



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Thursday 29 September 2022**

**Session 6**



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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 29 September 2022

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

## General Question Time

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Good morning. The first item of business is general question time.

### Educational Institute of Scotland (Industrial Action Ballot)

1. **Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recent ballot for industrial action by members of the Educational Institute of Scotland trade union. (S6O-01404)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** Industrial action in schools is in no one's interest, least of all that of pupils, parents and carers, who have already faced significant disruption over the past three years.

It is disappointing that the unions have rejected the latest pay offer. If they had accepted the offer of 5 per cent teachers would have received a cumulative pay increase of 21.8 per cent since 2018.

The Government has a strong record of support for teachers, and we are absolutely committed to supporting a fair pay offer through the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers, which is the body that negotiates teachers' pay and conditions of service.

**Paul Sweeney:** The cabinet secretary will be well aware that teachers are not the only public sector workers who have been forced to look to industrial action over pay and conditions. This year alone, cleansing and refuse workers have taken industrial action, railway workers are still taking industrial action, and healthcare workers look set to take industrial action for the first time in their history. Now it looks as though teachers will do the same.

When will the Government get its head out of the sand, start treating workers in the public sector with some respect and actually pay them what they deserve in order to keep ahead of inflation?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** As the member will be well aware, the Government is absolutely committed to delivering a fair settlement for public sector workers. That has been demonstrated in

the work that has been going on, particularly in the wider local government family.

I say to the member that the Scottish Government already has a fully committed budget and it has used reserves in full to deliver the 2022-23 budget. There is no capacity to borrow to meet pay pressures and we are not permitted to raise taxes in year. Therefore, as the Deputy First Minister has outlined to Parliament, a range of savings have already been made to enable us to increase the pay offers to public sector workers and to mitigate the cost crisis.

To fund any increased pay offer to teachers, further cuts to existing commitments would have to be made. That work is on-going, and I am determined to ensure that we have a good, fair and collaborative discussion with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the unions as we take forward the matter in what is a very financially difficult and challenging time.

### Cost of Living (Support)

2. **Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is, regarding the impact in Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale, to United Kingdom Government announcements regarding support for people facing poverty as a result of the rising cost of living and inflationary energy costs. (S6O-01405)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison):** Scotland is facing the most severe economic upheaval in a generation, which is significantly impacting people, businesses, public services and the third sector across our country.

The Scottish Government has repeatedly urged the UK Government to focus its efforts on those who are most impacted. That did not happen in last week's mini-budget, which instead caused further economic chaos, which will lead more people into hardship. It is clear that the UK Government does not recognise the scale of the struggle for many households, who are already facing a winter unable to afford essentials such as food and heating their homes.

**Christine Grahame:** Since lodging my question, as the cabinet secretary said, the pressures on my constituents have been compounded by the terrifying economic policies of Liz Truss, with the value of the pound plummeting—which adds more cost to all imports, including food—and interest rates skyrocketing. Does the cabinet secretary therefore share my additional concerns for my rural constituents, who were already paying prices that are higher than those in urban areas?

**Shona Robison:** Yes, I do. This morning, I met the Poverty and Inequality Commission and people with lived experience from urban and rural Scotland. People are terrified and angry. We discussed the fact that it feels as though the UK Tory Government has effectively declared war on the poor, with tax cuts for the rich; bankers' bonuses; inflation and interest rates impacting negatively on costs; going after people who are on universal credit and who are already working; and, now, massive cuts to public sector budgets to pay for all of the mistakes that it made last week.

We need full powers, not just fiscal flexibility, to tackle poverty and protect people from the current cost of living crisis—[*Interruption.*]. I would not utter a word were I on the Conservative benches, by the way, given the state of the economy and what you are doing to poor people. I do not want to hear anything from those benches today about poor people—not a word. You do not have the right to come here and talk about poor people at all. It is outrageous. Christine Grahame is quite right to highlight what is happening to her rural constituents, but it is happening to everybody across this country and, in particular, to the poor. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves.

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members to speak through the chair at all times.

#### **NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Meetings)**

3. **Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care last met with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and what issues were discussed. (S6O-01406)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** We last met on 26 September and discussed matters of importance to the local populace.

**Neil Bibby:** The last time that the cabinet secretary visited the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley was in March this year. Since his visit, things have gone from bad to worse. Even fewer patients are now being seen at accident and emergency within four hours: the average for the six months since his visit is under 60 per cent, while in March it was over 66 per cent.

The national health service recovery plan clearly is not working, and nearly one in five beds has been cut at the hospital over the past 10 years. Staff have very serious concerns about services and the patients that they are caring for.

What action will the cabinet secretary take directly for the RAH now to reverse that appalling decline and to ensure that people can access the healthcare that they need?

**Humza Yousaf:** Neil Bibby raises some very important points indeed. As he knows, when I was at the RAH, I also met a number of staff and staff representatives. I am grateful to the staff at the RAH. Data on the RAH that was published last week shows performance improving from the week before, when it was not at acceptable levels at all. The data recorded that the number of 12-hour-long waits had significantly reduced from the week before, as had eight-hour waits. I am really grateful to the staff for what they have done.

Next week, I will come to Parliament to give details of our winter plan. We will continue to invest in staffing. In Greater Glasgow and Clyde, for example, there has been a significant increase in staff since last year—both registered staff and healthcare support workers, who are helping on the social care side, where there is significant pressure, too. I will continue to engage with staff and to expand the workforce. We have record levels of staff working in our NHS under this Government. I will update Parliament fully next week.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** During yesterday's meeting of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, the medical director of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Dr Jennifer Armstrong, raised concerns with MSPs about significant impacts on mental health and primary care services as more families are pushed into food and fuel poverty.

Does the cabinet secretary share those concerns? Does he also agree that the United Kingdom Government needs to use the economic levers at its disposal to protect households that are struggling to pay their bills and heat their homes, instead of leaving it to the Scottish healthcare system to pick up the pieces?

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes, I agree. I am not sure why there are moans and groans coming from those on the Conservative benches. As Bill Kidd rightly says, that issue was raised by Dr Jennifer Armstrong. It is fair to say that the cost crisis—the UK Government's economic vandalism—is a public health crisis. There is no doubt about that whatsoever. People have to choose between heating and eating, and either choice will leave them worse off with regard to their health.

This Government will step up and do what we can in terms of anti-poverty measures. We will look to mitigate as much as we possibly can. However, we know that the meaningful levers—the fiscal and economic levers—lie in the hands of a Government that, frankly, no one has seen. It is about time that it came out of hiding and did the right thing.

### Social Rented Sector (Affordability)

4. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will work in partnership with landlords in the social rented sector to keep rents as affordable as possible for tenants. (S6O-01407)

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** We are engaging actively with landlords in the social rented sector as we develop our temporary emergency measures, as well as the safeguards that will come alongside them. We continue to seek close partnership working with them to determine the best way forward from 1 April 2023.

To support that important work, officials convened the first meeting of a short-life task and finish working group earlier this week, bringing together leaders from across the sector. The group will help to support consideration of the decisions that we and social landlords will take on rent affordability and related matters next year.

**Bob Doris:** I have met local housing associations in my constituency that have raised concerns over potential unintended consequences for the sector of the rent freeze from April 2023. They say that there will be an impact on their ability to continue to invest in their core stock to deliver net zero, meet pay demands and be able to borrow, and service borrowing already taken out, to build the new homes that we all want to see. The measure also potentially undermines the statutory consultation processes for setting rents that social landlords are required to complete. What is the minister's view of those concerns, and does he agree that dialogue and partnership with the sector would be the best way forward?

**Patrick Harvie:** I agree that dialogue and partnership are necessary. Both I and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government have had repeated conversations with the social rented sector and we absolutely understand the multiple pressures that Bob Doris has rightly highlighted. I can assure him and the sector that the Government is committed to continuing to work with social landlords on the development of our emergency measures and their interaction with our ambitious housing programme. I stress that no decision has been taken about the use of emergency measures after the initial period that runs to 31 March and that any such decision will be informed both by the cost of living situation as it develops and by our on-going active engagement with the sector, which is already under way.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I agree with Bob Doris and the concerns that he has raised. I understand that this is a very difficult

area, but we have very long waiting lists for people who are desperate for social housing. Does the minister fully understand the consequence that the Kingdom Housing Association raised with me just this week, which is that the house building programme will potentially be impacted by the change? How is he going to address that?

**Patrick Harvie:** Obviously, some of the issues will be debated in more detail next week once the emergency legislation is introduced. I hope that not only Mr Rennie but other members and the social housing sector will recognise that we have taken an approach that balances all those factors. The Scottish Government is fully committed to working with the social housing sector, both on housing supply and on the important transition to net zero, as well as other areas where its investment is necessary. The context in the social rented sector and that in the private rented sector are different, and that will be reflected in the way in which we engage with those sectors and make future decisions.

### NHS Lanarkshire (Risk Level)

5. **Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to safeguard patients and staff within NHS Lanarkshire, in light of reports of the national health service board returning its risk level to code black. (S6O-01408)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** Scotland's health boards operate their own escalation policy for the management of whole-system capacity. That includes well-established processes with locally agreed trigger points for maintaining a safe service and ensuring patient safety. The Scottish Government is in daily contact with NHS Lanarkshire to monitor the situation. It has an improvement plan in place, which we are also closely monitoring.

**Monica Lennon:** I know that the cabinet secretary is fed up with listening to me on the issue, but I put on record that the code black emergency in NHS Lanarkshire has lasted for a total of 260 days between last October and now. This year alone, it has been at code black level for 189 days. That means that there is no capacity and that it is unsafe for patients and staff.

I am grateful that the cabinet secretary has agreed that we need an emergency summit. Can we get an update on when that is likely to take place and an assurance that trade unions will be invited? I have had emails, including from Mr Downie about his wife Rosemary, who was admitted to hospital last week but waited for more than 10 hours in accident and emergency. She should have been seen by a consultant last December but does not yet have an appointment.

Mr Downie's concern is not only for his wife but for the staff, who are on their knees. Will the trade unions be involved at that summit?

**Humza Yousaf:** I am not at all fed up with hearing from Monica Lennon—far from it. She has raised that issue with me on a number of occasions recently and she has every right to do so. I am extremely concerned about the situation across our national health service, given the pandemic pressures that we are facing, but particularly in NHS Lanarkshire, where those pressures are significantly acute.

If my office has not already reached out to Monica Lennon, it will be reaching out to her this week about possible dates for that meeting. I think that MSPs and MPs from across political parties will be invited. I will consider whether it is appropriate to invite trade unions to the meeting or whether a wider separate meeting should take place. I regularly meet and engage with our staff-side trade unions, which are a key stakeholder in getting Lanarkshire out of that highest level of escalation and on to a steadier footing.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** NHS Lanarkshire does not have problems just in A and E. It has real problems with delayed discharges—the average wait for discharge is 33 days. General practices are suffering, too. One practice in East Kilbride is emergency only. Patients cannot get to see a GP. That is not acceptable. I urge the cabinet secretary, when he holds the summit, to widen out the discussions so that they are not just about A and E, because there are severe problems in Lanarkshire across the board.

**Humza Yousaf:** The meeting is not just about A and E. Delayed discharges have an impact on A and E, because the capacity issues affect flow, which then has an impact on the front door of any Lanarkshire acute site. I will ensure that the conversation is broadened out to MSPs and MPs of all political parties and that it addresses the whole healthcare and social care system.

The Scottish Government will continue its record levels of investment in the NHS. I ask Graham Simpson, if he has any influence with the United Kingdom Government—I doubt that he does—that he plead with it not to take a hatchet to public services as it is threatening to do because of its economic vandalism of this country.

#### **Extra-curricular Activities in Schools (Funding)**

6. **Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the funding of extra-curricular activities in schools. (S6O-01409)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** Decisions

about extra-curricular activities in schools are made locally and are funded in a variety of ways. For example, the Scottish Government has provided more than £12 million this financial year to local authorities to support opportunities to be active before, during and after school through the sportscotland active schools programme. We have also provided £12 million this academic year, in addition to the significant sums that local authorities are already investing in music, so that learners can access free instrumental music tuition in schools.

**Sue Webber:** Last week, it was reported that the £9 million funding for the youth music initiative was to be cut with immediate effect. It was then reported that the funding was to be paused, before it was finally confirmed as being secure. That flip-flopping caused legitimate concern and confusion, as that funding is vital for our talented young people.

Despite those concerns, the Scottish National Party refused to touch the £20 million that it has set aside for a referendum to feed its constitutional obsession. Can the cabinet secretary provide much-needed clarity on the Scottish Government plans for the funding of the youth music initiative?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** As has been said in the chamber many times already, the £20 million that is often referred to is for the next financial year. If we are going to discuss this year's budget, let us actually discuss this year's budget. As the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development confirmed on 15 September, the funding is secure and Creative Scotland has issued the contracts to delivery partners on 21 September.

I agree with the member that the youth music initiative plays a vital role in nurturing talent, which is why I am pleased that it is being supported.

Quite frankly, Presiding Officer, I will take no lessons from a Conservative on financial management, given the state of our economy and of the United Kingdom finances, and the impact that that will have on our public services, including on education, across Scotland.

#### **General Practitioner Services (Accountability)**

7. **Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what accountability mechanisms are available to communities who believe that they are receiving inadequate general practitioner services. (S6O-01410)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** As the member is aware, GP practices are run by independent contractors, which must have arrangements in place that operate in accordance with section 15 of the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011. In the first



instance, patients should raise their concerns with the GP practice manager, which allows concerns to be addressed at the level at which they can be most easily remedied.

If patients are not satisfied with the practice manager's response, they can go to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for consideration. If patients have concerns about how their health board is providing GP services, they can raise a complaint through the national health service complaints handling procedure.

**Oliver Mundell:** I have been inundated with concerns from constituents in Moffat and Lockerbie who are struggling to access GP appointments. They report that there are frequently times when no GP is available to see anyone face to face and that they offered telephone consultations only, which forces people towards accident and emergency departments. I and other local representatives, including the chair of Lockerbie community council, who is in the public gallery, have raised concerns with the health board, but it refuses to intervene. What can be done?

**Humza Yousaf:** I thank Oliver Mundell for raising the issue. For the sake of brevity, I will take the discussion offline and get more detail from him, if he is able to provide it. I will ensure that my officials are in touch with NHS Dumfries and Galloway to discuss how it will support the practices to improve patients' experience.

When it is clinically necessary, we expect people to get a face-to-face appointment. It might be that people are not seen by a GP because it is more appropriate for them to be seen by another staff member of the practice. Nonetheless, Oliver Mundell has raised some serious concerns, so I will get more detail from him offline and revert back to him on what we can do to support his constituents.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Ferry Procurement (Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd)

**1. Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** This week, it emerged that Ferguson's shipyard received preferential treatment from this Government and its agencies in the shipyard's bid to build two ferries. Ferguson's was the only bidder that was given special access to a 424-page cheat sheet on how to build ferries—a cheat sheet that it literally copied page after page from. It received a confidential in-person meeting with the people who were involved in buying the ferries. It was the only bidder that was allowed to resubmit with a new design, which a former technical director of CalMac Ferries called “completely wrong”. Then, after the deadline, it was the only company that was allowed to change its price.

Why did Ferguson's shipyard, which was then owned by a Scottish National Party Government economic advisor and prominent independence supporter, receive special treatment from the First Minister's Government?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Before I come on to the specifics of the question, I note that Douglas Ross might want to make his mind up about what his allegations are. For months, now, he appears to have alleged—wrongly, I hasten to add—in the chamber and elsewhere that the Scottish ministers directed and forced Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd, against its will, to award the contract to Ferguson's shipyard. Today, it appears that he is alleging that CMAL in some way collaborated with Ferguson's to ensure that the contract went to the shipyard. Perhaps he needs to get a little bit of clarity about the allegations that he is making.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Members.

**The First Minister:** I turn to the specifics. Ministers are not aware of any impropriety in the procurement process. That said, ministers were not involved in the process; we were not sighted on procurement documents or privy to exchanges between CMAL and bidders. However, the allegations in the BBC's “Disclosure” programme are serious, and, earlier this week, I asked the permanent secretary to engage with Audit Scotland about further investigation. I welcome the confirmation from Audit Scotland that it will look at the substance of the allegations.

On the allegation relating specifically to the CalMac statement of operational and technical requirements, of course it needs to be properly

investigated. However, as I understand it, there is no suggestion that it was CMAL that passed the document to Ferguson's. In fact, the BBC suggested that it was a design consultant who did so.

The allegations are serious, and they should be investigated in the normal way. In the meantime, we will continue to support Ferguson's shipyard in its work to complete the ferry contract.

**Douglas Ross:** The only conclusion that any reasonable person can draw is that the deal was rigged. It seems that Nicola Sturgeon is the only one who saw this week's programme who does not think that the deal was rigged.

She has asked for clarity, but it would have been helpful for members who are trying to get clarity if all the information had been available, rather than it coming out as it did this week. The documents that were finally revealed show that Ferguson's had the cheat sheet. It had its answers whispered in advance and then it got to change its answers after the deadline. No other company got to do that.

We did not find out any of that until a leaked dossier was uncovered by investigative journalists. Nobody knew about the depth and breadth of the special treatment that Ferguson's received. During lengthy investigations, neither Audit Scotland nor the parliamentary committee concerned got any of those details. Instead, we got secrecy. The public were kept in the dark, the Scottish Government's auditor was kept in the dark and this Parliament was kept in the dark. It is clear that there has been a cover-up by the First Minister's Government and its agencies.

Why has none of that come to light until now?

**The First Minister:** The Scottish Government has fully co-operated, and will continue to fully co-operate, with parliamentary investigations, and it will fully co-operate—as Audit Scotland has noted that it has done—with any Audit Scotland investigation.

The clarity that I asked for from Douglas Ross is important. People watching First Minister's question time will have heard him suggest in the chamber, in previous weeks and months, that CMAL did not ever want to give the contract to Ferguson's shipyard and that it was somehow forced to do so against its will by the Scottish Government. That was wrong, and I think that it has been evidenced that that was wrong. Today, of course, Douglas Ross has come to the chamber and said the contrary—that CMAL somehow colluded with the yard to ensure that the contract went there.

We will continue to ensure that investigations are supported. As I said, this week I asked the

permanent secretary to engage further with Audit Scotland, and I welcome Audit Scotland's statement. The procurement process was conducted by CMAL. Rightly and properly, ministers were not involved in it. The job of ministers was to save the shipyard from closure and to save and support the jobs of the people who continue to work at the shipyard, and we will continue to offer that support.

**Douglas Ross:** By giving Ferguson's special treatment, as details that were unearthed only this week show, it appears as if the Government has broken European Union laws, and it may have committed fraud, but the First Minister thinks that that is no big deal, that it is just another SNP disaster, to which no one should pay any attention, and that there is nothing to see here.

However, this does matter. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Members.

**Douglas Ross:** It matters to the islanders who have been abandoned by the Scottish Government. It matters because the price and the delays keep spiralling further. Yesterday, it emerged in a letter from Ferguson's to a committee of this Parliament that the delays are continuing. Hull 802 will now be six years late. According to Ferguson's, its total project budget was £125.5 million in March of this year, but the maximum budget is now £209.6 million. That is an increase of £84 million. In its letter to the committee, Ferguson's says that it briefed Scottish ministers on that last week.

What did Ferguson's say to ministers? Is the latest enormous cost increase correct?

**The First Minister:** I agree with Douglas Ross on the fact that these things matter, which is why I and the Government take them as seriously as we do.

The information given to ministers by the new management at Ferguson's shipyard is the information that is set out in the letter that will be sent to the parliamentary committee tomorrow. [*Interruption.*] If Douglas Ross wants to wait for the rest of the answer, he might get the detail that he is requesting.

On the delivery schedule, the target date for 801 has not changed. On the target date for 802, there is an estimated further slippage of one to two months.

On costs, Ferguson's has set out its latest estimate of costs, but—this is the key point—ministers have yet to properly scrutinise that estimate, so no decision has yet been taken about any further increase in the budget for the ferries. As that process of due diligence, which the Government has to undertake, is completed, we will update Parliament in the normal way. That is

what we will continue to do as we work to continue to support the shipyard, to support the completion of the ferries and—yes—to support the jobs that depend on that shipyard. That is the responsible approach to government.

Finally, I am not sure that Conservative Douglas Ross is on very strong ground at all today in talking about Government disasters.

**Douglas Ross:** Given that answer, I do not think that Nicola Sturgeon will ever be on strong ground in talking about ferries, because—incidentally—she is saying that the £84 million increase projected in a letter to a committee of this Parliament and spoken of to her Government ministers a week ago will not be scrutinised. That is basically the First Minister saying that there will be an £84 million increase for three months. I am not sure what scrutiny of those estimates will come up with, other than to say that a three-month delay is basically costing taxpayers about £1 million a day, because that is what £84 million works out at.

The First Minister told me in March of this year that she took ultimate responsibility for the deal and that the buck stopped with her. So, let us hear her take ultimate responsibility for the great ferry scandal. Her Government agreed a deal for the ferries without agreeing a design for the ships. Her Government ignored experts who advised it not to go ahead with the deal and it waived the refund guarantee that is a mandatory requirement in that kind of contract.

Now it appears that the whole deal was rigged. The Government seems to have given special treatment to a political adviser and ally. That looks like corporate fraud and there is a stench of political corruption, but nobody has been sacked, and the Government says that nobody is responsible and nobody is to blame.

What happened to the First Minister who used to have a monthly photo call at Ferguson's shipyard? The First Minister used to pose for pictures at the yard and shouted from the rooftops that it was one of her proudest achievements. Nicola Sturgeon was happy to take all the praise. When will she start to take the blame?

**The First Minister:** Douglas Ross is now reduced to simply standing up and making up things that I have said in answer to questions. I will never apologise for the actions that this Government has taken to save the jobs of the people who work at Ferguson's shipyard. Unlike my counterparts in other Governments, I will always take responsibility for the actions of this Government.

I whole-heartedly agree that the issue matters—it really matters. People who are out there watching right now will want to see me and my

Government held to account on this. That is right and proper, but the people who are watching this session are also terrified. They are terrified about the inability to heat their homes and the inability to pay their mortgages. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Members, we like to hear each speaker when they are on their feet. Please continue, First Minister.

**The First Minister:** They are terrified about the security of their pensions.

All week, people have heard Douglas Ross demanding that I match Tory tax cuts for the richest people in our society. Those tax cuts have already sunk the pound, crashed the mortgage market, brought people's pensions to the brink of collapse and forced the Bank of England into an emergency bailout, and they will force deep reductions in public spending. I think that people might have wanted to hear Douglas Ross explaining today why he thinks that the Scottish Government should emulate those policies.

For the avoidance of doubt, we will not emulate those policies, but Douglas Ross's silence about his demand that we do so says everything about his appallingly poor judgment.

### Energy Generation (Public Ownership)

2. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** We have a Tory Government that is hell-bent on crashing the economy. Energy bills are rising, mortgage payments are going up and the markets are in free fall.

In the face of that economic illiteracy and moral bankruptcy, Labour has a plan: it is a plan for a publicly owned clean-energy generation company that would be established in the first year of a Labour Government. It took the SNP months to back Labour's proposal for a windfall tax. Will the First Minister today back Labour's plan for a publicly owned energy company to bring down bills, create jobs and deliver energy security? (S6F-01377)

**The First Minister:** Yes—I am happy to give support to policies of that nature. Perhaps Anas Sarwar would back a situation in which Scotland had the full powers over the energy market and the access to borrowing that are necessary in order for us to establish an energy generation company of that nature.

I am happy to support things that I agree with, but since we are on this ground today, here are some other policies that the SNP Scottish Government has introduced that Labour would perhaps now like to back. How about we see Keir Starmer and United Kingdom Labour backing a £25 per week child payment like the one that we have in Scotland? How about we see Labour

backing an end to the benefits cap, or backing the abolition of prescription charges, or backing free personal care, the abolition of university tuition fees, higher health spending per head of population and more nurses and doctors per head of population? How about a rent freeze such as is being introduced here, in Scotland?

If we want to swap good ideas, I am happy to accept them when they come from Labour. Perhaps Labour needs to look to Scotland and to start emulating some of what we are doing here.

**Anas Sarwar:** I am pleased to hear that the First Minister backs Labour's plans. How times have changed—from the First Minister telling Scotland, "You're never getting a Labour Government again" to her now making proposals to the next Labour Government. Perhaps we can see more of that.

The First Minister wants to talk about her powers. In 2017—[*Interruption.*] The SNP front bench might want to listen to this.

In 2017, the First Minister promised to create a Government-run energy company that would sell Scottish renewable energy to customers at

"as close to cost price as possible",

using the powers that the Government has. That promise was broken. A Labour Government will establish a public energy company in year 1. After 15 years of SNP Government, we are told that we still have to wait.

This matters. In January, the First Minister sold off Scotland's sea bed on the cheap. If we had a publicly owned energy company in Scotland, that sea bed would have been in the hands of the Scottish people; they would have had a stake. Instead, we have the ludicrous situation in which Vattenfall, which is a publicly owned company in Sweden, will profit more than taxpayers here will. Why is it the First Minister's priority and policy that our natural resources fund schools, transport and hospitals in Sweden but not those in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** Our having a Labour leader in Scotland who is reduced to talking down the fantastic ScotWind programme just counts as one of many reasons why—whatever might or might not happen in the rest of the UK—Scotland will not be getting another Labour Government any time soon.

Yes—we committed to a publicly owned retail energy company. Covid, unfortunately, changed those plans. We will shortly set out our plans for the national public energy agency. However, if Anas Sarwar is going to come here and ask me such questions, surely he must know that to set up a publicly owned generation company would require that this Parliament have powers over the

energy market and access to borrowing that we do not have.

If Anas Sarwar wants this Government to do that—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, members.

**The First Minister:** —when will he back independence and full powers for this Parliament, so that we can do it?

**Anas Sarwar:** There we go: the old slogan about talking down Scotland. I have been hearing Nicola Sturgeon shout that slogan since I was at school. I say to the First Minister that it is time to change the record.

For 15 years, we have had an SNP Government that has chased the headline but has not done the work. It promised a national energy company, but that has now been scrapped. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you.

**Anas Sarwar:** The SNP promised 130,000 green energy jobs, but it failed to deliver. We should remember that it promised that we would be the "Saudi Arabia of renewables". Instead, it is selling off our assets on the cheap.

This week, the people of Scotland have seen that change is coming with Labour: change with our ambitious plan to freeze energy bills, change to invest in energy security, change to create tens of thousands of high-skilled well-paid jobs here in Scotland—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you, members.

**Anas Sarwar:** —and change to get rid of the economically illiterate and morally bankrupt Tory Government. Even the First Minister must surely see that those are the changes that Scotland needs.

**The First Minister:** Anas Sarwar says that he has for years been listening to me accusing Labour of talking down Scotland. That is probably true, but it is because I have for years listened to Labour constantly talking down Scotland. That is all that it seems to be able to do. That is why Scotland decided to get its own back on Labour and to start doing down Labour in electoral terms. I do not see any evidence that that will change any time soon.

Under this Government, we have a position where our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources. [*The First Minister has corrected this contribution. See end of report.*] Scotland leads the world when it comes to renewable energy, and ScotWind is a shining example of that.

In the interests of finding a bit of consensus, I say that I want to see the back of the rotten,

corrupt and failing Tory Government, just as much as anybody does. However, if it is to be replaced at United Kingdom level by a Labour Government, surely everybody has a right to hope that that Labour Government would be very different to what it would replace.

I will make another suggestion. Perhaps Labour could start by committing to reversing the Brexit that Scotland did not vote for. Just as the Tories are, Labour is now a pro-Brexit party, regardless of the economic damage that Brexit is doing. The fact is that, in relation to Brexit, as with so many other issues, the only way for Scotland to reach its full potential is through independence. Are not we really seeing what would be the benefits of independence right now? The sooner it comes, the better.

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to constituency and general supplementary questions.

### Cost Crisis

**Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** The First Minister will, no doubt, share my deep concern about research by KPMG that states that the cost crisis is forcing three in 10 people in the United Kingdom to rely on savings in order to afford basic necessities such as food, shelter and fuel. Does she agree that the Westminster Tory UK Government's crashing of the economy can only make the situation worse, and that missing-in-action Prime Minister Liz Truss must ditch the policies from last week and think again?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The issues could not be any more grave or serious. When we had exchanges at this time last week, it would have been very true—frighteningly true—to say that people were worried about being unable to heat their homes. That remains true. However, this week, people are also increasingly worried about their ability to keep their homes, because of what the Conservatives have done to the mortgage market, what they have done to the value of the pound and what they are doing to the economy in general. People are terrified about the cost of living, their mortgages, their ability to keep their homes and the security of their pensions.

All that comes from a UK Government decision to borrow vast amounts of money in order to give enormous tax cuts to the very richest people in our society. That is morally abhorrent and economically disastrous. In all sincerity, I call on the UK Government—if it does nothing else—to reverse its decision to abolish the cut in the top rate of tax and at least give a signal of a return to some common sense in its approach to economic policy.

Yesterday, as many people were, I was critical of the fact that the Prime Minister was missing in action. However, having heard her this morning, and watched the market reaction as she spoke, I say that perhaps we are all better off when the Prime Minister is missing in action than we are when she is out there talking about the disaster that she has inflicted on the country.

### Planning Policy

**Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** A development on green-belt space near Duntocher, in my region, is set to go ahead despite being widely unpopular with local residents and having been rejected by West Dunbartonshire Council. Across Scotland as a whole, last year local councils were overruled on nearly half of the planning applications that were appealed to ministers. Does the First Minister truly believe that her Government has the interests of local communities at heart when such projects can go ahead against their wishes?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We have a statutory planning process that allows local councils to take decisions, but also has in place measures for ministers to look at those decisions, in certain circumstances. Clearly, this is a planning matter. From the question, I am not sure exactly what stage in the planning process that project is at, but I will not—in case it is with ministers—comment further on the specific detail of the issue.

### Scottish Landfill Tax (West Dunbartonshire)

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** The Scottish Landfill Tax (Prescribed Landfill Site Activities) Amendment Order 2022 was approved on 7 July. At the time, the Government and Revenue Scotland advised that there were no financial implications for councils and no expected increase in tax. That appears to have been incorrect.

Barr Environmental Ltd, which has contracts for landfill with West Dunbartonshire Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Inverclyde Council, is increasing the cost per tonne as a result of the order, following discussion with Revenue Scotland. That will cost West Dunbartonshire Council alone £1.5 million extra. It simply does not have that money.

Will the First Minister consider whether the order can be paused while the issue is investigated? Time is pressing, and, unless the Government can rectify the perceived error, the contract might end in a couple of weeks and rubbish will be piling up on the streets of West Dunbartonshire.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, Revenue Scotland operates independently of Scottish ministers in its role as our tax authority. It would not be proper for me to comment on what is

an individual taxpayer dispute. I will ask the relevant minister whether more information can be provided and, if so, to write to Jackie Baillie.

I can say that our view is that the recent amendment order does not alter or expand the scope of the Scottish landfill tax; rather, the order provides additional confirmation by making it explicit that particular landfill site activities are within its intended scope.

### **European Union (Nature Protection)**

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** The Truss budget has unleashed chaos on households, but the United Kingdom Government has also threatened to renege on vital protections for our natural world, which have been developed over 40 years when we were part of the European Union. Scotland did not vote for Brexit. We did not vote for this catastrophic UK Government or its malicious and deeply damaging attacks on nature.

RSPB Scotland has called on the Scottish Government to do everything that it can to ensure that our nature is strongly protected, so will the First Minister and her Government lead the fight for Scotland's nature?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, we will continue to support Scotland's nature and our natural habitats. I support the comments that the RSPB made in the wake of UK Government announcements in the past few days. I am deeply concerned about UK Government policies and their potential impacts on the environment. I am even more concerned about the implications of Brexit, which make it more difficult for the Scottish Government to insist on the highest possible environmental standards.

It is the case that Brexit was done to Scotland against our will. It was done through the Tories and, as I said in an exchange with Anas Sarwar, even Labour is no longer promising to reverse Brexit. The only way for Scotland to get back into the European Union and to fulfil our potential with regard to nature, as in so many other ways, is to become an independent country.

### **Proposed Rent Freeze**

**3. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what the response has been from stakeholder groups regarding the Scottish Government's proposals to introduce a freeze on rent. (S6F-01387)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Those measures have been welcomed by a number of stakeholder groups that recognise the huge pressure that the cost crisis is placing on households and the importance of urgent action. However, in advance of the publication of our

detailed proposals, we have also been carefully considering reasonable points that have been made by other stakeholders, including landlords and, within that, social landlords. We will continue to engage with all stakeholders as we continue to develop the detail of the proposals.

**Liz Smith:** Irrespective of our political views about the proposed legislation, which most stakeholders agree is both complex and controversial, does the First Minister think that it is acceptable practice for it to be pushed through Parliament in just three days, when MSPs will see the bill for only an hour before it is due to be debated? Can she confirm whether it is correct that some stakeholders are being provided with prior sight of the bill before MSPs?

**The First Minister:** First, I do not think that emergency legislation is ideal. I would rather that we were not in the position of having to introduce emergency legislation to protect people from the impact of rent increases, but I also wish that we were not in a deteriorating cost of living crisis that has been caused and is, right now, being exacerbated by Liz Smith's party in government at Westminster. We have a duty to take action as far as we can to protect people from that cost of living crisis and we will continue to do so.

We are committed to working with the sector, and we are having discussions ahead of any decisions that we are taking. As I came into the chamber for First Minister's question time, I think that I heard Patrick Harvie talking about a meeting on Tuesday this week of a short-life task and finish group, involving stakeholders.

We will, of course, continue to talk to stakeholders, and Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the proposals when they come before us in the coming days.

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** At the Social Justice and Social Security Committee this morning, we heard from Shelter Scotland, which said that the recent short-term emergency measures in the programme for government to ensure that citizens can access their right to a home are very welcome in the context of the cost of living crisis but that it waits to see the final detail. What is the First Minister's response to that important contribution?

**The First Minister:** I welcome both parts of it. I visited Shelter Scotland on the day after the programme for government launch and heard directly from advice workers on the massive challenges that tenants experience day to day and the urgent need to support tenants who are in difficulty. I also discussed in general terms the measures that we had announced.

Of course, it is important that everybody scrutinises the detail and that we carefully

consider it. Shelter is one of a number of stakeholders that will do exactly that alongside members of the Parliament.

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Scotland's tenants union, Living Rent, continues to report rent increases on its members despite the First Minister's announcement of a rent freeze on 6 September. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that every tenant and landlord knows about the rent freeze and the moratorium on evictions? Do they include writing to everyone who is affected?

**The First Minister:** We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that there is high awareness of our proposals and of the law that will be introduced if Parliament passes the bill. I will certainly consider whether we can take steps such as writing to people who are affected. It is important not only that we take those measures but that people are aware of them. It is a constructive suggestion and I will give further consideration to it.

#### **National Health Service (Winter Pressures)**

4. **Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what provision the Scottish Government is making to cope with the anticipated pressures on the NHS this winter. (S6F-01394)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Recognising the challenge that the winter represents and the pressure that our health and care systems are under, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care will make a statement to the Parliament next week giving an overview of the wide range of work that is under way to ensure that health and social care services are well prepared for winter.

Our vaccination programme is a critical first line of defence, protecting the most vulnerable and reducing staff absences. We also seek to maximise capacity across health and social care services by expanding the workforce to manage expected demand. Public messaging is also crucial to ensure that people have the right advice and support to access the right care at the right place and at the right time.

**Christine Grahame:** The disastrous economic policies of Liz Truss—the lady has indicated that she is not for turning—pile even more pressure on folk who face terrifying energy bills. The pound is tumbling in value against the dollar and the euro, so every import, including food, becomes even more costly. Spiralling interest rates will increase credit card and mortgage payments. It is an economic tsunami, except for bankers and the rich.

Does the First Minister agree that there can be no doubt that pressures on our health services will

increase as a direct result of those policies? Will she consider including in discussions for her winter planning for the health service agencies such as mortgage companies, social landlords in the rented sector and Citizens Advice Scotland, which will also be on the front line and might help to prevent some of the damage that is being done to our nation's health?

**The First Minister:** I absolutely agree with Christine Grahame. She is completely correct to highlight those risks. It is important to understand that the economic and financial crisis that is being created by the Tories right now will potentially become a public health crisis in future. That will put significantly increased demand on our national health service, so it is important that we continue to work with the NHS and other partners, including Citizens Advice Scotland, to try to mitigate and manage that impact.

There is, of course, a more direct threat to the NHS for any Government that was to go down the path of tax cuts for the rich. I was struck this week by comments by the former deputy governor of the Bank of England, who, I think, is a current member of the Office for Budget Responsibility, although I will be corrected if I am wrong about that latter point. What he said was frightening. He said that the scale of the spending reductions that will be required to pay for the tax cuts would, in effect, mean the end of the NHS as we know it.

That is why it is vital that the United Kingdom Government reverses the tax cuts, but it is also why it would be wrong for anybody to demand that the Scottish Government follow suit on cutting taxes, given the risk that it poses to the NHS and other public services.

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** This week, it was revealed that hundreds of additional surge beds that were made available to health boards across Scotland last winter continue to be occupied, and the vice-president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, Dr John-Paul Loughrey, said:

"Every hospital in Scotland just now is under the cosh."

The bed shortage is a direct consequence of the Scottish Government's actions. Our hospitals have 4,000 fewer beds than they had in 2010—and we know who served as health secretary in that period. The situation is unacceptable. We cannot normalise our national health service being in a perpetual state of crisis. Therefore, what is the First Minister going to do to address that crisis as well as the crisis in capacity and staffing across the NHS? Will she take action? That is something that the current health secretary seems unwilling or unable to do.

**The First Minister:** Public Health Scotland's most recent annual health figures show that, in

fact, the average number of staffed acute beds has increased compared with the previous year. We also have more beds per head of population than England does. There is huge pressure on our national health service, but we continue to support it through investment, recruitment and work with the service.

It is a bit galling to hear a Labour member talk about bed reductions in the national health service. In the seven years or so of the last Labour Government in this Parliament, there was a reduction of 5,425 in the number of hospital beds in Scotland. That includes non-acute beds, but the rate of bed reductions was justified at the time for many reasons, including reducing the length of stay in hospital. Of course, many of those reasons still apply now. I think that Labour should perhaps check the facts and check its own history before it makes criticisms of this Government.

### Arjowiggins Paper Mill

**5. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what support the Scottish Government will make available to the reported 372 members of staff affected by the Arjowiggins paper mill at Stoneywood in Aberdeen entering administration. (S6F-01395)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** This is an exceptionally difficult time for people being made redundant at Arjowiggins in Aberdeen, and those affected are our immediate priority. Of course, they are already receiving support through our partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—initiative, and a partner event is taking place in Aberdeen today, with a jobs fair arranged for 10 October.

Scottish Enterprise has been working extensively with Arjowiggins. Unfortunately, conditions deteriorated and, despite everyone's best efforts, it was not possible to secure a sale of the business. Scottish Enterprise is working with administrators to understand possibilities for the business going forward.

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise is providing regular updates to local elected representatives, has spoken with Unite the union today and will speak to the administrator this afternoon.

**Douglas Lumsden:** It is now a week since the firm went into administration, and this is the first time that I have heard the First Minister mention it. When BiFab went into administration, the First Minister flew back from Germany. When Ferguson's went into administration, the Scottish Government nationalised the yard. When the Michelin factory in Dundee closed, Scottish Enterprise turned it into an innovation park. However, when it comes to jobs in Aberdeen, the

First Minister is nowhere to be seen and we are met with a wall of silence. When will the First Minister come up to Aberdeen to speak to the workers whose livelihoods are in jeopardy? What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that the mill can be saved or that all of the people affected can find alternative employment? The loss of more than 300 jobs needs more than the usual PACE response.

**The First Minister:** Of course, the actions that the member sets out in relation to other companies are regularly criticised—as we have heard just today—by the Scottish Conservatives.

On this serious issue, which I understand his concern about, the member is doing a disservice to everybody affected. Since 2019, when it first became clear that the company was facing administration, the Scottish Government has been working, principally through Scottish Enterprise, to try to find an alternative future and to find a buyer for the company. Despite all of those best efforts, that has not proved possible, which is deeply regrettable. However, as I set out in some detail in my original answer, the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise will continue to provide support to the workers and will continue to do all that we can to understand what possibilities there might be for the business.

The business minister is always willing to speak to local elected representatives in such situations. That is as true in this situation as it is in any other situation.

I am sure that Douglas Lumsden's concern for the workers involved is absolutely genuine, but I encourage him to engage with the minister and the Government so that, notwithstanding our many differences, we can perhaps work together in their interests.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** I put on record my thanks to the business minister for the call that I had with him yesterday regarding the impact on my constituents of the closure of the Stoneywood mill. I would be grateful if the First Minister could provide a commitment that the Scottish Government and partners will continue to support all constituents who are impacted by the closure, and if she would join me in condemning outright the employment practices of the mill's owners, who have not consulted the unions or employees and have provided no notice to workers of redundancies while locking them out of the workplace. Will the First Minister urge the administrators to engage with me, as the constituency MSP, to discuss staff redundancies? I have had no response so far.

**The First Minister:** I absolutely agree with Jackie Dunbar, and I give her the assurances that she has asked for. I commend her for the work



that she has done, and continues to do, on behalf of her constituents who are affected by the situation.

The Scottish Government firmly believes that there must be meaningful dialogue between employers and employees to ensure that, at all times, workers are treated fairly. As I have already outlined, we are committed to supporting all those impacted by the closure.

Jackie Dunbar has raised a really important issue about fair work practices. Employment law is, of course, a reserved matter, but it is our firm belief that a progressive approach to industrial relations and an effective voice for workers are at the heart of a fairer society in Scotland.

As I mentioned earlier, the business minister spoke with Unite the union earlier today and reiterated our on-going support through the PACE initiative and Scottish Enterprise. As I also indicated, he is speaking with the administrators this afternoon. He will emphasise the importance of engaging with all relevant stakeholders—including, of course, Jackie Dunbar, as the constituency MSP—and he will continue to update all elected representatives.

### **Sterling (Devaluation)**

**6. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister how the recent fall in the value of sterling will affect the finances of the Scottish Government. (S6F-01384)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Potentially disastrously—and that is of deep and profound concern to me and, I am sure, everyone across the country. As the Bank of England had warned even before the recent falls in the value of sterling, a falling pound will add to inflationary pressures in the economy. With inflation already at 10 per cent, the Scottish Government's budget is already worth about £1.7 billion less than it was when it was announced in December. The latest devaluation raises the risk of more real-terms reductions not just in the Scottish Government's budget but in the incomes of already struggling households and businesses throughout Scotland. The spending cuts that will be required to pay for the Tories' tax cuts for the richest also have potential implications for the Scottish Government's budgets in the period ahead. As a first step to restoring the United Kingdom's badly damaged financial credibility, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should urgently reverse the unfunded and unjustified tax cuts for top earners.

**Gillian Martin:** The First Minister will know—this has been mentioned many times already today—that the International Monetary Fund is openly condemning the Tory UK Government over the reckless plans for tax cuts for the highest

earners and a range of staggering decisions that will plunge millions into poverty and cause a public health crisis. I think that it is extremely ill judged for the Scottish Tories to demand that we replicate those tax cuts, which would lead to significant personal gains to them and their donors at the expense of our citizens in crisis and our public services, which they come to the chamber every week to ask us to put more funding into. What is the First Minister's view?

**The First Minister:** My view is that, when Gillian Martin says that it is “ill judged” for the Conservatives to ask the Scottish Government to emulate tax cuts for the richest that have sunk the pound, crashed the mortgage market, threatened people's pensions and forced a bailout from the Bank of England, she is probably being diplomatic and polite. I think that people will listen to the Conservatives calling on the Scottish Government to deliver tax cuts for the richest—and, in so doing, to slash public spending for public services—and wonder what planet they are living on. What happened last Friday, in the so-called mini-budget, was economic vandalism, and it was economic vandalism that was done knowingly and, it appears to me, deliberately.

Gillian Martin rightly mentions the IMF; it is extraordinary to hear such comments from the IMF about a G7 country. However, the comments from others are just as damning. The chief executive of the Resolution Foundation describes the mini-budget as

“the worst unforced economic policy error of my lifetime”,

while the Institute for Fiscal Studies talks about “gambling” and “betting the house”. Unfortunately, the chancellor was not betting on his own house; he was betting on the houses of people across the country.

The decisions are disastrous and need to be reversed—not because of some political or ideological debate, but for the sake of the homes, the living standards, the pensions and the security of people across this country—and they need to be reversed now.

### **Police Officer Numbers**

**7. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that police officer numbers dropped to 16,610 at the end of June, below Police Scotland's “full officer establishment” of 17,234. (S6F-01389)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Officer numbers fluctuate due to the cycle of recruitment and retirement. The latest statistics reflect the impact of Covid restrictions and the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—which reduced the capacity to

train new recruits at the Scottish police college. The statistics also reflect the impact of recent pension changes.

It is important to note, however, that a further 300 officers were recruited in July. That figure is not yet reflected in the statistics that have been quoted. On 2 August, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland published its assurance review of Police Scotland's strategic workforce planning and recommended a focus on

"developing a workforce based on the skillset and mix required to meet the current and future challenges for policing in Scotland".

Although the recruitment and deployment of police officers in Scotland is, of course, a matter for the chief constable, the Scottish Government will continue to discuss that and other recommendations with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland.

**Pauline McNeill:** I acknowledge that the figures will fluctuate from week to week, but I see that the Scottish Government has ushered in a permanent reduction in police establishment numbers of about 600 officers. If that were not concerning enough, Chief Constable Iain Livingstone is on record as saying that cuts to the police budget mean that we are already

"seeing the impact in our service of having fewer officers across a range of operational areas including a responsiveness to calls from the public".

I understand that we could lose up to 1,000 additional officers from our service. It is important to bear in mind that 80 per cent of calls to Police Scotland are not crime related. That marks out the distinctly Scottish nature of a police service that is responsible for wellbeing, which, I hope, the First Minister will defend.

Is the First Minister concerned about the chief constable's comments and the effect of brutal cuts in police numbers? What action will she take to ensure the resilience of the police service and to ensure that our police officers can do their jobs? I plead with her to recognise that, unlike other forces in the United Kingdom, the police service in Scotland has a distinct nature, and we should never accept the possibility of losing that.

**The First Minister:** I lead a Government that has worked throughout the entire time that we have been in Government to protect police numbers and to support our police officers and the staff who support them. We will continue to discuss these issues in what is a very difficult context with the chief constable, Police Scotland and, of course, the Scottish Police Authority.

We will always do everything that we can to support the work, wellbeing and resilience of our police officers; they do a fantastic job day in, day

out. I take this opportunity to thank the police for their recent outstanding work during operation unicorn. We will continue to do everything that we can to support our police and our other public services.

However, it is incumbent on me to point out, again, the reality of the context that we are operating in. We are operating within a fixed budget that has, because of inflation, already been eroded this year to the tune of £1.7 billion.

We are trying to give public sector workers the fairest possible pay increases, and I am pleased that we were able to conclude a pay deal with the police. These are difficult situations, which force us into difficult decisions.

We come at this with the determination to protect public services. I say to Pauline McNeill, as I would say to any member, that, in these really tough times, when much is completely beyond the control of the Government, if members think that we should be making different decisions, they should come and say that. However, members cannot simply ask us to spend more money in one area without saying where they think we should spend less. That is the responsibility that is demanded of the Government right now, and I think that it is the responsibility that people demand of all their politicians during this difficult time.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** If the First Minister wants a suggestion, why does she not stop spending money on independence white papers and start properly funding our police force? We are seeing damaging cuts, and the First Minister has broken her manifesto pledge to protect and support the police and to protect the police budget? It is shameful, First Minister.

**The First Minister:** I am not sure that anyone needs any more evidence this week of the financial, fiscal and economic illiteracy of the Conservatives, but I think that we have probably just had some more thrown into the bargain.

The Tories keep mentioning the money for an independence referendum, which would fall into the next financial year, not this financial year. However, in this week of all weeks, I think that it is pretty obvious to people why we so desperately need to be an independent country. We have a UK Government that Scotland did not vote for, that has already imposed Brexit on us against our will—a Brexit that is doing real damage to living standards and to the economy—and that has, this week, crashed the entire UK economy. The cost of that is being borne by ordinary people across the country. What has caused the crash in the economy? It is £45 billion in tax cuts that prioritise the very richest people in our society. Independence is about getting away from Tory

incompetence and, frankly, Tory immorality. The sooner the people of Scotland have the choice of independence, the better for us all.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes First Minister's question time. There will be a short pause before we move on to members' business.

## Mesh Treatment Clarity

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The Parliament is still in session. I ask members of the public who are leaving the public gallery and members who are leaving the chamber to please do so as quickly and as quietly as possible, because we are about to start the next item of business. Thank you.

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-05086, in the name of Daniel Johnson, on mesh treatment clarity. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to speak to press their request-to-speak buttons now or as soon as possible.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament understands the difficulties and desperation that women can experience as a result of transvaginal mesh implant surgery, both in terms of their physical wellbeing and their mental health; notes the view that there is a need for urgent reform so that women have the necessary treatment available; notes the calls for greater clarity and preparedness in dealing with mesh cases, so that more women, including in Edinburgh Southern constituency, can be supported with the clinical support they need, and further notes calls on the Scottish Government to do all it can to engage with mesh survivors.

12:54

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** I thank all those who have made it possible for this debate to take place in the chamber. I rise mindful of the fact that it is the first time that I have spoken about mesh. What goes before me is the tragic situation of debilitating pain and life-changing procedures that many women have had to face over a number of years, from which they will never truly recover. I am also mindful of, and I pay tribute to, those who have gone before me in raising the issue, particularly my former colleague Neil Findlay, whose work on the issue was truly outstanding. I also pay tribute to Jackson Carlaw, who has tirelessly campaigned on the issue.

The reason why I lodged the motion for debate is quite simple. I was approached by a constituent who had undergone mesh treatment. Although she is grateful that there has been movement and progress, she still has questions about the current status of the situation. I sought a members' business debate because it is a means of inviting the minister to the chamber so that we can put those questions and get the updates that are required.

The simple reality is that, although measures have been put in place and treatment made available, the issue will never truly come to an end for the women who were implanted with mesh. We must not let the issue go quiet; we must continue

to endeavour to provide the information and updates.

The issues around mesh have been well discussed, but I will briefly restate the situation. Approximately 40 per cent of women who underwent transvaginal mesh treatment faced immediate physical complications. A further 40 per cent had complications within two years. Those complications ranged from leg, groin, abdomen, back and bowel issues to autoimmune disorders and neurological disorders. It is difficult to overstate the life-changing and debilitating consequences that such chronic pain has.

It is not only physical pain—my constituent has spoken of the impact that TVM has had on her mental health, from severe trust issues to post-traumatic stress disorders and panic attacks. There is a real sense of the mounting frustration that she and others have about the lack of clarity and information. It is also about the financial impact, including the reduction in working hours—the giving up of paid work—and the financial impacts involved with taking up the care and treatment that they required.

To that end, I will ask a number of questions, and I hope that other members will as well. I have spoken informally to others about the tenor of the questions and the manner in which I intend to ask them. My first question is around support for aftercare provision. The Scottish Government fund ran for two years, from July 2020 to June 2022, with £1 million set aside for those who suffer from the after-effects of mesh to purchase self-care items, such as incontinence pads, and to undertake travel. How many women benefited from that fund, and how much of that £1 million remains? What will be done to extend any potential funding that women might require?

My second question regards access to removal surgery. The recent contract to enable national health service patients to visit Dr Veronikis in the United States to receive transvaginal mesh removal surgery is welcome, but there are key issues that require clarity. In order to access that surgery, many women are having to go back to the very facilities and physicians that performed the procedure on them. It is understandable that that is potentially hugely traumatic, and it is very difficult for those women to trust the individuals who carried out those procedures in the first place.

How many women have been able to take up the offer to travel to the United States for surgery from Dr Veronikis? Does the minister acknowledge that there is a need to have a more sensitive and prudent approach to both the consultation and the assessment, with regard to women having to go back to the place and the physicians that undertook the original treatment? The question that my constituent asked me to ask is this: how

would the minister feel if she or a family member had to go back to that person?

My third question is about the reimbursement fund. Although there is a fund that makes available £20,000 for women to receive the treatment privately, it is a reimbursement fund. Because of that, unless a person has £20,000 available to them, that fund might as well not exist at all. I ask again: how many women have been able to use the fund? Will the Government consider the impact on those who cannot afford £20,000, for whom reimbursement is quite simply inappropriate?

I would also like to ask about other medical devices, because these issues are not limited to transvaginal mesh. Other devices that have been used, including Essure, have been subsequently found to cause debilitating side effects and pain and might have been withdrawn from use altogether, and many people suffer because of them. I have been contacted by women who underwent Essure placement.

What work has the Scottish Government undertaken to identify issues such as those associated with Essure? What work has been undertaken to reach out to people who have been affected and to provide treatment to them now?

I am sure that members have many other questions. My time in the debate is coming to end, but I hope that this is an opportunity for us to get updates and clarity. I intend to lodge more motions in the future, or seek other opportunities, to get that clarity. That is our duty and responsibility to the women who underwent these procedures and who have suffered in a way that I do not pretend to be able to understand. They deserve those answers and they deserve treatment.

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

13:01

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I thank Daniel Johnson for bringing this important debate to the chamber. Indeed, it is one of many debates on this issue in which I have spoken over the years in this place. I also thank Jackson Carlaw and former MSPs Alex Neil and Neil Findlay for the immense amount of work that they did, long before I came on the scene, on the devastation that mesh implants have caused in women's lives.

Today we are debating something that will go down in history as one of the greatest medical injustices ever suffered by women. Thankfully, there has been cross-party consensus since the horrendous problems of mesh implants came to light. That resulted in a moratorium on the implants in 2014, which was instigated by the then

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil. Thankfully, now there is a ban on implants, which was brought in by former Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Jeane Freeman, which was warmly welcomed by campaigners. Award-winning journalist Marion Scott and mesh survivors Elaine Holmes and Olive McIlroy have blazed a trail on behalf of so many women and, after far too long, have achieved some form of justice.

I have to say that I was baffled by the text of Daniel Johnson's motion on mesh treatment clarity. I now understand a lot more what the motion means. He is, of course, right when he says in the motion that women experience "difficulties and desperation" due their implants, although that is something of an understatement. I am genuinely sorry to hear of some of the issues that he has raised today. He asks very important questions, and I look forward to the answers.

This has been a long-running, complicated and distressing issue, with too many twists and turns to be detailed in a short speech. However, progress has been made—belatedly, I agree, but it is progress nevertheless. It builds on Baroness Cumberlege's excellent 2020 report, "First Do No Harm", on providing holistic care to women who have suffered with mesh complications.

Earlier this year, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care Humza Yousaf introduced legislation to establish a £1 million fund to support women who have been affected by mesh complications after receiving mesh implants on the NHS. Such women have to travel abroad to have the implants removed by an experienced clinician. The first successful applicants to the fund received a one-off payment of £1,000 to help towards the costs associated with emotional or practical support. Women were entitled to apply if they had had to pay for that support at their own expense. That included, for example, purchasing self-care items such as incontinence pads or undertaking considerable travel as a result of their condition.

I understand that there is now a mesh centre of excellence in Glasgow, with clinicians who have been trained to remove mesh, a procedure that has not been available in Scotland before. I also understand why many women, as Daniel Johnson has outlined, would not want the surgeon who inserted the mesh to remove it—the mesh that has ruined their lives beyond belief. After everything that they have been through, I think that it is important that women have a choice of clinician and of where they go for treatment.

It has been a long, hard-fought battle for those women to get justice after the medical establishment was not held accountable for the scandal that affected hundreds of women in Scotland and, indeed, throughout the world. That battle for justice was fought by strong women who,

despite their pain and discomfort, did not want their daughters and granddaughters to experience what they went through. They were not listened to by clinicians and were dismissed by an inadequate review that they branded as a whitewash, and still they kept fighting. I congratulate them and hope that they take some comfort that their efforts have ensured that it will not happen again. It must never happen again. Too many lives have been ruined already.

13:05

**Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** Next year will be the 10th anniversary of the petition first coming to the Parliament. It identified what has emerged as one of the great health scandals of our time—transvaginal mesh. I want to continue to approach the issue in as bipartisan a way as possible, paying tribute to Alex Neil, Jeane Freeman and, indeed, Humza Yousaf, who have all made quantitative and qualitative steps forward in addressing the issue and improving the treatment of many women.

What was a bill is now an act, and women who went to the United States to have transvaginal mesh removed are now having the costs reimbursed. I have heard from constituents who have now received back the funds that they had to lay out in the first place in order to undertake what was, in effect, life-enhancing and life-saving surgery for themselves.

However, I say to the minister that I have a concern. I am hearing that a rather pedantic dead hand is beginning to be applied to the women who are now in the process of seeking to have that money reimbursed. They are being told for the first time that only basic economic flight costs will be reimbursed, not necessarily the cost of the flight that they undertook.

For some of the women, whose health has been seriously compromised and who have been physically in a distressed situation, a basic economic flight was not the most appropriate way for them to travel to the United States. We have to be very careful that we do not start treating those women as if they were going on some holiday excursion. They were going to the United States to have the transvaginal mesh removed to enhance their quality of life. When we say that we are going to reimburse the costs that they have incurred, we should be prepared to reimburse all the reasonable costs that they have incurred in undertaking that.

Secondly, I am slightly concerned that, although Dr Veronikis has removed transvaginal mesh from women, the cost of which has been reimbursed, and has been given a contract by the NHS to remove transvaginal mesh from other women, I

understand that not a single patient has been referred to him—not one. In addition, his contract is for just a year and I understand that, even if women are referred to him, a cap has been placed on the number of women who can go to him. That is because there is still a prejudice, not within this Parliament but within our medical establishment, that they know better than Dr Veronikis and they want women to go through a process that involves them.

Yes, we have the Glasgow centre for mesh excellence that has been referred to, but there is currently a 46-week waiting time for anybody to be seen at it. If you have been waiting all these years for the removal of a mesh implant that has compromised your living, 46 weeks is not an acceptable delay whatsoever. In addition, many of the women are being sent to a doctor in Bristol who is one of the doctors who was telling women that they had had a full mesh removal, only for Dr Veronikis to pull out acres of additional centimetres of mesh from within them when they saw him. It is no wonder that they do not have confidence in the process.

I say to the minister that, although we are making superb progress, we have to be mindful that there are still some very serious and significant issues in the practice that need to be addressed. We have to ensure that we are listening to the women who have been affected and doing right by them, not just saying in the chamber that we are doing right by them. My concern is with some of the medical establishment, and we need a strong hand in responding to and dealing with that.

My final point is one that we come back to on a number of occasions. Daniel Johnson made reference to it in relation to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. There is cross-party consensus in this Parliament for us, as a Parliament, to approach the United Kingdom Government in respect of what we have seen as the shortcomings of the MHRA and to try to find a solution that would allow Scotland—I say this as a unionist—to approach these issues from a health perspective that is unique to Scotland. For whatever reason, the Scottish Government has not wanted to take advantage of that cross-party consensus in the chamber. I really implore it to consider doing so. We do not want to see future avoidable surgical implant health crises that we could, if we applied ourselves more directly and appropriately, avoid.

13:09

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** It is always a tall order to follow Jackson Carlaw in a debate of this nature. I put on record my thanks for, and appreciation of, the work that

he has done over the years alongside the likes of Neil Findlay, working with the campaigners Elaine Holmes and Olive McIlroy, in particular, whom we have heard described already. I thank Daniel Johnson, too, for introducing today's debate, which is a measure of the distance that there is still to travel in the mesh issue. I come to some aspects of the challenge that is still before us.

To the women who are still suffering physical and mental trauma due to mesh procedures and who have come forward with their own deeply personal stories—we have heard all of them—I say that your bravery is awe inspiring but it should never have been necessary; you should never have had to drag this issue this far yourselves.

I want to talk about Cathy. I have talked about her previously in this context, but her story bears repeating. Like thousands of others, Cathy, who is one of my constituents in west Edinburgh, underwent mesh procedure because she was referred for it and recommended for the treatment. She was assured that the procedure was safe and that it would treat her mild incontinence with very little risk of complication and that she could get on with the rest of her life. That could not have been further from the truth. After her surgery, Cathy experienced agonising pain and made various desperate attempts to contact the nurses and doctors who had administered her treatment. Those calls went unanswered—in some cases, the phone literally rang out and she never received a response.

It is crucial to realise that Cathy's case is not an isolated incident but rather points to a problem in the medical profession and our society. It is no coincidence that this problem is overwhelmingly experienced by women. We know that women are far less likely to have their pain taken seriously and to have their symptoms diagnosed. In fact, a study that the United Kingdom Government completed last year found that 85 per cent of women had experienced a time in which their healthcare professionals did not listen to them, which has devastating consequences. That is, in part, how we have got to this position.

Such consequences have been unjustly thrust on people such as Cathy. Instead of being treated, she has experienced years of crippling chronic pain and changes to her lifestyle—we have heard about those injuries being life changing, and they are. The physical and mental effects of the procedure still affect her to this day.

Twenty thousand more women up and down Scotland have suffered this problem in one form or another, and it is my profound hope that the bill that we pass in January will provide relief to those women through the introduction of that conversation. However, I associate myself with Jackson Carlaw's remarks that we cannot be

cheap about this—we need to recognise that additional costs are incurred when somebody who has mobility issues that are caused by the implant procedure that we are trying to reverse is moved across continents.

It is not enough to stop there. It is still deeply regrettable that the bill was not extended to include survivors of other mesh implants, such as hernia mesh, despite repeated calls from MSPs across the parties, such as me and Sue Webber from the Conservatives. Although there might be fewer victims of hernia mesh implants, their plight has been just as horrific, yet they have not received any real recognition or compensation.

Furthermore, although women who have undergone transvaginal mesh procedure will now receive compensation, it will barely scratch the surface of their ordeals. The ordeals that are caused by experiencing such crippling pain are that, in many cases, they are unable to go to work, to do things that they love or even to think about anything else—the pain becomes all consuming. Those ordeals leave not just significant physical scars but mental ones too. It is vital that the Government now provides mental health support to those women and to the victims of hernia mesh implants.

To boil the matter down, Cathy is one of thousands of women whom the state has egregiously let down. As such, it is incumbent on all of us to do everything that we can to rectify the situation, and the Government must do everything that it can to provide the support for those people in need.

13:14

**Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** I thank Daniel Johnson for introducing the debate. So far, all the contributions have raised valid questions.

In August last year, a constituent of mine from Prestwick got in touch to ask me to help speed up her mesh removal, after what she called 12 years of living in a “nightmare”. Despite having surgery here, my constituent was unable to have all the mesh removed. She decided to navigate herself through the process and so was not under the care of a consultant. Naturally, she was worried that she would slip through the cracks, and all that she really wanted to know was whether the Scottish Government would pay for her to travel to the US for groundbreaking surgery with Dr Veronikis.

Until that point, I had only watched and read news reports of women speaking about the horrors of mesh. It was not until I spoke to my constituent that I understood the reality of living with it. She had received her mesh implant in the hope that it would improve the quality of her life

after the birth of her second child. Mesh, which had been around for several years before that, was hailed at the time as a revolutionary treatment for women who were suffering from stress incontinence or a prolapse.

For my constituent, six surgeries, including a hysterectomy, did not correct the damage or take away any of the chronic pain, bladder complications or, sadly, the original problem, which was a bladder prolapse. The pain was so great that she had to call an end to her 30-year career in education.

My constituent’s story is not unique. More than 20,000 women in Scotland have been affected by mesh implant and, just like my constituent, they deserve to be helped. As we know, in January this year, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement) (Scotland) Act 2022 to compensate women who have paid for mesh removal surgery. Any woman who wanted mesh removal here or in the US was urged to contact their clinician for referral to the Bristol centre or the one in the US. On 6 June, a dedicated fund opened so that the mesh removal cost could be reimbursed to women who had decided to have the surgery and had paid for it. I welcomed that news.

Fast forward to now, and, just this week, I have been speaking to my constituent, who has returned from the US. After four hours of surgery, she is now, thankfully, mesh free, which is great news and very welcome.

My constituent is in the process of completing her reimbursement form. It is not appropriate for me to go into all the details of the challenges that she is facing in that process, but I have written to the cabinet secretary about the reimbursement process, and I look forward to a response for my constituent’s peace of mind.

Even after all the forms are filled in and the money is paid, it will not be the end of the process for my constituent or any of the other women. The pain and damage might still be there, and rehabilitation might take a long time. Many women have suffered an unimaginable amount of pain due to complications as a result of transvaginal mesh implants, and it is absolutely right that the Scottish Government acted as it did. Rightly, there were concerns about women who might seek mesh removal in the future if symptoms develop, and I am pleased that the Scottish Government has provided assurance that the specialist national service—the complex pelvic mesh removal service—is available in the NHS in Scotland, hosted by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

The story does not end there; we must be mindful of that. There are women who might need

help for years to come, and the Government must be ready and willing to act accordingly. I remember my constituent saying to me that, because of the on-going pain and complications, her youngest child did not really know her. We cannot give her that time back, but we can give her and others a future by doing everything in our power to enhance the lives of the women who have been so cruelly robbed of time.

13:18

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I congratulate my colleague Daniel Johnson on securing this important debate.

Scores of women across Scotland are being left in limbo as they continue to face prolonged waits for treatment that will reverse the damage that has been inflicted by transvaginal mesh implant surgery. For around 20,000 women in communities up and down the country, the surgery was life altering and caused unthinkable hardship. They had to fight to be heard, with clinicians telling them that the mesh was not the cause of their pain.

I pay tribute to Jackson Carlaw, Neil Findlay, Alex Neil and the women affected for their work and campaign that resulted in the Scottish Government making a promise of paid-for mesh removal and a reimbursement scheme for the women who had already paid for surgery. That was particularly welcome.

However, now things appear to have stalled, just a little. Despite Government promises, patients have been made to wait months to see a specialist, and there has been little progress on that to date.

Earlier this summer, in a written question to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, I asked

“what the (a) average and (b) longest waiting time is for mesh surgery”.—[*Written Answers*, 26 July 2022; S6W-08949.]

Unfortunately, the cabinet secretary’s answer failed to provide any clarity. Either the Government does not know the answer or it simply does not record that information.

Less than a year ago, when I asked, at a meeting of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, how long women would have to wait, I was told:

“The pressure on the service is easing, so we hope that it will not be long before we are able to get back to a full service.”—[*Official Report, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee*, 2 November 2021; c 8.]

Currently, there are delays of 11 months.

We discussed waiting times in NHS Scotland just yesterday in the chamber, and it appears that mesh surgery has fallen victim to similar delays. Last month, I heard from Maureen Kerr, a mesh survivor who had to endure months of cancelled appointments before finally being scanned at the complex pelvic mesh removal service in Glasgow last November. Maureen was reassured that her mesh was flat and in place, following a five-minute scan. For her own peace of mind, she decided to pay for a private appointment, which confirmed that her mesh was, in fact, twisted. The continued failing of these women is unforgivable.

Maureen told me:

“I have lost my job because of this. The Scottish Government are just paying lip service to you. I have no idea how long this is going to take. A lot of people are being sent back to people they don’t trust, consultants who have told them all along that it isn’t the mesh that is the problem.”

She went on to say:

“It’s yet another fight meanwhile the pain is still there and you don’t know how fast things will progress and if they will get worse.”

Women are in chronic pain and are still being left to suffer while waiting for the necessary surgery. They continue to be failed.

I turn to the issue of cost. The women affected were promised flexibility, but they are now being told that there is a ceiling of £3,000 on reimbursement for travel for treatment. That is contrary to the financial memorandum to the Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement) (Scotland) Bill, which said that the estimated cost ceiling would be £4,000. There is no appeal system in place, and costs of that level will not be covered by the Government as promised.

In my view, the Government needs to do three things. First, it needs to get on top of waiting times for women to be seen by the complex pelvic mesh removal service, because these women have waited long enough.

Secondly, the Government must ensure that women who want to have their mesh removed outwith Scotland can get that done without further barriers being erected in their way. Jackson Carlaw is absolutely right—I understand that there has not been one referral directly from NHS Scotland to Dr Veronikis.

Thirdly, the Government must ensure that women are actually reimbursed for the cost of their travel and accommodation. None of us can begin to imagine the pain that these women have suffered and are still suffering, and it is incumbent on us to ensure that the welcome provision that the Government has made is effective.



13:22

**Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con):** As other members have done, I thank Daniel Johnson for raising this important issue. These women have suffered, and in many cases, continue to suffer huge amounts of stress and anguish. I have previously raised questions about transvaginal mesh in the chamber and have written articles in support of women who have been affected, and I welcome the chance to speak in the debate.

Two years ago, the Scottish Government announced the service to help women who were suffering from complications after receiving vaginal mesh implants. Sadly, hundreds of sufferers are still waiting for their ordeal to end.

Backed by £1.3 million of Government money, NHS National Services Scotland was tasked with establishing the new service within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The official announcement said that it would be introduced “gradually” from August 2020; no one knew just how gradual the process would be. For some sufferers, the effect has been catastrophic.

A constituent of mine has been in touch to tell me that she has been in constant pain since her operation 17 years ago. The plan that was unveiled in July 2020 gave her hope, but she is living proof that the promise has not been fully honoured. She said:

“I find it impossible to trust the NHS to care for me with mesh issues. A life with mesh is a painful, humiliating, and soul-destroying existence and has already destroyed so much of our lives.”

One woman who has been affected by the scandal has been in touch regarding her experience of the transvaginal mesh removal reimbursement scheme, details of which Jackson Carlaw provided us with. She understood that there was to be flexibility on the reimbursement criteria, but she says that it now appears that a ceiling of £3,000 for flights to America has been introduced by NHS NSS.

In some situations, the cost of economy flights exceeds the £3,000 limit. There is nothing in all the supporting documents to the bill stating that there will be a ceiling on the cost of flights. Furthermore, as I am sure that we all appreciate, flight prices depend very much on the time of year and how far in advance you book them. When you are planning surgery, you do not have that foresight or the ability to do long-term planning. Under the guidelines made by the Scottish Government, there is no appeal system for the mesh reimbursement application process. Where is the flexibility and the due consideration that was to be given to each application? It is non-existent. Several women’s claims are in excess of £3,000, and all should be given equal consideration.

In 2019, the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, promised:

“I am absolutely committed to and determined that we will do everything possible to get these women the treatment and the care that they need”.

Neither I nor the women who have contacted me believe that enough is being done by the Scottish Government to engage with the mesh survivors or help with their heartbreaking plight.

The current Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Humza Yousaf, must be honest with Samantha and hundreds of other victims who are still waiting for help and justice and explain to them why the system is still failing. The health secretary must tell them exactly what will be done to get them the treatment that they were led to expect. As my constituent said,

“We don’t want mesh to wreck what time we have left.”

The Scottish Government appears to have washed its hands of these women as soon as the bill was passed, and that is unacceptable.

13:26

**Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** It is a privilege to have the opportunity to take part in the debate. I congratulate all those who worked so hard to get the legislation on transvaginal mesh. I also congratulate my colleague Daniel Johnson for securing today’s debate.

It is clear from the people who are campaigning on the issue that they feel that they are still not being listened to. In the short time that I have today, I will focus on the concerns of hernia and other mesh survivors who do not currently seem to be covered by the scope of the scheme that is being discussed. Many of those survivors have suffered life-altering conditions. In particular, I want to pay tribute to Roseanna Clarkin and Lauren McDougall, who are petitioning Parliament and asking for the suspension of use of all surgical mesh and fixation devices that are being used in Scotland.

It is very much the case that mesh is still being used. I have spoken with women and men who have been affected by the procedure, including a 50-year-old man who had mesh implanted in the right side of his groin in 2013. He is still suffering extreme pain and debilitating conditions as a result of that procedure, including physical conditions that mean that he is unable to carry on with normal ways of living in the way that most of us would expect to do. He hardly sleeps and cannot get medication that alleviates the symptoms. He says that he is also suffering from depression.

My constituent Roseanna Clarkin was aware of mesh before her procedure. Indeed, she had been a campaigner and did not consent to mesh being

used. Her understanding was that tissue would be used for the hernia procedure that was carried out on her. Unfortunately, she is not the only example of the medical profession not getting informed consent from patients.

Therefore, there are still many issues that the Parliament needs to discuss in relation to the use of mesh in Scotland. I hope that we will have further debates in Parliament, because many people are calling for suspension of the use of all surgical procedures involving mesh. That is a debate that Parliament must continue to have.

The petitioners are asking for an independent review and for suspension of the use of all mesh and fixation devices. They point to the substantial damages that are being awarded, particularly in the United States of America, to people who have had mesh implanted. They ask for improved patient pathways, with

“specialist surgeons who are aware of complications”

and who know

“how to properly insert mesh”

and remove it when needed. They also want

“a choice of surgeries where natural tissue repair is offered first”

and believe that mesh should not be used until that work has been done. They would like the establishment of a specialist

“mesh centre with more surgeons trained in natural tissue repair.”

In particular, they call for an apology and

“recognition ... from the Scottish Government”

and compensation for patients who have been affected. I believe that those are all matters that Parliament should debate.

I very much welcome the motion that Daniel Johnson has brought to the chamber and the landmark legislation that has been put in place. However, I fear that we will need to consider more issues. I hope that time will be made available for us to do so and that the minister will respond on that in her closing remarks.

13:30

**The Minister for Public Health, Women’s Health and Sport (Maree Todd):** I am grateful for the opportunity to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government. I am also grateful to Daniel Johnson for lodging the motion.

We have, quite rightly, discussed mesh in Parliament on a number of occasions. Women across Scotland have been severely affected, and I know that we are all determined to do the best that we can now to help them.

I will try to respond to all the points that have been raised in the debate, but let me be absolutely clear in reiterating that my door is always open for me to hear members’ concerns. I ask any member whose concerns I do not respond to in my remarks to write to me.

For our part, the Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that women can access the care that they need, which clearly needs to be care in which they have confidence and that they can access as quickly as possible.

As members will know, we have established in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde a specialist service that carries out full and partial mesh-removal surgery and offers high-quality dedicated facilities. Fully holistic care is provided, giving patients access to pain management, physiotherapy and mental health support. So far, around 50 surgeries have been carried out and 150 outpatients have been seen.

I think that it is only right that we all acknowledge the effort that the NHS has made to establish and maintain that new service during the height of the pandemic. Its dedication and commitment are abundantly clear and are reflected in the positive feedback that it has received from patients. I look forward to visiting the service in the near future to demonstrate further my support for what it has done.

That said, we know that patients want choice. In the previous session, Parliament agreed that that is absolutely vital, so the Government and the NHS have worked together to deliver it. Therefore, patients who are referred to the Glasgow centre can now choose to have their removal surgery there or in an NHS England centre, or to have it done by one of two independent providers, one of which is in Bristol and the other of which is in Missouri, in the USA.

Patients have been understandably frustrated about the length of time that it has taken to put all the arrangements in place, but I am sure that members will acknowledge the importance of agreeing systems that ensure that referrals can be made safely, and of ensuring proper integration with the pre-operative care and post-operative care that are provided in Scotland.

There are really strong patient safety reasons for women being able to access care from private providers via the NHS in such situations. Those arrangements have now been agreed. They were not imposed by the NHS; they were agreed by the private providers and the NHS, along with arrangements for patients seeking treatment in Glasgow.

Members will be pleased to know that we expect patients to begin to travel to the independent providers from October. I assure members that

there is no cap on the number of patients who can go to Dr Veronikis. Once the clinical decision has been made to remove mesh, the choice of where the surgery will happen lies with the patient.

Members will also recall that, earlier this year, we unanimously agreed legislation to allow women who had previously made their own private arrangements for mesh removal surgery to apply for reimbursement of those costs. The scheme opened earlier this year and, in many cases, payment has already been made. Meanwhile, 648 applications have been received to the mesh fund. The fund's application period was extended by a year to enable more women to apply.

It is not the case that there is a cap on the value that can be reimbursed under the reimbursement scheme, but the Government and NHS National Services Scotland need to ensure that the costs that are being reimbursed are reasonable, and that the scheme is applied equitably to all applicants. In the event that the costs are more than the NHS expects, there will be a requirement for women to provide supporting documentation to show that those costs were necessary. To be clear, I note that there is in the reimbursement scheme an appeals mechanism that is explicitly for provision of payments that are above the normal rate.

The measures that we have put in place have arisen because we have listened to the women who have been affected and because their experiences were related with such power by a number of members of this Parliament, some of whom have since retired. I reassure Parliament that we are continuing to listen; I and my ministerial colleagues have heard directly from people who have been affected by mesh complications, and the cabinet secretary will meet another group of mesh patients in the coming weeks. Our colleagues in the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland have done absolutely sterling work with focus groups and through other engagement. I am really grateful for what the alliance has done, and is continuing to do, with the women who have been affected.

It is important to point out that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has engaged directly with patients who pass through its new service, and will continue to do so.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I am very grateful to the minister for everything that she has said, but I want to tie two pieces of the issue together. I am pleased to hear that women will be able to travel to an independent provider—I presume, Dr Veronikis—from October, but both Jackie Baillie and I have referred to the extended waiting time for women to go through the process of coming to a conclusion about what they want to do. If the contract with Dr Veronikis is for only one year,

there is the very obvious danger that a significant number of women will not be in a position to make a judgment until we are almost at the end of the contract period during which they can take advantage of an independent provider that has been approved. Will the minister keep an eye on that and commit to potentially extending that contract to ensure that all women, irrespective of when they come to a decision, are able to elect for the independent option?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you the time back for that intervention, minister.

**Maree Todd:** We are absolutely aware of the situation and regret that patients are experiencing longer than normal delays in accessing NHS care, including at the mesh removal service in Glasgow, as the NHS seeks to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, patients are being seen and surgeries are being carried out, and I absolutely reassure members that the service is making concerted efforts to continue to reduce waiting times.

I will certainly consider Jackson Carlaw's point about the one-year contract and whether women might time out in that respect. I also say that, having put so much effort into ensuring that all this can happen seamlessly, and that women can access the care seamlessly, we certainly do not want them to time out just because of the pandemic-related challenges that we are all facing. I am therefore more than happy to look at the matter, should it arise in the future.

**Jackie Baillie:** I welcome the point that the minister has just made and her openness to looking at things again. Could she also look at the ceiling on reimbursement costs? I have received an email from a constituent who talked about—I repeat—a ceiling of £3,000 for flights to America having been introduced by NSS. If the minister will take the matter away with her, I will happily provide her with the information for conducting such a review.

**Maree Todd:** I am more than happy to look at that, too, but I assure Jackie Baillie and her constituent that there is no cap on reimbursement. There is simply a requirement to provide extra evidence—after all, it is public money—but there is absolutely no ceiling. I am happy to look at the matter, which should be fairly straightforward to resolve.

In going back to the involvement of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, I have to say that it has done amazing work to ensure that the voices of lived experience are absolutely at the heart of the service that is being developed in Glasgow. The feedback that it receives helps us to refine and to further improve what is still a very new service; indeed, action is already being taken

as a result of the help that the alliance has had from its patients—help that the alliance and we are truly grateful for.

As for the Essure implant, I have met women who have been affected by it, and we have agreed steps to highlight the issues related to it.

It is relevant to everyone who has an interest in the area that the Scottish Government has accepted in full the recommendations of the Cumberlege report and will bring forward legislation on a patient safety commissioner this year. Our aim in establishing the post of patient safety commissioner is to prevent tragedies on such a scale from happening in the future. The women who have been impacted by the mesh implants have absolutely made a tangible difference for those who come after them. The establishment of that post is evidence of that.

The Government will, of course, reflect on the discussion that has taken place today. We remain absolutely committed to ensuring that patients can access treatment that they have confidence in. To that end, I commend the service in Glasgow and hope that all members will acknowledge the efforts that our NHS colleagues have made in establishing a new service in such difficult circumstances.

We will ensure that engagement with patients continues so that their experiences further influence and refine the services that we offer. We will continue to offer patients choice in who provides their treatment, and the NHS will continue to communicate and discuss all those options with patients.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate. I suspend the meeting until 2.30 pm.

13:41

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Portfolio Question Time

### Net Zero, Energy and Transport

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** Good afternoon. The next item of business is portfolio question time, and the portfolio is net zero, energy and transport. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should please press their request-to-speak button or enter the letter R in the chat function during the relevant question.

#### Aberdeen City Council (Net Zero Ambitions)

1. **Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting Aberdeen City Council to meet its net zero ambitions. (S6O-01396)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson):** The Scottish Government continues to work closely with local authorities to tackle the global climate emergency, including through the Scottish Cities Alliance.

We are supporting Aberdeen City Council in a number of ways. As a full partner in the Aberdeen city region deal, we are contributing £125 million over 10 years, alongside an additional £254 million, which will help to ensure economic transformation for the north-east with inclusive growth, increased wellbeing and a just transition to net zero.

This month, we announced that our north-east and Moray just transition fund will provide £20 million to projects this year, representing a total value of more than £50 million over four years, to support a fair transition to net zero and to diversify the regional economy in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

We are also supporting a low-carbon infrastructure green growth accelerator pathfinder project in Aberdeen. Alongside that, we are providing some £75 million through the energy transition fund to support our energy sector and the north-east over the next five years to make progress on energy transition as we move towards a net zero society by 2045.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer. Aberdeen City Council has an ambitious plan, with the ultimate aim of becoming a net zero and climate resilient council. The six key strands of the plan focus on mobility, buildings and heat, the circular economy, energy supply, the natural environment and empowerment.

Will the cabinet secretary join me in welcoming that ambitious plan for Aberdeen? Can he go into further detail on how communities in my Aberdeen Donside constituency will be able to take action to help to reach the net zero goal through the community empowerment legislation?

**Michael Matheson:** I very much welcome the work that Aberdeen City Council is taking forward through its climate change plan, and the work of other local authorities across the country. As a country, we have a target of achieving net zero by 2045, and all parts of the public and private sectors need to play their part in ensuring that we achieve that.

Alongside supporting local authorities to create greater community empowerment, we introduced the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to support communities to take more control over the decisions that affect them, their economies, their wellbeing and their local environments.

This year, we have supplemented that work with £1 million through the just transition fund that will be allocated through the participatory budgeting programme in Aberdeen city, Aberdeenshire and Moray, with the aim of empowering local communities to have a direct say in how funding will be spent on projects that lead to a just transition to net zero.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will take a supplementary question from Colin Smyth as the Labour spokesperson.

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. Transport remains the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases and one of the biggest barriers to councils delivering net zero. The Scottish National Party promised in its manifesto to remove the majority of fossil fuel buses from Scotland by 2023—a promise that was repeated in last year's programme for government. However, Transform Scotland's research suggests that just 16 per cent of the fleet will be electric or hydrogen powered by the end of next year. Can the cabinet secretary tell us whether that figure is correct? If the target is not met in 2023, when will the Government meet it?

**Michael Matheson:** We are taking forward a range of work to ensure that we decarbonise our bus network. The member will be aware of the significant levels of investment that the Scottish Government has already made in electrification of the bus network.

One of the aspects in Aberdeen city is hydrogen buses, which we have been supporting. The city has the biggest hydrogen bus network in Europe, I believe, as a result of the investment and support that have been provided by the Scottish Government. That is why, working with Aberdeen

City Council and other partners, we have been making sure that we continue the decarbonisation of the bus network.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** The cabinet secretary mentioned the just transition fund. There are about 120 applicants for the first £20 million of that fund, and they are desperate to get going and start making investment decisions. We know that the Scottish Government selected the successful bidders several weeks ago but has failed to announce them. Constituents have suggested to me that the announcement has been delayed until the SNP conference. Will the cabinet secretary counter those suggestions by publishing the successful names now?

**Michael Matheson:** I am sure that Liam Kerr will welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to taking forward the just transition fund for the north-east and Moray. We have identified the successful projects, as a result of the criteria that were applied in assessing the projects, and details will be announced soon by the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, Richard Lochhead.

I gently point out to Liam Kerr that the just transition fund for the north-east and Moray is a £500 million programme over the next 10 years, and we have repeatedly called on the United Kingdom Government to match that, but it has failed to do so. If the member is so keen on more money going into the north-east and Moray, he might want to try to get his colleagues at Westminster to step up and match the Scottish Government's level of ambition for that area.

### Concessionary Travel (Budget)

2. **Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of its announced £37.6 million reduction in the budget for concessionary travel. (S6O-01397)

**The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth):** As part of our routine management of the funding for bus services, the Scottish Government continually monitors forecasted spend against budget. As a result of the demand-led nature of the concessionary travel schemes, we have reduced our forecast for the rest of this financial year, due to patronage being lower than expected.

The change in the forecast will have no impact on access to the schemes for older and disabled persons or young persons. If patronage were to rise above the forecasted levels, so would our expenditure on the schemes.

**Foysoil Choudhury:** In its justification for the cuts to concessionary travel, the Scottish Government cited

“Forecast reduction in patronage numbers and fare levels.”

Given Scotland’s commitments to net zero, would it not make more sense to address the reduction in numbers instead of using that to justify cuts? Is that not another false economy from the Scottish Government?

**Jenny Gilruth:** It is worth pointing out that there has been a reduction in patronage because of Covid impacts. A return to normal has been slower than expected, and that has been reflected in reforecasting.

Similarly, travel levels under the older and disabled persons scheme remain about 30 per cent lower than 2019 levels, and we know that bus patronage has been slower than other modes of public transport to return to pre-pandemic levels.

However, I recognise what Foysol Choudhury has said. We provide support to the sector more generally. Earlier in the year, I extended the network support grant plus scheme, which existed during Covid, into next month. Next week, I will reconvene the bus task force directly with the sector. Over the summer recess, I met smaller and larger operators to talk about some of the very real challenges that they face.

On the member’s point about pulling people back to public transport, he might be aware that, only two weeks ago, we launched the marketing campaign for the young person’s bus scheme, which has been really successful; we are now over the halfway mark, which is hugely important. We will continue to encourage people to return to public transport, because that is vital for our recovery from the pandemic and, as the member mentioned, for our net zero ambitions and aspirations.

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** More than 2.3 million people in Scotland—everyone under 22, everyone over 60, and disabled people and carers—can now benefit from free bus travel for work, education and leisure opportunities. That policy has been taken forward against a backdrop of the Scottish budget being cut by 5.2 per cent.

Does the minister agree that, if Labour would rather that the Scottish Government did not have to make tough decisions, it is time that it joined the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Green Party in calling for the Parliament to have the full range of levers to realise its aspirations, rather than remain at the mercy of a United Kingdom Government?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I agree with the sentiment of Paul McLennan’s question. We know of some of the challenges that the Government has faced, particularly over the past week, and we will look at potential future support. That will be informed by the Scottish Government’s emergency budget

review. However, it is important that any additional support that we are able to give continues to adapt and evolve so that it remains fit for purpose. That is why I was keen to reconvene the bus task force—I want to speak to the sector directly to ensure that funding and support is fit for purpose as we go forward. However, we must recognise the limitations in the Government’s powers when it comes to revenue, and I hope that that will be reflected in the sentiments from members of other parties—from whom, I am sure, we are about to hear.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Free bus travel for under-22s was launched during the Covid crisis, so the fact that there have been 22 million journeys since then is pretty remarkable. I know from discussions with bus companies that those journeys have really helped to build back services after the pandemic.

However, there is still reluctance among over-60s to come back to public transport after Covid, which can affect the viability of some services. How can the message be sent out that bus travel in Scotland is both safe and free for millions of people who are eligible at both ends of the concessionary scheme?

**Jenny Gilruth:** The member is right to point out the reticence among certain groups in society to return to public transport, which I alluded to in my response to Mr Choudhury.

The Scottish Government continues to invest £300 million annually to give free bus travel to more than 2 million people in this country, including children and young people under 22, disabled people and everyone over 60.

In line with our long-term goal to encourage a modal shift and get people out of their cars and back into sustainable modes of transport such as buses, we will, as I mentioned in response to previous questions, continue to engage with operators, delivery partners and other key stakeholders to promote public transport as an attractive way to travel, as more people begin to return to the workplace and travel more often for leisure purposes.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** The concessionary travel budget is not the only source of funding that bus operators are set to lose. The network support grant plus scheme is due to end in 10 days’ time. If that happens, routes will go, fares will rise and the frequency of services will drop. England’s bus recovery grant has been extended to April, so will the minister commit to doing the same here?

**Jenny Gilruth:** The member raised the matter with me prior to the summer recess, and he knows that I extended the NSG plus scheme at the time.

It is really important, though, that Government support adapts to the current context. We have heard from other members today about some of the financial challenges that the Government faces. We budgeted £93.5 million from April this year to support the bus network as we recover from the pandemic, and an additional £20.5 million of funding has been given to extend the recovery until October, as the member mentioned. That is in addition to about £210 million that we provided during the pandemic to ensure that operators were well positioned and at the forefront of our green recovery.

The member talked about the challenges faced by the sector. It is worth mentioning a number of other challenges that do not come under my responsibilities as a minister in this Parliament. As a result of Brexit, there are labour challenges, which I have discussed with the sector. There are also challenges in relation to fuel costs. Again, this Parliament can take limited actions in that regard.

Many of those matters are reserved to the United Kingdom Government. The member might be interested to know that I have invited the UK Government to take part in the reconvened bus task force next week. I very much hope that it will take part, noting the reserved competence, as neither the member nor I have responsibility for those matters.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 3 was not lodged.

#### **Standing Charges (Highlands and Islands)**

**4. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it has had discussions with the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets regarding reported higher standing charges for energy in the Highlands and Islands. (S6O-01399)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson):** The increase in energy prices in recent months remains a huge worry for many consumers. That is especially true for those in the Highlands and Islands, where the additional costs of distributing energy are higher than in other parts of the country.

The structure of customers' energy bills, including standing charge levels, is reserved to the United Kingdom Government. Although that means that we have no option to intervene directly, we continue to provide consumers with as much support and advice as we can. We are also raising specific issues of concern with the UK Government and Ofgem.

**Emma Roddick:** It is clear from that, and from so many other penalties that the Highlands and Islands face for being a net exporter of clean

green energy, that the UK Government will never work for the communities that I represent and that it will instead leave them to suffer extreme fuel poverty. Does the cabinet secretary agree that we could and should do much better in Scotland and that we should call for energy policy to be devolved?

**Michael Matheson:** I acknowledge the specific concerns that the member's constituents have and the higher costs that people in remote and rural areas and the islands face in meeting energy charges. To some extent, the existing mechanism penalises individuals who live in those areas as a result of the way in which Ofgem and the UK Government regulate the process.

Where we have scope to take action, we are doing so. For example, through our area-based schemes, we provide funding to deliver energy efficiency improvements in areas with the highest levels of fuel poverty. We have committed to continuing to spend more per head of population in our remote and rural areas because of the significantly higher levels of fuel poverty there and the additional costs that are associated with the work that is necessary.

The member has hit the nail on the head. Given the absolute shambles that we have had with the UK Government's management of energy policy over an extended period, there is no doubt in my mind that an independent Scotland would be able to manage our energy policy in a much more effective way that reflects the needs of constituents in areas such as the Highlands.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** As Emma Roddick has suggested and as the cabinet secretary acknowledged, standing charges have been a particular issue of late. The lifting of the cap in April resulted in a 1p per day increase for gas but a doubling to 45p per day for electricity. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in the justification for that rise, there has been a suggestion that that is to pay back the moneys lost from companies going bust over the past couple of years, many of which could not be used by customers in the Highlands and Islands because of the total heat with total control mechanism? Will he agree to engage directly with Di Alexander, who is the chairwoman of the Highlands and Islands housing associations affordable warmth group, on the representations that can legitimately be made to Ofgem and UK ministers about the inherent unfairness in how those standing charges have been structured?

**Michael Matheson:** On Liam McArthur's final question, if Mr Alexander wants to write to me about his proposals, I would be more than happy to share that with my officials and as part of our representations to the UK Government on the matter.

There is no doubt in my mind about the impact, which the member rightly highlights, that standing charges have on people who live in our remote and rural communities and on our island communities such as Orkney. That is why the system must be reformed. It is presently calibrated in such a way that it penalises people who live in our remote and rural communities.

The member asked if some of the costs are associated with market failure. The companies whose energy purchasing was unhedged have gone bust. As a result of that, the taxpayer has to pick up the tab. That happened because the UK Government's regulator allowed unhedged companies to operate in the market. That should never have been allowed in the first place. The blame for the billions of pounds that consumers throughout the country will now have to pay back as a result falls squarely at the UK Government's door for its failure to regulate the energy markets properly on behalf of consumers.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 5 was not lodged.

### Peatland Restoration

**6. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its peatland restoration plans. (S6O-01401)

**The Minister for Environment and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan):** In recognition of the huge importance of our peatlands in the fight against the climate and nature crises, in 2020, we set out ambitious plans to invest more than £250 million over a decade to restore at least 250,000 hectares of degraded peat by 2030. We publish updates on progress against those targets in our annual climate change plan monitoring reports. The latest of those, which was published on 26 May 2022, is available on the Scottish Government's website.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Restoring peatlands will, as the minister said,

"help us fight climate change, support biodiversity and provide good, green jobs ... in rural communities."

Those words are lifted straight from the Scottish Government's website.

I will also repeat what the minister said. On page 70 of the Scottish National Party's 2021 manifesto, there is a promise to restore

"250,000 hectares of ... peatland by 2030."

However, the Government is failing dramatically and falling short of those targets. Instead, it is almost halving its £22 million commitment to peatland restoration. To meet its targets, the Government will need to restore on average

31,250 hectares of peatland per year until 2030. How does it intend to do that?

**Màiri McAllan:** I might have thought that the fact that nearly 60,000 hectares of peatland, which was once degraded and emitting carbon, is now restored and sequestering carbon would be a good thing and would be welcomed even by the Tories.

I acknowledge that peatland science is in its infancy, as is the peatland industry. That is exactly why the Scottish Government is doing everything that we can to support the industry by providing that £250 million of funding over 10 years, and that is why peatland action—this is part of NatureScot, our nature agency—has been working to support restoration projects throughout the country since 2012.

The industry is in its infancy; it is only a few years old. Contractor capacity is limited, as is the number of technical advisers. However, the Scottish Government is working at pace to bridge the gap and to meet our ambitious targets.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** I declare my role as Scottish Environment LINK's nature champion for Scotland's extraordinary blanket bogs. The carbon that is sequestered in Scotland's blanket bogs equates to one third of the carbon that is held in the Amazon rainforest. Does the minister agree that, with that extraordinary resource at our disposal, those lands must be systematically restored to help Scotland to reach its climate change targets? Will she commit to working closely with industry partners, including, for example, onshore renewable electricity companies, to ensure that peatland restoration is a prime consideration of permissions? Will she make sure that national planning framework 4 planning guidance ensures that renewable energy generation on those lands delivers peatland restoration in partnership, and in a sensible and pragmatic way, to protect that vital asset and to deliver net zero targets?

**Màiri McAllan:** I absolutely agree with Fiona Hyslop. Peatland restoration is an essential part of the linked challenge of the climate and nature crises, and it has the unique opportunity to provide co-benefits across our environment, our economy and our society.

I commit to continuing to engage closely with the renewables industry as we transition to net zero. That includes discussing ways in which the industry can balance the actions that it can take in relation to greenhouse gas mitigation and the protection of the natural world.

The member is correct in saying that Scotland's planning system will play a vital role in responding to climate change, encouraging nature recovery and helping to deliver the crucial infrastructure that



is needed to achieve our ambitions. I do not want to pre-empt the outcome of the final NPF4, but it will signal a turning point for planning, and we have been clear that responding to the twin challenge of climate change and nature loss will be central to it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 7 has not been lodged.

### Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme

8. **Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how many households it has written to promoting the warmer homes Scotland scheme since the start of the cost of living crisis. (S6O-01403)

**The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie):** Households can obtain free help and advice through various routes, including via direct mail to households living in or at risk of fuel poverty. For example, local authorities write directly to property owners in areas that are targeted by our area-based schemes. They might also refer them to Home Energy Scotland and to our warmer homes Scotland service. We do not keep a central record of those activities.

Yesterday, we launched our one-stop cost of living website, which provides a wide range of advice, including schemes to tackle fuel poverty.

**Mark Griffin:** I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am the owner of a rental property in North Lanarkshire.

In recent parliamentary answers, the minister has advised that Home Energy Scotland is meeting its targets to speak with low income, potentially fuel-poor clients, with 42,000 having been offered support in the past financial year. However, the number of installations as a result of those interactions is just 5,300.

The Government has targets for interactions and advice calls, but what would the targets be for the number of installations under the new contract? Does the new contract allow for enhanced promotion of the scheme, with local delivery teams on the ground able to make referrals directly?

**Patrick Harvie:** I am happy to engage with members from all parties on the development of the new contract but, as things stand, warmer homes Scotland, which is, of course, a demand-led scheme, provided support to more than 5,300 households in 2021-22, despite being impacted by the Covid pandemic. That is among the highest figures since the scheme began.

We are leading the way in these islands in supporting households in fuel poverty. In fact, the

chairman of the British Energy Efficiency Federation, Andrew Warren, recently wrote:

"My advice to Whitehall is simple. Whether you take the high road or you take the low road, you had best be copying Scotland's initiatives."

We will continue to develop and seek to go further, but we are making excellent progress in supporting people with energy during these difficult times.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have three requests from members to ask supplementary questions. I would like to take all three, so I make an appeal for succinct questions and answers.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Over the past five years, home insulation schemes have been completed in fewer than 1,000 projects in my North East Fife constituency. That is 1,000 out of 40,000 homes. We are in the middle of a climate emergency and now a cost of living crisis. That level of support is pathetic. How will the Government get more homes insulated quickly?

**Patrick Harvie:** I am sorry that Mr Rennie chooses to denigrate the work not only of Government but of our partner agencies, whose support to households in 2021-22, as I said, involved the highest numbers since warmer homes Scotland began. There is no need for that kind of language about the work that people are doing throughout this country to support people in the cost of living crisis, including with the cost of energy.

There is a huge amount more to do not only in the current context but throughout this decade to retrofit our homes for energy efficiency and zero emissions heating. I hope that, in the future, we will see political parties across the chamber joining us in ensuring that we pursue that as ambitiously as we can.

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** Has the Scottish Government assessed how many households are excluded from receiving external wall insulation through the warmer homes Scotland scheme due to living in non-traditional, steel-framed houses? What financial support might be available to those who do not qualify for that essential work but would like to improve the insulation of their homes to save energy?

**Patrick Harvie:** Warmer homes Scotland provides a bespoke package of energy efficiency and heating improvements that are suitable for each specific property. Some £55 million has been allocated in 2022-23. That is the highest-ever figure. More than 70,000 fuel-poor households have benefited from external wall insulation as part of area-based schemes. That includes properties with non-standard construction and steel frames. We have allocated £64 million to

local councils for those schemes to support the improvement of hard-to-treat properties.

I encourage everybody—whatever kind of property they live in—to contact Home Energy Scotland to explore the support that is available to them.

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

There are 530-plus social houses in Wick that require to be upgraded to energy performance certificate C. I estimate that that could cost more than £20 million. If we extrapolate that across the Highlands, the cost of getting social housing up to EPC C could be much more than £100 million. Will the Government help those houses to get up to EPC C?

**Patrick Harvie:** We work closely with the social housing sector to understand the scale of the challenge that confronts it and to support it through that. We will continue to do that in relation to energy efficiency and the critically important role that registered social landlords can have in developing heat networks, which are relevant in rural and urban settings. Just today, we launched the heat networks support unit, which will be an excellent support for the development of local projects in the years to come.

## Excellence in Scottish Education

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-06102, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on excellence in Scottish education.

14:59

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** I pay tribute to all the young people who have achieved qualifications and awards this summer, and to all those who have moved on to employment or started new apprenticeships or courses in our colleges and universities. They are a credit to themselves and to those who have supported them.

In particular, I recognise the dedication, commitment and hard work of our early years workers, our teachers, our college and university lecturers and all those who work alongside them.

There is much to celebrate in Scottish education and it is right to recognise and acknowledge some of that today. Our education system has an excellent reputation internationally. Beatriz Pont from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said last September to the Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee that

"Scotland is viewed internationally as an example of high performance."—[*Official Report, Education, Children and Young People Committee*, 8 September 2021; c 30.]

We have a higher proportion of adults with tertiary-level education than any European Union country. Scotland is ranked fourth in the 2018 programme for international student assessment study of global competence. Since August 2021, all local authorities in Scotland have been offering 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare to all eligible children. Scotland is the only part of the United Kingdom to offer the equivalent of 30 hours of funded childcare per week in term time to all eligible children, regardless of their parents' working status.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen the poverty-related attainment gap close on a range of indicators—for example, among school leavers achieving a pass at higher or equivalent. The resilience and hard work of our teachers and young people are extraordinary. This year saw one of the strongest ever sets of qualification results in an exam year. There was also a big increase in 2022 in those achieving skills-based qualifications. We have more school leavers who are in education, employment or training and we have a record high of full-time first degree entrants to university coming from the most deprived areas.

Indeed, the commissioner for fair access said in his last annual report that the Scottish Government's approach has been "an unambiguous success". Our commitment to free university tuition ensures that eligible Scottish students studying in Scotland do not incur up to £27,750 of additional student loan debt, resulting in the lowest student debt levels in the UK.

We are spending wisely on the people and the infrastructure where it matters most. We spend more per pupil and we have more teachers per pupil than any other UK nation. Our teacher numbers are now at the highest that they have been since 2008, with primary teacher numbers at the highest that they have been since 1980, and our school buildings are in the best condition that they have ever been in.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** There is lots of self-congratulation there, but that could be easily predicted for the speech that we are listening to. How many Scottish pupils who applied to go to Scottish universities were not able to gain admission because of the cap on the number of places for Scottish students?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I think that what is hidden in that question, Presiding Officer, is the Tory policy of ensuring that Scottish students would pay tuition fees, just like down south—

**Stephen Kerr:** On a point of order—

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** If we are having that type of debate, it is unfortunate that the Conservatives are not more honest in their—

**Stephen Kerr:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. What recourse is there for us, on this side of the chamber, when someone blatantly misrepresents the position of our party in relation to an issue, as the cabinet secretary has just done? If that is setting the tone of the debate, it is a very poor start.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Kerr. The content of members' speeches is not a matter for the chair. If there is a factual inaccuracy, there are mechanisms for correcting the record. Cabinet secretary, I invite you to continue your speech, and I can give you back that time.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Indeed, if the Tories do not want people to pay for university tuition, they must say where the money will come from, because that is the context in which Mr Kerr is operating.

Does what I have outlined represent a system that is failing, as many in this chamber and, indeed, some commentators claim? Of course it does not. However, we know that there is more to

do. Our aim remains to achieve excellence and equity in the outcomes that children achieve.

We have now seen a full year of the delivery of the expansion of funded early learning and childcare, bringing benefits to thousands of children and families spread across Scotland. Increasing access to high-quality funded early learning and school-age childcare is a priority and is fundamental to our national mission to tackle child poverty, to support families and to narrow the poverty-related attainment gap.

Our strategic childcare plan will set out our vision for early learning and school-age childcare. In 2022-23, we will invest £20 million to design and test options for all-year-round school-age childcare systems. We will also build the evidence base that we need to develop a high-quality learning and childcare offer for one and two-year-olds, starting with those children who will benefit most.

Continued improvement is at the heart of our plans for learning after the pandemic. That aim is shared with everyone who helps to deliver education in Scotland. We are committed to raising attainment for all our young people and accelerating their progress in learning.

As we move beyond the pandemic we are, rightly, also placing an increased focus on health, wellbeing and children's rights. The ambitious new approach for the Scottish attainment challenge that I announced last year includes a record investment of £1 billion and a strong focus on health and wellbeing. We have given councils and headteachers significant funding and trust them to get it right, because they know where that funding is needed most.

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I have rehearsed my point with the cabinet secretary on numerous occasions, but it is a little bit out of order to describe that approach as "ambitious" when she is cutting resources for the poorest communities in Scotland, such as those in my constituency in Dundee, which is resulting in massive cuts in the kind of provision that the poorest pupils in Scotland need.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** The funding arrangement that we have was welcomed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. It is important to recognise that the impact of poverty and the pandemic go right across Scotland. It was demonstrated that the way in which the fund previously operated ensured that around 59 per cent of children from low-income families were not able to access the funding through their school. I think that it was right—and COSLA agreed—that more should be done in that area.

In June, I visited Castlebrae community campus with the international council of education

advisers. We were delighted to hear first hand how the school and pupils have benefited from pupil equity funding, as well as from a new building that they are, rightly, proud of.

Our 2016-17 programme for government said:

“It is the defining mission of this Government to close the poverty-related attainment gap. We intend to make significant progress within the lifetime of this Parliament and substantially eliminate the gap over the course of the next decade.”

We remain committed to that and we are seeing progress. Covid has had a negative impact on the attainment gap, not just in Scotland but all over the world, and the cost of living crisis certainly is not helping. Therefore, we need a relentless focus to address the gap, reduce it and, ultimately, close it.

A consistent approach to limiting variation in performance across Scotland will be crucial to that. Our framework for recovery and accelerating progress requires local authorities to set their own stretch aims for progress against an agreed set of measures. That will enable authorities to use local data and knowledge in their contexts to set their own ambitious, but realistic, aims for progress. The Government will publish those stretch aims later in the year.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I think that the cabinet secretary is exaggerating. The apparent progress that she has alluded to is in comparison with 2019 figures. At the very best, progress is stagnant. Compared with the Covid years, there is a massive drop. At this rate of progress, it is going to take another three decades to close the attainment gap. Why is she being so timid?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Mr Rennie does a disservice to the work that has been done, particularly given that the money for the Scottish attainment challenge has been increased in this parliamentary session and particularly when we look back to the start of the attainment challenge. In primary schools, between 2016 and 2017 and up to 2018-19, the attainment gap narrowed for numeracy and literacy. We have also seen improvements in attainment in some higher education results. However, I absolutely recognise that there is more to do, which is exactly why the stretch aims have been introduced.

**Michael Marra:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** The member will forgive me, but I am going to make some progress and I have already given way to him.

We will continue to provide support for our children and young people. We will maintain funding for additional support for learning to enhance capacity in order to respond effectively to

individual needs. We will ensure that all school-age children have access to an appropriate device and to connectivity to support their learning by the end of the parliamentary session. We are committed to helping families with the cost of the school day, and to working with our local authority partners to plan for the expansion of free school meal provision to primaries 6 and 7 later in the parliamentary session.

However, we also recognise that education does not stop at the school gate. Learning is lifelong and we recognise the value in all learner journeys through our schools, colleges, universities, professional skills providers and apprenticeships. We have already started work on our new purpose and principles for post-school education, skills and research. We will consult with partners, learners and employers to ensure that we hear the voices that need to be heard so that we get our purpose and principles correct.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary give way on that point?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I apologise; I am going to make some more progress.

Finally, I will touch on our ambitious programme of educational reform to ensure that our system remains world leading. Launched last week, our national discussion on the future of Scottish education, co-chaired with COSLA and facilitated by Professors Carol Campbell and Alma Harris, will focus on how we get even better and build an education system that is fit for the future. It is an unprecedented opportunity for children and young people, parents and carers, and teachers and other practitioners to shape the future of the Scottish education system.

Ahead of the launch, I visited Carnegie primary school in Dunfermline, where I saw from learners how the resources can be used to support a conversation facilitated by teachers. I was deeply impressed by how knowledgeable and enthusiastic the children were.

I thank Professors Campbell and Harris, Councillor Buchanan, Willie Rennie, Ross Greer, Pam Gosal and Michael Marra for taking the time to attend the first facilitated conversation on the national discussion, which we had in the Scottish Parliament last week.

We will always have our political differences—but we have already seen that this afternoon—but the new report asked us all to have a national discussion, and it stressed the importance of reaching a “consensual vision” for education. I hope that we might see some of that this afternoon.

The national discussion will set the context for our reform—it has been 20 years since we had our

last national discussion on education. It is crucial that we listen to children and young people as we go through that process. That national discussion will lead into the work that Professor Hayward is undertaking on the independent review of qualifications and assessments.

The education reform bill will establish a new independent inspectorate and a new qualifications body. We are also developing the new national agency for Scottish education.

Our vision of excellence and equity is a shared endeavour, with partners including councils, early years practitioners, parents and carers, teachers, lecturers and care services playing a pivotal role in improving outcomes for children and young people. It is important that we recognise their hard work and listen to what they have to say.

We remain confident that our record levels of investment, our collaborative approach with key partners in the system and our continuous focus on improvement, underpinned by curriculum for excellence, will help to ensure that Scottish education remains a world-class system that places the needs and voices of children and young people right at the heart of education, which is just as it should be.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that there is much to be proud of and to celebrate in Scottish education; commends the hard work of all staff and teaching professionals in Scotland's schools, colleges, universities and early learning and childcare centres to support children and young people throughout this period of recovery post-COVID-19-pandemic; pays tribute to all the young people who achieved qualifications, broader achievements and skills in summer 2022, as well as those who have moved onto employment, started new apprenticeships, or courses in colleges and universities, having overcome the challenges they faced; recognises that, despite those challenges, this was one of the strongest ever sets of results for any exam year, given that pass rates were up on the last time that formal exams were held in 2019; welcomes that the attainment gap has closed over the last 10 years and that there has been a record high number of full-time first degree entrants to university coming from the most deprived areas in Scotland, but acknowledges that significant progress is still required; welcomes, therefore, the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that all children and young people receive a first-class education in their local school through significant investment in teacher employment, with the highest spending per pupil, and more teachers per pupil, than any other UK nation, as well as increased digital inclusion, action to address the costs associated with the school day, and a £1 billion investment over the course of the parliamentary session to close the poverty-related attainment gap; commends teachers, schools and local authorities across Scotland for their commitment to build a continuously improving system, which raises attainment for all, closes the attainment gap, and enables all children and young people to fulfil their potential, and encourages everyone – children, young people, families and teachers – to give their views on the future of education by taking part in the National Discussion.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I gently nudge colleagues who wish to participate and who have not already done so to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible. There is a little time in hand, so I encourage members to make and take interventions, for which they will get the time back. Therefore, I discourage members from providing a running commentary on speeches from a sedentary position.

15:12

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** Today, with grim inevitability, we will hear more of what we heard from the cabinet secretary—a variety of Pollyanna-esque speeches from Scottish National Party members outlining how great the SNP is doing. We will hear statistical acrobatics to prove that the figures are wrong, and we will be presented with Donald Trump-style alternative facts. We will inevitably be told how much worse things are in England as an excuse for the SNP's failures.

The SNP keeps repeating its doublethink, as if saying it often enough changes the reality of what teachers, pupils and parents experience daily. Nicola Sturgeon said that she wanted her time in office to be judged on her education record. She said that it was her "sacred responsibility". No wonder she is not in the chamber today; she knows how bad her record is.

There are 815 fewer teachers than there were when the SNP came to power in 2007. There is a scandalous number of teachers on temporary contracts. Attainment is falling and, despite what we have heard, the attainment gap is widening. One in three primary pupils is not meeting the expected level of literacy. One in four primary pupils is not meeting the expected level of numeracy. Fewer pupils are taking maths and science at higher level, and more than 40 per cent of Scotland's schools have not been inspected for at least 10 years. We should be angry at this litany of failure and at how we are letting down Scotland's children and young people.

Scotland's education was the envy of the world. My Scottish education has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. I am forever indebted to my teachers as well as to my parents for being so encouraging and supportive.

**Brian Whittle:** I have to declare an interest. My eldest daughter is the head of guidance at a secondary school.

I was listening to the cabinet secretary. Does my colleague agree that what she is describing does not reflect the incredible stresses and strains that our teachers are increasingly under? Inevitably, our teachers are going to reach burnout unless we do something to support them and our schools.

**Stephen Kerr:** I am grateful to my friend for his intervention, and I completely agree with it. It is Pollyanna-ism. The SNP is creating an alternative reality.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I wonder how the member would respond to Andrea Bradley, who recently took over as the general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland. She said:

“Yes, there is a lot more to be done and there is a lot more we want to achieve, but it is demoralising for young people to hear their work completely dismissed by politicians and the press as not being worth terribly much. That is very difficult for them to hear, for their parents to hear and for the wider school community to hear. It is really not how you encourage and support and stimulate progress in the direction we want to see it and you don’t achieve success by setting up competitions between different schools and different local authorities.”

I hope that Mr Kerr can get to the point where he congratulates Scottish education for what is right as well as pointing out what more we can perhaps do.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Kerr, you can have your time back.

**Stephen Kerr:** That is a typical SNP line of argument. Whenever someone puts the Government under examination and scrutinises it, ministers, including the cabinet secretary, hide behind the good people who are doing their level best to educate our young people. It is a low tactic, and I would have hoped for more from the cabinet secretary than that kind of argument.

I return to what I was saying about my own family and my own personal indebtedness to Scotland’s education system. No one in our family had ever been to university, but my mum and dad wanted that for my sister and me.

Let us look at what has happened under this hopeless SNP Government. Scotland’s global reputation has suffered under the SNP in so many areas, but none more so than the area of our proud reputation for education. It is true to say that

“The importance of education is ingrained in Scottish history”.

Those words are Nicola Sturgeon’s. Yet, little did we realise when she said them that she meant that Scottish educational standards were to be a matter of history rather than of the present.

A Scottish education must once again be seen as one of life’s greatest advantages. It must be a gift that gives to every Scot equality and quality of opportunity. It must inspire and uplift. It must be the passport that opens doors and leads to wider horizons. This is the very definition of levelling up: giving children and young people the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and fortitude to live a full and happy life. *[Interruption.]* I am willing to give way to the cabinet secretary, because she is

giving a running commentary on my speech. I am more than happy to give way to her, but instead I will give way to Bob Doris, from whom we always hear sensible things.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** Does Mr Kerr remember a visit to St Roch’s, in my constituency, when he was convener of the Education, Children and Young People Committee? We heard from many teachers who were working with young people from deprived areas on the attainment challenge. They were hugely optimistic and very positive about the future of Scottish education. Can Mr Kerr reflect any of that in his speech at any point?

**Stephen Kerr:** I am reflecting the critique of the Government that the member supports. That is what Parliament is for—to scrutinise the performance of the Government. I know that the SNP does not like scrutiny, but that is, in part, what this Parliament exists for and it is what we are going to do, whether it is comfortable or not.

By the way, I agree with Bob Doris. We met some fantastic teachers. I will return to teachers if I can make some progress in my speech.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Stephen Kerr:** Will I be able to recover any time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you up to 10 minutes, which would give you an additional two minutes.

**Stephen Kerr:** In that case, I will take one more intervention, then I want to deliver my message.

**Ross Greer:** I agree in principle with the member about the importance of parliamentary scrutiny, but Parliament gives Opposition parties the opportunity to lay out not just criticism of the Government’s record but alternative proposals for what they would do instead. When will the Conservatives come to that?

**Stephen Kerr:** The reason why I want to make some progress is because I want to talk about the themes around which the Conservatives wish to make some contribution. This is the beginning, I hope, of that contribution, though let us keep the Government scrutiny going here.

The SNP is good at shirking accountability, and we are hearing that today. It is taking far too long to make changes in education and far too long on reform; it is not making it happen. The SNP wastes time at the speed of light and is expert at prevarication, making it into an Olympic-class event.

We are now to have a national discussion, and I really hope that the cabinet secretary is not cynically using a national discussion as a

smokescreen for her Government's 15 years of failure. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review was just such—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, I have already advised the chamber about running—

**Stephen Kerr:** Again, I am willing to give way, because the cabinet secretary has something to say.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Kerr, allow me to manage the debate. Resume your speech.

**Stephen Kerr:** I just make the point, Presiding Officer, that I am more than happy to take interventions from the cabinet secretary.

The OECD review was just such a smokescreen. It was called “partial, sycophantic and superficial” in a damning criticism by Lindsay Paterson, professor of education policy at Edinburgh university. We should not keep defending the indefensible and commissioning review upon review simply to embed failure.

Vested interest in education means that those in charge today are responsible for the state of the system, which is failing. It is perfectly normal for them—it is a human reaction—to want to defend that system, but it is our job to be clear in our view—and incisive in our scrutiny—that we must be led in our policy deliberations by evidence, not wishful thinking and obfuscation.

The changes to Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority are turning out to be nothing more than a cosmetic exercise. It is all the same people; they will not deliver the change that we need. It is time for some honesty. Are we really doing the best that we can for our teachers, parents, children and young people? If this is our best, we should be ashamed.

We have tireless and dedicated teachers. I am always inspired by what I learn when I meet Scotland's teachers and I pay a heartfelt tribute to them. Close members of my family are teachers and I believe that they are typical of the very best of Scotland's teaching profession. My admiration for teachers knows no boundary. How much do we all owe our teachers? Our laws and policies must support them. Teachers must feel that we have their backs.

*The Times* reported earlier this year that more than 10,000 attacks had been made in one year on teachers in classrooms, with some schools threatening strike action over the lack of safety. I tried to get ministers to come to the chamber to make a statement on the EIS survey on attacks in the classroom and they would not come. They said that they had nothing new to say.

I can tell that I need to wind up.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You do indeed, Mr Kerr.

**Stephen Kerr:** I state very clearly that the Scottish Conservatives want real change leading to sustained improvement in our education system. Scotland should, once again, be defined by its world-beating education system. No doubt, this debate will be just another time filler in the parliamentary order paper if all we get now is craven, lickspittle speeches from the Government benches. [*Interruption.*] Let us hear some critical assessment from the SNP members—[*Interruption.*]—not a self-congratulatory performing seal act.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Kerr, resume your seat.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I have been in this Parliament since 1999. There are certain members of this chamber who abuse the good will, the spirit and the respect that the standing orders require in how we conduct our debates. They also use up valuable time that should be spent on the subject and content of a very important matter. Can you relay to the Parliament the seriousness with which the Presiding Officers take this chamber and remind members, who should know better, that, in the content of their speeches, they should show a bit of respect for the people and children of this country, rather than misrepresent others—as the member said earlier—so severely, as we have just heard, and that that is completely and utterly unacceptable?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Hyslop. As I ruled earlier, that is not a point of order, but you have put your point on record. I think that you have completed your speech, Mr Kerr—you are well over time.

**Stephen Kerr:** I move amendment S6M-06102.3, to leave out from “recognises that, despite” to end and insert:

“expresses concern that the Scottish Government remains complacent about education in Scotland with fewer teachers, larger class sizes, a growing attainment gap, lower levels of numeracy and literacy and a lack of school inspections demonstrating its neglect of Scottish education; notes that the Scottish Government has broken its promises on class sizes and failed to support teachers and pupils in the classroom, and further notes that the withdrawal from international comparisons and a lack of decent measurement of outcomes has shielded the Scottish Government from proper scrutiny while its reforms to Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority appear set to amount to nothing more than cosmetic changes.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Michael Marra to speak to and move amendment S6M-06102.1. You have around six minutes.

15:25

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I join colleagues in paying tribute to our young people, who are leaving school and emerging into, frankly, quite a worrying time in their lives and in the rest of the country. Scottish Labour is happy to support the national conversation that forms the substance of the Government's motion, which Professor Ken Muir recommended almost seven months ago.

I confess to approaching this latest exercise without a great surfeit of enthusiasm, given the blizzard of reviews and consultations that are so numerous in this Government that you might as well be counting snowflakes. Let us be clear that there are no substitutes for leadership and action. However, our first meeting, which the cabinet secretary highlighted, was full of good intentions and I will set out some of the Labour Party's expectations around that exercise.

In any wide-ranging series of forums, it is imperative that the voices of the public and all stakeholders are heard. The voices of those people who use our education system should be central to guiding the forums, and so should an overarching sense of purpose that can only really come from the democratic process that elects our Government. What kind of country do we want? What kind of country do we want to become? What are the opportunities to be seized and what challenges must we face?

There is, rightly, much focus today on the atrocious actions of the "doomsday cult" that dwells in Downing street. Those are not my words—I am quoting the chief economist at UBS Global Wealth Management. I suspect that Professor Adam Tomkins, late of this parish, is a natural Tory voter, but it is little wonder that he is now making it clear that a Labour Government must happen if this unfolding macroeconomic disaster is to be addressed.

In that context, the SNP will—understandably—clamour for a referendum and its own version of economic chaos in order to seize the economic levers. Yet, what we are discussing today is the single greatest economic lever available to any nation anywhere. An educated population would be ready to build a better Scotland.

In any national conversation about our education system, the hard facts of our economy must be acknowledged and be placed centre stage: Scotland's economic stagnation; our woeful productivity; our sclerotic business innovation; and business enterprise, research and development figures that have remained stubbornly poor for well in excess of a decade. However, our education system is about so much more: confidence, opportunity, friendship, community, music,

stories—the reasons to live rather than just the means and the chance, as Keir Starmer put it eloquently this week, to live rather than just exist. That is what our people hunger for.

**Brian Whittle:** I am listening to the member's speech with interest. I agree that education is our country's greatest lever on our route to prosperity. Does the member agree that the first thing that we have to do is ensure that the mechanism is there to support our teachers in their efforts to deliver for our children? Is he as concerned as I am that our teachers are reaching burnout?

**Michael Marra:** Mr Whittle makes a good point, as did Mr Kerr in his intervention. The strain that has been placed on our teaching workforce in recent years is extraordinary. In the schools that I visit regularly in my role, it is quite clear that teachers are on the verge of burnout. We know that that issue is part of the negotiations that the EIS, the largest teaching union, is involved in now to ensure that teachers have some form of recompense for the situation. I hope that the First Minister gets around that table to sort the situation out as soon as possible.

**Stephen Kerr:** Will the member give way on that point?

**Michael Marra:** I will make some progress if that is okay with Mr Kerr.

A real national conversation must encompass all those issues. If it does not, it will not be credible. The cabinet secretary must ensure that all voices are heard, that the methods are in place to produce that report and that the submissions of all organisations are published in full. The conversation must be broad based and challenging for the country and the Government. It must address the need for resources rather than dwell on the years of enduring cuts on cuts from the Government.

I worry about this general reform programme, and I have expressed to the cabinet secretary previously my view that, frankly, the whole thing is a bit of a mess. First came the announcement of the closure of the national education organisations in the face of their abject failure during the years of the pandemic. Then there was the establishment of a commission on assessment, which was followed by the establishment of the national conversation, the resultant precepts of which would, in any logical sense, surely inform the assessment commission.

With that guddle stretched out over a period of long years, it is little wonder that we discover that the system is fighting back and that Education Scotland and the SQA refuse to believe that they have been scrapped. They turn up at the Education, Children and Young People Committee like Monty Python's black knight—the Muir report



is “but a scratch” and the education secretary telling us in a statement that they have been abolished is “just a flesh wound” for those organisations. The reform boards are packed with people from their leadership.

**Stephen Kerr** rose—

**Michael Marra:** I ask Mr Kerr to please bear with me for a moment.

They are hardly busting a gut to get those reports written, and they are not burning the midnight oil, lest it set fire to the long grass.

**Stephen Kerr:** Does Michael Marra agree that it is shameful that, of 59 board member appointments, only three are teachers?

**Michael Marra:** That is a fair point well made. The composition of the boards is a problem, and I hope that the cabinet secretary will reflect on and address that point in her closing remarks. I think that the Parliament would have more confidence in the process if the boards were restructured.

There have been real consequences. We are told that the organisations did not serve our children and their future. Why, then, were the many life chances of tens of thousands of children impacted by the organisations’ self-serving continuation over a period of years? The cabinet secretary must be well aware of the frustration that the recommendations of the Muir report are rusting like a ferry in Ferguson’s yard. She can and must accelerate the process. I ask her to get the job done.

The immediate term is all the more difficult for pupils and teachers. They need their resources. The First Minister should be at the table, dealing with the EIS situation. After all, if she had addressed the bin strikes earlier, we would have got out of that situation an awful lot quicker.

I thank all those who work in our schools. For the sake of the country, I encourage everyone to engage, wherever they can, on how to improve our education system. Scotland needs those ideas, that passion and that commitment, because there is a sorrowful lack of them from the Government.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Will you move your amendment, Mr Marra?

**Michael Marra:** I did, but I will move it again.

I move amendment S6M-06102.1, to leave out from “recognises that, despite” to end and insert:

“regrets that the poverty-related attainment gap has widened for pupils sitting National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher exams in summer 2022 compared to results in 2021, and remains unacceptably wide; understands that the assessment model used had over double the impact on the poorest pupils, with the Higher pass rates among pupils from the 20% most deprived areas falling by 13%,

compared to a 5.9% decrease in the 20% least deprived areas; notes with concern that the Scottish Government’s recent reform of the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding resulted in money being taken from Scotland’s most deprived communities, and amounts to pupils in the most deprived areas paying for extra investment in areas of less deprivation; believes that Scottish Attainment Challenge funding should be available to pupils in every local authority; considers that the Scottish Government has failed to grasp or sufficiently respond to the scale of lost learning during the pandemic; welcomes the Scottish Government’s launching of the National Discussion and the opportunity for everyone in Scotland to give their views on the future of education; believes that the views of all stakeholders including children, teachers, families, employers and business will be of particular value in informing the direction of education reform in Scotland, and ensuring the education system is enabling the country to reach its potential; believes that this process must address the issues that teachers, parents and experts have highlighted in recent years, in addition to considering the long-term resourcing of education and skills; acknowledges the need to deliver genuine reform in the education system; regrets the length of time being taken to enact reform, and calls on the Scottish Government to accelerate the process to ensure that the maximum number of young people can benefit from a reformed and high performing education system.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Better safe than sorry. I call Willie Rennie to speak for around six minutes.

15:32

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The Government has a nerve. “Excellence in Scottish education” is the title of this debate. We have excellent teachers, excellent staff and excellent pupils, but this Government is far from excellent on education, and the education secretary should stop insulting teachers, pupils and staff by seeking to use them as a human shield against any criticism of the SNP track record and SNP failure.

“Defining mission”, “judge me on my record” and “close the poverty-related attainment gap completely” are words of the First Minister from six years ago that scarcely pass her lips these days. I stood on the same platform as her in that election. Such was my commitment to education that I said that we would put a penny on income tax for education. I made it my number 1 priority. The difference between us is that, this afternoon, I stand here again talking about education, which continues to be my number 1 priority, whereas the First Minister is nowhere to be seen.

Let us look at the record. I argued with, encouraged and pleaded with the Government for years to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap, which was at the centre of our slipping international education performance. Ten years ago, I said that funds targeted directly to the poorest pupils, through a pupil premium, was the best way to go. However, education secretary after education secretary, for years on end,

refused to do it. Because of that refusal, young children from poorer backgrounds struggled in school and, today, we see a yawning poverty-related attainment gap.

This year's exams saw the attainment gap stagnating at best and, at worst, growing. At the current rate of progress, it will take 35 years to completely close the poverty-related attainment gap. That is the promise: to close it completely. We have an education secretary who, before this Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee, sought to wriggle out of the commitment to close it by 2026, yet this is a Government that allows funding to pay for the police to patrol school corridors.

Every good teacher deserves a full-time contract, not years on end of short-term contracts. The zero-hours nature of so many of our employment contracts is unacceptable. This week, a teacher wrote to me to say that, "due to the stress", she was—like so many others—"considering leaving the profession", as it was "not sustainable", especially in the current climate, to live off the odd day here and there of supply work on a zero-hours contract. I get endless emails like that every week. That situation is not acceptable.

**Ross Greer:** Will Willie Rennie take an intervention?

**Willie Rennie:** Not at the moment.

In direct contradiction with the rest of the SNP's education policy, we have national testing, which leads to national league tables and all the negative behaviours that come with those. National testing must go. It is in contradiction with curriculum for excellence.

I have told the education secretary that we will engage on the promised reforms and will work constructively to ensure that people engage in the process, but I am far from convinced that we will get real change, because all the signs are that the reform process will be managed into mediocrity. There need to be a lot more teachers on the reform bodies and review groups. At the moment, there are far too few of them on those groups.

We must strengthen the role of knowledge in the curriculum, resolve the transition between the junior and senior phases at secondary school, remove the two-term dash that has been created and give teachers the materials to teach in the classroom so that they can do the job that they were trained to do.

**Brian Whittle:** I hope that Willie Rennie agrees that, when we talk about education, we should talk about education in its widest sense. Does he agree that the erosion, over the past three or four decades, of the inclusion in education of things such as sport, music, art and drama has

contributed to the decline in our education system and that the positive influence that those things have on pupils' confidence and resilience will help them to make the transition that he mentioned?

**Willie Rennie:** As strong advocates for sport, Mr Whittle and I share that view. I agree completely with him that we need to make sure that pupils get the broadest possible experience in school. I would be keen to work with him on that important area.

I spent many a session seeking to persuade Alex Salmond to offer free nursery education for two-year-olds. I eventually won the argument but, years later, many two-year-olds are still not receiving those free hours, because the Government could not get organised. Only about half of those who are entitled to that free nursery education are accessing it, which is not acceptable. That must change.

In addition, there is an exodus of staff from private and voluntary sector nurseries because of the built-in discrimination in the funding arrangements that are organised by the Scottish Government. Staff in one half of the sector are paid much less than staff in the other half of the sector to do the exactly same job. That is discrimination.

That matters, because the First Minister promised flexibility for parents. She promised that they would have the hours that they needed when they wanted them, but that will not happen without the flexibility that is provided by the private and voluntary sector nurseries.

Coming on to colleges, the Education, Children and Young People Committee held an evidence situation on the cuts in that sector, and the information that we received was devastating. Universities have had a devastating cut in the funding for research—a cut that is devastating not just for the universities and their staff, but for the wider economy. I could go on endlessly.

There is much more that we need to debate on education. One debate is simply not enough. I do not have a great deal of hope that we will be able to get into the detail of all the various areas, because the Government is not particularly keen on scrutiny on so many of those aspects.

Scottish education was the best in the world but, under the SNP Government, it has slipped down the international rankings. That has got to change.

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

15:39

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I always welcome the opportunity to debate

education in Parliament in a constructive spirit. It is only right that we should reflect on as many positive experiences and examples of success as possible, as well as considering the challenges for further improvement.

I start with a reminder of the four capacities embedded in the curriculum for excellence: pupils should be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens. Those capacities remain as relevant today as when curriculum for excellence was first developed. Let us also remember that the OECD values Scotland's approach highly, and has described curriculum for excellence as a "holistic, coherent and future-oriented" approach to learning. Indeed some countries are looking to adopt elements of our curriculum for excellence.

On the back of that ground-breaking system, schools are delivering success in exam results and positive destinations. Pass rates for national 5, higher and advanced higher have increased compared with 2019, with A passes also up. Achievement in skills-based qualifications is close to the highest ever level. Positive destinations for school leavers stand at 93.2 per cent, with many schools achieving their best ever results against that measurement. I welcome the Scottish Funding Council's report on widening access in 2020-21, which found that 16.7 per cent of higher education students now come from our most deprived areas and that, with a continued focus from our Government, we are on track to meet the longer-term target of 20 per cent by 2030.

**Stephen Kerr:** Does the member share my concern about the low take-up of free school meals and school uniform grants?

**Kaukab Stewart:** I believe that the increase in the Scottish child payment has changed the parameters for applying for free school meals. I believe that that is being looked at.

As someone who is in regular contact with schools, I am not surprised to hear that almost nine in 10 headteachers suggest that improvements have been made in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, despite the impact of the Covid pandemic.

As a former teacher, I know—and want to remind everyone about—the joy of seeing children developing and thriving socially, emotionally and academically and having fun learning.

I place on record my respect and gratitude for all members of the education profession, who work with compassion and dedication to deliver the best outcomes for the pupils in their care. Teachers have borne a huge responsibility as they have supported pupils and families throughout the pandemic, turning on a sixpence to upskill, go online and deliver remote and in-person learning

while also dealing with their own personal circumstances.

Schools undertake a range of social inclusion work to mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis. The Scottish Government rightly prioritises funding to support teachers and pupils throughout Scotland with measures including the Scottish child payment and the on-going expansion of free school meals, which will be available to all primary school pupils by the end of this session of Parliament. I urge the Government to go further with free school meals when it is possible to do so. It has also provided the school clothing grant and increased the number of hours of free childcare.

All that work means that teachers deserve decent salaries. It is worth noting that teachers in Scotland are currently the best-paid teaching workforce in the UK. The starting salary for a teacher in Scotland is £33,724, which is considerably higher than the £28,000 starting salary proposed for teachers in England and Wales.

Last week, I attended the Scottish Learning Festival in Dunfermline. It was a joy to be among pupils again and to speak to them about the real-life innovation that is going on in schools. This year's festival theme was placing learners at the heart of Scottish education, and the festival was busy and vibrant.

The cabinet secretary chose that event to launch the national discussion referred to earlier, an initiative suggested by Professor Ken Muir in his report, "Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Education".

The national discussion is specifically designed to encourage and facilitate the inclusion of learners and teachers in education reform. That takes time and it has to be done properly to make sure that it is meaningful.

**Stephen Kerr:** Will the member give way on that point?

**Kaukab Stewart:** I will.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Kerr—

**Stephen Kerr:** Should there be more teachers on the board?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that Ms Stewart is winding up, but I invite her to answer that question in doing so.

**Kaukab Stewart:** I will answer it quickly and wind up. Mr Kerr needs to remember that there are also teaching union representatives on the board, and those unions represent thousands of teachers.

I commend teachers and pupils in Scotland for their hard work, their resilience, their enthusiasm

and the results, which they can take pride in through challenging days. I commend the Scottish Government for commissioning the Muir report and I encourage it to be bold in delivering on the recommendations.

15:45

**Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con):** Like other members who have spoken in the debate, I commend, in the words of the Scottish Government's motion,

"the hard work of ... staff and teaching professionals in Scotland's schools, colleges, universities and early learning and childcare centres".

However, we have also heard from members across the chamber that the SNP Government has presided over 15 years of failure in Scottish education, with the attainment gap widening and education standards dropping. The SNP has starved schools and staff of resources, and its curriculum for excellence has been an unmitigated failure. We need to restore excellence in Scottish schools so that every child has the chance to succeed, no matter their background.

The SNP seems to have dropped its commitment to close the attainment gap by 2026. Shirley-Anne Somerville told the Education, Children and Young People Committee:

"I will not set an arbitrary date for when the attainment gap will be closed".—[*Official Report, Education, Children and Young People Committee*, 18 May 2022; c 4.]

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Sue Webber:** If the member does not mind, I will carry on.

The SNP stated in the 2016-17 programme for government:

"We intend to make significant progress within the lifetime of this Parliament and substantially eliminate the gap over the course of the next decade."

It is clear that that has not yet happened. In 2022, the percentage point difference in higher A-grade attainment levels between the most and least deprived pupils is bigger than in any year since 2017. The attainment gap in the pass rate for advanced highers is the second worst since 2017. The attainment gap for those with additional support needs has widened at national 5 level. The attainment gap for pupils with additional support needs has widened at higher level, and the attainment gap for disabled pupils has doubled since 2020. Furthermore, a Scottish Government audit found that the school closures had a disproportionately negative impact on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Education, Children and Young People Committee noted Audit Scotland's conclusion that

"The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide",

with limited progress on closing the gap, and that

"inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19."

The report states:

"Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country."

As we have already heard, Nicola Sturgeon said that she has a "sacred responsibility" to provide equal opportunities to all children. She stated:

"Now that I am First Minister, I am determined—indeed I have a sacred responsibility—to make sure every young person in our land gets the same chance I had to succeed at whatever they want to do in life."

I think that we can agree that she has failed to deliver on that promise.

It was a sign of the weakness of our current system that it took the PISA tests to identify that there might be a problem with attainment in key areas. We should have our own data about how young Scots are doing against international comparators. That is not the case at present and we must make sure that it is the case in the future. It is, after all, imperative that our young people can be confident that, wherever they go in the world, their academic achievements will be recognised.

I want to touch on the much-needed on-going reform agenda. When it comes to the detail surrounding who is responsible for each element of the current education reform, the picture is very unclear. Is the SNP merely rebranding the SQA rather than creating a genuinely reformed qualifications body?

The new qualifications body, which is tasked with reforming the qualifications agency, is dominated by former SQA managers, while those with the most valuable contributions to make—teachers, pupils and parents—appear to be pushed to the side. Shockingly, as we have heard from Stephen Kerr, it has been revealed that only three teachers were involved in the high-level discussions on the reforms of Education Scotland and the SQA.

It is important that the Scottish qualifications review does not duck the big issues. Any reform programme must address the mismatch between the curriculum's ambition and what the national qualifications deliver—or, right now, fail to deliver—for our young people.

Despite what it says, the Scottish Government remains complacent about education in Scotland. There are fewer teachers, larger class sizes, a growing attainment gap, lower levels of numeracy and literacy, and far fewer subject choices. The withdrawal from international comparisons has

shielded the Government from proper scrutiny, while its reforms to Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority appear to be nothing more than cosmetic changes.

Nicola Sturgeon said that she should be judged on her education record. She stated:

“Let me be clear—I want to be judged on this.”

If we are to judge her on that, it is obvious that young people have been failed by the Scottish Government—not only now but for each of the past 15 years that the SNP has been in power.

15:51

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** Earlier this month, during the debate on the programme for government, Liz Smith made some legitimate points about the expectation of the public that both of Scotland’s Governments would work together to address the cost of living crisis. It would be reasonable of me to observe that, in order for them to work together, the relationship requires to be respectful and one of equals, and that the conduct of the UK Government towards its Scottish counterpart, and the comments from the new Prime Minister that were directed at the First Minister, have hardly engendered that. However, I will leave that to one side, because Liz Smith, as a long-serving and respected member of this institution, was right in what she asserted.

However, the public has other, similar expectations, which, I argue, we MSPs ought to have of ourselves. As an MSP of less long standing than Liz Smith but who has served for more than a decade, I will focus on one of those.

The oft-heard cry in this place is that it is the role of the Parliament to hold the Government to account—and it is. However, I say, particularly to Stephen Kerr, that how the institution sets about that task is every bit as important.

Since returning to the back benches earlier this year, I have been pleased to serve on the Parliament’s Education, Children and Young People Committee. Under the convenership of Mr Kerr’s successor, Sue Webber, that has been a pleasure, not least because of the approach that has been fostered and taken by members—a genuine cross-party endeavour to interrogate fairly the condition of our education system in a balanced way, giving credit where that is due and offering criticism where and when that is merited. The recent unanimous report on the Scottish attainment challenge was evidence of that.

I contend that the Parliament would benefit from the replication of that approach in the chamber, where, too often, regrettably, oppositional politics tend to overwhelm the reaching of measured and balanced conclusions. Too often, our debate—

especially on topics such as education—descends into a “Government awful” versus “Government good” contest, whereas the truth lies somewhere in between. The Scottish Government is not perfect and we, on these benches, sometimes need to acknowledge that. However, nor is it anything like as deserving of the nature of the criticism that sometimes pours down on it from the Opposition benches.

In treating subjects such as education as a political football, not only do we let down those who seek the best from it—be they parents, pupils or professionals—we also sometimes ignore or downplay the actual causes of shortcomings, or at least the contributory factors to those. That does nothing to achieve the goals that collectively, I think, we all hold.

There is much to celebrate in our education system, despite its being sideswiped by the pandemic. I will highlight, briefly, one or two aspects of that, as they relate to my Angus South constituency: the significant strides that have been made, in partnership between the SNP Scottish Government and Angus Council, to improve our school estate; the progress that has been made—again, jointly—in delivering a transformational early years and childcare offering; and the congratulations that are due to the teaching staff and pupils of Monifieth and Webster’s high schools and Arbroath academy, whose 2021-22 exam results performance represented a significant step forward.

However, equally within education, locally and nationally, there remain areas for improvement, as the cabinet secretary has acknowledged. Above all, not all children enjoy or benefit from our education equally. This year’s exam results revealed that the attainment gap between the richest and poorest pupils had grown, with the gap in higher qualifications almost doubling and the national 5 and advanced highers gaps widening considerably.

In the course of participating in the Education, Children and Young People Committee’s inquiry into progress in the attainment challenge, I was struck not only by the passion of the teachers we met in west central Scotland for the task at hand but by their willingness to innovate and learn from mistakes.

More recently, in the course of the committee’s inquiry into the impact of college regionalisation, I had a wry smile at hearing from college representatives about the benefits of mergers and regionalisation. Oh, how I remember the reaction of the college establishment when the idea of mergers and regionalisation was advanced by Michael Russell—let us just say that it was arctic in its warmth.

I highlight those examples to illustrate the importance of, on the one hand, listening to those at the coalface and then rolling out best practice, while, on the other hand, acknowledging that sometimes we have to implement change because it is the right thing to do, regardless of resistance to it from vested interests.

That brings me to the second subject that I want to focus on, which is the change to come, as highlighted by other members. More specifically, I want to talk about the implementation of the recommendations of Ken Muir's report, "Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education". The Education, Children and Young People Committee's recent session with the leadership of the SQA threw up an interesting exchange around the shaping of reform—or, more accurately, the replacement—of that body. We explored the concern on the part of some that what is being embarked on will, as other members have noted, produce only a rebranding. As Michael Marra highlighted at that session, the fact that, of the 11-strong delivery board, six are employees of the SQA only heightens those concerns, whether they are justified or not.

As I said earlier, having coalface input is important. If nothing else, it can identify problematic and unintended consequences of change. I am in no doubt about the intent of the Government and the cabinet secretary in that regard, but when the SQA chief executive, Fiona Robertson, tells a committee that she does not accept that the decision to replace the SQA is indicative of the conclusion being reached that it has failed, we can understand the concern. If the SQA does not think that it is being replaced because it got things wrong, how can we be certain, with such a significant in-house presence on the board, that the recommendations that come forward will acknowledge the need for genuine change of the sort that Ken Muir and the cabinet secretary, by their comments and actions, have indicated is required?

I wonder whether, during her closing remarks, the cabinet secretary might provide reassurance about exactly how she will ensure that the modus operandi of the new awarding body, which it has been accepted must change, will undergo the transformation that is being sought. Sadly, I ask that while holding the view, after listening to Mr Kerr's contribution—and, to a lesser extent, that of Willie Rennie—that there is a far greater chance of that than there is of my earlier plea being heeded. Call me naive, but I live in hope.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Said as a Man United fan.

15:57

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** An excellent education is the best thing that we, in this place, can offer our young people to give them a fighting chance at a future. However, although it is important to appreciate the excellence in our education system, it would be naive of us to overlook its shortcomings. The reality is that far too many young people are falling through the cracks. We cannot celebrate excellence in education when the very system that it relies on falls short of excellent. Right now, in a number of ways, that is the case in the system that we have. Our teachers are being asked to do more with less. That is not excellent. Cut after cut to classroom workforces is not excellent. Above all, though, not all children are enjoying or benefiting equally from an education. That is not excellent.

**Bob Doris:** I apologise for interrupting the member in full flow. She mentioned young people falling through the cracks. No one wanted Covid, but one of the outcomes of the alternative certification model was that young people from the most deprived backgrounds did far better under that model than they did under conventional exams. Does she agree that the balance between continuous assessment and examination has to be looked at seriously, as is currently happening, to make sure that young people from the most deprived backgrounds can do as well as they can, because that seemed, in a limited fashion, to stop some of them falling through the gaps?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give Pam Duncan-Glancy the time back for that intervention.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** I thank the member for the intervention and the Presiding Officer for the generosity around the time.

These issues are incredibly important and I am sure that my party is willing to talk to the Government about that, because we need to get the best possible system for our young people and ensure that everyone can strive for the best education that they can get and get the best possible out of it.

There is another gap that we must focus on: the one between disabled and non-disabled pupils. The most recent results show that there is a five-point gap between disabled and non-disabled pupils who achieve an A to C at higher. It is not only that data that should be of concern to us: only 43 per cent of pupils with additional support needs leave school with one or more Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 6 qualifications, compared to 74 per cent for pupils without ASN. Disabled pupils are six times more likely not to be in education, employment or training when they leave school. In the longer term, disabled people remain more likely to be unemployed, and Enable

confirmed this morning in the Social Justice and Social Security Committee that the disability employment gap, which is wider here than elsewhere, is at 32 per cent.

Although failures on social justice and tackling poverty more widely are a conversation for another debate, the correlation between disability and poverty further exacerbates the disadvantages of disabled young people because of the compounded inequality that they face. The numbers speak for themselves, but so do disabled people. This summer, I went round Scotland to speak to people and they told me how hard it is for them. I put my thanks to them on the record. I also thank members who engaged with me during that conversation.

Young people told me that, at a time when they should be focusing on what they want to do when they grow up, they and their families are spending endless hours chasing and calling people and agencies that are needed to support them to get on. They are project managing their own lives. Staff in schools, social work and other agencies are doing their best, but the postcode lottery that has developed around local authority spending on support for young disabled people is making it harder for them and holding young people back.

Support in the teaching workforce is being drawn back, too. The number of dedicated ASN teachers dropped by 16.3 per cent between 2012 and 2019. That is 553 teachers who are no longer available to offer the dedicated, specialised and tailored support that those young people really need. Those cuts to the classroom workforce come at a time when the number of ASN pupils continues to increase. That means that teachers are being asked to stretch themselves even more thinly and to divide their time between more and more pupils. That not only threatens their ability to ensure that young disabled people get the fighting chance that they need and deserve, it impacts on teacher wellbeing, too.

The situation is so detrimental that many young people feel that they have no option but to leave school prematurely. Disabled people are five times more likely to do so than their non-disabled peers.

Despite people doing what they can, education is failing disabled people in Scotland. That is why I ask members to join people across Scotland in supporting my proposed disabled children and young people (transitions to adulthood) (Scotland) bill. I ask for their support to ensure that every young disabled person in Scotland has the statutory right to a transition plan no matter where they live or what school they go to, to ensure that the Government is accountable by reporting to Parliament on a national transition strategy and to require agencies to work together to reduce the

burden on families who have to project manage at a time when they should be dreaming.

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** Pam Duncan-Glancy is right to publicise her proposal for a member's bill. However, there is also the opportunity for disabled people to contribute to the national discussion so that that becomes the evidence on how our education system should look going forward.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** I thank Martin Whitfield for his intervention. My proposed bill is a step towards reducing the attainment gap and truly giving each young person a fighting chance at a future. I thank Camphill Scotland, Inclusion Scotland and my predecessor, Johann Lamont, for their hard work in getting us to this point.

I will share the strongest case for the bill: at age 16, disabled people have the same aspirations as everyone else; by age 26, they feel hopeless and feel that nothing they ever do will change their lives. That cannot go on. It is time to take real, tangible action to improve education for young disabled people, make it excellent for them, too, and give them the fighting chance that they deserve.

16:04

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** I do not intend to talk solely about what is already going well in Scottish education. There is plenty to celebrate, but this afternoon's debate gives us an important opportunity to acknowledge the challenges that it faces and discuss how we tackle those.

That said, I want to start with some positives. Scotland is among the most highly educated countries in the world. Although I accept that they are not a perfect measure, our programme for international student assessment—PISA—scores are high. In 2018, as the cabinet secretary mentioned, Scottish pupils scored 534 on the global competence assessment, which was far higher than the average of 474 and was one of the top results in the world. After a long-term decline, teacher numbers are now up, and the pupil-teacher ratio is going down once again. The Bute house agreement between the parties of Government commits to an additional 5,000 permanent teaching posts compared with pre-pandemic levels—that represents about 3,500 new posts and the replacement of the 1,500 or so temporary contracts that were created during the pandemic by permanent ones. There are challenges around how the money that is allocated to that is being spent by councils, as alluded to by Willie Rennie, and I hope that we have a chance to come back to that later, because it presents us with some challenging questions around the

autonomy of local government versus the ring fencing of funds for specific purposes.

We should not lose sight of those positives—and the many others—but, as the motion rightly acknowledges, there are still significant challenges and, on the attainment gap in particular, a huge amount of progress still to make. We need to recognise the key drivers of that gap, though, and thus the ways in which we will be able to actually close it rather than just mitigate it.

A poverty-related attainment gap needs to be tackled at source, by eradicating child poverty. Although progress is never quick enough, child poverty in Scotland has reduced in the past few years, and the Scottish Government is delivering policies such as the child payment, free bus travel for young people and the mandating of the real living wage among those bidding for public sector contracts, which will help families with their finances.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** Eradicating child poverty is the aim that we should all have in the job that we are doing. However, does the member recognise that Audit Scotland has said that the process that the Scottish Government is using in relation to the Scottish child payment and other areas is looking to alleviate child poverty rather than end it completely?

**Ross Greer:** I think that the member presents a key challenge when it comes to the question of the powers that we have available to us. If we want to tackle child poverty at source, we need reserved powers such as the power to set the minimum wage, without which we will simply be using devolved social security payments to compensate for poverty wages at minimum wage level, as set by the UK Government.

It is essential that we do not expect teachers and support staff to perform a role somewhere between that of a social worker and a miracle worker. We all know that schools perform miracles every day, but we cannot expect them to solve all of the social ills and inequalities that pupils arrive with each morning. However, poverty can, of course, be exacerbated by school-related factors. Those are areas in which we can take—and are taking—action right now. In the final budget of the previous session of Parliament, the Greens and the SNP agreed to expand free school meals to pupils in primaries 4 and 5 and to include P6 and P7 pupils as soon as possible. We acknowledge that councils had concerns about the speed at which the Government was rolling that out, but we all agree that it is an important measure, given the cost of living crisis. That is the reason for the commitment in this year's programme for government.

School uniform costs have long been an increasing burden on families, and they are one of many areas in which prices are rising, so I am proud that the Scottish Greens' manifesto proposal for statutory guidance to limit the cost of uniforms was included in the Bute house agreement. The consultation on that guidance is on-going, and I ask members to encourage groups in their communities, such as parent-teacher associations and youth groups, to respond to it before 14 October. That guidance is an opportunity not only to ensure that uniforms are affordable but to address issues of inequality, such as needlessly gendered uniform policies that result in girls paying more than boys because, for example, the required skirts are more expensive than the trousers.

Turning to exams and qualifications, I am more aware than most of the avoidable but fortunately reversed disaster of the SQA's 2020 alternative certification model, of the huge workload issues and stress caused by the 2021 model and of the disbelief at the patronising study guides that were produced earlier this year.

It is true, and absolutely worth repeating, that this year's results are more comparable to 2019 than to the intervening years and that, on that basis, there has been a slight narrowing of the attainment gap. However, the comparative data sets that we now have pose a question, which Bob Doris posed a moment ago, that is critical to the current review being led by Professor Hayward. Why, when student grades are based on the professional judgment of teachers and on work that has been produced throughout the year, is the attainment gap dramatically narrower than it is when grades are based on high-stakes end-of-term exams? The review of the model used in 2021 showed that there is a strong preference for alternative methods such as continuous assessment.

Young people across the country have come to the conclusion that antiquated Victorian-era high-stakes all-or-nothing exams are not an assessment method that is fit for the 21st century. Thanks to pressure from learners, teachers, MSPs and children's rights defenders, this year's appeals system was at least a significant improvement. That is a positive step that I want to celebrate. Learners can now appeal directly, they can do so free of charge and, beyond the specific cases of clerical errors, there is a no-detriment policy in place. There can be no return to the old appeals or re-marking system. To do so would take us further away from compatibility with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The appeals system might have improved but, yet again, the SQA's communication with learners was far below what it should have been. Yet



again, there was a breakdown of trust with key stakeholders, as laid out by the chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Sophie Reid. The SQA again communicated only with schools and colleges, not directly with students. It was only through the intervention of Sophie Reid, who was the only young person on the national qualifications group, that direct communication was later issued to young people over social media.

I was on the Education and Skills Committee five years ago, when it issued a report that was scathing of the SQA and, in particular, its ability to communicate with young people and teachers. It had the opportunity to improve but it did not, and it is now being replaced.

I understand entirely the scepticism about a reform process that is so heavily populated by officials of the organisation that has failed—I associate myself with Graeme Dey's comments on that point—but I thank Professor Hayward and Professor Muir for their continued involvement. They have proved their ability to tell the Government hard truths. I also welcome the appointment of the children's rights expert Dr Tracy Kirk, whom I worked alongside to undo the damage caused by the SQA's alternative certification models during the pandemic.

Despite the successes, which we should all celebrate, there are serious governance and policy problems in Scottish education. The reform process that is now under way is the opportunity to address them. The Greens have, and will continue to, put forward our proposals for reform in all areas.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Please conclude, Mr Greer.

**Ross Greer:** Complaining is easy—it is also often justified—but we will be thanked far more by young people and teachers if we all put the effort in to deliver the changes that they are crying out for.

16:11

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** It is an honour to participate in such an important debate.

Let me be clear from the very start: the main threat to Scottish education is the persistent and callous poverty policies of the current UK Government. This morning, I watched on television people despair about their mortgages, heating their homes and feeding their kids. That has everything to do with education because, as long as our children and young people live with the stress and despair that poverty brings, we cannot

expect them to arrive at school feeling ready to learn.

The Tories are speaking to an amendment that contains not a single positive word about excellence or achievements. There is nothing at all that celebrates our pupils, students, teachers or further education. It is telling that having a pop at the Scottish Government is the amendment's only content.

What is excellence in education? Although excellence can mean different things to different people, it is, in essence, about providing young people with the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need for learning, life and work in the 21st century. It is also about happiness, wellbeing, health and confidence.

Scotland has a proud educational history that dates back centuries and in which innovation and embracing the future have defined our institutions. That has produced among the world's most educated populations. Excellence should be for everyone, and we must always strive for it.

Education is about much more than academic achievement; it is about providing supportive environments that encourage individuals to learn, grow and thrive in a way that is meaningful to them, and about recognising their wide-ranging achievements. Excellence is driven from the ground up. It puts individuals at the centre of policy, and it builds in strengths to create lifelong learners. It equips our young people to craft their own paths to success and to lead fulfilling lives.

Recent times have brought unprecedented change and challenges, reinforcing the need to put people's wellbeing and mental health at the centre of all that we do, including education. There is much work still to be done around that and other reforms, as other members have already highlighted. However, although every child is capable of excellence, some face much bigger barriers and challenges than others do, especially those who live in poverty. Closing the poverty-related attainment gap remains critical, and the pandemic challenged earlier progress.

Bob Doris mentioned the Education, Children and Young People Committee's meeting with a large group of teachers at St Roch's in Glasgow to discuss the Scottish attainment challenge funding. The teachers highlighted many challenges, but they also told us how they were reaching into families and understanding poverty like never before. Those teachers spoke about creativity and in-depth work to support families and help children to achieve. That really was inspiring. The Scottish Government's continued investment in attainment—£1 billion over this parliamentary session—will continue that work.

We know that the poverty-related attainment gap starts early. That is why the Scottish Government continues to invest so heavily in extending free nursery care, with 1,140 hours for every three and four-year-old and for vulnerable two-year-olds. As well as early learning, free school meals and uniform grants, many wider policies tackle poverty, including the game-changing Scottish child payment, free bus travel, social security, renewable energy and many more. All of those will impact on our young people's future, but the current cost of living crisis is a growing threat, as has been noted.

Staying at the forefront of change means listening. Scotland's curriculum for excellence was ahead of the curve in 2010, and many other countries have followed that lead. However, we must continually strive to improve and make the changes that are needed.

At the invitation of the Scottish Government, the OECD reviewed the curriculum for excellence, and we listened, accepting all 12 of its recommendations. The significant changes that are under way as a result bring significant challenges, but they also bring opportunities. Making our education system fit for the future also means listening to our learners and to everyone with an interest in education. As the cabinet secretary noted, that is why the current national discussion on education invites children, young people, families and teachers to help us in getting it right for every child.

Sadly—I say this as a parent—our children grow up and move on from school. This year, we have seen exceptionally high positive outcomes for school leavers, with 92.4 per cent moving on to positive outcomes. That is a testament to the dedication of Scotland's teachers. I am also grateful to our teaching professionals for their hard work in difficult times. Their commitment to our students, to businesses and to progress is very clear.

The success of the New College Lanarkshire smart hub—a collaboration between North Lanarkshire Council, the University of Strathclyde and other partners—is a really good example. Not only are businesses benefiting and being encouraged to invest in technology, but the college is sparking school pupils' interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers, thanks to accessing the Scottish Government's advancing manufacturing challenge fund.

Finally, I must mention that it was a privilege to work with David MacMillan, a Nobel prize winner in chemistry. This Nobel laureate credits much of his success to Scottish education, and I had the pleasure of reconnecting him with his old school, Bellshill academy. David's love of science took

him to America, but he often returns to his family and his roots in Bellshill, and I really cannot wait for his next school visit, to watch him inspire even more pupils into scientific careers. David MacMillan—an ordinary wee Lanarkshire laddie—is living proof that the sky is the limit for our young people. That is real excellence, and may he inspire many young Scots.

16:16

**Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con):** I very much enjoyed the robust contribution from Stephen Kerr—our party's new education supremo—who regularly schools the SNP Government. We have heard many interesting speeches, but I was particularly impressed by Sue Webber's, Willie Rennie's and Michael Marra's thoughtful and passionate contributions. It was also refreshing to hear such a thoughtful and measured contribution from Graeme Dey. To his admission that the Scottish Government is not perfect, I say "Well done", but I fear that the SNP whips will already have been informed. In fact, they might have already got him—he has vanished.

Let us begin with some simple truths. Despite the cabinet secretary's selective exercise in self-congratulation, under the SNP Scotland's education system has gone from being world-renowned to being distinctly average. The minister has already attempted to allege that that is a criticism, so I state that it is not a criticism of our hard-working pupils and teachers, for whom I have great respect.

Stephen Kerr and Willie Rennie have already reminded us of what the First Minister said in 2015. She said:

"Now that I am First Minister, I am determined—indeed I have a sacred responsibility—to make sure every young person in our land gets the same chance I had to succeed at whatever they want to do in life."

I repeat: "a sacred responsibility". Those were fine words, First Minister. She also stated:

"Let me be clear—I want to be judged on this. If you are not, as First Minister, prepared to put your neck on the line on the education of our young people then what are you prepared to do? It really matters."

Those were yet more fine words.

Then there is the attainment gap. That is a phrase that gets bandied about, but what it actually means is the gulf between outcomes for children who come from poorer households and outcomes for those who come from richer households. In 2016, the SNP stated that closing the gap would be its "defining mission" and that it would "substantially eliminate" that gap over a decade. With three years left of that decade, how is that going? Well, this year, the gap got bigger—

again. It should surprise no one that the SNP has now, in effect, abandoned its time target, despite what the cabinet secretary said today. So much for it being a “defining mission”.

If I announced that I was going to sit advanced higher physics without saying when that might actually happen, no one would take such a claim seriously—and quite rightly so. In the same way, we can no longer take seriously very much about education that comes out of the mouths of SNP ministers—ministers who love to talk big but often fail to deliver.

Other speakers in the debate will, no doubt—some have already—lay bare how the global good reputation of Scottish education has been trashed under the SNP. However, the party is not content merely with reducing pupils’ life chances. There is also its other fixation: bringing the damaging obsession with breaking up the UK into the classroom. That is done through the rewriting of history.

**Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** I fear that the “damaging obsession” might be the member’s own. Is he really saying that teachers in Scotland’s schools are in some way indoctrinating children? That is the direction in which he is going.

**Russell Findlay:** Let me turn to what I was about to explain. In answer to Dr Allan’s second point, I say that that is absolutely not the case: my point is about the Government’s direction, not about teachers.

I will start with the curious case of the Loch Ness monster. Education Scotland told schoolchildren that Nessie can somehow help them to form a view on an independence referendum. [*Interruption.*] Was that the word “Jesus” from the front bench?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I did utter in despair, because we have been through this countless times. Dr Allan is quite correct that the resources are developed by people from Education Scotland, and not by the Government, to be used by teachers.

We could be taking a higher tone in the debate, but the member is sorely lacking in that respect. What he says is a disservice not just to him but to his party and, quite frankly, to the Parliament. The fact that we are on that subject again when we could be debating so many other things is utterly desperate.

**Russell Findlay:** The cabinet secretary should listen to the experts who are making their views clear. She might not enjoy hearing them, but their points are absolutely valid. It is worth listening to what the experts have to say. Education campaigner Chris McGovern described that

particular episode as “propaganda” and an attempt to

“brainwash pupils into believing that Scotland is the victim of a wicked conspiracy”.

Neil McLennan, a former President of the Scottish Association of the Teachers of History, has called out nationalism in education. He wrote recently that

“Our children deserve better. They are global citizens growing up in an interconnected world. Narrow nationalist ideas and parochial power-games have no place in the classrooms.”

**Bob Doris:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Russell Findlay:** I am sorry, but I do not have enough time.

Then there is the historian Sir Tom Devine, who described Education Scotland’s “The Road to the Scottish Parliament” teaching guide as “arrant propaganda”.

There are many more examples, but, as I have taken interventions, I do not have any time to spare.

Very quickly, I will touch on a subject that is close to my heart—the joy of reading, which is shared by the First Minister. Nicola Sturgeon often tweets about her love of books, but one in eight public libraries has been closed since 2010. If only Scottish children were as fortunate as the Bute house bibliophile. The FM’s enthusiastic espousal of literature makes the episode that relates to the book that was issued for the Queen’s platinum jubilee quite hard to swallow.

I will wind up my remarks, because I am out of time. To conclude, I say that I look forward to hearing from Pam Gosal, who also has a great passion for education and who will close the debate for the Conservatives.

16:24

**Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** I will start by offering my congratulations to the young people who passed their exams this summer. Their years in education have been more disrupted than any in living memory, and they can be proud—rightly—of their achievements. The legacy of Covid will take many years to filter through our education system. Unfortunately, Covid has intensified problems that have existed for years.

I am, therefore, dismayed by the motion, which is the sort of motion that we have come to expect from the Scottish Government. It is mostly self-congratulatory, with only occasional reference to the idea that not everything is rosy.

However, we are only 18 months down the line since the joint report from the Auditor General for

Scotland and the Accounts Commission, which found inconsistent progress in the national improvements. Although the Scottish Government is content to pretend that all the problems started with Covid-19, the report also said that the poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and that inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Those problems were not created by the pandemic; we know that those inequalities have been there for many years and we know that they have repercussions right through our society.

The Scottish Labour amendment highlights the scale of the poverty-related attainment gap this year, but we should not be tempted to believe that it ends with this school year. We know that those inequalities filter through society and that they entrench themselves geographically and generationally. The more those inequalities persist, the more Scotland will literally and figuratively be poorer. It will be poorer in the lost human potential of people who could have gone on to greater things but who were held back by the circumstances of their birth. It will be poorer as the effects accumulate and blight particular areas and communities across Scotland.

We know that poverty and race are closely correlated in Scotland. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation says that poverty levels among people in minority ethnic communities in Scotland are double the national average, and rising. The Scottish Government always has warm words on matters of equality, but when we see educational inequality being repeated year after year, even in the years before Covid, we should be aware of exactly what that means for marginalised people across Scotland. By allowing the poverty-related attainment gap in education to become entrenched, we are limiting the life chances of people in ethnic minority communities. Therefore, we are also continuing the cycle that leads to poverty becoming entrenched in those communities.

Surely we can hope for better than that. In so many ways, Scotland has come so far. Here, in Edinburgh, we have recently had the slavery and colonialism legacy review group, chaired by my friend Sir Geoff Palmer, which has done much to help our city to come to terms with its past.

**Bob Doris:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Foyso Choudhury:** I am sorry—I have a lot to get through.

What good is coming to terms with the past, however, if we are entrenching inequalities in future generations? That is partly why I strongly believe in anti-racist reform in our education system. As I have said in the chamber before, I praise the Scottish Government for setting up its

race equality and anti-racism in education programme, but, the last time I raised the issue, I was promised that we would hear more about it over the summer. What happened?

I firmly believe that we need an education system that addresses both the inequalities that ethnic minorities in it face and the injustices of Scotland's past. It must address the inequalities that I have mentioned, it must contain curriculum reform to address the legacy of colonialism and wider racism, and it must work to create an actively anti-racist Scotland. Only then will we start to make social progress that is worthy of the warm words of the Scottish Government.

The Government's motion does not express the reality of the inequality that Scottish education faces. I will support the Scottish Labour amendment.

16:30

**Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** It is with great pleasure that I speak in this debate on the excellence of education in Scotland. I will focus my speech on my constituency of Argyll and Bute, where there are many examples of that excellence. I want to pay tribute to all teachers and staff who make our schools and colleges great places to learn.

Argyll and Bute is home to many diverse communities, each with its own assets and challenges. Community collaboration is key to delivery of excellent education, so it was with much delight, but no surprise, that I learned last week of Dunoon grammar school's success in being shortlisted in the top three of the world's best schools for community collaboration. That is an incredible achievement. I was so pleased to mark it today by welcoming to the Parliament pupils and teachers from the school, including their inspirational headteacher, David Mitchell. They had a ball; they thoroughly enjoyed it. Just to see children be so excited to be in the Parliament and taking interest in what was happening in this chamber was truly inspirational. I will say more later about what that school achieved.

First, I will talk about UHI Argyll. The college offers further and higher education in nine centres across Argyll and Bute, from Tobermory to Campbeltown, and from Islay to Helensburgh. Last Friday, I joined staff, students and guests at the university's graduation ceremony. The Queen's hall in Dunoon was full of people who were bursting with pride, as student after student took to the stage to be awarded their degree—and the degrees were in many diverse subjects.

The guest speaker was Ryan McCuaig. Having experienced state intervention early in his childhood, he overcame significant personal,

financial and social barriers to graduate from the University of Strathclyde with a first-class law degree. He is now a dispute resolution and criminal defence lawyer. Ryan is also truly inspiring. His message was simple: positive relationships are at the centre of everything. He encouraged the graduates—and, in fact, everyone in the hall—to continue to connect with people, to be resilient, to have the right mindset and to build positive relationships.

This August, our Parliament hosted an international culture summit. Andreas Schleicher, director for education and skills at the OECD, also focused on the importance of relationships. He reminded us that learning is a social experience. He suggested that we think about our own schooling. Our favourite subjects were likely to be the ones in which we connected with our teachers. I can certainly attest to that, when I compare my interest in modern studies to my interest in physics.

Social and community learning is happening across Argyll and Bute. For example, the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust outdoor nursery in Lochgilphead has shown progress with pre-school children with additional support needs who have struggled to settle into more structured settings. Research has consistently demonstrated that outdoor learning shows levels of success that are unmatched in other approaches. It brings many benefits that anyone who has splashed in a muddy puddle or guddled in a rock pool will understand. When they are out of doors, children express themselves more freely and can explore with creativity and communication in the most natural way possible.

An independent supply chain specialist in the green energy industry, Renewable Parts Ltd, which is based in Lochgilphead, believes that introducing new jobs and skills is central to growing its organisation. It works closely with Lochgilphead high school, offering job experience, three-month attachments and apprenticeships. It is a business that is building good community relationships with the school and learners and is providing a path to training and jobs.

The Scottish Government has just launched its let's talk Scottish education initiative, which is the next step in this ambitious period of education reform. The time is right to reflect on and consider the attributes, skills and knowledge that young people will need in the future, and the associated support that they will need to gather them.

Argyll and Bute Council recently completed a rather bruising consultation on reshaping education delivery. It has been a difficult time for everyone involved and trust needs to be rebuilt, but we have been shown the way. Remember Ryan McCuaig's words: connection, mindset,

resilience and relationships. I hope that council officials, elected representatives, teachers, parents and learners will focus on those things to ensure that the best service is established.

I return to Dunoon grammar school. Its recognition is richly deserved. What can education in Scotland learn from that school? Headteacher David Mitchell says:

"Our mission statement here at Dunoon Grammar School is about being at the heart of the community, where we strive together to achieve excellence and have set up so many partnerships to help develop our curriculum".

Those are not just words; it is how the school works. Young people learn best when they feel that they are doing something meaningful, not just textbook stuff.

Let us look at the Dunoon project, which promises to be one of the most exciting and innovative community regeneration schemes ever seen in Scotland. The project board approached the school to ask whether the young people would be interested in working with it. With mountain biking, a zipline and a gondola all being proposed, who would not be interested? Therefore, a student advisory board was set up, putting young people right at the centre of the entire project and getting the opportunity to shape Dunoon's future.

Community collaboration helps young people to reach their potential by allowing them to take part in activities that are real learning experiences. As teacher Paul Gallanagh says,

"We are so passionate about our young people being part of the community because they are not just the future; they are the here and now."

Andreas Schleicher opened his contribution to the international culture summit with the words,

"The future is always going to surprise us."

To ensure that Scotland is finding solutions to those surprises, we need our education system to be inspirational, innovative and people focused. Let us learn from the success of Dunoon grammar school, let us take inspiration from Ryan and let us follow the example set by companies such as Renewable Parts and work collaboratively within our communities to ensure that the best decisions are made for our future.

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

16:36

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to close for Scottish Labour in this debate, which has, I think, ranged in emotions across the entire alphabet. However, there has been some clear water and clear light, and it is interesting to see the possible start of hands

reaching across the chamber to seek a unified approach. That is, of course, one of the purposes behind the national discussion on education.

I start by giving Jenni Minto an accolade. Possibly more important, I give an accolade to Ryan McCuaig for that ability to overcome challenges and achieve, even with so many barriers in front of him, and for pointing to what is probably the single most important factor of all: the ability to build relationships with those who care for us, our teachers and those around us. That skill is so important and one that a perhaps significant number of our young people struggle with. Perhaps we all do when we think about whether our favourite lesson was taught by our favourite teacher. How often does that prove to be the case?

Scottish Labour welcomes the launch of the Government's national discussion on education. It is essential that the voices of those in the education sector are listened to—the voices of parents and teachers, but also the voices of our young people. That is why I very much welcome the First Minister's comments yesterday at the Conveners Group meeting in response to being asked how the conversation can take place in a way that enables our children and young people to contribute properly. There is a great deal of expertise in Scotland in allowing young people to have a voice at the table and to influence the decisions that are made, so I very much welcome that.

I turn to the excellent contribution from Graeme Dey. To reach out in that way places a challenge on those in the Opposition parties to do the same in return, because our education system, our young people and, indeed, Scotland deserve that. I put my thanks to him on the record. In one area of the debate on education, I think that there is agreement across the chamber.

I know that it is not an easy problem to reconcile, but concerns were raised by Mr Dey, Ross Greer, Sue Webber and others about the people who make up the advisory committees looking at how education will go forward. I think that there is an opportunity to reconsider the issue and, if not to change the structure of the committees, to broaden the range of those who can influence those committees. In part, the responsibility of the Parliament, and of us as MSPs, is to look at the evidence that the committees listen to and the conclusions that are drawn and to move our education system forward both for the young people who are in it now and for those who will come forward.

**Stephen Kerr:** I, too, pay tribute to Graeme Dey for his remarks and I completely take on board the message that he imparted in his speech. I am also greatly encouraged by the idea that we can work

together on the basis of evidence rather than party dogma. Therefore, I very much endorse what Martin Whitfield has said.

**Martin Whitfield:** I am grateful for that intervention. Perhaps the hands across the chamber are reaching further than we had hoped. We need to build on that.

Scottish Labour has called for urgent action following the OECD report on curriculum for excellence, which remains the foundation of our education. Changes are being proposed and analyses have been made—indeed, my colleague Foysoil Choudhury talked about Sir Geoff Palmer's work in Edinburgh. The content of what our children learn will change, and that decision rests on our teachers who have the expertise and professionalism to make it.

I go back to the full capacities that were mentioned in the first speech in the open debate. If we are to create lifelong learners, we need to use different vehicles to reach out to different young people in our schools.

I apologise to Graeme Dey, but it would be remiss of me not to poke a bit of fun at the motion. We had interesting contributions from several people about what excellence means exactly. The motion says that

“this was one of the strongest ever sets of results for any exam year”—

but not for pupils from the 20 per cent most-deprived areas, where higher results fell by 13 per cent compared with a 5.9 per cent decrease in the 20 per cent least-deprived areas.

The motion also says that the Parliament

“welcomes that the attainment gap has closed over the last 10 years”.

In March 2021, the watchdog Audit Scotland reported that

“the poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19”,

which the Scottish Government has to admit. The report acknowledged that some progress had been made but concluded that that progress was “limited” and fell

“short of the Scottish Government's aims.”

It is slightly disappointing that the Scottish Government is now welcoming a result that fell short of its aims only a short period ago.

We have

“the record high number of full-time first degree entrants to university who come from the most-deprived areas in Scotland”.

The Presiding Officer will forgive me for pointing out that 16.7 per cent of our students come from

the 20 per cent most-deprived areas, whereas, in Wales, the number of 18-year-old applicants from the most-deprived areas increased from 21.1 per cent to 24 per cent in the past year.

I go back to Graeme Dey's speech—I will repeat Graeme Dey's name to put it on the record more than anyone else's name. I welcome that the SNP-Green Government's motion acknowledges that

“significant progress is still required”,

because it is through that recognition that we can reach out across the chamber to do what is right.

I apologise to members whose excellent contributions I was unable to mention.

Scottish Labour believes in an education system that will enable our country to reach its potential, equip our young people with the skills that they will need to rely on throughout their lives and respond to the needs of employers in building a high-wage, high-skill economy. To live is not just to exist; we must strive to live fully and not just to survive. That is the idea that our education system serves and what we all want for our young people.

16:43

**Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con):** I am honoured to close this important debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. I support the amendment that was lodged by my colleague Stephen Kerr.

To be frank, it is shocking that the SNP Government has the audacity to hold a debate on education and use the term “excellence” in the title, when the cabinet secretary knows that the Scottish education system, despite being hailed a priority, is in turmoil after 15 years of neglect under her SNP Government.

The calls for change from across the chamber reflect the growing mood across Scotland. As Stephen Kerr has highlighted, the SNP loves to reminisce on the glory days of Scottish education but fails to mention that that standard and quality have been consigned to the history books. As my colleague Russell Findlay has pointed out, those same history books are likely to be littered with distorted facts and to ooze political grievance—

**Bob Doris:** Will Pam Gosal give way?

**Pam Gosal:** No—I need to get on with my speech.

Those history books are likely to ooze political grievance, resulting in schools being flooded with SNP propaganda material.

Stephen Kerr rightly condemned the stripping away of virtually everything that is education. There are fewer teachers, lower levels of literacy

and numeracy and a lack of emphasis on knowledge. The list is endless.

My colleague Sue Webber drew our attention to the growing attainment gap and to how the SNP Government failed children and young people in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges of remote learning.

I welcome the speeches from Lib Dem and Labour members, who, like us, condemn the repeated attempts at political spin to cover up the string of failures in Scottish education that this SNP Government has presided over.

Like Michael Marra, I took part in the national discussion. I agree with him that that is full of good intentions. However, at the meeting that I attended, I highlighted that I am particularly worried about financial resources and how the SNP will deliver good outcomes. Let us see how that goes.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Will Pam Gosal take an intervention?

**Pam Gosal:** I really need to get on with my speech. You will be winding up, cabinet secretary, so you can cover the issue then.

**The Presiding Officer:** Through the chair, please.

**Pam Gosal:** I am sorry.

Pam Duncan-Glancy said that far too many children are falling through the cracks. Attainment gaps are growing. There is a perfect example of that in my region—we see it from East Dunbartonshire to West Dunbartonshire. Like Foysoy Choudhury, I congratulate pupils on their achievements after being through such a horrific pandemic. Willie Rennie spoke about many truths of the reality under the SNP Government.

Rather than naming each SNP or Green member who delivered a speech, I note the one thing that defined them all: they patted themselves on the back instead of facing up to the harsh reality and taking responsibility for failing too many children in Scotland too many times. However, like my colleagues Russell Findlay, Stephen Kerr and Martin Whitfield, I enjoyed listening to Graeme Dey's speech.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Will Pam Gosal give way?

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Will Pam Gosal take an intervention?

**The Presiding Officer:** The member has made it clear that she will not take an intervention.

**Pam Gosal:** Staff and pupils have adapted so well to challenging circumstances during and after the pandemic, but we recognise that the scale of

the challenge has been amplified by the mishandling of the education portfolio at the very top.

The SNP Government has promised a lot: universal free school meals for all primary school children; laptops for every school pupil; the closure of the attainment gap; the reduction of class sizes; the improvement of the pupil to teacher ratio; and, most important, delivery for pupils. However, the Government has consistently failed to deliver again and again.

On top of that, we do not have an accurate picture of the state of education, most notably because the SNP has pulled us out of international comparisons. There has been a notable decline in subjects that are central to our future economy, such as modern languages, STEM subjects and English at higher level. The attainment gap for pupils achieving an A at higher level is at its highest in four years. The time for change is now.

The SNP Government is reluctant to change and it allows review and reform only when pressured to do so. As is clear from the Scottish Conservatives' amendment, we believe that "reform" is a stretch when referring to what is taking place in our education system. Ken Muir, who recommended that the SQA and Education Scotland be scrapped, made it clear that teachers should be deeply involved in the agency or agencies that replace the SQA and Education Scotland. However, to no one's surprise, three quarters of the reform board members work directly for the Scottish Government, the SQA or Education Scotland. How many of them come from classrooms? There are just three teachers. The reluctance even to publish that information is evidence enough that the education system is set to sail the same course that it has always sailed—by that, I mean one that is shrouded in secrecy and cover-ups.

For the Scottish Conservatives, reform means having an independent inspections agency that is fully accountable to the Parliament, not to itself, and one that is staffed by teachers, not by civil servants. It means having a teacher-led curriculum for all and renewing the focus on subject-specific knowledge and life skills. It means providing more autonomy for the experts—our teachers—to designate resources in the most effective way to meet the needs of their pupils and schools. It means rejoining the process of developing decent measurement of outcomes to ensure proper scrutiny, transparency and awareness of education in Scotland. Most important, it means getting rid of practices that do not work and replacing them, not rebranding them. We trust our teachers; why doesn't the SNP?

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Shirley-Anne Somerville to wind up the debate.

16:51

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** After Pam Gosal's speech, I want to start with a positive. I join Jenni Minto in congratulating Dunoon grammar school on its success. It was a pleasure to meet pupils and teachers from the school after First Minister's question time. I am still wearing my badge with pride for our debate on excellence in education. I think that the pupils and teachers of Dunoon grammar school are a good example of that. They are an example of what happens in many of our schools across the country, which is why we have a good international reputation.

The 2018 PISA study—I point out to Pam Gosal that that is an international study, in case she is not aware that we are still in it—said that Scotland was ranked among the top-performing countries in global competence and that Scotland was the fourth top-performing country. The international council of education advisers and the OECD have highlighted that Scotland has an excellent reputation internationally. It is true that there is more to do, but we can work together to achieve that.

The debate was a tale of two tones. We had very constructive comments from members of the Labour Party, for which I thank Michael Marra and Martin Whitfield, in particular, as well as Michael Marra's back-bench colleagues. I thank them for their commitment to taking on the national discussion. I will be more than happy to have further discussions with Michael Marra about the timings of the different areas of reform. He will be aware that we have changed some of them slightly. For example, we have moved Professor Hayward's work slightly to ensure that it will be informed by the national discussion. Sometimes Michael Marra tells me to get on with it, but sometimes he says that we should wait and see what comes out of the national discussion. Let us work together to see whether we can come to some sort of compromise so that we are on the same page on that. I think that that is entirely possible.

**Michael Marra:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that commitment and would be most happy to have such discussions.

Does the cabinet secretary recognise that there is consensus across the chamber on the concerns about the reform boards and their membership? I am sure that she will come on to that. It would be good for her to reflect on that in her speech and to make a commitment to ensure that we can all have faith that the job of reform will be done and that a resolution for the relevant organisations can be arrived at quickly.



**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** The member is correct—I will come on to that issue later in my speech, so I ask him to bear with me.

Perhaps unfortunately, I turn to the Scottish Conservatives. It is perhaps unsurprising that I was disappointed that Stephen Kerr offered no positive proposals on his first outing as education spokesperson. I am also disappointed that, through their amendment, the Tories have chosen to seek to delete all mention of the national discussion. I sincerely hope that that does not reflect a lack of commitment to genuinely take forward a process that is looking for consensus in this area.

Opposition members and members of my party spoke about the importance of tackling the attainment gap. I point out that, when we talk about results day in 2022, it is very important that we compare it with results day on the most recent year in which we had exams. We had two years in which we had an entirely different process of assessment. That comparison shows that the gap in attainment between the least and most deprived areas has narrowed since the most recent year in which formal exams were held—2019—at national 5, higher and advanced higher level.

Of course, there is more to do, which is why we are putting a substantial amount of funding—£1 billion-worth—into reducing the attainment gap in the current parliamentary session.

I again congratulate our young people on the results that they achieved under the most difficult of circumstances and thank those in our schools, colleges and homes who helped them do that.

I turn to the issue of reform. There was some dubiety from Conservative members about who is in charge of reform. Let me put this clearly: there is one person in charge of reform and that person is me. I have said time and time again, in every public statement about reform, that I am absolutely determined to take forward genuine change in our agencies. I think that that is required and I am sure that the agencies themselves are in absolutely no doubt about that; it is something that we speak about every single time we meet.

That work is being taken forward by a strategic programme board, which includes Scottish Government officials working under ministerial direction. As I said, that minister is me and I am in charge of reform and am determined to bring that forward. External members have also been appointed to the board. They are there to provide input and critical challenge and to ensure that we achieve significant change in Scottish education, which cannot be done by the Scottish Government alone.

I point out to members that Professor Ken Muir's report, in which he discussed the new national

bodies to be established, clearly recommended that the transition should be taken forward in partnership with the bodies subject to reform. We must ensure that we include the agencies that we are replacing and that there are critical voices on the board so that I am held to my word and the project board is accountable. A lot is going on to ensure that that happens.

It is also important to point out that the boards are not the only way to be involved in reform. For example, I chaired a stakeholder reference group yesterday, numerous conferences are happening and I have also spoken to the learners and teachers panels about that issue and to the BOCSH group of curriculum leaders. There are therefore various ways in which teachers are being involved in the process; the boards are but one way.

**Stephen Kerr:** Having heard the expressions of concern from all parts of the chamber, will the cabinet secretary reconsider and add to the three teachers who are currently serving on the board, which needs more members from the profession?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Forgive me for being unable to remember who said so during the debate, but the unions are involved. Mr Kerr does a great disservice to the trade unions if he does not think that they are there to represent their members, who the last time I checked were teachers. Individual teachers are involved, and to say that the unions somehow cannot represent their members when that is exactly what they are there to do does them a great disservice. I highlight again that the board is not the only way for people to get involved.

I am afraid that I do not have time to get into the detail of the points raised by Pam Duncan-Glancy, but I thank her for raising them. She will be aware of the updated action plan that will be published later in the autumn and I will be pleased to take part in discussions about her bill as it progresses.

Ross Greer and Stephanie Callaghan pointed out that eradicating the poverty-related attainment gap will be very much helped by eradicating poverty. That is why, when we talk about education, we must also think about what has an impact on education. One way to have an impact on education is to tackle child poverty. Many members, including Stephanie Callaghan and Ross Greer, pointed to the work that the Scottish Government is doing on that along with our partners in the Scottish Greens. It is difficult to do that work when we have a UK Government that seems hell-bent on trashing the entire economy and making bankers' bonuses a higher priority than anything to do with child poverty.

We have also heard discussion of teacher numbers. It is important to point out that those

numbers are at their highest since 2008. We have 2,000 more teachers than we did before the pandemic. Ross Greer is right to point out that the Bute house agreement commits us to going further.

Based on what he said in his speech, I think I may owe Foysol Choudhury an apology if we did not write to him after we last spoke about antiracism in education. I apologise for that. I will ensure that that is followed up after today and I am more than happy to meet him if he requires that. If we did not write to him last time, I will ensure that we rectify that this time, because he again raises an important point about tackling race inequality and I thank him for that.

Only last week, we saw unfortunate incidents where some of our educators were attacked on social media for tackling that issue. The other aspect that we need to take account of in our reform is gender equality, and I am absolutely determined to ensure that that lies right at the heart of our reform process.

I end by quoting Larry Flanagan. He said:

“Scottish education is way ahead of the English system ... If you are attacking the education system you are attacking teachers. It really annoys me because it should not be difficult for politicians to mobilise behind the efforts schools are making.”

We have a real opportunity to do that in the national discussion. I am determined to rise to that challenge, and many members have shown that they are also ready to rise to it. Our children and young people deserve nothing less.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

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

The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-06089 and S6M-06090, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

### *Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Landfill Tax (Prescribed Landfill Site Activities) Amendment Order 2022 (SSI 2022/233) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Advice and Assistance (Summary Criminal Proceedings) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.—[George Adam]

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

## Points of Order

17:01

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. During topical questions on 6 September, the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, Ivan McKee, assured this Parliament that the budget and completion timescales for vessels 801 and 802 were on track. Last night, we were told that the vessels could cost another £84 million, bringing the total cost to £336 million against the budget of £97 million. Furthermore, we were told that vessel 802 will be subject—*[Interruption.]*

SNP members may be struggling to find this interesting, but the people of Scotland and the people of the islands that I represent find it very interesting, so I suggest that they listen to it.

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** Please continue, Mr Mountain.

**Edward Mountain:** Furthermore, we were told that vessel 802 will be subject to further delays. Having visited Ferguson's shipyard on 2 September, I knew that that was the case, which is why I lodged my topical question three weeks ago.

Presiding Officer, either the minister does not know what is going on in his portfolio, which I am sure he will wish to deny, or the minister was hiding the fact and therefore misleading the Parliament. If the latter is the case, how can the Parliament hold him and the Government to account?

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank the member for advance notice of the point of order. As members are aware, I am not responsible for the content of members' contributions. If a member feels that another member has provided information that is incorrect in a contribution in the chamber, the corrections guidance sets out steps that the member may wish to take and, of course, there are the usual opportunities for scrutiny in the chamber. Thank you.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. During First Minister's questions today, the First Minister said in relation to Scotland's energy consumption:

"we have a position where our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources."

The assertion is demonstrably and evidentially false. I am sure that the First Minister would be very pleased to be given an opportunity to correct the record such that a more accurate picture of the source of Scotland's energy provision could be given. I wonder if you could guide the First Minister on how she might go about doing that.

**The Presiding Officer:** In response to the member's point of order, I repeat that, as I have just said to Mr Mountain, if a member feels that another member has provided incorrect information, a mechanism exists by which to correct that. Thank you.

## Decision Time

17:03

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

There are 11 questions to be put as a result of yesterday's and today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-06071.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06071, in the name of Graham Simpson, on the Scottish Government's handling of ferry contracts, 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.

17:04

*Meeting suspended.*

17:08

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the division on amendment S6M-06071.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

**The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect to the voting platform. I would have voted yes.

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

**The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect to the platform. I, too, would have voted yes.

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

### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 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)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-06071.2, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, is: For 65, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-06071.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06071, in the name of Graham Simpson, on the Scottish Government's handling of ferry contracts, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**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)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (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)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 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)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse)

(SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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 on amendment S6M-06071.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, is: For 23, Against 93, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-06071, in the name of Graham Simpson, on the Scottish Government's handling of ferry contracts, 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)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)

Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-06071, in the name of Graham Simpson, on the Scottish Government’s handling of ferry contracts, as amended, is: For 64, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Project Neptune report on the governance of Scotland’s ferries; notes that ministers are engaging with affected communities, staff and all stakeholders on the options for reform; recognises that over £2 billion has been invested in the support of lifeline ferry services since 2007; welcomes the commitment to publish and consult on a long-term vessel and port investment plan as part of the Islands Connectivity Plan; recognises the concerns of island communities, and that ministers continue to work closely with them during periods of disruption; agrees that ensuring accurate reporting is key to avoiding unnecessary impacts on those economies, and notes the ongoing work to deliver the vessels under construction at Ferguson Marine, the positive relations between management and unions, and the protection of hundreds of jobs at the yard, including supporting over 50 apprentices, along with many more jobs in the supply chain.

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Humza Yousaf is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Jackie Baillie will fall.

The question is, that amendment S6M-06073.3, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06073, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on addressing national health

service waiting times, 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 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)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)  
 (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-06073.3, in the name of Humza Yousaf, is: For 65, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The amendment in the name of Jackie Baillie falls.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-06073.2, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06073, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on addressing NHS waiting times, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

Voting is now closed.

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. With some surprise, I found that the voting app would not connect. I would have voted for the amendment.

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

#### For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)  
 (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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 on amendment S6M-06073.2, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, is: For 51, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-06073, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on addressing NHS waiting times, 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 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)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-06073, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, on addressing NHS waiting times, as amended, is: For 65, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

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

That the Parliament recognises the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health services and thanks Scotland's frontline health and care staff for continuing to deliver high-quality care in spite of pressures associated with the ongoing pandemic; understands that these pressures are being experienced in health services across the UK and beyond; notes that, in 60 days, the number of people waiting longer than two years for an outpatient appointment was reduced by almost a quarter and that most specialisms have no waits of this length; welcomes that, since the start of the pandemic, NHS staffing is up by almost 9%; notes that child and adolescent mental health services began treatment of 5,200 children in the most recent quarter, the highest number ever recorded for the second quarter in a row; commends the dedication of Hospital at Home staff, whose work has avoided or saved bed days equivalent to that of a large district general hospital, including increased capacity for Outpatient Intravenous Antimicrobial Treatments, remote monitoring for COVID, and Respiratory Rapid Response services, which has already saved 45,000 hospital bed days in 2022; regrets the impact that Brexit and the UK Government's anti-immigration rhetoric have had on recruitment in care services, and welcomes that over £1.6 billion of Scottish Government investment is being provided for social care and integration in 2022, and that, by the end of this parliamentary session, investment will increase by at least £840 million to improve services through the creation of the National Care Service.

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Stephen Kerr is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Michael Marra will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-06102.3, in the name of Stephen Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06102, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on excellence in Scottish education, be agree to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)

### Abstentions

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)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (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)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-06102.3, in the name of Stephen Kerr, is: For 29, Against 64, Abstentions 23.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-06102.1, in the name of Michael Marra, which seeks to amend motion S6M-06102, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on excellence in Scottish Education, 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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

#### 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)

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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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 on amendment S6M-06102.1, in the name of Michael Marra, is: For 51, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-06102, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on excellence in Scottish education, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

**Jenny Gilruth:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I could not connect again. I would have voted yes.

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

#### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, 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)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)  
 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)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (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)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (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)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-06102, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on excellence in Scottish education, is: For 65, Against 50, Abstentions 0.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises that there is much to be proud of and to celebrate in Scottish education; commends the hard work of all staff and teaching professionals in Scotland's schools, colleges, universities and early learning and childcare centres to support children and young people throughout this period of recovery post-COVID-19-pandemic; pays tribute to all the young people who achieved qualifications, broader achievements and skills in summer 2022, as well as those who have moved onto employment, started new apprenticeships, or courses in colleges and universities, having overcome the challenges they faced; recognises that, despite those challenges, this was one of the strongest ever sets of results for any exam year, given that pass rates were up on the last time that formal exams were held in 2019; welcomes that the attainment gap has closed over the last 10 years and that there has been a record high number of full-time first degree entrants to university coming from the most deprived areas in Scotland, but acknowledges that significant progress is still required; welcomes, therefore, the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that all children and young people receive a first-class education in

their local school through significant investment in teacher employment, with the highest spending per pupil, and more teachers per pupil, than any other UK nation, as well as increased digital inclusion, action to address the costs associated with the school day, and a £1 billion investment over the course of the parliamentary session to close the poverty-related attainment gap; commends teachers, schools and local authorities across Scotland for their commitment to build a continuously improving system, which raises attainment for all, closes the attainment gap, and enables all children and young people to fulfil their potential, and encourages everyone – children, young people, families and teachers – to give their views on the future of education by taking part in the National Discussion.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to ask a single question on two Parliamentary Bureau motions. Does any member object?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that motions S6M-06089 and S6M-06090, 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 Scottish Landfill Tax (Prescribed Landfill Site Activities) Amendment Order 2022 (SSI 2022/233) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Advice and Assistance (Summary Criminal Proceedings) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.

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

*Meeting closed at 17:27.*

## Correction

The First Minister has identified an error in her contribution and provided the following correction.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):**

*At col 16, paragraph 12—*

*Original text—*

Under this Government, we have a position where our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources.

*Corrected text—*

Under this Government, the equivalent of 98.8% of our gross electricity consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources.

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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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba