back our plans to end automatic early release so that criminals can be jailed when a judge deems it appropriate?

**Keith Brown:** Criminals can be jailed when a judge deems it appropriate. In addition to attacking the independent Lord Advocate, the independent Parole Board for Scotland and the independent police service, the Tories are now attacking the Scottish Sentencing Council. It is quite clear that there is a broad-based attack on the justice system as a whole in Scotland, perhaps prompted by the headlines that we have seen down south, which say that the justice system in the rest of the United Kingdom is in complete free-fall. That might be the motivation, but if Russell Findlay looks at the figures, he will see that community disposals are far more effective in reducing reoffending.

Surely all of us, including victims, want to see a reduction in crime, and the most effective way to achieve that is to use community-based disposals where we can, and we will continue to do that.

#### Veterans (Health and Wellbeing)

2. **Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's most recent report on the health and wellbeing of veterans. (S6O-00959)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** I have written to the commissioner thanking him for advance sight of

the report on veterans' health and wellbeing. Over the coming weeks, we will consider carefully its recommendations. In due course, I will write to the commissioner again, although it will be the new commissioner at that point, to provide a more detailed response, and our action plan for taking forward the recommendations will be included in that response.

I again take the opportunity to thank Charlie Wallace for all his hard work and dedication to the veterans community, and I wish him all the best for the future.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I have been in contact with Poppyscotland, which, once again, highlighted the importance of veterans' mental health. It mentioned the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report, which states that mental health is the most common "unmet need" that has caused frustration among veterans.

Last November, the Scottish Veterans Care Network published its "Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan". However, the Scottish Government has yet to provide a timeline for the delivery of its recommendations. Can the cabinet secretary provide the timeline today, please?

**Keith Brown:** We are establishing a veteran-led action plan implementation board, which will be led by Charles Winstanley. I am not sure whether that information was in the public domain. The first meeting of the board is scheduled for 19 May.

In the meantime, we continue to fund Combat Stress and Veterans First Point, which will allow existing services to continue over the next few years as a Scotland-wide implementation plan is developed. Support for the board is currently being reviewed by the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care.

In addition, we have commissioned See Me Scotland to run a veterans anti-stigma campaign this year. Veterans Scotland and other third sector partners will contribute to the work to ensure that the experience of veterans can help to shape and influence the campaign.

Given Sandesh Gulhane's question, it would be useful if he were able to support the Scottish Government's call for the United Kingdom Government to pay some money towards the establishment of the commissioner's office. It has done so in Wales, so I do not know what the logic is for the Tory UK Government to say that it will not fund veterans' activity or the commissioner in Scotland. If he is willing to say that he will support that, that would be most welcome.

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** How will the £2 million funding that was announced last month for services that

provide mental health support to armed forces veterans be put to use?

**Keith Brown:** The Government is committed to ensuring that veterans have access to the right support and help when they need it. The Government works with a wide range of organisations and provides funding for the provision of mental health services for veterans. I mentioned in my previous answer that we have continued to fund Combat Stress by providing £1.4 million to it this year. As the member knows, it provides a range of specialist and community-based services for veterans who are resident in Scotland.

We, along with six health boards, continue to provide joint funding for the Veterans First Point Network, which will offer a one-stop shop for veterans, no matter what their need is. The future funding of veterans mental health services will be determined by the implementation of the "Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan", which was published late last year.

### **Police Officers (Mental Health Support)**

**3. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what work it and Police Scotland have undertaken to ensure that police officers have access to additional trained mental health workers. (S6O-00960)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Action 15 of the mental health strategy commits to fund 800 additional mental health workers in key settings. As at 1 January 2022, we have achieved 95 per cent of that target. That includes more than 26 whole-time equivalent posts to support those held in police station custody suites.

Police officers and staff can access mental health support, including a 24/7 employee assistance programme—EAP—which offers professional support via a team of trained wellbeing and counselling practitioners. Also, the trauma risk management—TRiM—process supports officers and staff affected by potentially traumatic incidents at work.

**Willie Rennie:** A survey found that 29 per cent of officers were experiencing moderate burn-out, a further 16 per cent endured high levels of burn-out and one third of officers went to work when they were mentally unwell.

As the minister has just mentioned, Police Scotland has an employee assistance programme that aims to help officers with their mental health. If officers need more support than the six one-hour sessions on offer, they are told that there is nothing more for them. Why have the worst-affected officers been left without the support that they deserve?

**Keith Brown:** That is the direct responsibility of Police Scotland, although, as I am sure that Willie Rennie would say, it is the Government's responsibility to help to fund such things.

Police Scotland works with a range of local and national service providers to provide care and assistance to those in distress. We fund a wide range of mental health services that can be accessed by first responders.

I mentioned the £2.1 million fund to expand the NHS 24 mental health hub, which will be available to the public 24/7, and the funding of £1 million to roll out the distress brief intervention programme on a national basis. It is also worth saying that there are additional supports for officers, which can take on further assistance—I mentioned EAP and the TRiM process.

Beyond that, it is always open to officers to speak to those who are designated within the force in their area about issues that they have. Those can include not just issues with mental and physical health and wellbeing, but all sorts of other issues that might cause stress, such as those related to money or traumatic incidents that officers have had to endure. We will continue to fund those services for police officers. At the same time, of course, we have more police officers than virtually anywhere else in the United Kingdom and those officers are paid substantially more than anywhere else in the UK.

#### **Crime (Victims and Survivors Services)**

**4. Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is making available to specialist services for victims and survivors of crime. (S6O-00961)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Our victim-centred approach fund is providing £48 million to 23 organisations across Scotland over the period 2022 to 2025. That will fund specialist services for people who are bereaved by crime. It will extend support and assistance to victims of human trafficking. It also includes £18.5 million for specialist advocacy support for survivors of gender-based violence.

We are also providing £38 million to more than 120 projects through delivery of the equally safe fund to tackle violence against women and girls and to support front-line services that maximise their safety and wellbeing.

I think that that underlines our commitment to victims and survivors, which is a key priority in our recently published strategy for Scotland's justice sector.

**Natalie Don:** I know that many valuable organisations are receiving funding, and I am sure that it will provide essential support to many victims of crime. However, in speaking with organisations and in my own personal dealings with constituents, it has been highlighted to me that there is concern about support for and stigma among people who are victims of facial disfigurement and facial scarring. Can the cabinet secretary provide any information or assurance on how that funding could be used for those victims?

**Keith Brown:** I am happy to do so, but I would say to Natalie Don that she might be interested in, or already aware of, the fact that, in Baroness Helena Kennedy's recent report on misogyny, she has recommended action that can be taken in relation to people who purposely disfigure others, and women in particular.

On this important issue, in recognising the profound impact that arises both where someone receives a facial injury as a result of crime and where those with facial disfigurements are very unfortunately on the receiving end of abuse, we would expect that funded organisations will be able to provide practical and emotional support but also that they will refer to more specialist support, including through health services, where that is available. We will continue to work with funded organisations as a community of interest to ensure that those issues are recognised. We would welcome any specific suggestions from Natalie Don as to how that might be done most effectively, including on how we might build a better understanding and evidence base around those concerns.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Victims tell us that where the system is currently letting them down is in the horrifying scenario in which they bump into an offender in their community after the offender's release from prison. It is a fact that far too few victims have been notified of the release of an offender. Is the cabinet secretary willing to address that by supporting two principles in my proposed victims bill? The first is to ensure that more victims are notified about the release of prisoners. The second is to further empower victims by enabling them to request exclusion zones around their communities to ensure that they are not further traumatised by simply bumping into someone in a supermarket.

**Keith Brown:** I think that Jamie Greene has made those suggestions before, and I do not want to dismiss them out of hand. I am happy to consider them and to look in detail at Jamie Greene's victims bill when it is introduced.

I think that we have to increase the level of notifications and make sure that notification is being consistently applied. I am happy to concede that point, and we are doing things now that will

address that. It is also true in relation to other aspects that Jamie Greene has raised in the past, such as notifications of Parole Board for Scotland hearings. I am happy to take on board those points and to continue those discussions. Notification is taking place, but we should make sure that it is being done more comprehensively. I am happy to have that discussion.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** Some victims of sexual assault have said that they feel like criminals in the trial process. I welcome the commitment in “The Vision for Justice” to improve communication with complainers through having a single trauma-informed source of contact. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that that will be treated with some urgency by the Scottish Government? Would he also consider the inclusion of some legal representation in that process? One thing that concerns me is that a person needs to have an understanding of the legal system when they talk to victims and complainers. Katy Clark and I have been proposing that measure.

**Keith Brown:** Pauline McNeill makes a very important point about people’s ability to understand legal processes. We have had discussions in the chamber about the not proven verdict in which it has been conceded that judges are not even allowed to explain to a jury the difference between not proven and not guilty. If the people the system is meant to serve do not understand it—even if all the lawyers understand it—that is a major problem.

I have some sympathy with what Pauline McNeill says. There are some compelling arguments in relation to legal representation for complainers. There are also some concerns, including from the legal profession, but we are looking at that urgently and will publish our thoughts shortly. I am looking for additional suggestions. We are not ruling that out, but it is a complex area. I am happy to continue those discussions.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** How will the sexual assault response co-ordination service—SARCS—help those who have experienced a sexual crime?

**Keith Brown:** SARCS is a dedicated service provided by the national health service that can offer healthcare and support in the days after rape or sexual assault if a person is not ready to report that to the police or is unsure whether to do so. That is known as self-referral. Through the chief medical officer’s rape and sexual assault task force, we have invested £11.7 million in the four years up to 2022 to support implementation of the Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Act 2021 and to either enhance or create SARCS across Scotland.

We know from listening to survivors that access to self-referral is an important way of giving control back to people. It is also a fundamental aspect of the forensic medical examination facilities that we are looking to roll out. Those services may have a positive influence on a person’s decision to report a crime to police, while ensuring that they are also able to access health services following an incident.

#### **Scottish Solicitors Bar Association (Court Appointments)**

**5. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members that I am a practising solicitor.

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish Solicitors Bar Association’s announcement that criminal solicitors will no longer take on court appointments for those accused, without lawyers, who are not allowed to represent themselves. (S6O-00962)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Regan):** We are, of course, very concerned about the effect of the boycott on court users and on justice partners. Officials met the president and chief executive of the Law Society of Scotland on 13 April to discuss wider issues with legal aid fees, in light of the profession’s call for a further increase of 50 per cent to all legal aid fees. Although the budget for legal aid cases is demanded, the Scottish Government allocates a budget to the legal aid fund. In 2021-22, that was £138 million, so a 50 per cent uplift would add £69 million per year to the fund, which is unaffordable, given the current pressures on public finances.

I have been informed that the meeting was constructive and that it is hoped that the Law Society will report back on that soon. The Scottish Government will continue engaging with the Scottish Solicitors Bar Association and with the Law Society of Scotland on a package of proposals worth £3.8 million, which was offered to target specific areas of solemn and summary legal aid fees that had previously been raised by the legal profession as being the most pressing of the fee-related issues.

**Liam Kerr:** The action that the SSBA has been forced to take because of Scottish National Party Government neglect will lead to some of those who have been accused of sexual or domestic abuse being unrepresented. That means further trial delays for victims of the most shocking crimes, who may have to wait years for justice. Criminal defence lawyers tell me that, after 15 years of SNP government, the system is collapsing and there has been a fundamental failure to address shortages in their profession. When will the Scottish Government actually start listening to the profession in those meetings that the minister describes? When will it invest properly



in legal aid to address the shortages and finally start tackling Scotland's huge court backlog?

**Ash Regan:** I do not accept the member's characterisation of the situation that we are in. I say to him that I listen to the legal profession regularly and often and that I take great care in listening to all the arguments that are put forward and in trying to address the profession's issues.

The member raised the issue of capacity in the system. I remind him that the Government recently invested £1 million in the traineeship fund. There was also a 5 per cent rise in legal aid fees in 2021 and a further 5 per cent rise in place from this month, representing a rise of more than £10 million in legal aid fees in the past year alone. The Government is listening to the profession and is continuing to invest.

I am concerned about the current situation and recent developments, and I assure members that my officials and I continue to discuss further fee reforms with representatives of the profession. However, the situation in Scotland, in relation to eligibility levels and the wide scope that remains, is different from the situation in England, where the Conservatives are in charge of the legal aid system. That system has been cut, cut and cut again, so there is a stark difference between the situation in Scotland and the one that Conservatives are presiding over in the rest of the country.

### Cybercrime

**6. Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what measures it is taking in response to the reported growing threat of cybercrime. (S6O-00963)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** We continue to work closely with Police Scotland and other cyber Scotland partners, including the National Cyber Security Centre, to protect the public and organisations from cyber threats.

In addition to the on-going activity that I highlighted to the chamber on 26 January, given the current heightened cyber risk, the Scottish Government is working with the National Cyber Security Centre to deliver a national cyber aware campaign that will seek to educate the public on the following two actions that everyone should take to keep themselves secure online.

First, the campaign will underline the point that someone's email is where they keep their most personal information, including financial information, and everyone should ensure that they have a strong and separate password for their email address. The recommendation is that three

random words should be used that cannot easily be guessed.

The second action is to enable two-step verification on people's accounts so that criminals cannot access them, even if they have people's passwords.

Further information on those measures and other relevant information is available on the cyberscotland.com portal. Victims of any crimes should phone Police Scotland on 101.

**Martin Whitfield:** I am very grateful for the cabinet secretary's response, particularly what he said about the response that individuals should take. Recent years have shown that our cyber infrastructure has been tested by cyberattacks, such as the attack on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency back in 2020. With the war in eastern Europe raging on, will the cabinet secretary say what steps have been taken to audit and improve Scotland's cybersecurity and to protect the country from the possibility of Russian state-sponsored attacks or attacks from criminal organisations that are based in Russia, which might use the conflict as a reason for attacks? What discussions has the cabinet secretary had with his counterpart in the United Kingdom Government?

**Keith Brown:** As Martin Whitfield would expect, there has been substantial discussion with the UK Government and very good collaboration.

We have invested an additional £1.5 million to set up the centre that I mentioned, and that is on top of the £1.16 million that we will invest in furthering the vision of the strategic framework for a cyber resilient Scotland. That investment is building on what is being done with the UK Government in collaboration. That work has to be done in collaboration, because many of the powers are reserved, so it makes sense to do that. There is a very effective relationship.

Martin Whitfield mentioned the attack on SEPA. There have also been attacks on public authorities in Ireland. That is a big concern for the Scottish Government, so we are ensuring that our public authorities are as secure as they can be. Much of the Government's work in that regard is led by the Deputy First Minister. We take the matter extremely seriously, and I assure the member that there is a very effective relationship with the UK Government on the issue.

### Water Safety Action Plan

**7. Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how measures in the water safety action plan will support awareness of water safety among school pupils. (S6O-00964)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Regan):** We are working with stakeholders to improve water safety on several fronts, including awareness. Some measures, such as work to improve signage, should benefit all age groups, but other measures focus specifically on children and young people. For example, coinciding with the National Fire Chiefs Council's be water aware campaign, next week will see the launch of age and stage-appropriate water safety education lessons, which have been developed by Education Scotland and Water Safety Scotland. The resource, which is to be hosted on the Education Scotland national improvement hub, aims to support those between the ages of three and 18 to develop valuable life-saving knowledge, skills and understanding.

**Kaukab Stewart:** As people continue to take advantage of the great outdoors, what work has been undertaken on Scotland's drowning prevention strategy to support safe open-water swimming?

**Ash Regan:** The 2018 to 2026 drowning prevention strategy is a collaborative piece of work between Water Safety Scotland and its members, and the strategy is complemented by the stakeholder action plan that I launched last month. Both approaches are informed by an appreciation of the challenges of open-water swimming, which are very different from those of indoor pools because of the risks that are posed by currents, obstacles and, importantly, cold-water shock.

A key focus has to be on education and raising awareness, and both documents set out the work that is being done in that area. There is always value in practical experience, which is why one of the actions that the action plan identifies is for a sub-group of Water Safety Scotland to review the scope for developing expanded opportunities for young people to experience being safe in open water environments.

The Scottish Government has enhanced the funding that is available to RoSPA, which supports Water Safety Scotland, so that such work can be progressed as quickly as possible. In the meantime, relevant authorities are undertaking a range of site-specific work—for example, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's water safety campaign will highlight the importance of wearing buoyancy aids or life jackets when participating in all water sports and focus on being visible in the water for open water swimmers.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** I ask the Scottish Government for an update on the roll-out of the new water safety promotions, which target high-risk areas such as the lochs and reservoirs in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs national park in my constituency.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You may have dealt with some of those points already, minister, so please answer briefly.

**Ash Regan:** The member raises a pertinent question given the tragedies that have occurred in that national park in recent years. The national park authority has developed a water safety policy and an accompanying risk assessment procedure, which formalises its approach on its owned and managed land. It has now upgraded and installed public rescue equipment and signage sites around Loch Lomond. I saw some of that myself when I was at Balloch for the launch of the action plan this past month.

The follow-up phase involves assessing and addressing issues on sites outwith the immediate Loch Lomond area.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can squeeze in question 8 if I have brief questions and answers.

### Prisoners (Assessment)

**8. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what role prisons have in the assessment of prisoners, including of their mental health, prior to their release. (S6O-00965)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** People in custody are subject to a range of assessments while in prison, including talk to me and general wellbeing. The national health service provides access to appropriate mental health support and assessment, including more specialist care when that is appropriate. The Scottish Prison Service works collaboratively on pre-release arrangements with community partners, which facilitates access to people in its care to support multidisciplinary assessments, for example to access throughcare services.

**Douglas Lumsden:** In December 2019, Stuart Quinn was released from HMP Peterhead and, the next day, murdered devoted dad Alan Geddes in Aberdeen. I keep in touch with Alan's sister Sandra, who strongly believes that her brother would still be alive today if Quinn's previous convictions and psychopathic behaviour had been properly assessed. Lessons need to be learned to ensure that something like that never happens again. Will the cabinet secretary meet me and Alan's family to discuss what more can be done to improve the system when a prisoner with a serious, unresolved mental health issue is released from prison?

**Keith Brown:** First, I extend my condolences to Mr Geddes's family. Of course, I am willing to meet the member and the family.

Such assessments are extremely difficult to do, but we should always continue to improve the system over time because, as in this case, people's lives can depend on it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio questions on justice and veterans.

## Finance and the Economy

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next portfolio is finance and the economy. Any member who wishes to request a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question.

### Four-day Working Week

1. **Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it has had any feedback from businesses that are making use of financial support to trial a four-day working week. (S6O-00966)

**The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead):** The pandemic has intensified interest in flexible working practices. We have seen the positives of adopting alternative working practices for a better work-life balance, and we recognise that the four-day week has many other benefits. Therefore, the Government has committed to the establishment of a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and explore the costs and benefits of moving to a shorter, four-day working week. We are committed to developing a comprehensive design for the pilot over the next year, supported by initial funding of £500,000.

**Emma Roddick:** Does the minister agree that United Kingdom employment policy is not fair for workers and that, rather than our relying on a callous Tory Government that cares little for those who bear the brunt of its outdated, race-to-the-bottom policies, which harm workers and deregulate an already skewed market, the pilot, which puts welfare and the mental health impact of a good work-life balance at its heart, demonstrates that Scotland could do better if we had powers over employment law?

**Richard Lochhead:** Yes, I agree with everything that Emma Roddick said. The recent P&O scandal highlighted the fact that UK employment policy should be dramatically improved.

Having employment law powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament would allow us to protect and enhance workers' rights by, for example, making the minimum wage a real living wage and tackling the inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts. We are doing what we can within our limited devolved powers, such as piloting a four-day working week,

to bring the benefits that Emma Roddick has talked about.

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** It is clear from the trials that a four-day working week benefits workers and businesses, with a better work-life balance and greater productivity. The Scottish Government has the power to introduce a four-day week in the public sector, so can the minister confirm when the Government will expand four-day working week trials in the public sector and whether workers in non-unionised workplaces, such as many of those in the hospitality sector, will be covered by future trials?

**Richard Lochhead:** As I said in my response to Emma Roddick, we agree that there could be many benefits from introducing a four-day working week, and that is why we are taking the ambitious and radical step of conducting, at a cost of £10 million, a pilot to look at the costs and benefits of a four-day working week in Scotland.

Indeed, several Scottish businesses have already chosen to switch to a four-day working week with no cut in pay, and officials from the Government have been meeting with and gathering information from those companies. Pilots are also under way elsewhere in the UK and in other European countries. We will get evidence from those pilots and take into account the points that the member has raised as we take forward the arrangements for the pilot.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 2 is from Gillian Mackay, who joins us remotely.

### Construction Industry (Fair Work)

2. **Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to implement the Fair Work Convention's recommendations on building fair work into the construction industry. (S6O-00967)

**The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead):** The Scottish Government is supporting plans for a more sustainable, productive, innovative and diverse industry. We very much welcome the results of the Fair Work Convention's construction industry inquiry, and we thank the convention and its construction industry inquiry group for the extensive research that they have undertaken.

The inquiry makes a range of recommendations about how to enhance fair work in the sector and remain competitive, making it more appealing to workers. Those recommendations are being considered by ministers.

The vision is for Scotland to be a leading fair work nation by 2025, and a place where fair work

drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for people, businesses, organisations and society. We look forward to considering the report's recommendations.

**Gillian Mackay:** Given the extent of subcontracting in construction, has the Scottish Government considered mechanisms to go further in ensuring that fair work criteria are implemented throughout the construction supply chain and not just for those who are employed directly in public procurement?

**Richard Lochhead:** Gillian Mackay has raised an important theme. We are considering further how subcontractors and contractors can be subject to fair work first criteria and so on.

The Scottish Government is already asking participants in tender submissions questions about fair work. The intention is that the delivery of any such commitments, including fair work criteria, will be monitored throughout the construction projects that are taking place in Scotland and in the forthcoming civil engineering framework. The Government will also be trialling a performance monitoring regime that will regularly review prompt payment and community benefits in all projects awarded under the Scottish Government's civil engineering framework, which will be tendered later this year.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The minister will be aware of the convention's observations that the existing labour force in the sector is ageing and around 85 per cent male, with low numbers of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities represented. If the sector is to be expected to support significant goals such as meeting housebuilding targets and net zero commitments, a new generation will have to be brought in. What is the minister doing, and what cross-Government work is being done, to promote the sector and build in the skills that are needed for the future?

**Richard Lochhead:** My colleague, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, regularly meets the trade association bodies for the construction sector, as do other ministers. We also meet the training providers as well as those in the further and higher education sector to discuss some of the challenges facing the construction sector in Scotland. Like many other sectors here, it has had to cope with the fallout from Brexit as well as the pandemic. I assure the member, therefore, that right across Government, we are considering how to help not just the construction sector but many of our other sectors with recruitment and some of the labour challenges that they face.

## Ferry Port Upgrades

**3. Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how much it has allocated in its budget for port upgrades ahead of hulls 801 and 802 being completed. (S6O-00968)

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** The over £580 million of investment to support and improve Scotland's ferry services that was announced as part of our wider five-year infrastructure investment plan in February 2021 includes £306 million for improvements to piers and harbours and incorporates the Ardrossan and Skye triangle infrastructure projects. The majority of that investment is driven by the replacement of life-expired infrastructure and supports the delivery of the two new vessels and future vessels, which will enable increased flexibility across the ferry network.

**Graham Simpson:** In order for the Glen Sannox to use Ardrossan, the port needs to be upgraded, but the process has been stuck for four years—even though a ministerial task force has been in existence for four years, the scheme has still not gone out to tender. That process will take six months, because the overall package of funding is yet to be agreed. Once work starts, it will take another two years. Why is the project still marooned?

**Ivan McKee:** The Ardrossan project has faced a number of challenges in the planning and design phase, notwithstanding the legal and commercial discussions between the statutory harbour authority, Peel Ports Group, and Transport Scotland, which continue. It is welcome that the project is now entering the tender stage, as was confirmed at the recent Ardrossan task force meeting on 23 February this year, and we remain committed to finding a solution at Ardrossan that can deliver in a cost-effective way and meet the needs of all the partners involved.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that the reason that the upgrading of Ardrossan harbour has dragged on for years is the difficult on-going negotiations with Peel Ports, which he has just touched on, and that such a scenario would not exist if the Tories had not privatised Clydeport, which ultimately led to the Scottish Government having to deal with a company for which the bottom line is paramount?

**Ivan McKee:** The member makes a very interesting observation. It is absolutely the case, as I mentioned in my initial answer, that we are committed to finding a solution at Ardrossan, but there have been significant delays, and the legal

and commercial discussions with Peel Ports have taken a considerable amount of time.

However, as I said, we are happy that the project is now entering the tender stage and is moving forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Rhoda Grant joins us remotely.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** The alternative arrangements that will be in place while Uig harbour is adapted will mean that there will be a third less freight capacity for Uist. That is unacceptable, especially as the closure will last for six months. It will impact on everybody on those islands and will put businesses in jeopardy.

Will the minister ensure that there will be no decrease in freight capacity during the closure period? Will he do everything in his power to speed up the timeframe for the works?

**Ivan McKee:** As I indicated in my earlier answers, the Scottish Government is investing significant sums to support the upgrading and improvement of infrastructure across Scotland's ports. In relation to the specific question that the member raises, I will ensure that my colleague the Minister for Transport responds to her with the detail that she has requested.

#### **Levelling Up Funding (Local Authorities)**

**4. Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is offering to local authorities to help them maximise the amount of levelling up funding that they receive from the United Kingdom Government. (S6O-00969)

**The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead):** As the UK Government continues to develop and implement the levelling up fund without the consent, agreement or engagement of this Parliament or the Scottish ministers, the Scottish Government has been excluded from meaningful or formal involvement in the process. The lack of respect for devolution has been further exacerbated by the fact that the fund enters into devolved areas, which means that the UK Government is encroaching into areas in which the Scottish Parliament was elected to deliver.

We will, of course, work with our regional partners in all their endeavours, building on the close partnerships that we have established since devolution.

**Stephen Kerr:** I would have liked to hear an answer to my question in the minister's response.

In Falkirk, there has been very welcome investment by the UK Government that has funded what I call the magic roundabout at the Helix,

which will open up investment opportunities at junction 6 of the M9. There is a new regional growth deal in the offing, as well as the hope of landing one of Scotland's two free ports at Grangemouth. At the same time, the Scottish Government has cut the funding for flood prevention and has frozen the council's capital grant. Are local authorities such as Falkirk Council to rely solely on the support of the UK Government to level up and power up their local areas?

**Richard Lochhead:** If the Conservative UK Government had stuck to its pledges and promises that it made to the people of Scotland to—unsuccessfully—persuade Scotland to vote for Brexit, a lot more resource and money would be flowing into Falkirk, Central Scotland and the rest of the country. Instead, we have had broken promises, with the UK Government trampling all over devolution and threatening democracy in this country. If Stephen Kerr requires more investment for his areas, he should be making strong representation to his good friends in the UK Government.

**Siobhan Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** What is the Scottish Government's response to the UK Government failing to replace European Union funding, as promised, which will see South Ayrshire short-changed by £3.1 million?

**Richard Lochhead:** The UK Government has clearly failed to provide an appropriate replacement for EU funding, as we were promised if Brexit was to go ahead, not only in South Ayrshire but across the whole of Scotland.

For the record, Stephen Kerr is laughing as I make that point. It is worth noting that our communities and our economy are losing out due to the broken promises of the Government that he supports. The overall Scottish quantum for the UK shared prosperity fund, which was earmarked to succeed the European funds, is only £212 million over three years, with only £32 million in the first of those three years. In anyone's book, that is an insufficient replacement for EU structural funds. Indeed, £36 million of that funding that has been announced has already been ring fenced for the UK Government's multiply programme. Therefore, the UK Government has let down Scotland, South Ayrshire and communities the length and breadth of the country.

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** Does the minister agree with me that the UK's so-called shared prosperity fund will distribute just £32 million around Scotland this year, whereas it is estimated that EU membership would have seen communities around Scotland benefit from funding of £183 million? Does he further agree that that adds financial insult to democratic injury for the people of Scotland?

**Richard Lochhead:** The Tory Government's betrayal of Scotland over this issue is, indeed, an insult to democracy in this country, this Parliament and this Government. I ask members on the Conservative benches, in particular, to remember that they are here to represent their constituents, not the UK Government in London.

It is, indeed, the case that we are getting only £32 million as opposed to the £183 million that we were expecting to replace the EU funds that we are losing out on because of a Brexit that Scotland did not vote for.

### Cost of Living

**5. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what financial resources it has allocated to help those across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders who are most impacted by the reported cost of living crisis. (S6O-00970)

**The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur):** The Scottish Government is taking a range of actions within our devolved powers to help people who are facing the impacts of higher energy bills, the increased cost of the weekly shop, the United Kingdom Government's national insurance hike and interest rate rises. Our £290 million cost of living package builds on existing support, giving £150 to each household that receives a council tax reduction irrespective of what band their property is in and £150 to every other household in properties in bands A to D by the end of April. That equates to almost £7.3 million in Dumfries and Galloway and £5.4 million in the Scottish Borders.

In 2021-22, we allocated £80.75 million to local authorities for Scottish child payment bridging payments worth £520 in both 2020-21 and 2021-22, reaching more than 144,000 school-aged children as of December 2021. Our second child poverty delivery plan sets out how we will continue to tackle and reduce child poverty in Scotland, which includes investing up to £10 million each year to mitigate the UK Government's benefit cap.

**Emma Harper:** The cost of living crisis has been a decade in the making, with rising costs compounded by damaging Westminster austerity. Does the minister agree that the UK Government should reverse the regressive national insurance tax hike and the £20-a-week cut to universal credit, that it should match the Scottish child payment UK wide and that it should introduce a real living wage of £9.90 per hour? Can he outline what representations have been made to the UK Government on those matters?

**Tom Arthur:** Given that most of the relevant powers are reserved, I agree that the UK Government must do more to help households to

cope with the cost of living crisis. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy wrote to the chancellor ahead of his spring statement with vital proposals to address the cost of living crisis using those reserved powers, including a call to reinstate the £20 universal credit uplift. However, they were largely ignored and the chancellor failed to take the opportunity to address the biggest challenges that are currently faced by households.

I also agree that all workers should be paid at least the real living wage. Having employment powers in the hands of the Scottish Parliament would enable us to protect and enhance workers' rights, including by making the minimum wage a real living wage. We will continue to call on the UK Government to take action to devolve those crucial powers.

In the meantime, we are already using the powers that we have. On 14 October 2021, we began mandating payment of the real living wage in Scottish Government contracts, where it is a relevant and proportionate requirement. Through the Bute house agreement and subject to the limits of devolved competence, we will also make it a requirement that grant recipients pay at least the real living wage.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Alexander Burnett joins us remotely.

### R100 Broadband Programme

**6. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the roll-out of the R100 programme in rural areas. (S6O-00971)

**The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur):** As of 31 March, 6,629 connections were delivered through R100 contract build and 1,875 were delivered through the Scottish broadband voucher scheme, which ensured that every address across Scotland, regardless of location, had the ability to access a superfast broadband connection.

As Audit Scotland recognises, R100 contract build is hugely challenging, with many premises in the hardest-to-reach locations. Instead of pursuing a lower-technology solution, we chose to focus on delivering full fibre broadband, which will underpin economic growth and connectivity for decades to come. Weather permitting, deployment of 16 subsea cables to service 15 islands will begin shortly.

**Alexander Burnett:** The finance secretary recently wrote to the Economy and Fair Work Committee, stating that the Scottish Government has

"delivered"—

delivered!—its

“commitment to ensure that every home and business could access superfast broadband by the end of 2021.”

It is utterly ludicrous to expect people to believe that after the Government failed to meet its own targets and delayed the R100 roll-out by six years. Certainly, thousands of those in Aberdeenshire who are without a reliable broadband connection will not fall for that.

In an answer to me, the finance secretary confirmed that only 15 per cent of the £3.3 million for the voucher scheme has been handed out, and less than 0.5 per cent of eligible properties in the north-east have made applications. Will the minister commit to extending the scheme so that the remaining 85 per cent of the funding goes to those who need it?

**Tom Arthur:** As the member will be aware, the main scheme is still available. The interim scheme was extended to 31 March. There was an extensive local and national advertising campaign to promote the interim scheme, but take-up ultimately did not reflect the level of demand that would necessitate its continuation.

More broadly, the commitment to deliver R100 by the end of last year was not solely about contracts but was about commercial undertakings and the voucher scheme, which is still in place, as I said. I remind the member that, as part of R100, the Government has committed £600 million of investment, compared to—if I recall correctly—£33.5 million of investment from the UK Government.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** The interim voucher scheme, which closed last month, was intended to plug the gaps in the communities with the lowest coverage in the country, which are predominantly in the north of Scotland. Not only has the take-up of that scheme been low, but Government figures have demonstrated that the poorest amount of money has gone to those in the north, compared to those in the south and central regions. Can the minister explain the logic of that?

**Tom Arthur:** The member is familiar with the intention behind the interim scheme. We extended the interim scheme. The original deadline was 31 December last year and we extended it to March. However, as I explained in my answer to Mr Burnett, ultimately, we judged that demand was not of a sufficient level to justify the continuation of the scheme.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I have been contacted by constituents who have been informed that they may have to wait until 2026—as has already been said—before getting connected to fibre broadband.

Community fibre broadband and the voucher scheme, which has been alluded to, are currently not viable options for them. How is the Scottish Government engaging with Openreach and other stakeholders? What further opportunities are being considered to support rural communities to connect to fibre broadband?

**Tom Arthur:** As part of our on-going dialogue with Openreach, we continue to look for opportunities to accelerate contract build, particularly in rural areas, where possible. Commercial investment also continues to play a key role in supporting digital connectivity. Our full fibre charter for Scotland is providing a platform for the Scottish Government and operators to work together to maximise full fibre coverage, including through the recently announced extension of 100 per cent non-domestic rates relief to March 2034, which surpasses a key charter commitment and offers the most extended period of rates relief in the UK.

Given that the area of telecoms is wholly reserved to Westminster, we continue to push the UK Government for greater flexibility on its plans for Scotland through project gigabit, as we believe that, once again, its current approach is likely to leave behind some areas that need improved connectivity the most.

### High Streets and Businesses (Support)

**7. Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the support it is providing to high streets and businesses. (S6O-00972)

**The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur):** On 13 April, we published, with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, our joint response to the independent report “A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres”. It is a call to action for all who have an interest in the future of our towns, setting out some of the ways in which we can all play our part in rebuilding, re-energising and reimagining our towns. Since the start of the pandemic, businesses have benefited from over £4.6 billion in support from the Scottish Government. That includes Covid-19 non-domestic rates relief, which has saved businesses around £1.6 billion since 1 April 2020. In the first three months of 2022-23, we are continuing to provide 50 per cent relief for retail, hospitality and leisure, which will be capped at £27,500 per ratepayer. That business support includes our £80 million Covid economic recovery fund for local authorities to support local economies and £6 million for the city centre recovery fund and our Scotland loves local programme.

**Annie Wells:** Following years of neglect by the Scottish National Party-run council, which has

been exacerbated by Covid-19, Glasgow's high streets are in need of rejuvenation. We all know that many small businesses were forced to suffer endless delays in accessing Covid-19 grants. Does the minister agree that it is time that we brought together a Glasgow City Council business forum that can address current issues in conjunction with businesses, as opposed to taking a top-down approach, so that Glasgow's businesses can engage effectively with the council?

**Tom Arthur:** I believe that at the heart of town and city centre regeneration is a place-based approach, which involves bringing all partners to the table. Businesses of all kinds—retail, hospitality and leisure—are key to vibrant and dynamic city centres, as are local authorities, economic development departments, chambers of commerce and government. We have taken that partnership approach through the city centre recovery task force and the Government's continued engagement with other partners. Glasgow is a dynamic and thriving city with a huge amount to offer. Anyone who walks around Glasgow will see that, although it faces the challenges that many city centres face due to the changing nature of retail, its potential is boundless.

All of us in the Parliament have a duty to talk up our city and town centres and not talk them down to make cheap political points.

### Digital Single Market

**8. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it has estimated the cost to Scotland of being removed from the European digital single market. (S6O-00973)

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** The Scottish Government understands the importance of the digital single market to Scotland's economic ambitions. One of the endless downsides of Brexit is that Scotland was taken out of the digital single market against our wishes, which has resulted in a less stable environment for our businesses.

The European Parliament estimates that the potential gains of a digital single market could be in the region of €415 billion to €500 billion per year as a result of higher productivity due to the faster flow of information, greater efficiency in traditional economic sectors and higher levels of e-commerce. Our most recent analysis suggests that, for Scotland, a 1.9 per cent boost to gross domestic product would be equivalent to £2.9 billion.

**Willie Coffey:** Will the minister outline what the Scottish Government can do to overcome that ridiculously stupid and damaging decision, which

was taken by the Tory Government, and help Scottish businesses to access the increasingly important digital markets that Europe provides?

**Ivan McKee:** We will continue to work to influence, where we can, the UK Government's misguided policies to ensure that Scotland stays as close as possible to our European trading partners through digital and other means. We will continue to push to reverse the idiocy of Brexit and will campaign for an independent Scotland to take its place at the heart of Europe.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio questions on finance and the economy.



## Ukraine (Displaced People)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is a statement by Neil Gray on displaced people from Ukraine—an update. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:56

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** It has now been eight weeks since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine began. That dreadful act of aggression has triggered the biggest displacement of people in Europe since world war two within Ukraine and across Europe. The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 7.1 million people have been internally displaced. Almost 5 million people fled Ukraine between 24 February and 18 April this year according to the United Nations refugee agency.

Each day, we see and hear increasingly grim reports of war crimes, including sexual violence. The bravery and resilience of the people of Ukraine in conflict and resistance is remarkable. We also see the fundamental importance of the role played by the free media and human rights organisations in exposing atrocities. That should be contrasted with the disinformation and denials issued by the Russian state and media in the face of convincing, mounting evidence.

Since the invasion, Putin's regime has rightly been isolated by the international community. In early March, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations in Ukraine. Earlier this month, the UN Human Rights Council voted to suspend Russia's membership of that body.

Scotland has played a part in that global response. Many Scottish exporters have done the right thing and severed links with Russia, for which I am grateful. We call upon others to do the same where it is safe to do so. We have withdrawn enterprise agencies' support for exports to Russia and produced guidance for public bodies on how to reject bids to procure a contract for goods or services from firms that are established in Russia or Belarus.

There has also been a huge effort to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches Ukraine. The Scottish Government has committed £4 million in humanitarian assistance: £1 million to the British Red Cross and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, which are both members of our standing

humanitarian emergency panel; £2 million via the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal; and £1 million to UNICEF to support work providing life-saving services and support families, including children with disabilities.

I am also grateful to people across Scotland for their incredible community fundraising efforts to support people in Ukraine or to prepare for their arrival here. The generosity has been truly inspiring. We have also taken significant steps to establish a warm Scots welcome.

The whole chamber will want to join me in recognising, again, the generosity demonstrated by the people of Scotland and the United Kingdom. In their tens of thousands, people have offered to open their homes to Ukrainians. The speed and scale of that response has been remarkable. Unfortunately, the speed and scale of bureaucracy from the Home Office has been predictable.

Given the UK Government's regrettable decision to insist that people escaping war had to secure a visa to enter the UK, trying to cut out some of the other barriers was one of the key reasons for our supersponsor approach. However, until recently, the key blocker has been not only the requirement for displaced Ukrainians to have a visa to enter the UK but the on-going and serious issues around the speed with which visas and permission to travel are issued to applicants. We have consistently pursued that issue with UK Government ministers in meetings and in correspondence. Initial changes have now been made, but we are aware that delays are still occurring for a range of applicants across the various schemes.

The latest information that has been shared by the UK Government shows that 31,400 Ukraine family visas have been granted, with 13,200 people arriving in the UK. For the homes for Ukraine scheme, 25,100 visas have been issued at UK level, of which 570 visas have been issued naming the Scottish Government as the supersponsor and 1,050 have been issued naming a Scotland-based private sponsor. Across the UK, of the 25,100 sponsorship visa holders, 3,200 people have arrived so far, and we assume that more will begin to arrive in the coming days and weeks. However, at present, numbers of arrivals to Scotland remain low. We will continue to closely monitor that.

To further alleviate issues with the process, the UK Government should immediately implement automatic status updating for applications that are outstanding for more than five days and an escalation process for applications that are outstanding for more than a week. It also needs to commit greater resource to visa processing and helplines for updates. One of the greatest

frustrations that has been reported to me and, I am sure, to colleagues, has been the total lack of information available to applicants or people here who are seeking to support them.

For those people who choose to come to Scotland and secure a visa, the welcome that they receive will be a warm one. I commend the approach of the councils, health boards, local chambers of commerce, third sector organisations and community groups that continue to work with the Scottish Government to make sure that that is the case. Last week, I visited the Edinburgh welcome hub and was able to pass on my thanks to the City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh airport, private partners and the staff of hotel accommodation who have been key in preparing and delivering that initial welcome.

The welcome hub model, which is currently focused in Edinburgh, at Glasgow airport and in Dumfries and Galloway, provides vital initial support and an opportunity to begin to assess needs such as health, education, employment and translation services. It is important that the hubs offer a safe space and a place where people arriving under the supersponsor scheme can rest their heads and eat a warm meal as we work hard to secure longer-term accommodation options for them in Scotland.

The hub model is local authority led with local partners who are best placed to determine the right level of support and the right structures to meet the immediate needs of Ukrainian arrivals. Although local authorities are firmly in the lead, the Scottish Government is supporting them in establishing their response, and other partners, including third sector and community groups across Scotland, are playing a key role in ensuring that the warm Scottish welcome is in place.

We have made a number of changes, at speed, to be ready to welcome people, despite the delays in getting people here. We have passed emergency regulations to allow specified groups coming to Scotland from Ukraine to access social security benefits from day 1. We have made changes so that, from 1 April, householders who accommodate a Ukrainian refugee will not lose their council tax single person discount.

Subject to parliamentary approval, displaced Ukrainian students settling in Scotland will be given access to free tuition and living costs support. Legislation has also been laid to put in place a safe, fast and free vetting system for those who open their homes to displaced Ukrainians. Enhanced disclosure checks will ensure an adequate level of vetting to minimise the risk of placing displaced Ukrainians with unsuitable individuals, while also allowing for the homes for Ukraine scheme to achieve its aims.

With operational partners, we have produced bespoke public protection guidance to ensure that displaced people of all ages receive the necessary care and support and any required protection. That guidance makes clear our preferred approach to identifying, supporting and maximising safety, the principles that should be applied and how that can be achieved within the existing safeguarding and child or adult protection legal frameworks. That will be an iterative document and will be updated with time.

We have also produced initial guidance for local authorities on the supersponsor and homes for Ukraine routes, which includes information on the quality assurance of accommodation, and we have published an information document that will be updated as necessary—I sent a link to that document to every MSP on Thursday. That is in addition to the information that is available on the Ready Scotland website. Support and information are also available through the NHS National Services Scotland's national contact centre helpline and on the mygov.scot website.

The UK Government has indicated that it will provide a £10,500-per-person tariff to the Scottish Government for those arriving through the supersponsor arrangements. However, it is confusing and illogical that public funding is only attached to certain visa routes and not others. There remains uncertainty about whether those who arrive on the Ukraine family scheme will attract the same tariff. I made it clear to the UK Government, in tandem with my Welsh counterpart Jane Hutt, that there will be revenue implications for local authorities regardless of the type of visa that is held by someone from Ukraine. The Scottish Government has committed significant additional funds to local authority partners, over and above the UK Government tariff, to assist their preparations.

The newly announced Ukraine extension scheme goes some way to help existing Ukrainian residents in Scotland. The scheme will provide reassurance to many Ukrainians in Scotland, including seasonal workers, but others will be left out. Ukrainian seasonal agricultural workers play a vital role in soft fruit and vegetable production. As a result of the conflict, a range of issues are likely to be of concern to them, and it is essential that they receive support to navigate those. The Scottish Government has therefore committed £41,000 to fund a worker support centre to provide an enhanced package of advice and practical support to Ukrainian seasonal horticultural workers.

The UK Government should provide a firm commitment that all individuals from Ukraine without the correct immigration status should be supported to secure that status. The Home Office

needs to deliver support to finalise displaced Ukrainians' three-year visas, which should include ensuring that biometrics can be taken locally, timeously and without charge, with appropriate signposting to immigration advice.

All those who flee conflict and seek refuge, wherever they are from—Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria or elsewhere—should get the care, compassion and sanctuary to which they are entitled. It is not their fault that the UK Government took a decision not to establish a separate resettlement scheme for people who are displaced by the conflict in the Ukraine, but rather to build on the existing immigration system. That has resulted in a complicated range of different visa routes for individuals, which risks causing confusion for people who are seeking refuge as well as for service providers. The immigration system is clearly in need of urgent reform—it does not work for people or for Scotland.

The war in Ukraine shows little sign of abating. We will work for as long as is necessary to ensure that everyone and anyone who comes to Scotland seeking sanctuary receives a warm welcome and the care and support to which they are entitled. Scotland has a proud record of helping those in need. The fact that all 32 local authorities in Scotland participated in the Syrian programme and welcomed more than 3,300 refugees into their communities is testament to that.

As set out in the new Scots refugee integration strategy, we have a tried and tested approach to integrating refugees into our communities, schools and workplaces. Nonetheless, we will continue to seek to improve our approach where we can. We are learning all the time, and will learn more over the coming weeks. We will continue to highlight and address bureaucratic barriers and call for further improvements from the UK Government where necessary. I encourage all colleagues across the chamber to continue to engage positively with that work, highlighting issues to me and recognising that we all share the same goal, which is to help the people of Ukraine.

As with other groups who have come to Scotland, we know that the Ukrainians who come here will make a valuable contribution to communities the length and breadth of the country. They are welcome and will have a home here for as long as they need it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. Despite the statement overrunning slightly, I still intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will need to move on to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask a question could press their request-to-speak buttons or place a R in the chat function.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I thank the minister for prior sight of his statement.

The Scottish Conservatives remain resolute in our support for the people of Ukraine and the need to provide a place of sanctuary for those who are fleeing the war and arriving in Scotland. It is imperative that we continue to provide assistance to those who are fleeing the horrific violence in their home country. Members on the Conservative side of the chamber remain entirely supportive of the Scottish and UK Governments working together to ensure that the various routes for Ukrainian refugees coming to Scotland are open and effective.

Leaving aside the predictable criticisms of UK Government migration policy, I note from the minister's statement that, in Scotland, almost twice as many visas have been issued to private individuals than visas under the supersponsor route. In the light of that, I ask him to comment on anecdotal reports that when potential sponsors select the Scottish Government as a supersponsor, that has the effect of slowing down the process because it does not count as an actual application. If that is true, what actions will the Scottish Government take to address it?

**Neil Gray:** I appreciate the initial support that Donald Cameron gave, and I concur that at ministerial and official levels we have been working pretty effectively with the UK Government and the Welsh Government. This morning, I had a constructive meeting with Lord Harrington and Jane Hutt.

The data that was published last week on private versus supersponsor routes will now be quite out of date. New data will be published this week, which might change the situation in Donald Cameron's mind. I have no evidence to suggest that the supersponsor route in itself is a blockage, other than in respect of the visa system that is operated by the Home Office, which is the issue that has slowed matters down. If he has evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, that he would like to share with me, I would be more than happy to see it and to pass it on to the Home Office to ensure that processing happens as quickly as possible.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the minister for advance notice of his statement.

Although we do not know how long the invasion will last, Ukraine is being destroyed brick by brick and, in the future, we will need to help it to rebuild. For now, we should do everything that we can to help people who are fleeing Ukraine. I agree with the minister that the Conservative Government's approach has been woeful, leaving people vulnerable, confused and in limbo, and it just got worse with the Rwanda proposals.

I have heard of families that have had to return to Ukraine because underlying health conditions were not being supported as they attempted to travel to safety and waited for visa clearance. I have also heard about women and children becoming victims of sexual violence by invading soldiers, or being put at risk of sexual abuse during their lengthy and uncertain journeys, while waiting for their visas to be approved.

What dedicated support will be available to traumatised refugees, particularly victims of sexual violence, to access rape crisis centres and mental health support from the day that they arrive? What dedicated digital support will be available so that refugees are not excluded from accessing online support and connectivity? Will the minister commit to updating the frequently asked questions advice, because the tour of the websites that he sent is not what we or our constituents urgently need right now?

**Neil Gray:** I thank Sarah Boyack for the support that she outlined, and I put on record my shared concern and disgust at the shifting of asylum seekers to Rwanda.

On her substantive questions, we have also received anecdotal evidence of people either returning to Ukraine or choosing other options due to the delays in the immigration system that is operated by the UK Government. We are extremely concerned by that, which is why we have used every tool in our box to put as much pressure on and work with the UK Government to unblock some of the delays in processing visas.

When people arrive, we will do everything that we can to ensure that the support that they need in the areas that Sarah Boyack outlined is addressed. As members would expect, we have been working with our health partners and with our local government and third sector partners to ensure that that is the case.

On digital support, ensuring that we have translation and other services in place through local government partners will be a priority.

With regard to the update that Sarah Boyack feels is required to the frequently asked questions, I previously held constructive meetings with her and other political colleagues from across the chamber. I would be happy to do so again in order to hear any particular concerns so that the document is as up to date as possible to allow her and colleagues to provide support, assistance and advice to constituents and others who are in contact with them.

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I thank the minister for his statement. I have been approached by a constituent who offered, and which offer has been accepted, a place in their home for a Ukrainian family using their own direct

social media connections. I am aware that there will be considerations around ensuring safety and that various checks will be required, but my constituent is asking how they can proceed, which authorities should be made aware and whether they can self-match at all. Can the minister provide any advice to those in such situations and advise when he expects the system to be fully operational?

If I write to the minister, will he endeavour to reply to me as soon as possible so that the situation can be rectified timeously?

**Neil Gray:** The huge groundswell of compassion, generosity and support that has been shown for the people of Ukraine has been heartwarming to see. Those wanting to offer their homes to displaced people should contact and register their interest through the homes for Ukraine portal. I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to ensure that people do that through that official channel rather than through informal correspondence.

We have recently published guidance for local authorities, individuals and organisations wishing to support people arriving from Ukraine, and we will shortly be publishing guidance specifically for hosts. If Michelle Thomson wishes to write to me, I would be more than happy to respond as quickly as possible, and to follow that up with a meeting if required.

**Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con):** Refugees coming from war-torn countries often live through atrocities that none of us here can ever imagine. They need our help now, but to do that we need to be able to communicate. Will the minister tell us how many Ukrainian language speakers are embedded in local authorities as of today? How many spaces are still to be filled? What steps is the Government taking to recruit more individuals fluent in Ukrainian?

**Neil Gray:** Sharon Dowey is absolutely right that having access to people who are able to interpret for displaced Ukrainians is crucial. We have been very grateful for offers of support from the Ukrainian communities across Scotland who have been supporting us at our welcome hubs, and we are grateful to the Scottish Refugee Council and others for the work that they are doing to ensure that we have dedicated support in place.

If the member wants further detail, I would be happy to respond in writing. I have been very pleased with the uptake of offers, voluntary or otherwise, to ensure that we are able to communicate effectively with displaced Ukrainians.

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I am aware of a few individuals and families from Ukraine who have already moved

into communities in my region, and of even more of my constituents who stand ready to open their homes. How will the Government support Ukrainian refugees who are placed in areas that do not have a significant existing refugee population and therefore do not have the existing community support networks that we know are so important?

**Neil Gray:** I am extremely thankful for the generosity of everyone across Scotland, including from those in Highlands and Islands communities, for offering their support to Ukrainians displaced by the current conflict.

Like you, Presiding Officer, Ms Roddick represents Orkney, which is where I am originally from. I know that there is a great appetite there to help ensure that a warm welcome is provided, not least, I suspect, because of the historical links in providing support to children from the Chernobyl area on an annual basis.

Once matched to a specific local authority and home, individuals and families will receive support to integrate into the local area. Resettlement teams are in place in all 32 local authorities. Those teams have been supporting refugees in those areas for a number of years as part of previous resettlement schemes. Our local authorities, as well as partner and third sector organisations, will play an important role in supporting displaced people from Ukraine to rebuild their lives in their new communities.

If Ms Roddick has any further concerns that she wishes to raise with me, I would be more than happy to do what I can to ensure that that information is forthcoming.

**Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** The minister said that all who flee conflict and seek refuge should get the care, compassion and support to which they are entitled. However, in Edinburgh, we still have hundreds of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan who are stuck in hotels and other temporary accommodation. There is no suitable permanent housing. Homes for Ukraine is welcome, but not everyone will fall within that scheme. How will the Government ensure that the refugee housing crisis does not continue?

**Neil Gray:** Foyso Choudhury is absolutely right to raise that question. The success of the Ukrainian scheme will be based on a true partnership between the UK Government, Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector organisations and housing organisations in particular. Sadly, that was not the case previously, particularly with the Afghan scheme. As a result, people were placed in accommodation without the local authority or the Scottish Government being made aware or being able to provide the level of

support that we are looking to put in place through the Syrian scheme and now through the Ukrainian scheme.

However, that is not to say that the Scottish Government has washed its hands of responsibility to the Afghans who are here. We want to do everything that we can to ensure that we are supporting them. We continue to do that work, and I would be more than happy to meet Foyso Choudhury to discuss some of the ways in which we are ensuring that that is happening.

**Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** Like many MSP colleagues across Scotland, I have been involved in trying to seek clarity about outstanding individual Ukrainian visa applications, on behalf of constituents who have offered their homes as sanctuary. Most recently, I did so on Saturday evening in helpful correspondence with the private office of Lord Harrington. However, I think that that helpful approach is very much the exception rather than the rule. I would like it to be the rule.

Can the minister confirm that he will continue to press the UK Government to proceed with extreme urgency, given that lives are at stake? I also ask him to ensure that relevant information is made available to local communities about how they can get involved in helping the refugees who will be, or already are, housed in their area. I know that local communities are very keen to do that.

**Neil Gray:** I have repeatedly raised concerns with the UK Government about the speed with which the visa applications are being processed, and I will continue to do so. People must be given visas quickly so that they can travel safely. Most recently, I raised the issue this morning in a meeting with Lord Harrington and Jane Hutt from the Welsh Government.

The huge groundswell of compassion, generosity and support that has been shown to the people of Ukraine has been heart-warming to see. Ms Ewing's experience in Cowdenbeath will be similar to mine in Airdrie and Shotts, with the community wanting to come together to provide support for people who are arriving here.

We recently published guidance for individuals and organisations that wish to support people who arrive in Scotland from Ukraine. I also encourage people to look at the Ready Scotland website to find out more about what they can do to support people in their area. Those who want to offer their homes to displaced people should register their interest through the homes for Ukraine portal, and I encourage community groups across Scotland to get in touch with their local authorities to ensure that that warm welcome is in evidence in all our areas.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)**

**(LD):** I declare an interest in that my family and I have signed up for the homes for Ukraine scheme.

I am pleased to hear about the welcome hubs that were mentioned and the opportunity that they provide to assess needs. The minister will share my deep concern that many of those who are fleeing Ukraine will have experienced untold trauma and will need our support. Many will arrive with profound mental health needs. Some will have suffered deep psychological harm. What reassurance can he offer the Parliament that they will be met with immediate mental health support and a trauma-informed and compassionate welcome on their arrival?

**Neil Gray:** I thank Alex Cole-Hamilton for his question and for the generosity that he has shown, in common with tens of thousands of others across Scotland, in looking to open his home to people from Ukraine. Like others, he can expect to be contacted soon by local authority partners to ensure that the appropriateness of the accommodation is sound and that he, as an upstanding individual, is also disclosure checked. There are no exceptions to those checks.

On his more substantive point about ensuring that trauma and mental health support is in place, as I have said, we are working with our national health service partners to ensure that it is. There will be a triage process when people arrive at our welcome hubs in order to ensure that the expectation of service is established at a very early stage. Services can then be put in place from there. I again extend the offer to the Labour Party, through Sarah Boyack, and the Liberal Democrats, through Alex Cole-Hamilton, to provide a regular update on that, if required.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Just a few days ago, the Westminster Government unveiled inhumane plans to deport people who seek refuge in the UK to Rwanda. Although the response to refugees from Ukraine has so far been inadequate, it is positively generous compared with that deliberate cruelty. Has the minister had any communication with the UK Government about those plans and any potential consequences that they could have for Ukrainians who seek refuge in Scotland? Can he confirm that the Scottish Government will do what it can to protect all refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland from deportation to Rwanda?

**Neil Gray:** I thank Ross Greer for that important question. Unfortunately, when we were given notice of the new immigration plans by the UK Government, the plan to deport people to Rwanda was not part of the discussion. We have therefore not had an opportunity to have the fulsome discussion that we would want. However, I hope to have an opportunity, when I meet UK ministers in

the coming weeks, to make sure that our displeasure at that move is articulated in the strongest possible terms. I know that that is also being articulated by faith groups and other community groups that represent refugees. It should be to the UK Government's shame that it continues to progress with that plan.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We have just under four minutes and four more questioners. I am keen to get them all in, but we need brief questions and responses, as far as possible.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** Small communities in and around West Linton in my constituency have formed the West Linton area supports Ukraine group, with over 30 households signing up to the UK Government programme. However, to date, because of the sluggish visa process, which has been referred to, no Ukrainians have been allocated. Will the Scottish Government, through its welcome hubs, together with local authorities, when relocating families in rural communities, take account of the need to ensure that they have other refugee families relocated with them in order to provide them with additional support in adjusting to their new circumstances after such dramatic experiences?

**Neil Gray:** I thank Christine Grahame for that important question. I share the frustration that she and her constituents have about the delays in processing visas. I also share her view on the need to take a holistic approach to the matching service and the allocation of people who are displaced from Ukraine to different parts of Scotland. She can rest assured that that is part of the considerations that we are applying to that service.

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** With regard to mental health and emotional support, what work is being conducted to prepare toolkits for people, including children in schools, on knowing what to look out for and how to approach and broach issues?

**Neil Gray:** My colleagues in education have been working at pace to ensure that schools and educational settings are appropriately resourced so that people arriving from Ukraine are given the support that they need. That applies to the educational experience in the classroom and to the wraparound support that parents will need. If there is anything specific that Maurice Golden feels should be added, I would be more than happy to hear about it.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** What specific support will local authorities receive to assist Ukrainian refugees and their hosts on arrival in Scotland?

**Neil Gray:** We have provided funding to local authorities to sustain and enhance resettlement teams and enable co-ordination of the third sector contribution to this work. We have also offered more than £7 million to local authorities to support refurbishment of accommodation to support displaced Ukrainian people.

Clear guidance has been published for local authorities, covering critical issues such as safeguarding and access to services. In addition, the UK Government has confirmed funding for local authorities at a rate of £10,500 per person. I have already articulated my concerns about ensuring that that applies regardless of the visa route. There is also an expectation that local authorities will administer the thank you payments to sponsoring households, at a rate of £350 per person, and additional funding will be provided to local authorities to meet that need.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is from Paul Sweeney, who joins us remotely.

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** The minister's update is certainly welcome, and it is clear that there is good will across the chamber towards Ukrainians who are seeking refuge in Scotland. In March, when the minister appeared before the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, he indicated that the Government was supportive of the idea of providing free concessionary travel to Ukrainian refugees and other asylum seekers. Will he provide an update on when we might see the Government's work on that policy to date? Will he meet me and other members who are concerned with the matter to discuss how we can work together to take those plans forward?

**Neil Gray:** I thank Paul Sweeney for his long-standing interest in that area. The matter is not just my responsibility, but the responsibility of other ministers. However, I would be more than happy to meet Mr Sweeney and others to update him on the work in that regard, and to hear any further ideas that he would like to feed in.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes this item of business. There will be a brief pause before we move on to the next item.

## Cost of Living

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-04050, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on the cost of living crisis.

15:30

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I am very pleased to bring this motion before the chamber on behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats in our parliamentary time.

What began as a struggle to get by during the pandemic is quickly turning into a cost of living catastrophe for thousands of people across Scotland, and it is not clear that there is any end in sight. The 54 per cent rise in energy costs has left millions of people across the United Kingdom unable to pay their bills, and if we think that things are bad now, they look likely to get even worse by the time next winter rolls around. In October, families could face a further £145 a month price hike, which has led to warnings that one in four adults in the UK will be unable to afford gas or electricity at all.

On top of that, there is the rising cost of food. The price of pretty much everything is ballooning, while taxes rise and inflation causes the amount of money in people's bank accounts to shrink. Many people who have donated to food banks for years are now relying on them instead. This is Scotland. It is 2022. Many people cannot afford to eat or to put their heating on in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Enough is enough.

Both the Scottish and UK Governments are sitting on their hands while people's bills skyrocket. The meagre support that has been announced so far will barely make a dent in those eye-watering increases.

Last week, the First Minister urged people to vote for her party in the upcoming elections, pledging that Scottish National Party councillors would

"help ease the cost of living squeeze".

Putting aside that lack of detail for a moment, I note that Nicola Sturgeon neglected to admit that her Government is exposing people to the crisis by hiking rail fares, by forcing up council tax and by leaving disability benefits up to 6 per cent behind inflation. Those are all devolved powers. Those are the choices that the SNP-Green coalition Government has made. It is hard to see how endlessly slashing council budgets helps to provide people with the support that they so desperately need.

Unlike Scotland's current Governments, the Scottish Liberal Democrats have a plan to tackle the crisis. Unlike the pitiful action that has been taken so far, our plan would make a meaningful difference. My party's cost of living rescue package includes proposals to cut VAT to 17.5 per cent. That alone would be worth £600 to the average Scottish household.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** For clarity, I note that VAT policy is reserved.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I am grateful to the member for that intervention, but, as I said, action is required from both our Governments—the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

The cut to VAT would kill two birds with one stone. It would give businesses a boost by encouraging spending, and it would lower prices for consumers. That would be at the heart of the response to the crisis. We could and should also increase and expand the winter fuel payment and the warm home discount.

The recent 6 per cent increase to several Scottish social security benefits was necessary and welcome, but the Government is not going far enough when it comes to disability benefits, which are being raised by just 3.1 per cent. That is almost 4 per cent less than the figure for inflation that was announced last month, and it could be 5 per cent less than the figure that experts are predicting. That is simply not good enough for many Scottish households.

The latest figures predict that, this year, the country faces a £10.9 billion tax hit due to the Conservatives choosing to increase national insurance. The very last thing that struggling families need right now is more tax to pay.

The Scottish Government must also announce protection for households that are experiencing council tax rises due to the cuts that it has made to council budgets—cuts that should never have happened and which my party has opposed since the start.

Some energy companies stand to benefit from the crisis; they are profiting while people literally cannot afford to buy food. Now is the moment to impose a Robin Hood tax on those energy companies that make superprofits, in order to help fund the support that people need.

While we are at it, why do we not take the opportunity to finally crack down on the tax avoidance schemes that have been going on for far too long? Sadly, one does not have to look far to find people with exorbitant amounts of wealth who go out of their way to bend the rules and avoid paying their fair share. That simply has to

stop—I am sure that members of the Scottish Conservative Party will agree whole-heartedly.

The Scottish Government must also reverse its recent 3.8 per cent rail fare hike. The SNP and the Greens should be making train tickets cheaper, not increasing their cost. The Government has known for two years that it would run ScotRail, and the Scottish Green Party had a specific manifesto promise to bring down rail costs. Instead, together, they have driven up those costs, which have risen by 4 per cent. They promise a review—more talk—while they put up the prices, which is a betrayal of everyone who is struggling right now. Make no mistake: a vote for the Government's amendment is a vote against cheaper rail fares.

The Scottish Government could also activate an emergency nationwide home insulation programme to increase energy efficiency. We can help protect the environment and save people cash in the process. That would be an obvious step to take, and we should be able to agree on it across the chamber today.

I finish with the words of the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, who once wrote that

“to know that one life has breathed easier because you lived here. This is to have succeeded.”

Thousands of our neighbours, friends and, indeed, constituents are being strangled and suffocated by this crisis; they have not breathed easy for a very long time. We in Parliament are in the immensely privileged position of being able to take action that would lighten their burden in some way, and it is our duty to do so.

I move,

That the Parliament considers that both the Scottish and UK governments must immediately do much more to tackle the worst cost of living crisis for generations, and that without additional help this will have a devastating impact on household incomes and poverty; believes that every household could benefit from a cost of living rescue package; urges the UK Government to act through a cut to VAT to 17.5%, worth £600 to the average household, the reversal of the National Insurance rise, the doubling and expansion of the Winter Fuel Payment and Warm Home Discount, and a “Robin Hood” tax on the energy companies that are making super profits from the current crisis; urges the Scottish Government to use its wholly devolved powers to reverse the recent 3.8% rail fare hike and, instead, to expand the system of railcards so that everyone is eligible to get the benefit of rail discounts of at least one third off, based on the model that already exists throughout London and the south east of England; further urges the Scottish Government to increase the value of disability benefits, announce protection for households experiencing council tax rises due to the Scottish Government's cuts to council budgets, and activate an emergency nationwide home insulation programme with reports provided monthly to Parliament on the impact of its interventions to increase household energy efficiency, and considers that together these steps would help insulate households from the cost



of living crisis, where recent government decisions have added to their exposure.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Shona Robison to speak to and move amendment S6M-04050.3 for up to six minutes.

15:36

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison):** I thank Alex Cole-Hamilton for bringing a debate on this important topic to the chamber. We are indeed facing the worst cost of living crisis for generations. Rising inflation caused by the effects of the pandemic, Brexit and events in Ukraine is placing increasing pressure on household incomes and means that households could be set to experience the biggest fall in living standards for 50 years, with a disproportionate impact on lower-income households.

The cost of living pressures that households face are undoubtedly immediate and acute, and the Scottish Government is taking a range of actions, within the powers that we have, to help people with the cost of rising bills.

Our budget contains a range of measures that are available to help people face the very real impact of the crisis, but that action needs to be matched by the UK Government, and we have repeatedly called for it to take further action.

This past month, my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer ahead of his spring statement, calling for urgent action to support households with spiralling costs. His statement was disappointing, to say the least.

The letter included a set of suggested policy actions that fall within the gift of the UK Government. Although some of the spring statement announcements were welcome, other asks were not met—notably, the removal of VAT from household energy bills; the reinstatement of the £20 universal credit uplift; an increase to benefits by 6 per cent, in line with our Scottish Government approach; and a windfall tax on those making huge profits from the pandemic or the current global situation. That failure follows the devastating impact of successive UK Government welfare reforms that have been imposed since 2015, as a Scottish Government analysis that was published last week highlights.

Were key welfare reforms reversed—including the two-child limit, the removal of the £20 uplift to UC and the benefit freeze—an additional £780 million would be put into the pockets of Scottish households in 2023-24 and 70,000 people, including 30,000 children, could be lifted out of poverty.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Shona Robison:** Just a second.

The chancellor did not take the opportunity to help those who were hardest hit and has not only failed to mitigate rising costs but actually increased them with a rise in national insurance and a below-inflation rise in benefits and pensions.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** The cabinet secretary is right to point out the failings of the Tory Government. However, does she also accept that the Scottish Government is failing by taking £5 million out of the pockets of children across Scotland by not rolling out the child payment fast enough to all those who need it, and by not doubling the bridging payments?

**Shona Robison:** The member must have anticipated that I was just about to talk about our second tackling child poverty delivery plan, which was published last month and was widely welcomed by stakeholders across Scotland who have a deep interest in tackling child poverty.

The plan sets out ambitious actions to provide immediate support to families who have been impacted by the crisis and to drive sustainable progress towards the child poverty targets that the Parliament has set, backed up by £113 million of additional investment this year. It includes delivering a new parental employability offer to help parents to access and make progress in employment, a new parental transition fund to tackle the financial barriers that parents face in accessing the labour market, and immediate steps to mitigate the UK Government's benefit cap, thereby supporting up to 4,000 low-income households each year. That benefit cap was, of course, introduced by the Tories in coalition with the Liberal Democrats back in 2013.

We have already doubled our unique Scottish child payment to £20 per week from the start of this month, which immediately benefits around 104,000 children under the age of 6, and will now go even further. By the end of 2022, we will increase the payment to £25, at which point it will be made available to eligible children under the age of 16, providing £1,300 per child per year with support that is not available anywhere else in the UK.

That is not all. We are also taking wide-ranging action to support households and tackle the crisis. From this month, we have uprated eight social security payments by 6 per cent, which is double the rate that has been offered by the UK Government. As Alex Cole-Hamilton knows, disability benefits are administered by the Department for Work and Pensions on our behalf under agency agreements, so we were

constrained by having to apply the same rate as the DWP, or 3.1 per cent.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Shona Robison:** Very briefly.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I know that those benefits are controlled in London but that is only because the SNP has chosen not to take full control of the powers, which it has had the ability to do for several years.

**Shona Robison:** That is not the case. Disability benefits are hugely complex and, as Alex Cole-Hamilton knows, work is well under way on transferring them. While they are administered in Scotland, progressive changes are being made to them.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Shona Robison:** I want to make some progress.

More than 450,000 low-income households are protected from council tax bills through our council tax reduction scheme, with almost 400,000 households paying no council tax at all. We have also increased the water charges reduction scheme discount to 35 per cent, making the average water bill for 2022-23 less than the average charge in England and Wales.

Our recent cost of living package means that 1.85 million of Scotland's households will receive extra help, via their local authority, by the end of April. In addition, we have committed a further £10 million for our fuel insecurity fund for 2022-23, to help households that are at risk of self-disconnection because of their energy use.

I want to talk very briefly about rail fares. For the past 10 years, we have taken action to keep rail fares down, and ScotRail fares are still, on average, 20 per cent cheaper than those across the rest of the UK. To encourage passengers back to Scotland's railway, ScotRail will launch a 50 per cent reduction in off-peak tickets for travel between stations across Scotland in May. That is hot off the presses and I hope that members across the chamber will welcome the announcement.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, could you bring your remarks to a close, please?

**Shona Robison:** Taken together, all that means that we are investing more than £770 million in tackling the cost of living crisis next year. That is a substantial package of support for low-income households in Scotland.

I move amendment S6M-04050.3, to leave out from "considers that both" to end and insert:

"recognises the increasing pressures facing households during the current cost of living crisis; welcomes the significant actions taken by the Scottish Government to mitigate those pressures within the scope of devolved powers and budgets, and that these include doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week, with a further increase later in 2022, uprating eight Scottish benefits by 6%, mitigating where possible the impact of the UK Government's so-called bedroom tax and benefit cap, substantially increasing free childcare, introducing free bus travel for under-22s, committing to a Fair Fares review, including the pricing of public transport and the availability of concessions and discounts, a £1.8 billion programme of heating and home energy efficiency in the current parliamentary session, an extension of eligibility for Warmer Homes Scotland, the expansion of Home Energy Scotland advice services, and increased grants for area-based schemes; recognises that, after these actions, considerable challenges to cost-of-living pressures remain, resulting from a combination of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and the UK Government's failures to tackle spiralling energy costs, its removal of the £20 Universal Credit top-up, its failure to uprate benefits and pensions in line with current inflation, and its introduction of increased taxes on working people; calls on the UK Government to use its powers to reverse the National Insurance increase, increase benefits, increase all bands of the minimum wage to at least the real living wage, and tackle energy prices and increase UK-wide energy efficiency schemes, and further calls on the UK Government to put in place a windfall tax on excess profits made by large companies, including fossil fuel producers, to provide immediate financial help for families impacted by the cost of living crisis, or to transfer the powers to do so to the Scottish Parliament so that it can fully address the cost of living crisis and meet the needs of the people of Scotland."

15:44

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I begin by fully acknowledging that the current cost of living situation is a serious issue for many families across the country, who see their household bills going in one direction, particularly utility bills, fuel and many items of food. I also acknowledge that their anxiety has been heightened by concerns over the direction of some UK and some Scottish Government policies, all of which have come at the same time as increasing political tension between Russia and Ukraine.

As the International Monetary Fund set out so clearly on Monday when analysing the threats to world economic recovery, this is not an easy time for anyone, especially the most vulnerable families, who it is clear are having to face very tough choices. It may be true that the living wage has increased and tax rates have fallen for those on universal credit, but that does not go nearly far enough to help lower earners, who spend 38 per cent of their income on groceries, heating and electricity, compared with the 18 per cent that higher earners pay. For many of the items that are at the sharp end of increasing costs and, therefore, increasing prices, lower income groups

are disproportionately affected, and we should be concerned about that. I will say more about that in a minute.

Seldom are economists united in their approach to economic analysis, but they are when it comes to the reasons for the current high level of global inflation, as are producers and suppliers who are involved in international trade, who confirm that much of the current level of inflation is a direct result of sharply rising shipping and transportation costs—that is one of the main reasons behind the chancellor's cut in fuel duty—the increases in wholesale gas costs and the disruption to many supply chains.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development inflation statistics are grim, as are yesterday's G7 statistics, but there is another important issue, which relates to shortages in labour markets. I have argued previously in the chamber that I would like the UK Government to do much more to ensure that there is greater flexibility in labour markets. In Fife and Perthshire, for example, unnecessary constraints have restricted the supply of seasonal workers for fruit and vegetable farming.

The other factor is that there is demand-led inflation, because there are pent-up levels of demand, which are rising as the Covid pandemic diminishes in scope. Businesses desperately need that demand; so, too, does the country when it comes to addressing weaker economic growth and investment. However, we all know that the policies to deal with demand-led inflation do not always sit easily with those to control cost-push inflation.

We know, too, that the cost of the pandemic is well over £400 billion and that 6 million people are on NHS waiting lists. Whether we like it or not, it was generally agreed when it was first announced that the national insurance increase needed to be gone ahead with.

I have heard the claims that VAT on fuel bills should be scrapped, but economic history tells us that that is not the best way of assisting those who are most in need, as it is not a progressive measure. Indeed, while it might reduce bills by 5 per cent, it would cost the Treasury billions of pounds, thereby necessitating much more stringent measures across the economy, which, of course, we can ill afford.

Therefore, the UK Government has decided to look at other ways to mitigate the effects of the current situation, whether through a UK Government loan to the energy companies of £5 billion to £6 billion, which would reduce household bills by around £200, an increase in the warm home discount or additional loans through which families can get immediate help and more

substantial assistance, which is exactly what consumer groups have demanded.

We recently debated replacements for European Union structural funds, but I remain rather surprised by the tone of the reaction in the Parliament to the levelling up fund and the shared prosperity fund, given the direct support that they will provide to local communities—

**Shona Robison:** Will Liz Smith give way on that point?

**Liz Smith:** I will not, if Ms Robison does not mind.

Local authorities have warmly welcomed that extra support.

As the Scottish Fiscal Commission has stated many times, it is vitally important to focus on where there is economic imbalance and on helping weaker areas to thrive, and I ask the Scottish Government to consider whether it should not be warmly welcoming the shared prosperity fund, as many—

**Shona Robison:** Will the member give way?

**Liz Smith:** Have I got time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** If the intervention is very brief.

**Shona Robison:** Obviously, any funds are welcome, but does Liz Smith not recognise that the new arrangements will involve £32 million being allocated to Scotland for 2022-23, which is £151 million short of the £183 million that is estimated to be an appropriate replacement for EU structural funds? [*Interruption.*] If Finlay Carson has something to say, why does he not intervene instead of speaking from a sedentary position?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am the one who does the refereeing here. I invite Ms Smith to respond to the cabinet secretary's intervention.

**Liz Smith:** I am sorry, but I gave way to the cabinet secretary. I was simply asking about time.

Let me say clearly that one of the reasons regarding the EU fund is that there is still money coming into Scotland from the EU. The taper effect is not reflected by the statistics that the cabinet secretary has just quoted.

I will also say to the cabinet secretary that many people in local councils, including in SNP-run ones, very much welcome the figure.

I move amendment S6M-04050.1, to leave out from "considers that both" to end and insert:

"recognises the significant economic challenges being faced by households and businesses as a result of the intense pressures from rising global inflation and increased costs of production; believes that the UK and Scottish governments need to work together to address these

challenges, most especially for vulnerable groups and those on lower incomes, and welcomes the emphasis being placed by the UK Government on Levelling Up, Shared Prosperity and Community Renewal funds to assist those areas with weak economic growth, weak investment and lower employment levels.”

15:50

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** People in every neighbourhood across Scotland are struggling to make ends meet. Middle-income households are squeezed, and people on low incomes and those who cannot work are being pushed further into poverty. This cost of living crisis is an emergency, it is set to get even worse and both of Scotland’s Governments are letting us down. Their failures and inaction mean that choosing between heating and eating is now a reality for thousands of people in Scotland. Neither Government is doing enough and, in some cases, they are actively making things worse.

The spring statement package from the Chancellor of the Exchequer was frankly insulting. On the same day that the independent Office for Budget Responsibility confirmed the biggest hit to household incomes on record, Rishi Sunak announced measures that will barely scratch the surface, failing to heed Labour’s calls on the necessary steps to ease the cost of living crisis.

Instead of siding with Labour and introducing a windfall tax on big energy companies, Rishi Sunak and the SNP refused to target energy giants that are raking in profits of £44,000 a minute. The Tory response was pathetic, but the SNP is not doing enough either. Its motion today passes the blame to Westminster yet, when it came down to it, its flagship cost of living action plan was simply to tweak the Tories’ offering, handing households a pitiful £4 a week off their bills.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Labour Party and our colleagues in Westminster have been doing the jobs of both the SNP and Tory Governments for them. Here in Scotland we presented a fully costed plan, which would provide more than £1,000 of support to those who need it the most. By using the powers of this Parliament, we can reduce costs for everyone and we can put money in the pockets of the people who need it most. We can cap bus fares and we can use the powers of the newly nationalised ScotRail to cut rail fares by a third over the next three months. We can reverse the rise in water charges and give every household a £100 rebate. Crucially, we can target a £400 payment to households who are hardest hit, using data that the Government already holds to ensure that families with a disabled person in them, older people, unpaid carers and people on a low income receive the help that they desperately need now—as well as increasing the Scottish welfare fund, so that local authorities have the

resources to lift up those who might fall through the cracks.

Instead, the SNP copied the Tories. In doing so, it has, in some cases, lined the pockets of the most well-off people in the country by using the same scattergun approach based on the unfair and outdated council tax that the SNP promised to scrap when it first took office. Fifteen years later, there is no sign of a new system. The one thing that the SNP has a good record on is breaking promises. It did the same when it came to a publicly owned energy firm, right when we needed it the most.

Fuel poverty is higher in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, and it is a looming reality for many more. It is high time that the SNP took real, tangible action to tackle it. Instead, it is on track to miss its targets by seven years. The SNP should now stick to its word: it should deliver on the promise to replace the council tax with a system that is actually based on property value and ability to pay, and it should urgently create a publicly owned energy company that protects us for the future against unfair fuel rises and an overreliance on big, private energy corporations.

Rather than coming here today and asking for more powers, the SNP should be properly using the ones that it has. That starts by addressing the failures with the Scottish child payment. In the absence of a full roll-out, the SNP Government is short-changing children by £5 million a week. It also includes addressing the eligibility and adequacy of newly devolved benefits. Instead, however, the Scottish Government is again copying the Tories.

Changing where a benefit is paid from is not an improvement in itself. It is not enough. We have an opportunity to create a whole new system, and that is what devolution is for. We should use it. We need real radical action now to tackle the rising costs that are raining down on households today—energy price hikes, food price rises, increased water charges and higher public transport costs.

That can be done, by this Parliament and by this Government, and Scottish Labour’s plan is clear on how to do it. We have even identified the money to pay for it. Our policies would help people to make ends meet today and would also tackle long-term structural poverty and inequality, which, for so many, has meant that this crisis has not just caused a tightening of the purse strings but has left them not a stone’s throw away from destitution.

This is an emergency. We need more action now.

I move amendment S6M-04050.2, to insert at end:

“; further calls for the Scottish Government to support households struggling to pay their bills with a targeted fuel costs payment and a top up to the Welfare Fund; believes that the cash surplus stored up by Scottish Water should be utilised to give every household a £100 rebate on their water charges, and calls on the Scottish Government to cut ScotRail fares for three months to help address the cost of living crisis.”

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

15:54

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I welcome this short debate and acknowledge the concerns and anxieties of households that face energy costs and costs of living that are skyrocketing. I will not repeat all the mitigations that the cabinet secretary outlined in her opening speech, but I will say that they are required solely because of the oppressive policies of this Tory Government, which knows—and, by its actions, demonstrates that it could care less—about the poverty that it is inflicting on the most vulnerable in society.

This economic disaster can be traced right back to the days of the Liberal-Tory coalition of 2010 to 2015, when austerity was seen as a solution to the banks’ collapse. Billions were taken from health and local government budgets, attacking the standard of living of ordinary decent folk, while the rich got richer and the economy was encouraged to function on consumerism that was fuelled by low interest rates and credit, both commercial and individual.

It was a house of cards primed for collapse. Brexit was pursued in the middle of a pandemic, and an oven-ready deal turned out to be a pig’s breakfast, which has now been compounded by an energy crisis.

This economic house of cards is collapsing after nearly 12 years of Tory rule. Who will suffer? Not the chancellor and his tax-avoiding wife—who declared, as a non-domestic taxpayer, that she did not intend to permanently reside in the UK, which saved her millions in UK tax while the rest of us are paying hikes in national insurance and some are losing universal credit. Not Boris Johnson, who apparently does not know what a party is—although he did have £50 to pay that fine. Not heartless Priti Patel, who is paying to export miserable desperate souls to a country with dubious human rights. They are so removed from what is decent and the reality of ordinary lives that I despair.

It will, as always, be the pensioners, those on low pay, the disabled, the disadvantaged and the single-parent families who pay the price for the Tories’ selfishness and incompetence.

The solution offered by the Opposition parties here is to raid public funds from our health and education budgets to, once again, try to ease poverty that has come about entirely as a result of the actions of the UK Government. Much has been done by the Scottish Government, but mitigation has its limits. Already, £600 million a year is being spent on just that.

Do our people deserve this? Did they vote for this? Consider this: at the most recent UK election, in 2019, Labour returned one MP, the Liberals returned one MP, and the UK party of Government, the Tories, returned 6. The SNP has 45 MPs. In the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, the Tories returned 31 MSPs to the SNP’s 64. Throw in the 62 per cent vote to remain in the EU, and we can see that the people have spoken in election after election.

Independence would end the mitigation of the actions of Governments and consequences of policies that we did not vote for. For the first time in generations, we could run our own economy with the competence that is so lacking among the Tories, with the goal of a socially just society that protects the vulnerable, not the privileged.

It is time for mitigation to end. Surely, even the remnants of the Labour Party and the Liberals in here can see that, or will they keep propping up this failed UK Government, which has been rejected time and time again by the Scottish electorate?

15:58

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** We are, without question, facing one of the worst cost of living crises for generations. Keeping costs in check is becoming increasingly difficult, with many families now forced to make decisions that nobody should have to face in this day and age.

Energy bills, in particular, have gone through the roof for a number of reasons, not least as a direct consequence of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. We know that the energy price cap changed this month, which means that 18 million households are having to pay inflated prices, with predictions of even higher costs looming large. Yesterday, the chief executive of Scottish Power, Keith Anderson, warned that another steep rise is expected in October and revealed that his company had received over 8,000 calls last week alone from customers who are worried about their ability to pay.

Higher energy costs have a serious knock-on effect on food prices. Many distributors face uncapped energy costs and are now having to pass on increased costs to consumers.

It is imperative that both the Scottish and UK Governments do considerably more to tackle this crisis. This is not the time to be political point scoring. We should be working together to help the millions affected—particularly the most vulnerable—during this time.

Right across the country, people are worrying about the cost of living, but it is worth pointing out that those who are living in rural and remote communities such as my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries are facing more dramatic circumstances than urban areas. Many households have no access to on-grid energy supplies and instead have to rely on solid fuels and having gas and kerosene delivered to tanks at their homes. Those fuel costs are uncapped and unregulated.

One of my retired constituents lives in a 200-year-old house where heating oil is his only option. He goes through around 3,400 litres per year. In October 2020, he paid 31.5p per litre; last month he paid £1.20 per litre, which means that his annual bill of £1,200 will rise to over £4,500. His electricity has increased from around £1,000 a year to over £2,000. In total, his annual bill for fuel has risen from £2,500 to over £7,000, which is an increase of nearly £4,500 per year. Energy bills are now taking up almost 80 per cent of his pension.

Coupled with a serious lack of affordable housing in many rural communities, there is now a serious danger that the crisis will lead to many families quitting rural life simply because they cannot afford to exist there any longer. Rural dwellers also face damaging health inequalities, which force them to travel great distances in order to access health services. That results in increased travel costs, because public transport is simply not fit for purpose.

The SNP-Green coalition may well point to free buses for many, which would be fine if people could actually find a bus. Public transport services in many rural areas have been cut during the pandemic, and they have still not been restored to pre-Covid levels despite commitments to do so. The same applies to rail services. We have urged the Scottish Government to reduce rail fares now that it has taken over ScotRail, and to increase services. We have already seen that the price of some rail tickets is being reduced south of the border as the UK Government encourages more people to get back on trains. I am pleased that ScotRail has now followed suit.

The time for action is now, before a growing number of struggling families slip further into poverty. We know that Scotland's block grant has been increased by more than 10 per cent, which is the largest rise in the history of devolution. The finance secretary, Kate Forbes, has already

announced a £150 council tax rebate, which is similar to the one announced by the UK Government, but that is just a drop in the ocean compared with what is needed. The SNP has not yet matched the income tax cuts that have been awarded to taxpayers south of the border. That means that millions of taxpayers here are set to pay more than their counterparts in the south. We want to see the SNP agree to identical cuts as a matter of urgency instead of damaging hard-working people's livelihoods.

We also want to introduce a help to renovate scheme to make houses more energy efficient in order to reduce heating costs and to help achieve net zero in the long term. However, more help is needed now. The UK Government's levelling up fund will provide nearly £1.5 billion in city and growth deals in every part of Scotland. That can and should be used to improve local infrastructure, public transport and services. I hope that all local authorities, whatever their political colour, will take full advantage of that.

Finally, instead of the SNP-Green Government continually bleating on about the powers that it wants, maybe now is the time for it to start using the powers and additional funding that it already has.

16:03

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):**

The rising cost of living affects all our constituents. We have talked time and again about the risk of putting people in the position of having to choose between heating and eating. For a large number of our constituents, that has, or very shortly will, become the stark reality. One in seven UK adults are already behind on at least one household bill. Rising energy costs and the spiralling cost of food are pushing more people to have to make the decision: do I heat or do I eat?

Our Scottish Government can go only so far with the limited powers and the funds that it has while fighting against the tide of disgraceful decisions at Westminster that continue to have devastating effects on thousands of people across Scotland. The spare room subsidy, which the Liberal Democrats supported the Tories to push through Westminster in 2013, is one of them. That alone costs tenants who are affected by the bedroom tax between £14 and £25 a week. The removal of the £20 uplift in universal credit, reducing household incomes by £1,040 a year, is another. Over the past six months, food insecurity levels have risen to their highest yet, affecting 5.7 million adults. One in six people who receive universal credit needed to visit a food bank at least once since the start of December, and almost 2 million people currently go without food.

However, the UK Government has rejected calls to uplift benefits, providing no security to people who are struggling to buy the bare essentials. Food insecurity in households in receipt of universal credit was 37 per cent lower when the uplift was in place compared with before the pandemic. That points to the critical role that the £20 uplift had in protecting families from food insecurity.

The UK Government should have used its spring statement to follow Scotland's lead by matching the 6 per cent uprate of social security and increased all bands of the minimum wage to match the real living wage to ensure that we protect the people on the lowest incomes throughout the country. However, once again, no support was forthcoming from the chancellor. There was also the devastating 54 per cent rise in the energy cap, but the UK Government failed to make changes to VAT on household energy bills, which would at least have provided some short-term relief to households.

Where it can, the Scottish Government has taken significant actions to mitigate the pressures of the cost of living crisis. It has doubled the Scottish child payment to £20, with a further increase to come in 2022. It has uprated Scottish benefits by 6 per cent, which puts money in the pockets of people who are most in need. There have also been other interventions: the introduction of 1,140 hours of free childcare, the eligibility for which has been extended; free bus travel for under-22s; and £1.8 billion being committed to accelerate the deployment of heat and energy efficiency measures. We continue to have free prescription charges, free eye examinations, free tuition and increases to school clothing grants. Almost £6 billion has been invested to support low-income households in Scotland over the past three years.

As we rebuild from the pandemic and face the cost of living crisis, we have an opportunity to make Scotland a more equal and inclusive society. However, Scotland does not hold all the powers that it requires to achieve that. It will come only with independence. The UK Government has shown time and again that it is unwilling to support the poorest in our society and does not have the same priorities as the Scottish Government in relation to supporting all our citizens. That only reaffirms the need for Scotland's future to be in Scotland's hands.

16:07

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** In politics, it is often easy to give something a title and forget about the magnitude and the reality of what lies behind those words. We have already heard today about austerity, but that really means

falling standards of living for the poorest in our society through Government cuts. The Government speaks of a budget of choices, but what it really means is cuts to the moneys that are available to local government to educate our children, lift the bins and fill the potholes.

I fear that the expression "cost of living crisis" is becoming another one over which there is much hand wringing by Scotland's Government but little real action. We know the reality of the crisis: sleepless nights for thousands of people about how they will pay their bills, ensure that their children have enough to eat and get to work as the cost of petrol and public transport goes up and up.

We cannot allow the cost of living crisis to become another phrase that is timeworn by the inaction of the UK and Scottish Governments. As we emerge from the pandemic, during which many Scots experienced a collapse in their earnings, thousands of people who were just getting by are being propelled into poverty and precarity. The crisis continues to devastate family finances and the UK and Scottish Governments are simply not doing enough and are not focused on the real needs.

Despite promising cheaper energy bills during the 2016 Brexit referendum, the Tories have alternated between being completely silent on the crisis and being completely tone deaf. Despite the crisis, they have hiked up taxes for working people and dished out temporary loans—a heat-now, pay-later measure that only exacerbates the issues in the long term.

Let us not forget that the SNP Government has presided over the crisis in Scotland. It recently nodded through increases in water charges and increased rail fares at a time when families are least able to afford them. In response to urgent calls for support, the SNP and Green Government has failed to use the extent of the powers that it has and instead has offered one-off payments equating to less than £4 a week. That is the equivalent of one single off-peak ticket from Paisley to Glasgow and, with current fares, it is hardly a measure that will soften the blow.

While Scottish families are choosing between heating and eating, Government-owned Scottish Water and its subsidiaries are sitting on a cash mountain of more than £500 million. Scottish Labour's amendment demands that that cash mountain is used to deliver a rebate of £100 to every household on their water charges.

As I come to the end of a decade as a local councillor, I have been reflecting on the importance of local government in delivering targeted support to those who would otherwise remain in crisis. Our local councils are quickly becoming the last line of defence in the cost of

living emergency. The amazing people I have had the privilege of working with in local government are being starved of cash and forced to make unpalatable decisions. We need more money, advice and rights services, more funding for Citizens Advice, more community resilience groups and more support to help people pay their bills.

Copying the Tories by giving people a £150 council tax rebate will not cut it. If the Government is serious about tackling the cost of living, it must properly fund local government to deliver the services that people rely on, and give people real financial help that they can spend in their local communities to build up local economies. I point to the innovative work that is being done in Labour councils across Scotland, such as the community wealth-building agenda in North Ayrshire in my region, and the club 365 holiday hunger programme in North Lanarkshire—once again, councils being the last line of defence.

It is clear that, as my colleague Pam Duncan-Glancy articulated, Scottish Labour has a plan at every level of government to tackle the crisis and help people through it. It is also clear that the situation is grave for people across Scotland, and it will take more than warm words to heat homes and put food on the table.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Maggie Chapman, who will be the last speaker in the open debate, joins us remotely.

16:11

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** This is an emergency, but it is not an accident. The cost of living crisis is not unpredictable or unplanned; it is not an act of God or nature that has fallen from the sky equally upon us all. It is not the result of Covid or the invasion of Ukraine, although both those tragedies have exacerbated its effects and will continue to do so. No, it is the result of deliberate policies of the UK Government that are specifically, if not explicitly, designed to widen the gulf between the poor and the rich; between those who suffer from the misery of cold, damp and hunger, and those who profit by it.

We are, to our great sadness and collective shame, acutely familiar with the concept of the hostile environment—that malevolent invention of Theresa May’s Home Office. Those toxic seeds are now bearing their poisoned fruit in the UK Nationality and Borders Bill and in the proposal to outsource our obligations to the most vulnerable of refugees to Rwanda, which is itself a victim of European colonialism.

More hostile environments are lovingly nurtured by the right, egged on by those who should know

better. Hostile environments surround the rule of law, the concept of public integrity and the wellbeing of climate-scarred generations. Let us not forget that David Cameron’s “cut the green crap” approach has added £2.5 billion to UK energy bills, or that 90 per cent of energy cost rises in the past year has been down to gas price volatility. Had we moved away from fossil fuels years ago, as we could have, we might not be in this predicament.

Most acute of all, a relentlessly hostile environment has been deliberately constructed around the poor. That environment comprises deliberately cruel and humiliating policies such as the bedroom tax, the benefits cap and the rape clause, and it has been built by their equally cruel and humiliating implementation. It is decorated by the dehumanising and brutal language with which they are described by politicians and the media. It is vital that we acknowledge that reality and understand who is bearing all the burden and who is reaping the rewards. Vague language about “every household” does not do that; it only obscures the shocking scale of this scandal.

It is vital that we respond to the full extent of our capability with integrity, solidarity, effectiveness and justice. There are three ways we can do that. First, we can resist, on behalf of the Scottish people, the most egregious effects of Westminster cruelty. Our Scottish Green manifesto commitment to mitigate the benefit cap was an example of such resistance, and I am pleased that, through constructive dialogue and co-operative working, it was incorporated into the tackling child poverty delivery plan to support the families who are most crushed by the cap.

Secondly, we can use our devolved powers to address the practical needs of the most vulnerable. The doubling of the Scottish child payment is part of that work, as is the uprating of benefits that Social Security Scotland has delivered and the very welcome announcement that rail fares are being cut by half next month. New Zealand—another small country making its mark on the world—is leading by example on that.

Thirdly, we can work to change the narrative: the worse-than-Victorian fiction of wealth creators and the undeserving poor. We can do better than approaching a workhouse supervisor with our empty bowl, begging, “Please sir, can I have some more?” We can point out, and go on pointing out, that the workhouse is built on common land, and that what is so grudgingly dropped from the gruel pot was stolen in the first place.

There is a consensus among many of the parties in the chamber that the UK Government should impose a windfall tax on companies that have profited obscenely from our overlapping crises. That is entirely appropriate. However, their



windfalls are not the fortunate harvests of hard-working orchard keepers—they have been gained by enclosure, and kept through subsidy, secretive lobbying and systems that stockpile privilege and punish the poor. Until that reality is acknowledged and the story changes, we will still be firefighting this emergency that is no accident.

16:16

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

People are facing a crisis that is happening right now. Members may stand here and put forward the idea that independence is going to help people, but it is not—not right now. We can look at Brexit as an example—how many years did it take for the Tories to decouple the UK from Europe? Whether we are for or against independence, we all need to be honest about that.

A lot of what Christine Grahame said about the policies that have been pursued over not just the past couple of years but the past decade by a Tory Government that has brought about some of the worst attacks on the poorest is absolutely right. We should never give up on saying that, and we should make it clear that those people should take responsibility. There seems to be agreement in the chamber today that, regarding the cost of living crisis, there are things that we can do and that we should be urging the UK Government to do. Removing VAT, reinstating the benefits uplift and stopping the attacks on the poorest in our society and implementing a windfall tax are all actions that could be taken right now.

I welcome the child payment—it should be welcomed, as it is a game changer. Let us stop all the politics, where we are simply attacking each other. The child payment is to be welcomed, as it is a step in the right direction. Looking at the medium term, however, there are issues that could be tackled. For example, what about a public energy company for Scotland? The renewables sector in Scotland is growing, with no state intervention and no state ownership; that all points to disaster for the future. We do not need new powers to be able to do those things—the Government in Scotland has those powers right now and can use them. That applies likewise to the charges on water. There are things that the Government in Scotland can do right now to help.

Nonetheless, I agree with Christine Grahame that we cannot continue to mitigate the effects of every cut that the Westminster Government makes against the poorest people in Scotland. We have to unite to be able to fight that. The cost of living crisis is hitting people right now, but anyone who listened yesterday to the very bleak warnings from the chief executive of Scottish Power will know that the situation is going to get a lot worse before it gets better.

I make an appeal to members. Instead of coming to the chamber for this type of debate and trying to play politics, let us sit down and start talking about the practical things that this Parliament can do and the powers that we can use. For example, the lowest-paid carers in the country work in the private sector—they are being paid with Government money for delivering a public service, yet their terms and conditions and their pay are appalling. That can be tackled right now by this Government in this Parliament, so let us work together. Let us recognise that while we, on our salaries, are probably not going to suffer that much through the crisis, there are people out there who cannot heat their homes, buy food or put clothes on their children's backs. We have a duty and a responsibility as a Parliament to address that and to work together where we can to do so.

16:20

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland)**

**(Con):** It is clear that we are facing one of the worst cost of living crises in living memory. Inflation is increasing, bills are going up and energy costs are causing a lot of fear and distress in our communities. We all know the challenges that our constituents are facing and we all understand the concern and worry that they are causing many families across Scotland.

When it comes to a national crisis, Governments must step up. In Scotland, we have two Governments, and they must work together and implement a raft of measures to mitigate the crisis as much as possible. The motion from the Liberal Democrats echoes the belief that Governments have to step up. The UK Government has stepped up and introduced a raft of measures that will help households across the UK. I am sure that it can do more, and I am sure that the chancellor will do more throughout the year. There is a range of initiatives that will help hard-pressed households, although it is not a magic bullet—they simply do not exist.

We will all face increased bills and challenges because of what is happening elsewhere in the world. Maggie Chapman seems to think that the situation exists only in the UK, but it is a global problem. It is not a case of fixing the problem but a case of dealing with it as best we can. I believe that the policies that have been introduced by the UK Government will go some way to tackle the issues and help families to cope better over the coming months.

Where the UK Government is allowed to help while protecting the devolution settlement, it has done so. The cut to fuel duty by 5p per litre helps us all to fill our tanks, but it is of particular

importance to people in rural areas, where car travel is essential.

Levelling up funds and city growth deals, which Finlay Carson mentioned, bring huge investment and could transform many areas of Scotland. Freeports will also provide an economic boost to Scotland. The £150 rebate on council tax bills for the coming year, which was thankfully passed on by the Scottish Government, will mean that most properties in bands A to D will pay less council tax next year than they did this year. That is welcome, and I thank the UK Treasury for making it possible. There is also the doubling of the household support fund.

That is all in stark contrast to the increased costs that the Scottish Government is burdening hard-working Scots with, which add to the cost of living crisis. SNP rail fares are going up. As Alex Cole-Hamilton pointed out, the Scottish Government could cut the fares rather than the services. Water charges are up. We have a higher tax bill than people in the rest of the UK. With the car park tax, the SNP and Greens want to tax people for going to work. They could stop that right now if they wanted to. The SNP has now announced that it wants a congestion charge in Edinburgh, meaning more tax and more costs for citizens who are just trying to get to work to pay the bills.

This year, the Scottish Government core block grant has increased by more than 10 per cent, which is the largest increase in the history of devolution. It gives the Scottish Government the means to help households directly, but instead the money might be used to cover the waste that we expect from this Government, such as £250 million on unfinished, rusting ferries; £147 million on a delayed sick kids hospital; and £40 million on the malicious prosecution of the Rangers administrators. That is all money that could have been directed to the cost of living crisis, but instead the people of Scotland are having to pay for the SNP's mismanagement.

The SNP-Green Government could choose to do so much more, but it does not, because it has one goal and one goal only—to pursue independence. We heard it from Jackie Dunbar and we heard it from Christine Grahame. They do not care—[*Interruption.*] They do not care about people's priorities; they care only about their own. It is a disgrace.

The Liberal Democrat motion is correct: Governments need to step up. The UK Government has done so—it is time that the SNP-Green coalition did so too. I support the Conservative amendment.

16:24

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** I will try to lower the temperature just a little. I believe that every member in the chamber, regardless of their political party or our differences, understands the importance of this topic, and it deserves a serious response. It does not deserve members angrily calling for things that we are already doing or downplaying the actions that we are taking. It does not deserve members angrily calling for actions where they know that our hands are tied and the powers are held at the UK level. Neither does this topic deserve simply refusing to acknowledge the actions that the UK Government has taken, whether that is the national insurance hike, which was not universally welcomed, its long-standing regressive tax system or keeping the minimum wage well below the real living wage. It does not deserve a failure to acknowledge the long-term systemic, structural nature of the crisis that we are facing.

**Liz Smith:** Will the member give way?

**Patrick Harvie:** I will in a moment.

Furthermore, the debate does not deserve defensiveness from this Government. I want to reassure the small number of members who chose to use their time in the debate to put forward positive, constructive ideas instead of simply downplaying what we are doing that we are constantly looking to see, and we will continue to look at, what more we can do beyond the actions that we have taken and that any positive ideas that have been put forward in the debate will be taken seriously.

**Liz Smith:** I agree that there should be constructive debate. What constructive suggestions does Mr Harvie have in relation to the principle of economic growth? What policies are the Scottish Greens looking to that would benefit the economy? I have heard several times that the Greens do not approve of economic growth. That is a very serious issue when it comes to the cost of living.

**Patrick Harvie:** Perhaps if the Conservatives want to bring to the chamber another debate on the meaning of economic growth we can get into that in great detail and I will lay out the reasons why Greens around the world recognise that, on a planet of finite resources, economic growth cannot go on forever and that everlasting economic growth does not meet the needs of the majority of people.

I want to keep the debate on the issues that are before us. Let us look at the reality of the contrasts between Scotland's two Governments, which many members have described. I contrast a UK Government that introduced the benefit cap with a

Scottish Government that is mitigating that cap, even though that should not have to come from within a devolved budget. I contrast a UK Government that has cut universal credit with a Scottish Government that has introduced the game-changing Scottish child payment, doubled it and then committed to increasing it further. I contrast a UK Government that has uprated benefits by significantly less than inflation with a Scottish Government that has uprated them, where we could, by six per cent.

The UK Government has, apparently, put all its eggs in one basket by expanding the oil and gas industry in the middle of a climate emergency and by expanding nuclear power, which is one of the most expensive ways to meet the country's energy needs. I compare and contrast that with a Scottish Government that invests in energy efficiency and renewables.

There is, of course, much more that we can and will do, and we will continue to seek to do better. However, let us look at the roll-out of free bus travel for the under-22s. I say again—I mentioned this to Finlay Carson—that the policy will help to make services, including those in rural areas, more viable than they have been. Making services more viable is one of the best consequences and side effects of the free bus travel policy. I note that the fair fares review will be taken forward as part of the Bute house agreement to look at the uneven nature of transport costs.

On energy, there is an extraordinary gap between a UK Government that published a UK energy security strategy that did not say one word about demand reduction or about energy efficiency and a Scottish Government that is expanding eligibility for the warmer homes Scotland scheme, increasing grants in area-based schemes and extending home energy efficiency advice. This Government is doing all of that in the context of a £1.8 billion heat in buildings programme and a commitment to establish a public energy agency, which will play a critical role in decarbonising heat and doing so fairly.

On housing costs, the Scottish Government has made commitments on rent controls; we are undertaking our on-going mitigation of the bedroom tax; and we are carrying out the largest affordable house programme in the UK, which is the biggest since the 1970s. On council tax, only two councils have set increases that are above 3 per cent, and all the increases are significantly below inflation.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Please conclude, minister. Thank you.

**Patrick Harvie:** This Government has a strong track record of addressing the cost of living crisis where we can. We want to do more, we will

continue to commit to do more and we look forward to engaging with any members who have positive, workable and constructive proposals to bring.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Liam McArthur to close the debate—for up to six minutes, please.

16:30

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** This short debate has been timely and important, and it is precisely the sort of topic that our constituents would expect to see us debating.

As everybody has acknowledged, Scotland is facing the biggest fall in living standards in generations as household bills skyrocket. At every turn—whether due to rising energy bills or the price of the weekly shop—it is getting harder and harder for so many people in Scotland, across the UK and more widely to make ends meet. That is compounded by soaring inflation, which is driving the worst squeeze on incomes since records began.

There will not be a single member in the chamber whose inbox and mailbag are not overflowing with countless desperate examples of the impacts that those eye-watering increases are having on so many. In my Orkney constituency, average fuel bills are set to go up by a staggering £1,300. In a community that is already suffering the highest levels of fuel poverty and extreme poverty, it is no wonder that islanders are at their wits' end. For many, being in this position is a new and profoundly unsettling experience.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all of us to respond in a manner befitting the scale of the challenge that is faced by those whom we represent, and to use all of the powers and resources at our disposal to the fullest extent, as Alex Rowley demanded. We must also demand the same of colleagues at Westminster and, indeed, in local government. That might still not be enough to do everything that we would wish, but it is the very least that people across Scotland have a right to expect and demand.

I am certainly not arguing that either of Scotland's Governments has done nothing; the cabinet secretary, Patrick Harvie, and Liz Smith have set out their cases. Rather, I would argue that what has been done to date still falls short of what is needed. Liz Smith fairly acknowledged that in what I thought was a characteristically measured contribution. In all honesty, I am pretty sure that Liz Smith and many of her colleagues on the Conservative benches will have seen the chancellor's spring statement as deeply disappointing.

**Patrick Harvie:** I welcome the tone of the member's closing remarks, which is unlike the tone of Mr Cole-Hamilton's speech. Does he acknowledge, though, that there is an immense gap between what the UK Government has been doing, which has made the problems worse, and the actions that the Scottish Government is taking to address the problems? Does he acknowledge that there is that difference and that we are not sitting on our hands in the way that Mr Cole-Hamilton suggested?

**Liam McArthur:** I think that the people we represent are less interested in who is doing less and who is doing worse. What they want to know is that, in both Governments and at the local government level, all the powers and all the resources are being deployed to their fullest extent.

The Conservatives have chosen to break their promise, though, by hiking national insurance and handing UK taxpayers a £10.9 billion tax hike. In the current circumstances, that is, frankly, reckless. Yet the Scottish Government is scarcely blameless. As Paul O'Kane highlighted, the SNP Government has been hollowing out local authorities for years. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that many councils, including Orkney Islands Council, have been forced to raise the level of council tax after being handed, in effect, a £250 million cut to their budget by the SNP-Green coalition.

As Pam Duncan-Glancy reminded us, abolishing the unfair council tax altogether was once an SNP flagship policy. That flagship appears to have gone the way of the SNP ferries over recent years. The SNP and Greens have also chosen this moment to use the powers at their disposal to hike rail fares while failing to increase disability benefit in line with inflation. Both of Scotland's Governments are failing to rise to the challenge of this emergency.

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Liam McArthur:** No. I do not have time, I am afraid.

What, then, should they be doing? Not—as Christine Grahame and Jackie Dunbar urged us to do—blasting a black hole in the country's finances and supercharging austerity through separation. As Alex Rowley reminded us, that would provide no immediate benefit and much medium to longer-term disbenefit. Rather, as the motion proposes, they should be taking steps to make a meaningful difference to those who are worst affected. At the heart of our proposals, Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that VAT should be cut to 17.5 per cent. That alone would be worth £600 to the average

Scottish household, and it would boost consumer spending and therefore business prospects.

A windfall tax on the inflated superprofits of oil and gas companies would allow us to extend the criteria for the winter fuel payment and the warm homes discount and to double them. We would use the levers at our disposal to reverse the hike in rail fares and would activate an emergency insulation programme this summer to improve the energy efficiency of the households who are most in need.

The grim truth is that this crisis is far from over. Predictions suggest that a difficult 18 or so months lie ahead, as my colleague Alex Cole-Hamilton reminded us. With a further wave of increases in energy costs looming later this year, there is also the prospect of things getting worse before they get better.

The crisis is already taking a heavy toll on individuals, households and businesses across Scotland. They need to see more from both of their Governments. I have set out some of the ways in which Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that more can be done. Those are tangible, meaningful, deliverable steps that would offer those whom we represent the help and hope that they desperately need to breathe a little easier.

I urge Parliament to support the amendment in the name of Pam Duncan-Glancy and the motion in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on the cost of living crisis.

## Ferries

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-04051, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on ferries. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons.

I call Alex Cole-Hamilton to speak to and move the motion.

16:36

### **Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)**

**(LD):** The situation at Ferguson Marine has been called many things: a fiasco, a scandal, a farce. It has been described as the height of incompetence and as a complete mess. Although those descriptions are no doubt accurate, it is important that Parliament does not become obsessed with the process and pantomime and lose sight of the real-life impact of the situation.

The reality is that the situation is harming communities every day. This is not a parliamentary soap opera; there are communities to whom promises were made. Those promises were not kept. That is what our debate is about. We should be open about how those communities came to experience years of disruption, with years more still to come.

The stories that they tell illustrate the impact of years of shocking Government mismanagement. Last week, the BBC reported the plight of an 81-year-old couple from Arran and the lengths that the two had to go to in order to attend a hospital appointment in Kilmarnock. What should have been a simple return journey turned into an exhausting 94-mile detour involving three ferry crossings. Those elderly people were forced to choose between making that gruelling journey or paying for a three-day hotel stay to attend a 30-minute appointment.

There is also the story of a young couple with a newborn baby. They were forced to abandon their car on the mainland when their ferry home was cancelled. That story becomes more harrowing when we consider that they had just been discharged from hospital, that the baby had been born prematurely and that the mother was recovering from a caesarean section.

Just yesterday, residents on Arran learned that the ferry serving the main route between their island and the mainland will be out of action until at least Friday, following an engine failure.

We must also remember the damage being done to local economies and to the tourism that those islands rely on. Caledonian MacBrayne's managing director has accepted that services are,

in his words, "at a really difficult point". The average age of a CalMac ferry is fast approaching 23 years, while more than a quarter of the company's major vessels have passed their 30-year design life. When sailings are cancelled, there are no spare vessels to cover those journeys and to serve customers.

That is why it was music to people's ears when the announcement came that two new vessels to serve our island communities, including Arran, would be built at Ferguson Marine on the Clyde. The work was originally supposed to be completed in 2018. We are now told that the ferries will be ready in 2023. Our island communities will believe that when they see it.

Even if, this time, the ferries have real windows that are made of glass and funnels that do something other than providing accommodation for seagulls, islanders will still be forced to wait and will still be subject to horrendous delays and cancellations and the uncertainty that comes from those. That story is all too familiar to our island communities. They have been dealing with it for years, since long before the scandal was splashed across our national newspapers.

In truth, this latest debacle is only adding insult to an injury that was sustained a long time ago. Those who dared to believe the Government's promise to fix the situation have now been left doubly disappointed and angry. To make things worse, it seems that absolutely nobody is being held to account for this failure.

The Scottish Government's website states that an open Government

"gives the public information about the decisions it makes ... supports people to understand and influence those decisions ... and values and encourages accountability (responsibility for those decisions)."

Scottish Liberal Democrats thought that today was a good opportunity to review the Scottish Government's progress in those areas and on those aims.

When it comes to sharing information about decisions, nobody can say how the Government came to decide to give the contract to Ferguson Marine in the first place. In fact, Audit Scotland could not get to the bottom of it because there was no paper trail. We are talking about the decision to award a then £100 million contract in the face of warnings from Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd.

An open Government aims to support people to influence decisions, but no one can claim that islanders have been at the heart of this process. In fact, decisions were reportedly taken because they fitted in with the Scottish National Party's conference timetable and not because they were necessarily the right decisions for islanders.

What about the lofty aim of encouraging accountability and responsibility? We have had the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy telling us that she could not say who made the decision. The First Minister then danced around the question of who gave the sign-off before conveniently attaching it to Derek Mackay. It is awfully convenient for Nicola Sturgeon that the latest scandal that is threatening her Government and, indeed, her premiership can be neatly blamed on someone who has since departed politics. However, if we are to take the First Minister at her word, Derek Mackay should appear before Parliament to give his side of the story and confirm that the First Minister and the rest of her Cabinet had no input into the deal that is set to cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds more than was originally scheduled.

The public and our island communities deserve answers and accountability. This open Government is asking us to believe that a £100 million contract was awarded on the eve of the SNP's conference without the direct involvement of a famously precise First Minister—a First Minister who famously remarked that she

“didn't say don't go ahead”,

whatever that means; a First Minister who ranked the Government's acquisition of the Ferguson shipyard among her proudest achievements; and a First Minister who has refused to apologise to the island communities that have been affected by this calamity. They deserve better. In 2014, Nicola Sturgeon became First Minister. In 2016, she described the Ferguson shipyard as

“going from strength to strength.”

It is now 2022 and there is not a ship in sight.

Scotland used to be the proudest shipbuilding nation on this planet. In the 20th century, more than 30,000 vessels were built in shipyards on the Clyde, whereas, in the 21st century, the Government can barely manage to build two. Oh, how lamentably far we have fallen under SNP leadership.

I move,

That the Parliament condemns the severe delays to the production of vessels 801 and 802 contracted by Scottish Government-owned Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), paid for by the Scottish Government, built originally by a company celebrated by the Scottish Government and, since 2019, by the nationalised Scottish Government-owned company; believes that these delays have left islanders and communities without reliable services that are critical to island life; notes that the Scottish Government's Open Government Action Plan 2021-25 states that “an open government gives the public information about the decisions it makes, supports people to understand and influence those decisions, and values and encourages accountability (responsibility for those decisions)”; considers that the Scottish Government has breached each of its own tests of open government, to the

cost of taxpayers and the islanders waiting year after year for the ferries that they need; notes the impact on their local economies and the impact of the cost overrun on the spending available for other public service priorities; expresses regret that no Scottish minister has either resigned nor considered resigning despite all of these events, and believes that if vessels 801 and 802 are not completed within the revised timescale and cost, as provided to Parliament on 23 March 2022, the latest in a string of revisions, then the ministers responsible deserve to finally be held to account in the form of resignations, and calls on the Scottish Government to give this assurance.

16:43

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** I am well aware, as is the Government, that ferries are an essential lifeline for many people in Scotland. Our island communities rely on them for access to employment, for health provision, for education and to see their loved ones. Ferries are essential to support a vibrant and growing tourism sector and to sustain local businesses, enabling the distribution of products and providing vital supplies to support local trade.

Through the Government's policies, we have delivered considerable growth in services, which has been underpinned by significant investment in vessels and infrastructure. That has already led to orders being placed for two vessels for Islay and investment in ports at Uig, Lochmaddy and Tarbert, and work is well under way on designs for the small vessel replacement programme that will benefit Dunoon and Kilcreggan. There will be further major vessel replacements for Mull and South Uist, and there will be replacement freight ships for Orkney and Shetland. The Government is committed to supporting our island communities and ferry users.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** If that is all true, why do ferries keep breaking down and why do islanders keep waiting for new ferries?

**Ivan McKee:** I have made it clear that the Government is committed to expanding the fleet and providing new vessels as quickly as we can. The significant investment of £580 million that I mentioned is testament to that.

The Government also supports Scottish industry, the continuation of shipbuilding on the Clyde and skilled employment at Ferguson Marine, which stands in stark contrast to many on the Opposition benches. Those in the chamber with long memories—longer than mine—will remember that, when they were in Government and responsible for procuring ferries, the Liberal Democrats were prepared to let Ferguson's close, so their opportunism in introducing today's motion will not go unnoticed.

The Government also fully recognises the importance of lifeline ferry networks to island and

remote communities, which is why the infrastructure investment programme sets out our commitment to invest that £580 million. We accept that the delivery of ferries has faced challenges, but the Scottish Government is crystal clear about what it expects from Ferguson Marine with regard to the delivery of vessels 801 and 802 and the turning around of the business to make it competitive. I fully recognise the critically important nature of completing those vessels for the sake of island communities and the many people who are dependent on that being the case.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Given that, what does the minister say about reports that the equipment—the engines on MV Glen Sannox and hull 802—might actually be out of date?

**Ivan McKee:** The member will be aware that, because of the delays, work is being done on a regular basis to assess the fitness for purpose of parts that have been purchased previously. I am not aware of the specifics that the member talks about, but if he has any information on those points, I would be delighted to pass it on.

I want to talk a wee bit about the Audit Scotland report that sets out the challenges that we took on when we rescued Ferguson's from administration in 2019—much of which have already been considered by the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee in the previous session and debated in the chamber several times.

The decision that we took saved hundreds of jobs and the future of commercial shipbuilding on the Clyde, and it was the right thing to do. We stand by the commitment to the shipbuilding communities in Inverclyde and the island communities that rely on the vessels that the yard will deliver.

The Audit Scotland report says that

“the turnaround of FMPG is extremely challenging”

and highlights that Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow

“has implemented some of the significant operational improvements that were required at the shipyard”.

The challenges have been great. The initial report on the state of the yard in December 2019 sets out the scale and depth of the business turnaround that is required to put Ferguson Marine on a stable footing.

Covid has slowed the turnaround efforts—the yard has had to shut down twice due to the pandemic and has worked at reduced capacity for many months as a result of the implementation of necessary distancing requirements and the impact of Covid sickness absence and self-isolation. However, despite those significant challenges, progress has been made. The new permanent chief exec has been in post since February and

brings a fresh vision and a new approach. A more collaborative culture is in place that ensures much closer work with CMAL.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The Audit Scotland report says that

“There is no documented evidence to confirm why Scottish ministers were willing to accept the risks of awarding the contract to FMEL, despite CMAL's concerns. We consider that there should have been a proper record of this important decision.”

Why was there not a proper record of that decision? Does the minister agree that not to have proper record keeping could be a breach of the ministerial code of conduct?

**Ivan McKee:** The member should be aware that more than 200 documents have already been put in the public domain with regard to the issues that he is talking about, and that full information is there about the process that has gone on previously over the period that the Scottish Government has been involved.

Let me be clear that the Government expects the yard to complete the vessels successfully as a priority at the fastest and most achievable pace. We expect the yard to turn around its operation so that it is competitive, productive and efficient, and to secure a further pipeline of work on the basis of its operations.

As I said, the Government has now released more than 200 documents in two tranches—the most recent in March of this year. We undertook the most recent release because the Audit Scotland's report referred to a range of reports and complex structures.

It is precisely in the interest of openness and transparency that we proactively published those documents on the Scottish Government website. I hope that those documents will help those with a less than full understanding of the issues that are involved to get a better picture of all aspects of the situation.

This is a demonstration of the Government's commitment to open government that gives the public information about the decisions that it makes, supports people to understand and influence those decisions and values, and encourages accountability.

The Government recognises the value of supporting Scottish jobs, communities and shipbuilding, which is why we took the decisions that we did to keep Ferguson's operational, and why we work to ensure that those ferries are delivered according to the timeline.

I move amendment S6M-04051.3, to leave out from “condemns” to end and insert:

“supports the Scottish Government’s decision to deliver vessels 801 and 802 to serve island communities; recognises that saving Ferguson Marine from closure preserved over 300 skilled jobs and maintained commercial shipbuilding on the Clyde; notes with regret the delays to the completion of 801 and 802, but acknowledges recent progress with the updated schedule; further notes the continued significant investment that the Scottish Government is making to ferry services to support lifeline services and remote communities, including the completion of the procurement of two new vessels to serve Islay; notes that the Scottish Government has made available to the Parliament and published significant information, in line with the commitment to open government, to allow the public to understand and contribute to the debate, with the proactive release of 210 documents, and recognises that much of the recent debate relates to information that has been in the public domain for two years.”

16:49

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I thank the Liberal Democrats for bringing the issue of ferries back to the chamber. Since we used our own debating time on ferries very little has changed. Islanders on Arran are still without a ferry because it has broken down again. No one has accepted responsibility for handing the contract for vessels 801 and 802 to Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd against the advice of the Government’s own experts. No one has yet explained why that was done and no minister, former or current, has held their hands up—not Derek Mackay, not his then boss Keith Brown, not John Swinney, who signed the cheques, and not Nicola Sturgeon.

We might find out more when the Auditor General appears before the Public Audit Committee tomorrow. Who knows what we might hear if Mr Mackay is invited to give evidence?

We agree with the Liberal Democrat motion, which ultimately calls on ministers to be accountable and to fall on their swords if need be. Frankly, that should have already happened.

We have rehearsed the arguments about the Ferguson contract. The ferries are years late and vastly over budget. Had the Government listened to CMAL, islanders could have had new ferries by now, and the taxpayer would have saved a fortune. Ferguson’s might well have survived without needing to be nationalised, and we should remember that when it was nationalised, ministers had no idea what they were taking on. They did not know what condition the vessels were in. They went in blind and, frankly, it shows.

**Ivan McKee:** Is it the member’s position that we should have allowed the shipyard to close at that point and that no progress should have been made on the two ferries?

**Graham Simpson:** The minister well knows that nobody has said that. Despite what he said earlier, nobody wants Ferguson’s to close.

We know that the vessel that the First Minister launched in 2017 had deteriorated by the time that Tim Hair wrote the update report in December 2019. It had suffered from two years of marine growth and was going to have to be taken out of the water. If that photo op had not taken place, things might have been better. There was also extensive internal degradation.

The procurement of vessels 801 and 802 is a scandal. Heads should have rolled but they have not. In our amendment, we call for an explanation of why CMAL was ignored. Of course, we know the answer. It was so that the announcement could be made at the SNP’s conference.

We also call for the project Neptune report to be published immediately. This is not the first time that I have asked for that to happen. Jenny Gilruth has promised to let us have it, but she has yet to deliver. She should be open and transparent and publish it in full because we need to start having an honest debate about how we will run our ferry services in future. The current model is not fit for purpose.

There is some urgency about this. The current contract for CalMac to run the west coast services is up in less than two years’ time. The Government should by now have signalled its intentions and, whatever model it chooses, started to either make changes or launch a new bidding process. All this dithering does not help the islanders, who are the people who really matter. They need the certainty of knowing that there will be a reliable service every year with new and more efficient ferries. They have been let down by the SNP.

Nicola Sturgeon has expressed her “regret” over the ferries situation. However, when asked at the weekend why she will not apologise to islanders, she said, “Oh for goodness sake!” The last thing that islanders who are suffering from a woeful ferry service need is a snotty response from the First Minister. “Oh for goodness sake!” is not the answer to people who cannot get to hospital appointments, make it to family gatherings, get to work, or run their businesses effectively. An apology would help, but the Minister for Transport, who is not here today, needs to decide whether the current model is the right one. I would say that a system that has herself, followed by Transport Scotland, followed by CMAL, followed by CalMac, is not a good place to start.

She should consider models such as those that are used in Canada and Norway, and she should consider issuing more than one contract for the west coast, which could allow operators such as Western Ferries to bid for routes.

We need action on ferries, and we need ministers to take responsibility. Our islanders deserve nothing less.



I move amendment S6M-04051.1, to insert at end:

“; further calls on the Scottish Government to set out why it ignored the advice of CMAL to award the contract for vessels 801 and 802 to Ferguson Marine Engineering Limited and to say which ministers were involved in that decision, and calls on the Scottish Government to publish Ernst and Young’s Project Neptune report immediately.”

16:55

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome this Liberal Democrat debate. The Parliament has just debated the cost of living and now we are debating the cost of the Scottish Government’s failure: severe and unacceptable delays to vessels 801 and 802, which have already cost the taxpayer £250 million.

Ministers say that the process that led to cost overruns and delays was “normal”, as if there is nothing to see here. As Graham Simpson said, let us hear what the Auditor General has to say about that at tomorrow’s meeting of the Public Audit Committee.

The truth is that this is one of the biggest public procurement failures in 20 years, and the failure to deliver the vessels on time and on budget has deprived islanders of the lifeline ferry services that they need. This week, islanders on Arran are yet again feeling the impact of being reliant on old ferries that are in desperate need of replacement.

I believe now, as I believed in 2014, that the long-term solution is a national ferry-building programme, and I believe now, as I believed then, that any replacement programme can bring new opportunities to Ferguson’s and the lower Clyde. Scottish Labour has no truck with those who would have let the jobs at Ferguson’s go to the wall. We will always stand by the dedicated, professional and blameless workforce at Ferguson’s.

However, nobody can excuse the failures and the mismanagement that have led us to where we are now, which put those jobs at risk. Audit Scotland found a “multitude of failings”, and there are still aspects of the scandal that Audit Scotland did not look at, such as the procurement decisions that were taken prior to August 2015 and the adequacy of vessel designs.

There are further questions that Parliament should expect answers to, such as why the Government-appointed turnaround director, who earned £2 million, did not turn around the yard. Transparency and accountability are essential if we are to fully understand what went wrong and to have confidence that the Government can put it right.

I want to be clear about what Scottish Labour believes must happen next. There must be a full public inquiry. There must be clarity about

ministerial decisions in relation to the awarding of contracts without full refund guarantees. There must be maximum transparency. The documents that the Scottish Government released more than two years ago were released under Derek Mackay—the minister the Government is now trying to blame for the fiasco.

There must also be real ministerial accountability. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy would not stake her reputation on the revised timescales that she announced to Parliament last month. Perhaps she will confirm whether that is still the case when she closes for the Government.

The truth is that responsibility for the fiasco goes straight to the top. There has been a ministerial merry-go-round, with the fiasco extending from the involvement of Alex Salmond in 2014 to that of Derek Mackay, and including Nicola Sturgeon’s launching of one of the ferries before it was done, with painted-on windows. Fiona Hyslop, Michael Matheson, Humza Yousaf and Graeme Dey have all come and gone. Jenny Gilruth is now the Minister for Transport and, today, Ivan McKee and Kate Forbes are speaking for the Government.

It is the Scottish Government that is ultimately responsible for the procurement of the vessels, and it is the First Minister who is ultimately responsible for the Scottish Government. Therefore, Labour is again calling on the First Minister to take direct ministerial responsibility. There should be no more buck passing and no more blame shifting; it is time for real accountability.

Today, we ask Parliament to support our calls for the First Minister to assume responsibility for the Ferguson’s fiasco; finish the ferries, do it right, do it transparently and do what it takes to bring the scandal to an end.

The Lib Dems have rightly asked whether there will be ministerial resignations if there are any more delays or extra costs. I make it clear that I do not think that it matters how the Scottish Government votes or what it says today. If there are any further delays or cost overruns, the public—who have paid the cost of the Government’s failure—will expect resignations.

I move amendment S6M-04051.2, to insert at end:

“; further calls on the First Minister to lead government efforts to secure the completion of vessels 801 and 802 by taking ministerial responsibility for government investments in Ferguson Marine; notes that the associated costs to the taxpayer include almost £2 million paid to a turnaround director of the yard; considers that, given the ongoing delays to the vessels, this cannot be considered value for money; notes that there remain unanswered questions with regards to the awarding of the contract for vessels 801 and 802, and calls on the Scottish Government to confirm

whether a ministerial direction was issued and to publish a copy of any such direction.”

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. I call Kenneth Gibson.

16:59

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Earlier this month, I visited Ferguson Marine with a number of colleagues. I am sure that, although they are, as I am, disappointed by the delays in building the ferries on time and to budget, they would agree that the determination of the new chief executive, David Tydeman, his management team and the workers to deliver the Glen Sannox into service by next spring, and vessel 802 six months later, was impressive.

Mr Tydeman discussed the well-known trials and tribulations of the ferries contract and spoke passionately and in great detail about how construction of the vessels will successfully be concluded, and about Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd’s ambitious future plans. A visit to the Glen Sannox itself made clear the work that is being undertaken to complete construction by the 462 employees, 43 of whom are apprentices—soon rising to 58—backed by 250 contractors and a strong supply chain. FMEL is now working closely with Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd and Scottish ministers.

Of course, the yard would not even exist if the contract for the two boats had not been awarded to FMEL, and all political parties represented in the chamber supported the decision at the time. The Tories may drone on now about CMAL’s concerns, but I do not recall that being their position then. Hindsight is always in 2020 vision. The Tory position is simply opportunistic—nothing more. As for suggesting that FMEL should have been awarded the Islay ferry contract, I wonder how that would work, given that the Tories argued that FMEL should not be building the Glen Sannox and vessel 802, as the yard, its workforce and their skills would no doubt have vanished years ago.

The Glen Sannox will carry up to 1,000 passengers and 127 cars between Ardrossan and Brodick, greatly increasing capacity and resilience.

**Graham Simpson:** Will the member give way?

**Kenneth Gibson:** The vessel is now more than 80 per cent complete, and it is expected to enter service in March to May 2023. Ensuring that that happens is the yard’s overriding priority.

Barbara McIntyre, the head of engineering, explained that, beyond the ferry contract, the yard is not standing still. It is currently bidding for the construction of offshore patrol vessels for the navies of Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria, which

perceive public ownership as a major advantage for FMEL. It has been pointed out, however, that the relentless criticism of FMEL by Opposition politicians in this chamber is being used by commercial rivals in Italy and France against FMEL.

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con) rose—**

**Kenneth Gibson:** The company anticipates securing orders from the Scottish Government for its seven-in-three small ferry programme, and it stressed that it is vital for orders to be placed for those vessels soon if the yard is to maintain its order book beyond October next year. I know that there are challenges, but a commitment to that from the Scottish Government today would be helpful. FMEL also plans to bid for 40m-80m ferries and offshore wind supply vessels.

For my Arran constituents, however, the priority is that the Glen Sannox enters service. The situation on Arran at present is awful. On one of the busiest days of the year, Easter Sunday, the MV Caledonian Isles broke down. The loss of capacity has been huge, with only the MV Isle of Arran taking the strain. CalMac says that, in relation to bookings, prioritising lifeline supplies and travel such as for medical appointments and family emergencies for each sailing is being done on a case-by-case basis. For many islanders, travellers and businesses, however, the hard work of CalMac port staff is not enough. The situation is chaos for many people who are missing vital engagements on the mainland and fear that they will be stranded if they travel.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Kenneth Gibson:** Additional capacity is urgently required. High tides have impacted both the Lochranza to Claonaig and Ardrossan to Brodick routes, and there is now fear about planning ahead. That was epitomised only last week by CalMac chief executive Robbie Drummond. The isle of Arran ferry committee and I were due to meet him on 11 April at 5 pm in Brodick. Less than half an hour before the meeting, Mr Drummond cancelled, fearing that the 7.20 pm from Brodick would not sail. It did sail, but what does it say about the service that its chief executive has little faith in it?

Islanders on Arran, Cumbrae and elsewhere are utterly exasperated, angry and frustrated by the endless cancellations, which disrupt their lives, week in, week out, and they have been for many months—and indeed several years. They want solutions from the Scottish Government, and they want them now.

I apologise for not taking interventions. I like to do so but, with four minutes, that is not always possible.

17:03

**Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Although we have discussed the ferries scandal a number of times before, I welcome today's debate, as every week seems to bring further revelations and attempts by the Scottish Government to avoid its responsibility.

As I am an islander, no one needs to tell me about the critical importance of ferries to the communities that they serve. It is something that simply cannot be overstated. I have often referenced the important role that ferries play in allowing people to access public services. The example that I will give has been touched on by Alex Cole-Hamilton and Graham Simpson.

Only last week, the Arran Cancer Support Trust gave a stark reminder of what the situation can mean beyond the chamber. The group pointed to its own figures, which show that half the important medical appointments on the mainland were missed in February, as ferry disruption was rife. This week, the MV Caledonian Isles is out of action, with a smaller vessel covering the route, and that decreased capacity is further impacting on availability. That only highlights the limited resilience of the CalMac fleet and the utter mess that the Scottish Government has made of the replacement programme. The new vessel that is scheduled to take on the route and serve Arran is the infamous Glen Sannox, launched by the First Minister—its windows painted on for the occasion—which is now sitting unfinished in a yard, years later. That is just one route. How many other lifeline services, used for accessing vital services, have been similarly impacted? How many people on our islands and in our remote areas have been similarly disadvantaged?

That is more than enough reason to call this a scandal—a scandal that is entirely of this Scottish Government's making and a result of the incompetence of successive ministers and the decisions of the First Minister who appointed them. Yet at the weekend, as Graham Simpson highlighted, the First Minister was asked whether she would go further than her previously stated expression of "regret" over the situation and apologise, on behalf of her Government, to islanders. Her reply, quoted in *The Scotsman* newspaper, was rather less conciliatory. A "visibly frustrated" First Minister, the newspaper reported, replied:

"Oh for goodness' sake".

She added:

"Well look, you can decide to make comments about the words. I choose my own words."

Well, one word that the First Minister chose not to use was "sorry".

Does that sound like the voice of a Scottish Government that cares about the impact on island communities, such as those on Arran, in my home in Orkney or in Shetland, or in any of our island communities where there are growing concerns over the future of our vital ferry links? Does it sound like a Scottish Government that truly recognises its role in—and its responsibility for—bringing this situation about, or one that has its finger on the pulse of those communities? No. It sounds like what it is: a Government that sees the troubles of those communities as little more than a nuisance or a public relations disaster that is frustratingly not disappearing off the agenda. I can assure ministers that it will not be disappearing off the agenda any time soon.

I have spoken about accountability, which is key to today's debate. I remind the chamber that the Scottish Government's position is that everything is on record and that there is nothing more to find. That position was repeated by the First Minister at the weekend. With this Government, that would be unusual.

We need only return to the conclusions of the Auditor General in last month's report to see the true situation. He said:

"We consider that there should have been a proper record of this important decision."

The claim of "insufficient documentary evidence" will be familiar to anyone who has tried to pursue the Scottish Government on any issue, but these are vital concerns about the use of large sums of public money. Yet the First Minister claims that the public knows everything that there is to know. I do not think that anyone on our islands, or even in the chamber, really believes that.

There will be much more to say during the debate on what details are absent and how this remarkable situation came about, but, today, the Scottish Conservatives have come to the chamber with two specific demands in our amendment. The first is for a clear answer to the question about why CMAL's concerns were overruled in making the contract award and why no proper records were kept of the decision. The second is for the Scottish Government to release the full EY report on project Neptune now.

This has been a depressing episode and it continues to be so. It is not just a regional issue but an issue that has resonated with people across Scotland—those who sympathise with the plight of remote and island communities; those who see hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money wasted; those who have

watched as yet another Scottish Government project turned into an avoidable, expensive fiasco—

**The Presiding Officer:** I will have to stop you there.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** —and those who have seen SNP ministers desperate to try to cover up their responsibility for it.

17:08

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** The transport minister was recently in my constituency to hear about the challenges that different communities face on the ferries front. I know that her visit was appreciated, and the meeting that I chaired in Tarbert, Harris was certainly a productive one.

That island—Harris—and North Uist share a ferry, with services between Tarbert, Lochmaddy and Uig in Skye forming the so-called Uig triangle—a route for which vessel 802 is intended. The investment that the Scottish Government has put into rebuilding both Tarbert and Uig as harbours in recent years is very significant. That inevitably means that, later this year, Uig will be closed for some months.

Harris, of course, has a land border with Lewis. I have registered my concerns already about what will happen if, during the period when the Uig to Tarbert service is out of action, we try to squeeze all the Tarbert traffic on to the existing service from Stornoway to Ullapool. That would mean that a population of 20,000 people would be entirely dependent on a single, fallible vessel for several months. No other population even approaching that size is in a similar position on any other CalMac route. I struggle to see how that is viable, unless CalMac can allocate more capacity to the Stornoway route during that period.

All of that brings us to the urgency of finding new additional tonnage, whether through charter or purchase, and I again make the case for that option to be pursued. I know that the minister and her predecessor have been active on that front.

The acquisition of the MV Loch Frisa from Norway will directly benefit my constituents, as MV Lord of the Isles will be freed up to deliver additional services to South Uist. The entire network will also benefit from the increased resilience that an additional vessel affords. In addition, the Scottish Government has undertaken a number of short-term charters of the MV Arrow to enhance freight capacity on the Stornoway to Ullapool route. Although I know that it may not be an option to purchase that particular vessel, I again make the case, because there is a strong

case to be made, for Stornoway to permanently host a freight vessel.

In the longer term, it is my belief that North Uist and Harris require a vessel each during the busy summer months. At present, those routes, along with several others in my constituency, run at virtually full capacity for the entire tourist season, making it difficult for anyone living on the islands to book their car on to a ferry for weeks on end. Prior to the introduction of the MV Loch Seaforth at Stornoway, those routes actually carried more cars than the Stornoway to Ullapool route. I have no doubt that the introduction of vessel 802 will see a similar increase in traffic, although it is only with separate vessels that each community will be able to have the capacity and resilience that they each deserve.

The recent orders for replacement vessels for Islay are very welcome. In the short term, however, and particularly in the context of the new Clyde and Hebrides ferry services contract, we need to have a serious discussion about how to ensure that islanders have something nearer a level playing field with tourists when it comes to booking tickets. At present, in summer, the playing field slopes away from island customers at an even sharper angle than that of the famous pitch at the Eriskay football club.

Although it is questionable whether the motion before us is actually motivated by any such practical concerns as those that I have outlined, the debate provides an opportunity for island MSPs to talk about the real, and very urgent, needs of their communities.

17:12

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** It was right that Ferguson Marine was brought into public ownership, because its closure would have led to the loss of hundreds of skilled jobs and further weakened Scotland's industrial base. However, although public ownership is welcome, the Scottish Government's mismanagement of Ferguson Marine is not.

The Government could have used public ownership of the company to drive the development of a national ferry procurement and building programme. It could have worked with trade unions and workers to transform Ferguson Marine into a vital publicly owned industrial asset. Instead, the Scottish Government has mismanaged Ferguson Marine, leaving us with continuing delays, secrecy about procurement and a lack of a long-term vision for the company.

We remain in a position where neither of the two vessels has been delivered. Their construction has been subject to repeated delays, while costs continue to increase as parts degrade, redesigns

take place and items fall out of warranty. The Scottish Government's ownership of Ferguson Marine has exacerbated those delays due to poor planning and ineffective management. However, we should reflect on the fact that it is the communities that rely on ferry services who are truly bearing the brunt of the delay. We need the Scottish Government to take urgent action to ensure that the two vessels are delivered without further delay.

The Scottish Government also has questions to answer over procurement decisions relating to Ferguson Marine. Audit Scotland's report highlights that ministers awarded a contract to a builder that could not meet the basic contract guarantees. Ministers also signed up to a contract that committed public funds without public accountability. Warnings from Transport Scotland and CMAL to retender the contract were ignored, with ministers pressing on at a cost to the public of £250 million.

Despite their commitment to open government, ministers have failed to make public all the information relating to their decisions on that contract. That is why Labour is calling for a public inquiry into the failings in the procurement of the contract.

The experience of Ferguson Marine emphasises the need for a long-term strategy for Scotland's shipbuilding industry. In March, Audit Scotland called for Transport Scotland to finalise the long-term plan and investment programme for ferries by the end of this year. The Scottish Government must ensure that trade unions and workers are able to input into that process so that what emerges is a truly national ferry procurement and building programme.

We must also begin to think about the long-term governance of our ferry network. The Scottish Tories have called for CMAL to be privatised but that is the wrong approach. Labour wants a new governance framework to be established—one that prioritises the needs of passengers and communities who rely on the ferry network. We need a long-term vision for Scotland's ferry services and I look forward to tomorrow's members' business debate, led by Katy Clark, on that subject.

Ferguson Marine must remain publicly owned but must also receive continuing investment, because the alternative is stark. A failure to invest in Ferguson Marine will cost vital shipbuilding jobs and skills in Scotland. That would be an act of industrial vandalism that the Parliament cannot allow to happen.

17:16

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I was asked during last year's election campaign why I keep speaking about transport. I was surprised that I had to explain that, without good transport links to the mainland and beyond, islands, wherever they are, cannot survive and thrive. The CalMac shambles has left lifeline services in chaos with people unable to get home for days on end and missing important appointments, while businesses are on their knees because they cannot get the stock and materials that they need. The west coast situation is intolerable and protracted, and peoples' lives have been severely disrupted.

I will highlight the Shetland case, on which on-going concerns have been raised repeatedly with the Scottish Government. Shetland is served by one ferry route. Our islands face freight capacity issues and limitations on passenger cabin and car capacity on the overnight crossing.

The seafood sector is responsible for around one third of Shetland's economic output. It generates hundreds of skilled jobs and supports an extensive local supply chain. Findings from Seafood Shetland in 2021 compared Shetland's freight capacity with that of our closest neighbour, Orkney, which has capacity on 80 scheduled sailings per week. Contrast that with Shetland's freight capacity of 24 scheduled sailings per week in 2021. Shetland's capacity is less than a third of that of Orkney, where around 400 more trailers a week could be moved than in Shetland.

The Stewart Building Transport Group commissioned a study that examined the current and short-term future position for freight capacity on the northern isles ferry service. The findings showed that six in 10 northbound sailings are running at 90 per cent capacity, with one in 10 over the allotted capacity. Hauliers are told that there is sufficient capacity across the week, but that does not help to get goods away on Mondays and Tuesdays to meet deadlines further south or bring in northbound freight, including the return of empty trailers, on Sundays or Mondays at the beginning of the working week.

More freight capacity for Shetland's thriving economy is needed now but, until new vessels are introduced on the northern isles route, the charter of an additional freight vessel would be an interim solution. I understand that, in freight terms, the Aberdeen-Lerwick-Aberdeen route is the highest-earning route in the Scottish island ferry network, generating in excess of £10 million per year. Shetland's economy simply cannot grow unless there is the freight capacity to accommodate it. There are yearly pinchpoints, such as during the livestock period, so seasonal capacity must be increased ahead of time to limit disruption.

Shetland is host to two new fish markets in Lerwick and Scalloway, which have the possibility to host 600,000 boxes a year. That potential is yet to be realised because of the pandemic, but it could materialise quickly. Fresh fish cannot wait and must be transported as soon as possible, so increased freight capacity is vital. However, the issue is not just exports. With on-going construction projects contributing nationally to providing clean energy and the development of the nationally important space port, as well as Shetland's role as a hub for the oil and gas industry, capacity is ever more precious.

I have every sympathy with people who live in other islands, such as Arran. Their experiences are familiar to people in Shetland. We must learn from the west coast ferry service scenario. New vessels in northern waters must be appropriate and built or procured in an open process. Islanders do not ask for special treatment, but they ask that their communities be supported and their livelihoods protected. Their contribution to Scotland will be greater as a consequence.

My overall message is clear: island communities throughout Scotland need reliable and resilient transport connections. Greater ferry freight capacity for Shetland now would start to fulfil those needs.

17:20

**Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** For those who live and work on the mainland, it can be hard to understand how important functioning ferry routes are for island communities. Food and supply concerns were at the forefront of people's minds on my recent visit to Benbecula and South Uist. At a time when the cost of living is soaring, the last thing that our island communities need is further price hikes due to goods being in limited supply.

I met people who are alive with innovative ideas to meet the needs of their communities but, as I visited the site for a future deepwater harbour in Lochboisdale, I could not help but sense that the lack of reliability in our ferry services chokes off that innovation. We need to move from our islands being full of potential to being able to deliver on what they have to offer.

To unlock that potential and reverse the on-going march of depopulation, Scotland needs a fully functioning, reliable, resilient and green ferry network that is seen as an essential part of our national public transport network. There has never been a better time to redesign Scotland's ferry networks. Given the recent nationalisation of ScotRail, thanks to the Scottish Government and the Greens, the stage is set for further transformative changes to our transport systems.

Our island communities desperately need new vessels, not least to provide a buffer when another ship needs maintenance. That has been happening far too frequently and causes intolerable disruption to residents and, as we have heard, local businesses, such as in Lochboisdale where the ferry has been out of action for the best part of three months.

However, it is not just about procurement. To get our ferry services fully functioning, we need a comprehensive, long-term marine infrastructure plan that covers ports, harbours, vessels, offshore renewables and all components of Scotland's marine infrastructure. As part of that plan, we could establish three standard sizes for new vessels, so that they can berth at more ports to make it easier for one ferry to substitute for another when it is offline.

We must go further to make our ferries a good green transport option for the 21st century. Significant investment into the sector must be future proofed by improving connections with public transport networks and making our ferries cleaner and greener to run. A constituent recently wrote to me to express her gratitude that there is a new Mull ferry but her disappointment that it runs on diesel while countries such as Norway are already moving towards zero emissions ferries.

It is also vital that we provide free travel on ferries for young people, just as we provide free bus travel for people under 22, as delivered by the Scottish Greens. I have heard many stories of how free bus travel has transformed young people's lives. Let us do that for young people on islands, too.

Finally, we must ensure that decisions about our ferries best serve the people who use them most—there need to be more islanders on the CMAL and CalMac boards. I will work with colleagues in the Government to feed ideas such as those into the upcoming islands connectivity plan and the delivery plan for the strategic transport projects review 2, to make Scotland's ferries an asset for the future of our island nation.

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

17:23

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** It is desperately sad that the Scottish Government's mismanagement has had such a devastating impact on the communities that depend on lifeline ferry services; £250 million has been squandered, and that cost is likely to rise.

As Mercedes Villalba said, the impact on the communities that are served by these ferries is immeasurable. Businesses are losing millions of

pounds due to lack of capacity and cancelled ferries, and island food and fish exports are rotting on the pier, which has a direct impact on the islands' economy. The social cost is immeasurable, which Alex Cole-Hamilton talked about.

The allocation of the contracts to Ferguson Marine should have been a step towards building a thriving shipbuilding industry on the Clyde, but the SNP's mismanagement has delivered nothing but chaos. Instead of putting that right, it now procures ferries from Turkey rather than the Clyde. What are the working conditions in Turkey? Do they comply with fair work practices? What community benefits are being provided by those contracts? As Neil Bibby said, we need a full public inquiry into what went wrong.

In 2019, Tim Hair was appointed as turnaround director in the yard. Emails obtained through freedom of information requests showed that the appointment was rushed through. Tim Hair was paid £2 million to turn around the yard, but the ferries have been delayed yet again. While ministers have come and gone, the First Minister has been a constant presence throughout this fiasco. We need a personal guarantee from her that she will take ministerial responsibility for the delivery of those vessels, with no more delays.

Audit Scotland's damning report highlights how Scottish ministers ignored warnings and awarded the contract to a builder that could not meet basic contract guarantees. Neither Kate Forbes nor Nicola Sturgeon can explain why the normal financial safeguards were not put in place or why they ignored the warnings from CMAL. There is no written evidence as to why ministers pressed ahead and accepted the terms of the contract without a full builder's refund guarantee.

The First Minister says that "the buck stops with" her, but she bears none of the consequences of the huge failure, and she subsequently pointed the finger at Derek Mackay. As Alex Cole-Hamilton said, Jim McColl, the previous owner of Ferguson's, has suggested that the contract was awarded for "political" reasons, so that the SNP could announce it at Nicola Sturgeon's first conference.

We believe that the First Minister must now show leadership and ensure that these ferries are delivered with no further delays and that the reputation of Ferguson's is restored. She must instigate a national ferry procurement and building programme to ensure that CalMac's ageing fleet is renewed and—as Mercedes Villalba highlighted—that the benefits of these contracts remain in Scotland. She must ensure that the structures surrounding our lifeline ferry services are fit for purpose and allow CalMac to work with communities to build the ferries that those

communities need. Finally, we need a public inquiry so that the lessons are learned and we never see a fiasco like this repeated in the future.

17:22

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Two themes have come through loud and clear this afternoon. The first is the litany of failures that have characterised this matter since John Swinney first proudly announced, in 2014, that the SNP would replace 12 ferries for £250 million. Subsequently, that was scaled back to two ferries for £97 million. Those two ferries—the Glen Sannox and hull 802—will not be in service until next year at the earliest.

Those failures include delays in the installation of pipework; up to 939 electrical cable coils that were too short; not installing a ducktail, which reduces resistance and thus fuel use, even though the previous yard owner said six years ago that that was required; not actually running the dual-fuel engines, which now might not even work and are out of warranty—terrifyingly, the minister admitted earlier that he did not even know about that; and not building the bunkering facilities in Ardrossan or Uig that are required for the liquefied natural gas.

**Brian Whittle:** Is my colleague aware that, although the Glen Sannox is due to enter service between Ardrossan and Brodick, the ship is too big to dock in Ardrossan and the Scottish Government is yet to offer a solution to that problem?

**Liam Kerr:** I am aware of that, and the member is absolutely right to be concerned, because I heard at finance question time earlier today that there is not even a budget to carry out the work that is going to be required. I hope that the cabinet secretary will address that in her closing remarks.

All of that comes at a cost of £250 million, which may well rise to £400 million.

The second thread running through the debate is epitomised by the tone of the SNP's amendment. What the amendment and the SNP members who have spoken in the debate, such as Kenny Gibson, have failed to do is accept either agency or responsibility for this shambles. In fact, Ivan McKee let the cat out of the bag in asserting in his amendment

"that much of the recent debate relates to information that has been in the public domain for two years."

I leave aside the fact that some may question the accuracy of that assertion.

Nicola Sturgeon, who ran the same line, followed up by saying:

“it’s just that nobody has chosen to make it what it’s been, and that’s up to the media and opposition politicians.”

The SNP’s case is that we are blowing this out of proportion. That is truly shameful, and it is disrespectful to islanders and the people who are directly suffering the consequences, as Alex Cole-Hamilton rightly pointed out in his opening remarks.

As we have heard, the abdication of responsibility goes right to the top, with the First Minister initially refusing to say who was responsible and who green-lit the contracts, then later throwing Derek Mackay under the bus. When it was pointed out that he was on holiday at the time, Humza Yousaf suggested that it was Keith Brown who signed. Jim McColl, the yard’s former owner, said that the decision to ignore the fact that CMAL could not provide the mandatory refund guarantees was made by one Nicola Sturgeon and that it was John Swinney who signed the cheques. They are all, bar one, senior ministers who sit comfortably in this place now, pointing at one another and muttering, “It wisnae me.” It is, however, Kate Forbes who might have to carry the can—and she was not even here when all of this started.

Speaker after speaker has exposed the rotten culture of deflection, obfuscation and prevarication at the heart of this SNP Government, which gives no one—least of all the islanders who are suffering due to this debacle—any confidence whatsoever that the matter will be sorted any time soon.

The Liberal Democrat motion is absolutely correct to demand both delivery and accountability, which starts with the publication of the project Neptune report, as is called for in the Conservative amendment, and the public inquiry that Neil Bibby demanded earlier. That is why Parliament should agree to the motion and to the Conservative and Labour amendments today—and get this ferry fiasco sorted.

17:31

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes):** As many members have said, for our island communities, ferries are as critical as roads, rail and bus links are on the mainland. They are possibly even more important, because they are nearly always the only route to the islands. They are relied on for access to employment, health provision and education, as well as to see loved ones. Breakdowns and cancellations are deeply regrettable, to put it mildly. In the previous debate on the subject a matter of weeks ago, the transport minister and I apologised unreservedly on two separate occasions to those island communities.

During the Easter recess, I visited constituents by travelling on the very vessels on which they rely. I know that colleagues in the chamber who represent island communities will have done likewise. Those include Alasdair Allan and Kenny Gibson, who mentioned some solutions and suggestions to improve vessel connectivity in their constituencies. Those suggestions are all worthy of urgent consideration by CalMac and Transport Scotland.

Scrutiny in the Parliament is vitally important, which is demonstrated by our having another debate on this important issue. Arguably, scrutiny by the public is even more important, and listening directly to those communities matters enormously.

Over the past few years, we have sought to deliver considerable growth in services, underpinned by significant investment in vessels and infrastructure. We have also identified substantial funds, not least in the most recent budget, to invest further in enhancing the resilience of the fleet, including through the procurement of new vessels. That has already seen orders placed for two new vessels for Islay, as well as investment in ports at Uig, Lochmaddy and Tarbert. That work is already well under way, as are the designs for the small vessel replacement programme.

That brings me to Ferguson Marine. I have already set out the scale of the challenge that we took on when we rescued Ferguson’s from administration in 2019. It is important to note that we did so in order to complete vessels 801 and 802 on behalf of the communities that rely on them. We also saved hundreds of jobs and the future of commercial shipbuilding on the Clyde. It was the right thing to do.

We stand by our commitment to the shipbuilding communities in Inverclyde and to our island communities that rely on the vessels that the yard will deliver. I was pleased that Opposition MSPs had the opportunity to visit the yard a few weeks ago to see the vessels and to hear from the new chief executive about the work that is under way.

The challenges have been great and progress has not been as fast as we would have liked it to be. I have made my views abundantly clear to the chief executive and the chair that the vessels must be delivered. Ultimately, the board is required to deliver on our clear expectations for the business. There are three expectations of the board. First, it must successfully complete the vessels at the fastest achievable pace. Secondly, it must make the yard competitive, productive and efficient. Thirdly, it must win further work on the basis of the yard’s ability to deliver.

I am heartened by reports from those who visited the yard that tangible progress can be



seen. That is in line with the Audit Scotland recommendation, which states:

“The turnaround of FMPG is extremely challenging”

but

“FMPG has implemented some of the significant operational improvements that were required at the shipyard”.

We will drive forward the process to ensure that Ferguson Marine is an efficient and effective shipbuilder.

Before I close, I will turn to the claims about a lack of transparency. There have been two proactive releases of documents. The Government chose to release those documents, of which there are 210 in total. Those have willingly been put into the public domain with the express intention of enhancing the public’s understanding of what we are trying to achieve and the processes that are in place.

The Scottish Parliament’s inquiry was followed by the Audit Scotland report. Those reports are useful. In places, they are difficult to read because of the hugely challenging situation that has been created. Equally, they include clear recommendations, many of which have already been taken forward. Furthermore, lessons have been learned, not least in the most recent procurement exercise and in the way in which the Scottish Government invests in private companies.

Things have not progressed as we might have hoped they would, but progress is being made on arguably the most important element: completing the vessels as quickly as possible. It has taken a mammoth effort by all involved to get the yard moving to build the ships that we need. Much work remains to be done, both to deliver the vessels and to make the yard efficient and competitive. The scale of the challenge is not in question, but we are committed to meeting that challenge for the sake of those who depend on the ferry services. I know that it is a challenge that David Tydeman, the new chief executive of Ferguson Marine, is willing to meet—

**The Presiding Officer:** I ask you to conclude, please, cabinet secretary.

**Kate Forbes:** I will close by saying that we are committed to resolving that.

17:37

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I thought that Kenny Gibson summed up things extremely well when he said that the situation on Arran is “awful” and that it is “chaos”. He demanded urgent action from his own SNP Government. I contrast that with Alasdair Allan, who made not a peep of

criticism of the Government for the delays that directly affect his constituency.

**Dr Allan:** Will the member give way?

**Willie Rennie:** I will give way in a second.

That is just like all the other supine back benchers this afternoon who have not uttered a word of criticism of the Government.

**Dr Allan:** I do not mean to read out my speech all over again, but the member will have heard me criticise the situation with regard to specific routes to my constituency relating to the lack of service, including the lack of service that is currently planned for Tarbert to Uig. I really think that what he said is inaccurate and he might want to reconsider.

**Willie Rennie:** What I said was not inaccurate in any way. There was not one word of criticism by the member about the Government or the delays to the ferries that have led to the situation in his constituency. If he is going to stand up for his constituents, he has to stand up to the Government.

Alex Cole-Hamilton referred to the open Government action plan. I can guarantee that it is a riveting read and I recommend it. As ever, the Government claims that its approach is “world-leading” and pioneering. It boldly states:

“An Open Government ... gives the public information about the decisions it makes ... supports people to understand and influence those decisions ... and—

this is the best bit—

“values and encourages accountability”.

Despite what Ivan McKee said in his opening remarks, the Government has failed on every part of the document. Take project Neptune. The Government agreed to an investigation by Ernst & Young. Its report has been ready for a long time. Have we seen it? Despite repeated promises that we would, no, we have not. If we have an open Government, it should publish that report without delay.

Jamie Halcro-Johnston mentioned Audit Scotland. Audit Scotland said that there was a lack of transparent decision making, and then continued:

“There is insufficient documentary evidence to explain why Scottish ministers accepted the risks and were content to approve the contract award in October 2015.”

Kate Forbes said that documents were public. Audit Scotland disagrees and says that evidence has not been forthcoming. Where is that evidence? If it does not exist, why on earth does it not exist? This was a critical decision involving hundreds of millions of pounds and two important ferries for the constituents of the members who have spoken this afternoon. We have not seen

those documents. If we have an open Government, they should be published without delay.

Then, in a new low, we saw in this very chamber the First Minister point the finger at Derek Mackay, who is no longer here to defend himself. We only later discovered that he was not involved in the sign-off. Perhaps another minister was, but we have still not been told which ministers were responsible. If we have an open Government, we need to know exactly which ministers made that decision. On project Neptune, on Audit Scotland and on Derek Mackay, the SNP Government is mired in secrecy.

The open Government action plan emphasises that there must be accountability but, despite the delays, the cost overruns, the waste of public funds and the betrayal of the shipyard workers and the islanders who are still waiting, no minister has been held accountable. Accountability is at the heart of our democratic system. If ministers think that their jobs are secure no matter how many cock-ups they make, no matter how many mistakes they make and no matter how many things they get wrong, our democracy is fatally undermined.

Yet no minister has resigned. Other politicians have resigned for far less. David McLetchie resigned because of taxi bills. Henry McLeish went as a result of his office rent in Glenrothes. Wendy Alexander went for £995. SNP ministers waste hundreds of millions of pounds, but everyone keeps their job, their salary and their ministerial car. What will it take for ministers to resign? How bad does it have to get? Will the costs have to go to £260 million, £300 million or £400 million, or will they keep their jobs no matter how high the price goes?

If construction is delayed by another three months—or a year or two years—will anybody go? Will the minister resign if future ferry contracts do not go to Ferguson, just like the ones that have gone to Turkey? I bet that they do not. There is not a chance that a minister in this Government is going to resign, because they are more interested in looking after themselves than in serving the public in this country.

The First Minister does not think that it is bad enough yet. Boris Johnson is refusing to resign no matter how many “partygate” fines he gets. However, I did not think that the moral backbone of Boris Johnson was the gold standard to which the SNP aspires, so I think that we should be told: will any minister be held to account for this utter shambles? The ferries are four years late and three times over budget, islanders are without lifeline services and the reputation of a shipyard with a proud heritage has been trashed by terrible leadership. What is the response from the SNP

Government? Just be grateful—it could have been worse.

Let the minister tell the taxpayers that they should be grateful because it could have been worse; tell the care workers who are desperate for a pay rise that it could have been worse; tell the islanders who are stuck at harbours waiting on their broken ferries to be fixed once again that it could have been worse; and tell the shipyard workers who see orders for new ferries—

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Rennie—

**Willie Rennie:** —heading for Turkey because the Government-owned yard did not even bid for them that it could have been worse.

This is arrogance from an SNP Government that has been in power for far too long.

**The Presiding Officer:** You must now conclude, Mr Rennie.

**Willie Rennie:** Ministers should be held to account and they should resign—

**The Presiding Officer:** You must conclude.

**Willie Rennie:** —if they do not get this fixed.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on ferries.

## Business Motions

17:44

### The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-04077, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

#### *Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 26 April 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Reducing the Cost of the School Day for Low Income Families

*followed by* Legislative Consent Motion: British Sign Language Bill - UK Legislation

*followed by* Committee Announcements

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 27 April 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Covid Recovery and Parliamentary Business; Net Zero, Energy and Transport

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Implications for Scotland

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 28 April 2022

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs and Islands

*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 3 May 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Committee Announcements

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 4 May 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm General Questions

2.20 pm First Minister's Questions

3.05 pm Portfolio Questions: Health and Social Care; Social Justice, Housing and Local Government; Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

*followed by* Ministerial Statement

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Approval of SSIs (if required)

4.50 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 25 April 2022, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[George Adam]

#### *Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motions S6M-04078 and S6M-04079, on stage 2 timetables for bills. I call George Adam to move the motions on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

#### *Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 20 May 2022.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Foreign Nationals) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 20 May 2022.—[George Adam]

#### *Motions agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:45

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam to move, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, motions S6M-04080 and S6M-04081, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Prohibition of Smoking Outside Hospital Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.—[*George Adam*]

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

## Decision Time

17:45

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Shona Robison is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liz Smith will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-04050.3, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04050, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on economy: cost of living crisis, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

17:46

*Meeting suspended.*

17:49

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment S6M-04050.3, in the name of Shona Robison, be agreed to. Members should cast their votes now.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Against

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 66, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** Therefore, amendment S6M-04050.1, in the name of Liz Smith, falls.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-04050.2, in the name of Pam Duncan-Glancy, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04050, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is now closed.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app crashed, but I would have voted no.

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

#### For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 23, Against 93, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-04050, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on economy: cost of living crisis, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)

Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

### Against

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

### Abstentions

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 51, Abstentions 1.

### *Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises the increasing pressures facing households during the current cost of living crisis; welcomes the significant actions taken by the Scottish Government to mitigate those pressures within the scope of devolved powers and budgets, and that these include doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week, with a further increase later in 2022, uprating eight Scottish benefits by 6%, mitigating where possible the impact of the UK Government's so-called bedroom tax and benefit cap, substantially increasing free childcare, introducing free bus travel for under-22s, committing to a Fair Fares review, including the pricing of public transport and the availability of concessions and discounts, a £1.8 billion programme of heating and home energy efficiency in the current parliamentary session, an extension of eligibility for Warmer Homes Scotland, the expansion of Home Energy Scotland advice services, and increased grants for area-based schemes; recognises that, after these actions, considerable challenges to cost-of-living pressures remain, resulting from a combination of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and the UK Government's failures to tackle spiralling energy costs, its removal of the £20 Universal Credit top-up, its failure to uprate benefits and pensions in line with current inflation, and its introduction of increased taxes on working people; calls on the UK Government to use its powers to reverse the National Insurance increase, increase benefits, increase all bands of the minimum wage to at least the real living wage, and tackle energy prices and increase UK-wide energy efficiency schemes, and further calls on the UK Government to put in place a windfall tax on excess profits made by large companies, including fossil fuel producers, to provide immediate financial help for families impacted by the cost of living crisis, or to transfer the powers to do so to the Scottish Parliament so that it can fully address the cost of living crisis and meet the needs of the people of Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-04051.3, in the name of Ivan McKee, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04051, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on economy: ferries, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**Against**

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 66, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-04051.1, in the name of Graham Simpson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04051, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is now closed



**Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My system went down. I would have voted yes.

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

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I do not think that my vote registered, but I would have voted no.

**The Presiding Officer:** I can confirm that your vote was recorded, Ms Callaghan.

#### For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysoyl (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 51, Against 66, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-04051.2, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04051, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on economy: ferries, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 51, Against 66, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-04051, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, on economy: ferries, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)

Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**Against**

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Government's decision to deliver vessels 801 and 802 to serve island communities; recognises that saving Ferguson Marine from closure preserved over 300 skilled jobs and maintained commercial shipbuilding on the Clyde; notes with regret the delays to the completion of 801 and 802, but acknowledges

recent progress with the updated schedule; further notes the continued significant investment that the Scottish Government is making to ferry services to support lifeline services and remote communities, including the completion of the procurement of two new vessels to serve Islay; notes that the Scottish Government has made available to the Parliament and published significant information, in line with the commitment to open government, to allow the public to understand and contribute to the debate, with the proactive release of 210 documents, and recognises that much of the recent debate relates to information that has been in the public domain for two years.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to put a single question on two Parliamentary Bureau motions, if no member objects.

The question is, that motions S6M-04080 and S6M-04081, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Prohibition of Smoking Outside Hospital Buildings (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

## Sexism in Football

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The final item of business is a member's business debate on motion S6M-03367, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on sexism in football. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I encourage members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak buttons now, or as soon as possible. I call Joe FitzPatrick to open the debate, for around seven minutes.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament condemns the findings of a recent investigation, undertaken by the *Courier and Press & Journal*, which, it believes, shows the scale of sexist abuse facing those involved in women's football in Scotland; notes with concern that the investigation found that 60% of female respondents had experienced sexism in football, and that sexism was the most commonly encountered form of abuse experienced by female players; highlights that, according to the investigation, just 8% of respondents believe that the football industry does enough to reduce discriminatory behaviour towards women; notes that 86% of respondents think that increasing media coverage of women's football could attract more people to the sport; welcomes increased participation in women's football in Scotland, including in Dundee; understands that the number of registered female players in Scotland increased by 21% during 2019; notes the physical and mental health benefits of participation in sport; commends the work of HerGameToo which, it understands, strives to support, empower and progress women's football; strongly believes that discrimination of any kind has no place in sport; applauds journalists Sophie Goodwin and Stephen Stewart for conducting this important work, and notes the calls for action to be taken now to stamp out what it sees as the culture of misogyny in football.

18:09

**Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP):** I am grateful to members from across the chamber for supporting the motion.

I pay tribute to journalists Sophie Goodwin and Stephen Stewart for their investigation, which has highlighted the serious issues that are encountered by female footballers in Scotland. I will start by laying out some of its shocking findings. Sixty per cent of female respondents said that they have experienced sexism in football, and just 8 per cent of respondents said that they believe that football does enough to reduce discriminatory behaviour towards women. Those are findings that none of us should be willing to accept—as, I am sure, members here would agree.

It is critical that we call out sexism, and not just in football or other sport, but in all walks of life. We should be under no illusion: sexism is a societal issue, and not one that is present only in football. Sport has always provided a platform for unity and for social justice, so I believe and hope that sport

can be part of the solution to not only sexism, but to other societal prejudices including racism and sectarianism.

Before I turn to the challenges in more detail, I note that it is important to welcome the progress that has been made in women's football in Scotland. It is fantastic to see interest in the women's game growing domestically and internationally. It is encouraging that our women's national team is now playing home games at Hampden. Just last week, 7,804 fans attended Scotland's women's world cup qualifier with Spain, which was a record attendance for a competitive home game. I am sure that members across the chamber will join me in wishing the team every success in their remaining world cup qualifiers.

I also want to mention some of the women's football teams in Dundee—Dundee United Women's Football Club, Dryburgh Athletic Community Club, Dundee City West Women's Football Club and Dundee St James Football Club. They have enjoyed some significant success of late. Dundee United have been promoted from Scottish women's premier league 2 and Dryburgh Athletic won the championship cup. Both huge achievements have helped to inspire greater participation. However, we must accept that the women's game—as do women, in fact—faces barriers that exist for no reason other than that the players are women.

So, what steps can be taken to eradicate sexism from football? That is a big question, but there is definitely not just one simple answer. It is important that we recognise that each and every one of us needs to lead by example: people need to take personal responsibility and adjust their behaviour. I am firmly of the belief that men, specifically, need to take responsibility and change our attitudes to football and female participation. We need to call out misogyny and sexism wherever we see it. That might be on social media, at football matches or elsewhere in society. We all need to tackle it head on, but it is important that we do so in a way that also calls on men to be part of the solution. Most clubs, players and fans see the harm, but do not know what to do, so we must work together across society to make progress. Football clubs also have a role to play.

Everyone in the chamber will be familiar with the David Goodwillie transfer earlier this season, which led to Raith Rovers Women and Girls Football Club severing ties with the men's club and reforming as McDermid Ladies. Incidents such as that undoubtedly heavily impact on female participation in sport. There was, rightly, widespread condemnation of the transfer and McDermid Ladies have my full support. I am sure that members across the chamber will agree. Sadly, the player in question then looked set to

return to Clyde Football Club, which resulted in Clyde Ladies FC deciding to fold.

Aileen Campbell, who is the chief executive officer of Scottish Women's Football, expressed concern and called into question the decision making, which she said could see

“women side-lined or women's clubs treated as an afterthought.”

She also made what I think is a crucial point, which was that women's football is growing but it is fragile. As she put it,

“Without meaningful support, investment and respect women's football will never realise its full potential.”

I welcome the Scottish Football Association's “Accelerate our game” strategy, which seeks to increase participation to over 25,000 registered players by 2025. The ambition requires investment and it requires women being in leadership roles. Football must be equally accessible to all.

Representation is also important. As things stand, women are significantly underrepresented on professional football club boards, which is reflected in the boards of the SFA and the Scottish Professional Football League. We need to do more to get more women into senior roles in football clubs. That would give a bigger voice to women's football, promote greater participation by women and girls and help clubs to play their part in addressing sexism.

We also need to make progress to ensure that women are represented in the media, by building on the success of Jane Lewis, Leanne Creighton, Joelle Murray, Gemma Fay and others to ensure that broadcasters play their part in showcasing women's football. Eighty-six per cent of respondents to Sophie Goodwin's and Stephen Stewart's investigation said that increasing media coverage of women's football would attract more people into the sport. If you can't see it, you can't be it, so representation and role models matter.

My final point is about the role that education can play. Scotland's women's team captain, Rachel Corsie, has said that

“she believes abusive behaviour is a wider reflection of our society and the best way to stop such incidents is to continue to educate and call out any forms of abuse.”

We have seen great work recently from campaigns such as HerGameToo and Police Scotland's “That guy”, which ignite a powerful conversation across Scotland and call on men to make a difference by taking a hard look at our attitudes and behaviour at home, at work and when socialising. We need to build on the success and momentum of such campaigns.

Specifically, I would like clubs across Scotland to facilitate educational workshops to address sexism in football. Graham Goulden, who is a

former chief inspector and key member of the Scottish violence reduction unit, facilitates workshops that adopt a bystander approach. He has worked with a range of organisations and sports clubs on how they can identify warning signs of unhealthy behaviours, and on how to empower them to use their leadership roles to promote greater choice and change. I believe that a collaboration between Graham and Scottish football clubs could be incredibly fruitful, so I encourage football clubs to reach out to him to discuss how they could work together. I hope that the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport will agree to discuss with me how the Scottish Government could help to facilitate that.

I conclude by once more thanking members from across the chamber for supporting the motion and allowing us to have the debate.

I truly believe that by working together we can tackle sexism and misogyny in football and in wider society. We all know the benefits of playing sport—it improves physical and mental health, tackles isolation and loneliness and boosts self-esteem. Those benefits should be available to everyone, regardless of gender, race or ability.

I look forward to hearing colleagues' contributions and to hearing from the minister about the Scottish Government's work to tackle all forms of discrimination in sport, and to increase female participation.

18:17

**Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** I am grateful to be contributing to this members' business debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. I thank Joe Fitzpatrick for bringing the debate to the chamber.

For centuries, women have had to fight for recognition in every aspect of life. Sport is no different from any other aspect. Women's participation in football can be traced as far back as the 17th century. Prior to its official recognition in 1971 by the Scottish Football Association, women's football had faced a formal ban that was largely due to the perception that the sport was too manly, or too dangerous and physically demanding for women.

However, there has been progress. Thanks to the work of organisations such as HerGameToo and local grass-roots teams, women's football has record levels of participation, record attendances at domestic and international levels and record visibility. However, the statistics that are detailed in the motion about the sexism and abuse that are experienced by female players is concerning.

Unfortunately, outdated attitudes to women's participation in football still exist. In fact, as

recently as last week, the Northern Ireland women's football boss made headlines when he said that second goals in women's football come so soon after the first because

"women are more emotional than men."

Such language damages women's football and undermines its credibility.

How do we change perceptions? A survey by the Scottish Football Supporters Association and HerGameToo revealed that one in four female football fans has suffered misogynistic or sexist abuse at Scottish football matches; that 61 per cent had witnessed online sexist abuse; that 31 per cent had experienced misogyny online; and that 12 per cent did not feel safe, or even fairly safe, while discussing men's football games in social settings. Women are actively being discouraged from following the sport, never mind participating in it. We must tackle that, first.

A survey that was conducted by *The Press and Journal* found that in 74 per cent of cases that were reported by female respondents no action was taken. First and foremost, in order to tackle abuse and misogyny there is a need for clear reporting mechanisms and appropriate punishments. Secondly, more women should be part of decision-making bodies in women's football, so that policies reflect women and girls. Last, but not least, stereotypes must be dealt with. That starts with empowering women and girls at a young age and ensuring that women's football is visible to girls as they grow up.

A main operator in my region has said that there is a stark difference between uptake of girls football in more affluent areas and uptake in more deprived areas, and said that fees, kits and boots can be barriers to girls joining the sport. They also stated that there is a need for more funding. I therefore welcome the £2 million from the United Kingdom Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which will open up opportunities for increased participation by underprivileged and underrepresented demographics in Scotland, including opportunities in girls football.

In conclusion, Presiding Officer, I say that sport is key to improving our physical and mental health, and that no one should be discouraged from it. Women should be able to pursue football as a hobby or professionally, without facing abuse, misogyny or sexism.

18:21

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** I thank my SNP colleague, Joe FitzPatrick, for bringing this incredibly important debate to the chamber.

All my life I have been a follower of football. I support and have coached youth teams at my

local team, Hibernian Football Club. I coached professionally at Hibs for 10 years and witnessed the growth of the girls and women's game in that time. I have raised my son and daughter with the same enthusiasm for the game. My passion for the sport led me to completing my Union of European Football Associations coaching qualifications. My son, Scott, coaches professionally in England and my daughter Kirsty, like me, is a season ticket holder at Easter Road.

As a lifelong fan, I have witnessed and felt the exhilarating joy, as well as the overwhelming dismay, that football brings. I have lived through moments in footballing history that make me proud to be a football fan, but with that pride comes deep disappointment. That disappointment is because the sport that I and many other Scots have cherished for a lifetime has a darker side to its culture—one of racism, sectarianism, sexism and misogyny. Today's debate is to discuss the latter two problems.

Sexism and misogyny are deep rooted in football. Indeed, since its creation, football has been seen and understood as being a lads game. It is in the laddish culture that surrounds football that casual sexism proliferates and misogynistic attitudes are not just tolerated, but are entrenched. How many of my male colleagues have been present during conversations in which women have been trying to have a well-reasoned debate on football only to be asked, "Do you even know the offside rule?" or to be met with the classic, "What do you know about football? You're a woman?" I can almost guarantee that we have all been in that situation.

Sadly, the report by *The Press and Journal* that has been referred to merely confirms what we already knew—only, it is at a scale that we had, perhaps, underestimated.

Despite the great strides that have been made by the women's game, many players run a gauntlet of sexist hate, sexualised comments, homophobia and body shaming simply for playing the game that they, and we, love. That is backed up by the Scottish Football Supporters Association and HerGameToo survey, which found that one in four female fans has experienced sexist or misogynistic comments while attending matches.

What is even more concerning to me, though, is the tolerance of sexism and misogyny that breeds violence. That was evidenced recently by Raith Rovers' decision to sign David Goodwillie, despite his having been ruled to be a rapist. That decision was defended by the club as being one that was

"First and foremost ... football related".

What message does that send out to the wider Scottish footballing community? Is it that you can

rape a woman then return to elite football just a few years later?

To my mind, football clubs should be leading by example and showing fans and the wider sporting community that behaviours that enable and breed violence against women and girls are not acceptable. Women and girls of all ages in Scotland should have the right to feel confident and safe when sharing their opinions about football, online and in real life, without fear of sexist or misogynist abuse.

Finally, Scotland should strive to be a country in which women are encouraged to forge careers in the football industry without worry about discrimination, unequal opportunities and pay, and abuse in the workplace. Football, as a sport, can lead by example. I have already been in discussions with the minister about how our football clubs can take such an initiative forward and I look forward to continuing discussions. The time for action to be taken to stamp out the culture of misogyny and sexism in Scottish football is now.

18:25

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I am a football fan and I am also a woman. I am not just a casual football fan either; I am a season ticket holder for my local team, Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club, and I have travelled internationally to follow the Scottish women's team.

When I was a girl, however, I was not a football fan for a number of reasons. First, I was not welcome to play. In physical education, I was shuffled off to the red ash and handed a hockey stick instead. At lunchtime kickabouts, I was chased away by the boys who felt that the only way a girl should be involved in football is when they decided it would be an effective weapon for hitting the back of their head. That attitude is too often carried into adulthood.

Secondly, I thought, and I understand why many share this fear, that all football was like the type of football I saw on the news. I thought that all football fans were like the loud, violent men who raged drunk through the streets when certain derbies were on. I did not know there was a whole lot more to Scottish football. It was not until I had left school that I was able to discover the joy of things like pies and Bovril, Partick Thistle Football Club's Kingsley rocking up on to the pitch, or watching Falkirk Football Club get relegated. Scottish football is rich and ridiculous and many people miss out on the delight of it because of the darker, often more visible, side putting them off.

It is very clear to me that a lot of people—a lot of men—use football as an excuse for unacceptable behaviour. They use a big game as an excuse to

drink too much, cause a disturbance and sometimes harm each other and other people, because that is just what you do. It is not just what you do and it is a problem. The attitude that some take towards football in Scotland ruins it for other people and it puts folk—often women and girls—off taking an interest or becoming footballers themselves.

The phrase “culture of misogyny” in Joe Fitzpatrick’s motion is spot on. I struggle with discussing sexism, misogyny and related issues within one part of society because, as Joe FitzPatrick said, it is an issue everywhere. We talk about sexism in politics and in the workplace, and they are examples of a widespread problem that exists everywhere in society being magnified by problematic attitudes that are concentrated in a particular place. There is no denying that football in this country is subject to that magnification and those problematic attitudes.

It is therefore not surprising to me that women players have reported to *The Courier* and *The Press and Journal* investigation being subject to abuse, some of which was horrific, and all of which was unacceptable, simply for playing their game.

Earlier this year, I was heartened by the comments made by Inverness Caledonian Thistle when it stepped in to save Thistle Girls Football Club, a local team that would have become dormant without fast and positive action. The club stated its commitment to promoting and growing football for women and girls in the Highlands. It was a very proud moment for the club and it is hard to overstate the importance of such statements in solidifying the place of women in the game.

Since being elected last year, and despite the rain that day, one of my favourite engagements was attending the Scottish Women’s Football’s Highlands and Islands League cup final in Nairn. It was a cracking game between Clachnacuddin Women Football Club and the successful Sutherland Women’s Football Club. If there was ever a perfect display of why women’s football must be supported, it was in that game, because it is our game too.

However, we cannot ignore the fact only 8 per cent of the respondents to the investigation said that they felt that enough was being done by the football industry to reduce discriminatory behaviour. More has to be done. I am grateful to Joe FitzPatrick, to Sophie, Steven and to all others who are working to address the issue because it is our game, too and, right now, we need the support.

18:28

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Joe FitzPatrick for bringing this important debate to the chamber.

I must start by reiterating the appalling figures found by *The Press and Journal* and *The Courier* showing that 70 per cent of female respondents to the survey had experienced discrimination in football, and that 60 per cent had experienced sexism. In both cases, that is quite a clear majority and it shows that discriminatory behaviour towards women in football remains prominent in modern day Scotland.

We cannot and must not stand by and accept that. We cannot let sexism and discrimination pass as acceptable because it is said in the context of football. We must call it out for what it is: discrimination against women in a male-dominated field.

The recent progress of women’s football is down to the players, their families, coaches, supporters and others who have worked so incredibly hard to obtain for women’s football the respect and attention that it deserves, and which other members have mentioned this evening. Indeed, next season, the Scottish Women’s Premier League 1 comes under the responsibilities of the Scottish Professional Football League, which is an important step for clubs and players alike.

The standard of women’s football in Scotland is high, with clubs such as Glasgow City Football Club attracting international attention in the latter stages of the Championship League, and Scotland’s national team, led by Shelley Kerr, qualifying for its first ever FIFA women’s world cup, and performing so impressively on the biggest stage of them all.

That shows the high level of performance, talent and dedication that has brought the women’s game in Scotland to where it is today. To ensure that the game continues to develop, we must do all that we can to reduce the number of people who are experiencing discrimination and sexism in the sport. We must all do better. However, that starts not just by increasing the representation of women on the field of play but also in the dugout, the stand, the boardroom and refereeing, as has been mentioned by other members. Those are all parts of the game in which women remain a very small minority.

Men absolutely do have a role to play as coaches and referees in women’s football, but we should seek to increase the number of women who hold such roles in years to come.

At grassroots level, we see clubs up and down the country giving women and girls the opportunity to play. Last summer, I had the pleasure of visiting



Nithsdale Wanderers Football Club to see the excellent work that it is doing to promote the women's game in the south of Scotland. I know that such work is being replicated by communities across Scotland.

As the motion states, 86 per cent of respondents think that increasing media coverage of women's football could attract more people to the sport, but it is clubs like Nithsdale Wanderers and others where most will start their careers before going on to reach the heights of the elite divisions. For many, it need not be about reaching those high levels in the game. As with all sports, football brings with it significant physical and mental health benefits before all else and our first focus should be on improving the mental health of the population by encouraging girls and women to get involved in competitive yet fair team sport. Time and time again, we have been made aware of the positive impact that such involvement can have on a person.

Sexism has no place in any sport. It has no place in football. It is her game too. The findings of the investigation referenced in the motion are a stark reminder that, despite the progress that we have seen, we still have a long way to go. The public, football authorities, the media and the Parliament have a role to play in kicking sexism out of football once and for all.

On behalf of Scottish Labour, I thank the member for bringing this important debate to the chamber. We will always be on the side of women in this fight.

18:33

**Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** I begin by congratulating Joe FitzPatrick on securing the debate. This is an important issue and I am glad that it is being raised in Parliament this evening.

In order to prepare properly for today, I thought that it would be beneficial to meet with the best women's team in Scotland at the best club in Scotland, Ayr United Football Club.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** I have to disagree with my colleague Siobhian Brown, because my daughter is vice-captain of Westdyke Ladies Football Club. I do not think that I could let that one slide, I am afraid.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Brown, I am glad that that was an intervention and not a point of order.

**Siobhian Brown:** Thank you. I would like to take this chance to thank Ayr United ladies team and assistant head coach, Clare Docherty, for allowing me to meet them to learn more about women in football and hear their stories. Needless

to say, I do not think that I will be joining them to train soon.

When I read to the team the motion that is being debated tonight, it really resonated with them. Each and every woman and girl had faced sexism in football in some shape or form. One girl told me that when she was playing at an away game, a member of the men's away team shouted at her, "Get back to the kitchen"—a disgraceful comment.

Sexism in women's football is not always so obvious. For example, the women's team at Ayr United always had to pay for and fundraise for their own kits. When Clare first started, she was handed a box of men's hand-me-down kits and told to make do. Some of the shorts were three sizes too big. Currently, the kit that the women's team is using is mismatched with an old sponsor. When speaking to the women, they highlighted to me that they felt that, when a man plays football, he signs his contract and just turns up to train and play. Everything gets handed to him. Meanwhile, the ladies have to fundraise and work for just about everything.

The good news is that, next season, the ladies team at Ayr United will wear the same kit as the men, which will present the team as a professional and serious force. Under the new owner and chairman, David Smith, the future is bright for the ladies team and Ayr United as a whole.

Last Saturday, for the first time ever, the women and men came together for a joint awards night that recognised the achievements of both groups. I congratulate Clare Docherty, Katie Patterson and Jodie Barbour on the awards that they won last Saturday.

Under David Smith, there have been much closer links between the players and the club, with bold and ambitious goals for growth and more support. The club is now offering to pay for a head coach for the ladies team. Previously this was a voluntary role that required no experience. Now Scottish Women's Football has put in place guidelines that require all coaches to meet certain criteria.

During the Easter break, Ayr United academy ran a football camp to encourage more young people to take up the sport. There was an excellent turnout of girls. It is clear that they are the next generation who will lead women's sport to a bright future. A player who has been at the club for 15 years told me that what is happening now is the most change that has ever happened and that it always felt like the boys were the priority and the ladies got whatever was left over. Put simply, all those positive developments would not have happened without Clare Docherty in charge. I hope that all clubs across Scotland will follow Ayr's example.

There is still so much work to be done. People will often say that women are just not as good as men at football, or that they are not as entertaining to watch as the men. Well, of course, they would think that with all the structural barriers that are put in the way of girls and the lack of attention that women's football receives. The amount of money in men's football is not even comparable with that in women's.

As I say, things are improving. People are tuning in to watch the Scotland women's team play, and conversations have started about ticket sales and pay. Women do not want special treatment or recognition. They just want the same chances that the men get on a level playing field. Women's and men's football teams are an important source of local and national pride, so let us make Scotland a world leader in sporting equality and success.

18:37

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** I thank my colleague Joe FitzPatrick for bringing this important matter to the chamber.

I did not intend to speak, Presiding Officer, so I thank you for being able to take me. As the convener for the cross-party group on the future of football in Scotland, I felt that it was important for me to speak, especially having heard the powerful speeches that have been made. I am conscious when convening the cross-party group that there is not always a woman's or girl's voice there. I work hard with the secretariat, particularly Paul McNeill of the SFA, to ensure that that happens. Aileen Campbell is a relatively new member of the group in her new role, and she is a welcome addition to the group and to Scottish women's football generally.

The main point that Joe FitzPatrick made was that men need to challenge ourselves. We hear that a lot in the chamber and we need to do it. I am challenging myself. I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s and played football all day and every day. Any man who is still in the chamber for the debate or elsewhere who plays football and does not acknowledge what I am about to say would not be telling the truth—Presiding Officer, I know that you play football so perhaps you understand where I am coming from.

I say sorry to Emma Roddick because there were Emma Roddicks who wanted to play football with us and we said, "No, you can't play because football is not for girls." We were kids. It takes becoming an adult to realise that that was wrong, but we need to own up to that. We need to ensure that my two sons and my daughter, for example, do not find themselves in the same position.

We are changing and it is better. I am talking about what happened in the 1980s and 1990s and I am obviously showing my age by saying that. Emma Roddick is not in that age group with me, but she still had a similar experience.

Girls football is now thriving. I have taken both my boys to a football academy. It is not quite 50:50 yet but the numbers of girls attending the academies is growing. There are really good girls football teams across Coatbridge and Chryston. Coatbridge Rovers have a thriving girls community. My kids, their friends and people I talk to see no difference. We should be led by them.

I have a really good example. I have started taking my older boy, who is eight, to Scotland international games. We have been to a couple of men's games and to Scotland versus Hungary, and if I had not been on holiday last week, we would have gone to Scotland versus Spain. We were at the Scotland versus Hungary game, which Scotland won 2-1 after a goal by Rachel Corsie with the last kick of the ball. My wee boy, who had, at only eight, been to two Scotland games before, said that that was the best of the lot. To pick up on Siobhian Brown's point, perhaps those who say that women's football is not as good as men's should talk to him, because he will certainly put them right.

On a more serious note, the difficulties that women experience are still very obvious. Members might have heard about an example of that in Lanarkshire at the weekend, when there were scenes after the Motherwell-Hamilton women's game. I am looking at my phone to get the newspaper headline, which says:

"The most disgusting scenes seen at a football match in 50 years'—Motherwell FC and Police Scotland investigating after spectators allegedly attacked by balaclava clad gang outside Fir Park after Motherwell women's game on Saturday".

That was the women's first game at Fir park. The story makes me really angry. Shame on those men. The women have experienced enough to be able to get on to that field and to play, so for that to happen to them and to fans makes me angry. I spoke to Clare Adamson before deciding to speak in the debate and told her that I would mention that. It is appalling and highlights what has been said by other members about the difficulties and barriers faced by women and girls in the sport.

I know from my time on the cross-party group on the future of football in Scotland that the SFA is working to combat that. Scottish Para-Football recently won an award from UEFA for its grass-roots initiatives on disability. That shows that we can break down barriers in Scotland, so we can continue to do that when it comes to women and girls in sport and in football.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call the minister to respond to the debate.

18:42

**The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd):** I thank Joe FitzPatrick for his motion on this very important issue. The debate has covered a lot of ground and, after hearing the contributions, I am both greatly encouraged by the progress that we as a nation have made and under no illusion that a lot of work remains to be done.

I firmly believe that sport should be a safe space for people, whether they are participating or watching. I want to create and provide every opportunity for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Scotland, no matter their background. That is a critical part of improving the health of the nation. As we look to rebuild sport in Scotland following the impact of the pandemic, we must all support women and girls to return safely to sport.

The Scottish Government understands the importance of sport and physical activity for women and girls in Scotland and the positive impact that sport has on their physical, mental and social health and on their wellbeing. Working together is vital to the recovery of the sector as we come out of the pandemic and re-engage people from across society in sport and physical activity.

Football is a great example and can be a leader, as many here have said tonight, given its iconic position in Scottish society. The growth of women's and girls football in Scotland is really encouraging. Significant steps forward have been taken to support that and to improve the visibility and reach of football.

The Scottish women's national team now plays at Hampden and delivered a record crowd for a women's qualifier in Scotland. Considerable efforts are being made to professionalise and commercialise the women's elite game through the new governance model within the Scottish Professional Football League. That includes the aim to elevate female role models via the enhanced visibility of the game. Under the new Scottish women's premier league model, there will be further enhanced visibility of women's football through broadcast and online channels, making more matches available to more people.

On participation, in 2021, UEFA playmakers in partnership with Disney launched 30 centres across the country aimed at encouraging five to eight-year-old girls to play football. Six of those centres were in areas of high deprivation and were delivered free, providing the opportunity for 180 girls to play football in their local areas.

Female-only coach education courses are being delivered alongside the existing curriculum, and female-only referees courses have been introduced: 25 participants will attend the Scottish women's national team match against Spain later this month as part of one of those first-ever courses.

Those are all very positive steps and are greatly welcomed. However, sexism and misogyny are underlying societal problems and the Scottish Government places huge importance on tackling them. Gender equality is at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision for a fairer Scotland, where women and girls have, and are empowered to exercise, equal rights and opportunities, have equitable access to economic resources and decision making and live their lives free from all forms of violence, abuse and harassment.

As part of our extensive gender equality work, we established the gender equality task force in education and learning; published "A fairer Scotland for women: gender pay gap action plan"; are developing plans to incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women into Scots law; and are implementing the recommendations from the First Minister's national advisory council on women and girls.

As part of our £100 million three-year commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, we have created a new delivering equally safe fund, which will direct £38 million to projects that focus on early intervention and prevention, as well as support services.

Violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights, and the Scottish Government has taken robust action to tackle sexual offending by improving our laws, encouraging more victims of recent and historical cases to come forward and improving support. We also set up the misogyny working group, which was tasked with evaluating how the Scottish criminal justice system deals with misogyny, including looking at whether there are gaps in the law.

As the First Minister said in Parliament on international women's day, too many women live

"in perennial fear of harassment, abuse, domestic and sexual violence"

and

"it is not women who need to change. What must change is a culture in which prejudice, sexism and misogyny still thrive."

She continued:

"a society in which women do not feel safe is not one in which we can ever be truly equal."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 2022; c 14-15.]

**Jackie Dunbar:** Does the minister agree that small changes can help, too? Tonight, I have heard members speaking about the Scottish football team and the Scottish women's football team. We should call it the Scottish men's football team and the Scottish women's football team to make it more equal. Small changes like that are a beginning, although definitely not the end.

**Maree Todd:** Certainly. I am all for team Scotland. The women's team and the men's team should absolutely be regarded equally. They give us great heart when they are playing well and devastate us when things go wrong. I am more than happy to make those small changes that build up to a bigger picture.

We need to challenge unacceptable male behaviour and better protect women from it. Scotland has led the way by creating a zero tolerance position on domestic abuse by creating the first domestic abuse offence that recognises coercive and controlling behaviours in law. Baroness Helena Kennedy QC's working group on misogyny recently published its groundbreaking report. The Government welcomes that report's recommendations in principle and we will respond formally after giving full consideration to the recommendations.

I mention those issues because it is clear that we are talking about a problem that is not only seen in football but widely witnessed across all sectors of society. I have regular conversations with all the sports bodies, as we have a responsibility to tackle those issues and take steps to make positive changes.

Football is just one of many sports, but—oh my goodness—it has a powerful presence, and it can lead the way for good and demonstrate the change that is badly needed.

I recently had a very useful meeting with representatives from Borussia Dortmund to learn about the excellent work that it has done to address antisemitism in the fan base and the wider city, and I will look to implement the learning from that in tackling equalities issues here in Scotland. I also met Kyniska Advocacy, which is a strong voice in advocating for sport across the UK to be safe and equal, and for all sportspeople to be celebrated, protected and respected. I share its ambition of making sport as safe as possible for everyone. I will be more than happy to take up Joe FitzPatrick's invitation to meet to explore the potential for educational workshops to catalyse change.

I reiterate that, as the minister for sport, the issue of tackling sexism in sport is very close to my heart. I am absolutely determined that we will encourage more women and girls to participate in sport, and that they will be safe in doing so. I am

hopeful. A generation after I experienced the view that girls cannot play football, Emma Roddick experienced that view. At the recent Cabinet meeting with children and young people, I was told by girls that that was one of the things that they were told they could not do. I would like to look forward to a future in which no girl is told that she cannot play football.

I thank all the members who have contributed to tonight's discussion, and I again thank Joe FitzPatrick for bringing the debate to Parliament.

*Meeting closed at 18:52.*

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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