



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# **Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee**

**Wednesday 6 September 2023**

**Session 6**



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**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2023, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

\*Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab)

\*Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)

\*Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Andrew Mylne

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



**Scottish Parliament**  
**Citizen Participation and Public  
Petitions Committee**

*Wednesday 6 September 2023*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]*

**Interests**

**The Convener (Jackson Carlaw):** Good morning, and welcome to the 12th meeting in 2023 of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee—our first meeting after the summer recess, which I hope all have enjoyed, notwithstanding the weather.

Our first item is a declaration of interests. As members will recall, our colleague Alexander Stewart has left the committee. We were able to thank him for his work when he was last with us. I gather that Alexander will be able to join us at the launch next week of our public participation and democracy inquiry. In his stead, we welcome our new colleague, Maurice Golden, and offer him the opportunity to refer to any interests.

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I declare that I am a fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which does some work on citizen participation, although I have not been involved in that thus far.

**The Convener:** That is the most interesting declaration that I have heard in a very long while. Thank you for that.

**Decision on Taking Business in  
Private**

09:32

**The Convener:** Item 2 is to invite colleagues to agree to take items 5 and 6 in private. Are we content to take those items in private?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Continued Petitions

### Child Sexual Abuse Allegations (Religious Organisations) (PE1905)

09:32

**The Convener:** The first of the continuing petitions is PE1905, which was lodged by Angela Rosina Cousins on behalf of UK XJW's Support. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to order a public inquiry into the actions that have taken by religious organisations in response to child sex abuse allegations since 1950.

Since our last consideration of the petition, we have written to the Scottish Government, highlighting the recommendations of the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse in England and Wales. As part of that communication, we again called for the Scottish inquiry to have its terms of reference extended or for the Scottish Government to investigate the possibility of establishing an alternative inquiry in order to match the scope of the inquiries that are taking place elsewhere.

We have since received a response from the then Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, restating the Scottish Government's position that widening the inquiry's remit is not practicable, as it would make the inquiry "unmanageable in scope". The response states that it is imperative that resources are dedicated to on-going work to implement the national guidance for child protection.

Do colleagues have any comments or thoughts in the light of the former Deputy First Minister's latest response?

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** I am reluctant to close the petition, even though the Scottish Government has said that it will not widen the scope of the inquiry. We should try again, by writing to the new Deputy First Minister to reiterate the committee's recommendations that the Scottish Government extend the Scottish child abuse inquiry's terms of reference to include religious organisations or establish a separate public inquiry to address the issues that are highlighted in the petition and to ask what work has been undertaken since the submission in January to consider the recommendations in the report on child protection in religious organisations and settings in England and Wales. We should also ask how the Scottish Government monitors the implementation of national guidance for child protection, what steps it is taking to ensure that religious organisations are aware of and adhering to the guidance, and how it demonstrates its

function of supporting and challenging religious organisations on those issues.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):** I very much support what Mr Torrance has recommended, but perhaps I can supplement it by asking that, when we do write that letter, we draw specific attention to the useful material that the clerks have provided in paragraph 9 of their paper. The paper mentions the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse in England and Wales, which published its final report in October 2022. The paper then refers to recommendations 2, 9, 13 and 19 of that inquiry report, all of which appear to have relevance. In his reply, Mr Swinney says that the on-going inquiry might well consider the issues that are of relevance here, but he does not really go into any specifics; however, at least four of those specifics have been drawn out by the clerks, and there might be others, too.

The point that I am making is that it would be useful to give the Deputy First Minister a steer on this and suggest that, as well as the general points that Mr Torrance has made, it would be useful to hear whether the existing inquiry will specifically consider all the pertinent and relevant recommendations made by the English inquiry. If we are to accept the Government approach, we can do so only on the basis that it will cover all the relevant issues, albeit in a different way—and even, perhaps, unsatisfactorily, given that we have not heard evidence et cetera.

I just wanted to make that specific point, convener.

**The Convener:** I think that that is fair. Are we content with that?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** I wonder whether there should be a flavour of something else in our approach. Obviously, the Government has made its argument, but for people not covered by the inquiry's scope, the inference is that the abuse that they suffered is not worthy of an inquiry in its own right or further investigation. I think that that is an unfortunate conclusion. It might well be that, as Fergus Ewing suggests, the Government is going to touch on this matter in a different way, but it would be helpful to invite it to spell out why it feels that way. We as a committee are going to have to go back to the petitioner and say, in essence, that the issue that they have identified is not thought by the Government sufficiently serious to warrant its investigating it in a formal way. That is not a conclusion with which the Government should be comfortable.

Is the committee content?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## **Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 (Post Mortems) (PE1911)**

**The Convener:** That brings us to our second continued petition, and I gather that the petitioner is again with us in the public gallery. Good morning.

PE1911, lodged by Ann Stark, is on review of the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 as it relates to post mortems. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the 2006 act and relevant guidance to ensure that all post mortems can be carried out only with permission of the next of kin; do not routinely remove brains; and offer tissues and samples to next of kin as a matter of course.

In our consideration of this petition, we are joined by our colleague Monica Lennon MSP. Good morning to you, too, Monica.

Members will recall our evidence-taking session in June with the Lord Advocate and Andy Shanks, Head of the Scottish fatalities investigation unit at the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Since that meeting, we have received further information from the COPFS; its written submission states that the COPFS is working with pathology providers on a service redesign, and its preference is to have a national pathology and mortuary service established under national health service leadership. On the issue of CT scanning, the submission notes that representations have been made by two pathology providers on the viability of using scanning in post-mortem examinations, which I think is progress on what we have understood to be the position before.

The petitioner, Ann Stark, has provided two written submissions, the first of which notes the upcoming service redesign and states that there is an opportunity to introduce the use of scanners in murder and suspicious cases. Ann also emphasises the importance of taking grieving families' perspectives into account if a national service is to be established.

In her second submission, Ann Stark reiterates the importance of families having a choice about what happens with their loved ones and highlights the use of scanners in London to check for prostate cancer, which I think was in a very recent news story—in fact, they were talking about using magnetic resonance imaging for that.

In addition to the two submissions that are included in the papers, we have all received numerous e-mail communications directly from the petitioner about issues relating to her petition. I say to the petitioner that, although I fully understand her desire to ensure that we are fully informed, it is most helpful if submissions go to the

clerks, because it causes confusion among members if we get them, as we are not sure of the operational process for dealing with them. I assure the petitioner that, if they go to the clerk, we will get them on a concise form, and that would assist us.

Before I open up to wider comment, given that Monica Lennon was with us when we heard our evidence from the Lord Advocate and from Andy Shanks, I wonder whether she would like to say something.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It is lovely to be back and to have the opportunity to be with the committee again, and it is good that we have Ann and Gerry Stark in the public gallery today. The loss of their son, Richard, is what brought us all here and what has brought all the evidence and discussion into the Parliament and the public arena.

Ann is a prolific e-mail writer and sender. I do not want to make committee members feel that they are not special, but she has been writing to every MSP and has been getting a very warm response. More and more people are coming forward to say that the issues that we are looking at are very important.

I will not repeat everything that I said in my summary at the session in June. It was quite an intense session with the Lord Advocate and Mr Shanks and, at points, it was frustrating to try and find out who will take responsibility for the issue. Fergus Ewing and Alexander Stewart, in particular, teased out a lot of that. In the end, the Lord Advocate acknowledged that, if we all want a humane and progressive system, we need to be robust and thorough in investigating deaths where there is suspicion, but that it needs to be proportionate.

In prompting the inquiry, the petitioner has highlighted that in Scotland we are not keeping pace with modern practice elsewhere, and not only in England—we have heard about the experience in Lancashire—but in Japan and Australia, and there are other examples. We want to keep pace with that. The evidence that we heard from colleagues in Lancashire gave me some comfort that those innovations have been cost neutral to public authorities. It is important for us, as parliamentarians, to understand the cost implications.

We all want families to be treated with respect, dignity and compassion, but unfortunately that has not always been the case. We have heard about some of the workforce challenges. No one wants to minimise those, but the proposals that have come to the committee would help with workforce pressures and future workforce planning.

I am a Central Scotland MSP, and the family behind me are from Lanarkshire. Rightly, they are wondering why families in Lancashire can benefit from the service but no one has been looking at it in Scotland, until now.

It is welcome that the committee has had an update from the Crown Office on the service redesign during the summer but, to go back to the title of the petition and the ask of the Scottish Government, the Scottish Government has, in my view, been sitting on the sidelines while everyone else has been trying to figure out what to do. It is important that the Government is aware that the Parliament is taking the issue seriously and that ministers are fully engaged. Looking back at the notes from the previous session, I think that the Lord Advocate pretty much said that, if she gets a steer on what to do next, she will do it to the best of her ability, but that it is not really up to her. We need leadership on the issue.

The petition that Mrs Stark lodged is a huge credit to her, but it has been at huge personal cost to her. She spends every waking hour on this, and I can tell you that she does not get a lot of sleep. It is important that we do the right thing by her and other families.

I am interested to hear what Government and other partners will do next because, until now, no one has really picked up the ball on this; it has been left to families, which is unfair. I appreciate all the time and effort that the committee has put in. We started with a blank sheet of paper, and no one really knew what was going on but, now, thanks to the committee, we have a ton of evidence, not just from the United Kingdom but on what is happening internationally, which is really important. I say a big thank you to all the committee members.

09:45

**The Convener:** Thank you very much, Monica. You described the evidence session that we had as tense, which is a fair description. Having read the *Official Report* of the meeting, I think that you characterise it correctly in many respects. Although it was a slightly tense atmosphere, the Lord Advocate clearly stuck to her view of where her responsibilities lay. The committee got slightly frustrated that it was not clear thereafter where she thought the committee should go to get the correct answers. That is what we have been reflecting on.

Given the evidence that we heard from the pathologists in Lancashire and the other evidence that we have heard, I believe that members of the committee are minded to seek to do everything that we can to advance the aims of the petition. In

the light of those remarks, do colleagues have any contributions?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, I agree with that. It was very helpful to have Monica Lennon's exposition at the beginning, so I thank her for that. I will refer to a couple of bits of the evidence and then make a couple of recommendations.

The Lord Advocate was very clear that it is not her role to deal with matters relating to pathology. She started off by saying:

"We do not have a role in the recruitment or training of pathologists".

She went on to say:

"It is really for the professional body to consider the quality, efficacy and benefits of the imaging and to determine whether imaging should be utilised in the process being undertaken. If the Royal College of Pathologists has identified a means by which post mortems can be less invasive when undertaken using imaging, then I as the Lord Advocate ... would reasonably expect that the pathologist advising the Crown on that issue would explain that the process was available and should be used."— [*Official Report, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee*, 14 June 2023; c 10, 14.]

In a sense, the Lord Advocate is saying that it is not her job but, if she is advised by the experts in the pathology world that that is something that should happen, as it does apparently in England—and, we hear today, in Japan and elsewhere—she would pay heed to that in her role. That seems to be no more than common sense, and entirely logical and correct.

Therefore, with one caveat, we should take up the suggestion of writing to the Royal College of Pathologists to highlight the evidence session, point out the evidence from the practitioners in England, stress that scanning and other processes appear to be available in England but not here, ask for an explanation of why that is and get its views on these matters—perhaps orally, if necessary, but in the first instance in writing. As the petitioner very clearly argues, there is a gap in the Scottish system, which results in the petitioner's conclusion that nobody appears to care, which struck me in her remarks.

The one caveat is that, as the petitioner pointed out, the fiscal service's contract that the Lord Advocate referred to a couple of times expires in seven months. If that is the case, the committee may feel that the new service-level contract should refer to specific duties to enable the provision of scanning and so on to be available where appropriate. Working backwards from that, for that to happen, we might want to flag up to the minister that that approach is in our minds, subject to getting professional expert advice from the pathologists.



Finally, the clerks have flagged up that the pathologists say that some of the medical and clinical decisions may involve radiologists as well as, or instead of, pathologists. Perhaps the clerks could consider from whom we require to obtain the most relevant evidence, and whether it is one or the other, or both—I suspect that it is both.

I am sorry that I spoke for so long, convener.

**The Convener:** No—that was incredibly helpful.

In the letter that Fergus Ewing has suggested, it might be helpful to refer to the fact that the COPFS has said that it has received representations from two pathology providers. It might be interesting to ask for a bit more detail on that, because that does not tell us anything other than that it has received submissions. It would be useful to pull that together, as Fergus Ewing has suggested.

Do colleagues have any other suggestions over and above that?

**Fergus Ewing:** The clerks could consider following up the reference to Japan and other countries, too, if need be, because we would not want to leave any stone unturned.

**The Convener:** I think that we have covered the ground at this stage, mainly. Will we get that evidence first? I am just trying to think where we want to be sequentially—

**Fergus Ewing:** What we might want to do, because seven months is not a long time and it might well be that the meat of the negotiation is being conducted right now—my point is that we might miss a chance—

**The Convener:** We want the most comprehensive letter at this stage—

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, we want to flag it up to the minister now, specifically saying—

**The Convener:** Yes, it might be risky to be sequential here; let us get it all in there now.

**Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** Can we ask the Crown Office whether it has any alternatives and whether it has done anything at all to find any solutions since it met us last? We were concerned then, and we saw the reaction of the Lord Advocate. I do not know whether the Crown Office has done anything, so can we ask it?

**The Convener:** Yes, we can do so. The only thing that it has said is that it has had those two submissions, which is not really action but just a reflection of that fact. Thank you for that. Are we content to proceed on that basis?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** The petition remains open. I am hopeful that Parliament will be able to influence its

outcome and advance its aim as we proceed; let us hope that we do. I thank Monica Lennon for her on-going interest and the petitioner for all the interest that she shows. I appreciated having an opportunity to read the response that the petitioner received from the Lord Advocate, which was economical in respect of the issue. The opportunity to advance the aims of the petition exists, so thank you, everybody.

### Public Toilets (PE1955)

**The Convener:** PE1955, which was lodged by John Wood, calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that local authorities provide good-quality, clean and accessible public toilets by placing a statutory duty on local authorities to provide adequate such toilets and ensuring that sufficient funding is available for local authorities to meet that requirement.

Since our last consideration of the petition, we have received information from Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council about their use of the comfort scheme. Members will recall that that is a voluntary scheme whereby businesses and organisations can obtain grants when they register to become providers of toilet facilities. The written submissions provide information about how many businesses and organisations are registered, the cost of the scheme to local authorities and their approach to advertising the existence of the scheme.

The Scottish Government has provided information about the rural tourism infrastructure fund as it relates to public toilets. Although that information has been useful for the committee in understanding the current landscape and alternative routes for providing facilities, the petitioner stressed the importance of the petition's main ask. The petitioner does not feel that the comfort scheme is a satisfactory alternative and feels that

“the rural tourism infrastructure fund is not an appropriate source of funding for a basic public service”.

He has reiterated that

“public toilets are a basic requirement of public health and hygiene”,

stating that

“only a statutory duty and ... sufficient revenue will provide”

that requirement.

Do colleagues have any comments or suggestions to make?

**David Torrance:** I have sympathy with the petition, but the Scottish Government has stated that it will not impose a statutory duty on the 32 local authorities because it is up to them to decide

whether they fund public toilets. As somebody who has seen the comfort scheme work really well in Fife along the coastal path—

**The Convener:** I thought that you were going to say, “As somebody who uses public toilets”. [Laughter.]

**David Torrance:** There is nowhere for us to go, because the Scottish Government has been very clear that it will not impose a statutory duty on councils. I ask the committee to consider closing the petition under rule 15.7 of standing orders, on the basis that the Scottish Government has no plans at this time to make provision of public toilets a statutory obligation on local authorities.

**Fergus Ewing:** I back up what Mr Torrance has said. I perhaps owe the petitioner an apology because, in my remarks when we last considered the petition, I specifically suggested that we look at the rural tourism infrastructure fund. The reason why I suggested that was that I knew, from experience as a minister, that that was a practical way of providing funding for something. However, in the petitioner’s response, he made the fair point that that was a red herring or a cul-de-sac—whatever you want to call it—and that he was concerned about the basic human right of having a public convenience. I wish to state on the record that I did not mean, in any way, to show disrespect to the petitioner.

However, for the reasons that Mr Torrance has described, it is plain that, although we admire and respect the principle that the petitioner is pursuing, we cannot take the petition any further. I want to make that clear to the petitioner, because I fear that he did not understand what I was trying to do, which was to be helpful in a pragmatic way.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Mr Ewing. I think that that was clear as your objective. Of course, the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee is not making an editorial judgment on the merits of the petition; we seek to advance the aims of petitioners as best we can, but, ultimately, the decision as to whether the aims of a petitioner are fulfilled is one for the Government. In this case, the Government has come back and said that it does not intend to pursue the statutory route. For that reason, Mr Torrance has recommended that we close the petition. Are members content to do so?

**Foysoil Choudhury:** I think that it is an on-going issue. I have been getting quite a lot of emails on it from constituents in Edinburgh and the Lothian region. I had a business in Dalry—I was involved in Dalry a long time ago—so I know that toilets closing in the Dalry area puts extra pressure on local businesses. If people come in—pregnant women, people with diabetes and so on—because there is no public toilet in the area, that puts extra

pressure on local businesses. Sometimes, it can put staff under pressure; if someone wants to use the toilet but staff do not allow it, that can cause them trouble.

I am not really sure about this—it is an on-going issue and we need to consider it. It is a mental health issue, too. Being new to the committee, I do not know how long the petition has been with the committee, but I feel that, as the issue is on-going, we need to consider it and support local businesses. In Edinburgh, almost all the public toilets have been or are being closed, so where can people go?

**The Convener:** If I can coalesce your view, you would prefer to keep the petition open and go back to the Scottish Government, highlighting the petitioner’s latest evidence. Perhaps we could say—in your words, if I can paraphrase them—that further public toilet closures appear to be taking place, which is placing an unreasonable burden of expectation on local businesses, and that, for those reasons, the Government should have a further think about whether it would be prepared to consider its position. Is that appropriate?

**Foysoil Choudhury:** Yes, it is.

**The Convener:** We have the two approaches. Mr Torrance, are you content? What is your view?

**David Torrance:** I am still quite happy to close the petition under rule 15.7 of standing orders, because the Scottish Government will not change its mind on imposing anything on local authorities, which are autonomous and can make their own decisions.

**The Convener:** Would you be content, Mr Choudhury, if we closed the petition but sent a further letter to the Government, highlighting the issues as you have described them and saying that, although we have noted what the Government has said and recognise that it is unlikely to change its mind, this is a matter of concern and we think that it is worth the Government being aware of the continuing difficulties that are arising? Would that help?

**Foysoil Choudhury:** Yes, it would. I think that we also need to support local businesses and their staff. As I said, it is a big mental health issue, which I know because I was involved in the catering industry. I am happy—

**The Convener:** I think that Mr Torrance’s conclusion, as supported by Mr Ewing, was that it does not look as though the Government will change its view on the statutory matter.

**Foysoil Choudhury:** We can always ask.

**The Convener:** The Government has come back twice to tell us that. However, we could draw

to its attention why it is a matter of on-going concern.

**Maurice Golden:** That is a sensible course of action, convener. It would be useful, as part of that letter, to get the Scottish Government's view on the point that toilet provision is a basic requirement of public health and hygiene.

**The Convener:** Well, we are not closing the petition, then. Mr Ewing, do you have any further reflection? We now have two colleagues suggesting that we close the petition and two colleagues who would prefer to have a further go at drawing the latest matters to the Government's attention.

10:00

**Fergus Ewing:** I absolutely understand the points that my colleagues who have proposed a different approach make. At the end of the day, Mr Torrance's argument that the Scottish Government is not going to change its position seems to me to be pretty much correct and not really open to doubt. The views that colleagues have expressed are perfectly legitimate, but they perhaps need to be pursued in the political arena, because I am not sure that, as a committee, we will get any further with that.

I absolutely agree that we could write to the relevant minister setting out the reservations that we perhaps all have about the approach, but I do not think that the approach will change; indeed, I am certain that it will not change. Therefore, we should probably close the petition, subject to the helpful suggestion of writing to the minister. I share the concerns, as I think we all do. There is a particular problem in the Highlands because of the distances between available opportunities, shall we say.

**The Convener:** Rather unusually, over the issue of public conveniences, I am invited to come to a casting position. I am minded to close the petition but to accompany that with a directional letter to the Government that sets out our concerns about the approach that it has decided to adopt but which recognises that it appears that the Government is not prepared to reconsider that. That matter will be for others to pursue in a different environment. Thank you all very much.

### **A890 (Adoption as Trunk Road) (PE1974)**

### **A832 (Adoption as Trunk Road) (PE1980)**

**The Convener:** Instead of considering PE1973, I will jump ahead on the agenda, because we now have Rhoda Grant with us, and I am happy to try to facilitate Rhoda's morning by bringing forward the petitions in which she has an interest.

Both petitions have been lodged by Derek Noble. PE1974 calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to adopt the A890 as a trunk road and to resolve the safety problems that are associated with the Stromeferry bypass. PE1980 calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to adopt the A832 between Achnasheen and Gorstan as a trunk road, connecting that route into the existing trunk road network. We considered the petitions on 18 January, when we agreed to write to a range of stakeholders to seek further information on the issues raised.

As I said a moment ago, we are joined by our colleague Rhoda Grant—good morning, and welcome, Rhoda. I am pleased to say that we have received responses from Lochcarron community council and the Plockton and district community council, which highlight the disruption that residents and others face when rock falls cause a closure of the A890, as well as their support for action to recognise the increased volume of traffic on the route and improve the quality of the road surface.

We also received a response in February from the then Minister for Transport, which suggests that, although there is linkage between the criteria set out in the strategic transport projects review and the A890, it is the Government's assessment that the A890 does not sufficiently meet the criteria to be incorporated into the motorway and trunk road network. The minister also suggests that transferring the route to the trunk road network would not solve the investment challenges that are associated with addressing road safety and maintenance issues on this stretch of road.

On a related point, the VisitScotland response states that it considers road infrastructure to be an important part of the visitor experience but that it would be for the Scottish Government to consider whether adopting the A832 as a trunk road would improve outcomes for residents and visitors to the area.

The response from Highland Council notes that it has done no further work on the Stromeferry options appraisal since December 2019, given that the project has no capital programme support and no preferred option has been identified. The council's response also states that, although parts of the A832 may not meet today's design standards, the issues of the A890 Stromeferry section outweigh those issues significantly.

There is a range of responses, and they are not altogether encouraging from the point of view of the petition, unfortunately. Before I ask the committee to reflect on what we have heard, I invite Rhoda Grant to make any comments that she feels would be appropriate.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):**

Thank you for giving me the chance to speak to the petitions. I cannot stress enough how vital the links in question are to the west Highlands. They link the Highland Council area to the Western Isles. They are seen as links to Uig on Skye and to Uist, so they are incredibly important.

You referred to what the then Minister for Transport said about the STPR and how the A890 did not wholly meet the criteria for inclusion in the trunk road network. I do not understand that, because local communities use it to access healthcare and education, and it is also used for tourism, farming, aquaculture and renewables. It is a freight link to the Western Isles and it is on the north coast 500; as we all know, that has been incredibly successful in encouraging tourists into the area but it has put huge pressure on the road. I believe that the A890 is of national significance because of that.

You mentioned the submissions from Lochcarron community council and the Plockton and district community council, which highlight how important the A890 is to the area. If the road is closed, the detour involves going from the west coast to the east coast and back. That is a detour of 140 miles. A child from Lochcarron who goes to Plockton high school will have to double back, adding 280 miles to their daily commute to high school, which is totally unacceptable. That happens often, often for long periods of time. Therefore, I do not understand the then minister's reluctance to adopt the A890 as a trunk road. We should also think about the extra carbon that is emitted when the freight that uses that route has to travel an additional 280 miles, which is certainly not good for the planet.

Highland Council has made it clear that it is keen to do something about the situation, but it simply does not have the money. Last year, it spent more than £700,000 trying to deal with the rock falls. This year, it expects to spend £1.5 million on that. The council has not been able to make any progress on the options appraisal that it carried out.

I believe that the roads in question meet the criteria for a national strategic link and that the Government should therefore consider making them trunk roads. Given that we are two transport ministers on from when the most recent response was received, I suggest that the committee should write to the current transport minister to ask her to consider the petitions. I think that the A890 is of national significance and is significant in the context of the Scottish Government's duty to ensure that children are educated. The issue of children not being able to get to school because of rock falls was an issue when I was at school; it has been going on for some time. At some point,

there will be a horrendous accident, because the road is dangerous—people who use it take their life in their hands. The current situation is simply not good enough.

The local people do not care who is responsible. It is clear that Highland Council does not have the money to do the work that is necessary because of the cuts in local government finance. People need to have safe roads. If the Scottish Government is not willing to adopt the A890 as a trunk road, it should seek to make capital available to make it safe or to reroute it along a safer route.

I know that the committee will be tempted to close the petition because it has had a response from the Scottish Government, but I ask it to write to the Scottish Government again, given the national significance of the route and its importance to education, to ask it to change its mind, or to at least consider how it could assist.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much. Fergus Ewing engaged in the discussion when we last considered the petitions, and he is keen to comment.

**Fergus Ewing:** I endorse what Rhoda Grant said. If she does not mind my saying so, if rock falls on the A890 have been a problem since she was at school, the issue did not arise yesterday. I can put it no more candidly than that.

To be serious, this is a Highland problem, and it has been highlighted very well. The community councils have replied. Plockton community council has pointed out that, when the road is closed, there is a 130-mile diversion. Who in the central belt would put up with that? The community council also refers to the closures because of rock landslides, which Rhoda Grant has referred to today, and the fact that the road surface is “an embarrassment” with

“potholes that look like World War 1 shell craters”.

I do like unvarnished prose, uncluttered by euphemism and Government jargon. However, the serious point is that, although Transport Scotland has said that the road does not meet the criteria, it has not said why it does not. It has listed the criteria, and, as Rhoda Grant said, some of the criteria appear absolutely to apply. The road links remote communities and key tourist areas—those two criteria are clearly met. Deploying said Government-style prose, Transport Scotland says:

“Although there is linkage in relation to the A890 with some of these criteria, it is our assessment that the A890 does not sufficiently meet the criteria to be incorporated into the strategic motorway and trunk road network”.

However, it does not say why. I think that our job is to tease out why it does not sufficiently meet those criteria.

As I said before, Highland Council covers an area larger than Belgium and 20 per cent larger than Wales and has a far larger road network than any other local authority—even Scottish Borders Council, which has a substantial one. The burden of maintenance of those local roads is massive. If the A890 is designated as a national trunk road, which I believe it should be, that would at least diminish the impossible burden that Highland Council's roads department bears in relation to dealing with the pothole situation across the network.

I strongly endorse what Rhoda Grant has argued for today, and I think that we need to pursue this issue further. It might be difficult to do so but, at the end of the day, Transport Scotland has got to show that it understands and is sympathetic to the interests of the Highlands. At the moment, the strong feeling in the Highlands is that that is not the case on the part of that Glasgow-based quango.

**The Convener:** I am going to assume that there was no connection between your observations about Ms Grant being at school and world war 1 potholes. I take it that that was just an unintended—[*Laughter.*] Also, I wonder who is left to evidence that a pothole looks like a world war 1 crater, but maybe there is someone who can do that in the Highlands, where, of course, everyone is long-lived.

Mr Ewing is right to say that we have simply been told that the Government does not consider that the road meets the criteria but that we have not been told why, in the light of the evidence that has been attested, it has come to that view. It has simply asserted its view, not justified it, and I agree that we should ask it to do so. I am happy with that proposal if other colleagues feel that it is appropriate. Are members content for us to proceed on that basis?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Rhoda, I think that your attendance contributed to a different outcome being achieved in our consideration of the petition, so I thank you for that.

### **Cohabiting Couples (Division of Assets on Separation) (PE1973)**

**The Convener:** The next petition, PE1973, in the name of Sandy Izatt, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 and provide greater clarity on the division of assets in cases of cohabiting couples who are separating, by removing the use of sheriffs' discretion rulings in civil cases; providing clear legal guidance to the Law Society of Scotland on the division of assets for cohabiting couples; allowing appeals to be

heard when it is determined that a sheriff has the rule of law wrong but has used their discretion to prevent an appeal at no cost to the appellant; and publishing information on what resources have been allocated to provide clear legal guidance.

We last considered the petition on 21 December, when we agreed to write to a number of organisations, including the Scottish Government, the Scottish Law Commission, the Law Society of Scotland and the Family Law Association. We have received submissions from the Scottish Law Commission, the then Minister for Community Safety and the Law Society of Scotland.

The Scottish Law Commission confirmed that judicial discretion was considered as part of its work on reform of the law relating to cohabitation, with its final report and recommended reforms having been published in November 2022.

10:15

In her response, the minister was unable to commit to a timescale for bringing forward legislation in relation to the commission's recommendations but said that the Government was considering how to implement a number of commission reports, including the one on cohabitation, during this parliamentary session.

The Law Society's response indicates that it would not support the removal of discretion in civil cases, noting that

"Every court decision involves an element of discretion, or judgement, on the part of a Sheriff"

and saying that the society is

"broadly supportive"

of the reforms that are proposed by the Scottish Law Commission.

Colleagues, does anyone have any comment or suggestion to make?

**Fergus Ewing:** As it happens, I have by sheer coincidence spent many hundreds of hours dealing with the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985. I think that most practitioners feel that that is a very good piece of legislation. It sets out clear rules for the division of matrimonial property on divorce and therefore does not have the problems that are associated with the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006, which deals with cohabitants as opposed to married couples. Not all cohabitants necessarily want to make a lifelong commitment, so they cannot be equiparated.

At the time of the passage of the 2006 act, I opined that the Parliament perhaps felt that cohabitants were getting the same rights as married couples; they were not. The act provides a clear discretion to sheriffs to determine what

financial settlement is suitable. The sheriffs—Sheriff Pyle, for example—and Court of Session judges have said that that discretion is very wide. That makes it difficult for lawyers to advise, because it is not clear what a fair outcome should be. All of that means that it would be desirable to have law reform. After all, that is the purpose of the Parliament.

The recommendation that has been made to us is that we might think of closing the petition because the Scottish Government anticipates bringing forward legislation in the current parliamentary session. I checked that yesterday in the programme for government and saw that it is not in the 2023-24 legislative programme. That means that it will probably be at the coo's tail and perhaps not even at the coo's tail.

My suggestion, therefore, is very simple, and cuts through all the complexities of the substantive issues. It is that we write to the Scottish Government before we close the petition, asking whether it is still the case that there is to be a bill during this session of the Parliament and, if not, we should ask for a view from the Law Commission and others, including Scottish Government officials, as to when that bill is likely to be ready.

The bill will be substantially dependent on the commission, the Law Society of Scotland and practitioners coming forward with a thesis. I do not think it is something that MSPs can be expected to bring forward. It is highly technical and complicated.

A lot of work has been done, but it looks as if the bill will not be before us during this session of the Parliament. Out of respect for the petitioner, therefore, we should find out the facts, given the absence of the bill in the programme for the coming year, which was announced yesterday.

**The Convener:** Are colleagues content to proceed on that basis?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** We will seek that information.

## New Petitions

### Deposit Return Scheme (PE2023)

10:18

**The Convener:** As this is the start of the parliamentary year, I say, as indeed I do each time we consider new petitions, for the information of those people who might be looking in on our proceedings because they have lodged a petition or are following how a petition might be progressing, that, ahead of the committee's first consideration of a petition, we seek the views of the Scottish Government and of the Scottish Parliament information centre—SPICe, our independent research operation—to assist us. We do not consider any petition for the first time without views having been received.

The first new petition under this item is PE2023, as it happens, which seeks to stop the deposit return scheme and which was lodged by Jim Foster. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop the introduction of the 20p deposit for consumers and the roll-out of the deposit return scheme. It is the petitioner's view that introducing the scheme will increase costs to the consumer, punish those who already recycle and result in additional journeys to recycling centres.

The minister's response to the petition, which was received in May, reaffirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to launching the scheme in March 2024. However, as can happen with the consideration of petitions from time to time, events have overtaken us. Members will be aware that, before the summer recess, the minister announced that the introduction of the deposit return scheme would be delayed until October 2025 at the earliest.

I do not think that the committee has heard directly from the minister, but that is simply our reading of matters in Parliament.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action in relation to the petition? I hesitate, but I see that Mr Torrance wants to speak.

**David Torrance:** Thank you, convener.

Considering the Government's position and the fact that the scheme has been delayed until October 2025, I would like to close the petition under rule 15.7 of the standing orders on the basis that the Scottish Government has paused the introduction of the deposit return scheme until October 2025.

**The Convener:** The petitioner would, of course, have the opportunity to lodge a fresh petition for

consideration by the committee at that time, depending on the Government's decision.

**Fergus Ewing:** It is ironic that, in one respect at least, we have achieved what the petitioner wanted before the petition has even been considered. That must be something that—

**The Convener:** A triumph.

**Fergus Ewing:** Perhaps it is not a triumph, but it is certainly unusual. However, it is, of course, just a referral.

I agree with Mr Torrance for the reason that my understanding is that the lead committee is still considering the issue as live and is unlikely to cease doing so. It has the bit between its teeth, it has been considering the matter in detail, and it would be wrong for us to start to take on any serious consideration of a matter to which a lead committee has devoted a huge amount of time and effort. I do not know whether the issue is still live, but there is certainly still public debate about it.

Most recently, the UK Government suggested 2026 and not 2025. I believe that the minister has resisted that.

All those matters will almost certainly be raised by members of the lead committee, so it would be otiose for us to stick our neck in. The petitioner is quite entitled to go to the lead committee and make representations to his MSP to that effect. They would be the more appropriate vehicle to raise these issues with.

I worked with Mr Golden and other members on the matter, and I would be interested to hear what he thinks. However, that is my honest view, despite the fact that I would very much like to question the minister. Perhaps that is for another time and another day.

**Maurice Golden:** I agree that we should close the petition, at least partly on the basis that we do not know for sure the scope and form of what we would be stopping. There is quite a changing landscape in respect of extended producer responsibility and a delay to the rest of the UK scheme to 2026, which may or may not have implications for us in Scotland. There is also the potential for a different form of deposit return scheme via the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill, which we wait to see amendments for. Therefore, it is not clear to me exactly what we would be stopping. The petitioner might look kindly on a new form of deposit return scheme, if it was a digital one and there was something in it about refillables. However, I think that, until we and the petitioner know what we would be stopping, we have no option but to close the petition.

**The Convener:** There seems to be a fairly consensual view among colleagues. Are members content to support Mr Torrance's proposal?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** We will write to the petitioner to offer the opportunity that I mentioned and reflect on some of the points that Mr Golden made about the committee not being absolutely certain about what we would be stopping at this stage.

### **Performance-enhancing Drugs (Public Information) (PE2024)**

**The Convener:** Our second new petition, PE2024, which was lodged by Cael Scott, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to create a national public information programme to raise awareness of the impacts of using steroids, selective androgen receptor modulators, or SARMs, and other performance-enhancing drugs, or PEDs, which should include a particular focus on the impact on young people aged 16 to 25; to work with community learning and development practitioners, gyms and community coaches to raise awareness; and to develop a public health campaign to highlight the negative impacts of PEDs and encourage regular health check-ups for users, and a screening programme to allow users to test the safety of their PEDs.

Cael tells us that one of his friends was admitted to hospital with a life-threatening issue resulting from steroid use. Having seen many people at his gym use performance-enhancing drugs without any apparent impact, Cael's friend had been unaware of the severity of the impact that they can cause. Cael notes that that was not an isolated incident and raises concerns about how easily available and widely promoted the drugs are, without information about negative impacts being provided.

The SPICe briefing sets out the distinction between anabolic steroids, which are class C drugs that can be prescribed by pharmacists for personal use, and selective androgen receptor modulators, which can be legally purchased in the UK without age restrictions. The latter are gaining popularity, partly due to heavy promotion on social media.

The Scottish Government's response outlines the work that the Scottish Drugs Forum is doing to provide information and training on the matter. The response also states the Government's commitment to developing its public health surveillance data to better understand drug trends and says that that work could be further enhanced to include the substances that the petition highlights. It refers to a multi-agency working group, whose work includes the development of a

set of standards to support young people with their drug use.

We have received a further submission from the petitioner, which welcomes some of the activity set out by the Government but raises concerns that the current approach does not address the main harms that are associated with performance-enhancing drugs, namely hepatic, kidney and cardiovascular disorders.

The petitioner has drawn an important issue to the committee's attention. What thoughts do members have on how we might approach it?

**David Torrance:** I wonder whether the committee would like to continue the petition and write to UK Anti-Doping, Anabolic Steroids UK and the Scottish Drugs Forum seeking their views on the action that is called for in the petition. I would like the committee to write to the Scottish Government to highlight the petitioner's submission and seek clarity on the membership and terms of reference of the multi-agency working group.

**Fergus Ewing:** I endorse that. I was struck by the detailed response that the petitioner gave to the Scottish Government's main response. As well as saying that the Scottish Government does not seem to be covering the issues that he believes are relevant, he says that the multi-agency working group to which the Scottish Government refers might not include the right people, and he goes through who they might be.

I do not know much about the area, but the petitioner is basically saying that there are young people between 16 and 25 who go to gyms and have access to steroids with no guidance or information about how to use them and what the risks are. I think that he is saying that people in that world, who are in charge of running gyms and have a medical background, for instance, should be involved in the multi-agency working group.

When we write to the Scottish Government, could we specifically ask about the range of suggestions that the petitioner made so that we can get answers on them now? I suspect that, if we did not, we would get the same points from the petitioner again, who might feel that we have not pursued the substantive and concrete points that he made in his response.

**The Convener:** I am content with that. Are members content with it?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** The petition will remain open and we will write to the various organisations suggested.

## Victims of Domestic Violence (PE2025)

**The Convener:** PE2025, which was lodged by Bernadette Foley, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the support that is available to victims of domestic violence who have been forced to flee the marital home by ensuring access to legal aid for divorce proceedings where domestic violence is a contributing factor; ensuring that victims are financially compensated for loss of the marital home, including loss of personal possessions and furniture left in the property; and ensuring that victims are consulted before any changes are made to non-harassment orders.

In the background to the petition, Bernadette explains that her sister faced threats and harassment from her ex-husband, whose family emptied their marital home of all furniture, fixtures and fittings. The police were seemingly unable to take any action to prevent that. Bernadette also tells us about the mental and physical impact that that experience has had on her sister and how she was unable to access financial support to replace her possessions and start over.

10:30

The SPICe briefing notes that the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 introduces two short-term civil protection orders, both of which could exclude a perpetrator of domestic abuse from the place where the person at risk lives. However, the briefing also notes that that part of the act is not yet in force.

In responding to the petition, the Minister for Victims and Community Safety notes that civil legal aid is available in a wide range of actions, including contested divorces, and that around 70 per cent of people are eligible for some form of civil legal aid. The minister highlights other options, such as the Scottish Women's Rights Centre, which offers free legal information and advice to women in Scotland who have or are experiencing gender-based violence. The minister also refers to the work that is undertaken on improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse, including options for financial support for women leaving an abusive partner.

The minister refers in her letter to the Scottish Law Commission's plans, as part of its work on family law, to review the civil remedies that are available for domestic abuse, which the committee is aware of from our consideration of related petitions. In the light of all that, do colleagues have any suggestions as to how we might proceed?

**David Torrance:** I hope that the committee will keep the petition open and dig into it a bit more. In that case, I hope that we would write to Scottish



Women's Aid, the Scottish Women's Rights Centre and the Law Society of Scotland to seek their views on the action that the petition calls for. I would like the committee to write to the Scottish Law Commission to seek an update on the review of civil remedies for domestic abuse, including clarification on whether the issues that are raised by the petitioner will be included in the scope of the review. I would also like the committee to write to the Scottish Government to seek clarification of when part 1 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 will be fully implemented.

**The Convener:** As there are no further suggestions, are committee members content with those recommended actions?

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Therefore, the petition will remain open and we will again endeavour to understand the thinking of the various organisations to whom we will now write, in the first instance.

### **Council Tax Discounts (Second Homes and Vacant Properties) (PE2026)**

**The Convener:** PE2026, which was lodged by Sam McCahon, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to eliminate council tax discounts for second homes and vacant properties and to make the property owner, rather than a tenant, liable for payment of council tax.

The Scottish Government's response, which was provided in May, encouraged the petitioner to contribute to a public consultation on the council tax treatment of second homes and empty properties. The consultation closed in July. The Government submission stated that a joint working group on sources of local government funding and council tax reform has been convened and is considering targeted changes to council tax.

The petitioner makes the case for the property owner rather than the occupier to be liable for council tax, saying that that would promote justice and equity and reduce the cost of living for all residents in Scotland. The petitioner's view is that the council tax reduction scheme leads to significant revenue loss for councils and increases the burden on tenants and home owners who do not qualify for the means-based tax reduction. The petitioner believes that the existing approach is, in effect, subsidising property owners' investments. Do members have any comments or suggestions?

**David Torrance:** The committee could write to the Scottish Government to seek a summary response of the recent consultation on council tax for second and empty homes, request details of the future relevant work planned by the joint

working group on sources of local government funding and council tax reform, and ask for the Government's view on making the property owner liable for payment of council tax in the light of the points that were raised in the petitioner's recent submission. The committee could also write to Citizens Advice Scotland and Shelter Scotland to seek their views on the actions that are called for in the petition.

**The Convener:** Colleagues, are we content to support those suggestions?

*Members indicated agreement.*

### **Changing Places Toilet Fund (PE2027)**

**The Convener:** We come to the last of our new petitions this morning. PE2027, which was lodged by Sarah Heward on behalf of the Tyndrum Infrastructure Group, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to launch without further delay the £10 million changing places toilet fund that was pledged in the 2021 Scottish National Party manifesto, and to make the application process clear, straightforward and expeditious for groups that are trying to build these much-needed facilities.

The response from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport states that, due to budget constraints, funding for the construction of changing places toilets has not yet been allocated and specific timelines for its distribution remain unannounced. The Government's submission emphasises the need to prioritise spending efficiently to benefit those in the greatest need and says that further details on the investment in question will be provided over the parliamentary session.

The petitioner's submission details the group's work to obtain the necessary permissions for a changing places toilet in Tyndrum and notes that the only thing that is preventing it from building the facility is a lack of capital funding. The petitioner highlights the hardships that are faced by disabled individuals and their carers as a result of the absence of changing places toilets, which include indignity, isolation and health risks.

The positive impact that the use of similar funding in England has had in expanding access for disabled individuals is cited. The petitioner notes the benefits to the local economy of tapping into the purple pound of potential tourists and customers in the disabled community.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

I am sorry; I had forgotten—even though I directed him to the appropriate seat—that we are joined by our colleague Paul O'Kane, who has an interest in the petition. Before we move to our

consideration of potential options, I invite him to comment in support of the petition.

**Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** I am very grateful to the committee for hearing me this morning. I am convener of the Parliament’s cross-party group on changing places toilets, which was newly established this session, so I have had an opportunity to hear from a number of stakeholders who are interested in the provision of changing places toilets across the country.

I am sure that colleagues will be aware of the great benefits that such facilities bring to communities across Scotland. As well as being fundamentally the right thing to do, the putting in place of such a facility benefits the whole community. Where such facilities are not in place, many families feel that they cannot be spontaneous and cannot enjoy the same access to tourism and leisure activities that others do. Therefore, the provision of changing places toilets benefits the wider economy.

The convener might be aware of the changing places facility in Rouken Glen park in his constituency, which opened only recently. It has increased the number of visits, particularly by families who have disabled children, which shows the impact that the provision of such a facility can have.

In speaking to the petition, I must note the challenge that is faced. A party-political pledge was made in the SNP’s manifesto; it was also a feature of the 2021-22 programme for government that a £10 million fund would be rolled out. Evidently, that has not yet happened. I appreciate what the minister has said about financial constraints and challenges, but I believe that the Government is still committed to rolling out that funding by the end of the parliamentary session. I think that what people want is detail from the Government about its intentions for the fund, how applications might be made to it and what structure the process might take. That would go some way towards making people feel confident that the fund will be put in place.

The petitioner runs a business and is keen, as a business owner, to make a contribution, which she wants to be supplemented by capital funding for the wider community. There are many third sector organisations and people who run their own businesses who are interested in putting in some of their own funds in order to make a changing places toilet a reality, but who require additional funding from the Government.

There is a huge opportunity here. People are concerned that, as we approach the midway point of the parliamentary session, progress does not seem to have been made. Progress has been made in other parts of the UK—a £30 million fund

has been distributed in England and is entering its second phase—so Scotland is falling behind in the availability of changing places toilets. That brings us back to the economic argument. People might choose to holiday in other places where there is greater provision.

I simply wish to represent the views of the members of the CPG and ask the committee to give the petition serious consideration and to look, at least, at how such provision might be structured.

**The Convener:** Thank you. I think that you are quite right—the Government lit the fuse of expectation without giving us the bang of delivery on an issue on which the public expected progress.

Do colleagues have any suggestions?

**David Torrance:** I wonder whether we could write to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport to highlight the equality and welfare issues that the petitioner has raised in her recent submission and to ask when the promised £10 million will be allocated to the changing places toilet fund and when it will be distributed. Perhaps we could also highlight to the petitioner the existence of the rural tourism infrastructure fund, which is available to be used to build new toilets or to provide upgrades to existing facilities. That might be a route for the Tyndrum group to go down.

**The Convener:** Do colleagues have any other suggestions?

**Fergus Ewing:** I endorse David Torrance’s suggestion and support Paul O’Kane’s comments.

I have heard from constituents who are parents of a child with profound disabilities, who feel that they cannot travel south of Inverness because there are no facilities on the A9 that are suitable for their child. I thought that I would mention that, because, although the petition relates to the situation in Tyndrum, which is over on the A82 in the west, the issue is one that substantially affects rural Scotland, as the petitioner herself says.

**The Convener:** Thank you. We welcome the petition. Are members content to keep it open and to begin our investigations by following the suggestions that have been made?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Thank you all very much. That concludes the public part of our meeting. We will meet again on Wednesday 20 September. We move into private for items 5 and 6.

10:41

*Meeting continued in private until 11:00.*

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

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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