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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 28 October 2020

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

Portfolio Question Time

Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): Good afternoon. Before we begin, I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask that members take care to observe the measures during this afternoon's business, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Members are also reminded of the need for pace and brevity in both questions and answers in order to allow all questions to be taken, if possible.

The first item of business is portfolio question time.

Meetings with United Kingdom Government (Constitutional Matters)

1. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the United Kingdom Government to discuss constitutional matters. (S5O-04681)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): I should make clear that I often raise with the UK Government the issue of the profound damage that the UK Internal Market Bill 2019-21 will have on the powers of the Scottish Parliament. I did so at the meeting of the joint ministerial committee on European negotiations on 3 September, and will do so again at the next meeting of the committee, which is scheduled for tomorrow.

On 10 September, the Minister for Europe and International Development participated in a quadrilateral meeting with the UK Government and ministers from the other devolved Administrations, to discuss progress on the ongoing review of intergovernmental relations. The minister also had a call on 10 September with UK Government ministers to discuss fisheries protection and maritime security, and another call on 1 October with UK Government ministers to discuss borders.

Anas Sarwar: I know how passionate the cabinet secretary is about accuracy, and I also know that—as I do—he cares about putting the pandemic before politics, so he must have been surprised when he heard the First Minister's

statement on 16 October, during which she said that she had “paused” the independence campaign through the pandemic. If we look at any minister's Twitter account, including the First Minister's, they are flooded with references to independence and indyref 2.

In this Parliament, on 1 September, the Government said that the independence referendum bill would be at the heart of its programme for government and would be expected in the coming months. Can the cabinet secretary confirm on what date the independence referendum campaign was paused and on what date it was unpaused?

Michael Russell: There is a letter from me to Michael Gove that indicates that we have paused it, and that letter is dated March—possibly 16 March. I will check that and come back to the member. The independence referendum will be unpaused—in the sense that we will work on it—only when we are preparing for the bill, which is to be published before next year's election.

I am surprised by Anas Sarwar's line of questioning. I would have thought that, in considering constitutional matters, the member might want to consider Brexit and the Internal Market Bill in order to see the damage that is being done by Brexit, and that he might consider the fact that the UK Government has not only not paused Brexit, but is intensifying the search for an increasingly damaging Brexit. That seems to me to be the issue that should be addressed, and I am surprised that the member refuses to do so. Perhaps the closeness between the former “better together” friends is now being seen again.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is time for the UK Government and Opposition parties in the chamber to acknowledge the huge strength of feeling across Scotland in favour of another independence referendum, given the momentous changes—including Brexit—in recent years? If they have faith in the union and confidence that they can win the arguments, they should, rather than obstructing, work to facilitate the right of people in Scotland to decide their own future, and they should back another independence referendum.

Michael Russell: Kenneth Gibson has made a very valid point. We have the extraordinary spectacle of the Labour Party: it has championed the right to self-determination across the globe, but when it looks at Scotland, and the opinion polls that say that the people of Scotland want to exercise their right to self-determination, its own selfish interests come first. However, the people of Scotland know that and have already judged the Labour Party. We can see that from the trickle of

members who are on its benches now. There will be even fewer of them next year.

Covid-19 (International Development Programmes)

2. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what proposed changes have come from its review into international development programmes in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04682)

The Minister for Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth): In the programme for government, which was published on 1 September this year, the First Minister set out the Government's intention to review our approach to international development. The impetus for a refresh of the strategy is that we ensure that we are focusing our work on areas where we can make the biggest difference in our partner countries, against the new backdrop of Covid-19. That work is on-going, so in answer to Mr Briggs's question, I say that no proposed changes have, as yet, come forward from the review.

Miles Briggs: One of the changes that was being proposed was around health spend and health support for developing countries. In the light of the pandemic, what discussions have taken place about supporting developing countries to access a vaccine, once one is globally available? Given the pandemic's negative impact on our national health service, what have ministers here in Edinburgh learned about the impact on the health systems of developing countries?

Jenny Gilruth: I have held a number of discussions with our partner countries' Governments, and with representatives from civil society groups in each of those countries, on their thematic priorities. Mr Briggs is absolutely right to say that healthcare is a priority for a number of our partner countries. However, it is not for the Scottish Government to direct what future schemes will look like, so I hope that Mr Briggs will appreciate that the review is on-going, in that respect.

On how we are supporting our partner countries, Mr Briggs will be aware that we ring fenced £2 million from the international development fund as part of this year's financial contribution to Covid-19 efforts in our partner countries.

Access to vaccines has not yet been raised with me directly. Obviously, we do not yet have a vaccine. I am not ruling that conversation out for the future, but I would like Mr Briggs to understand that conversations are on-going. Healthcare remains a priority for us in Scotland, and he is absolutely right to say that our partner countries could benefit from expertise here. Part of that work

is already being done through, for example, NHS Scotland's partnership with Malawi.

United Kingdom Trade (Jobs)

3. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what estimate it has made of the number of jobs in Scotland that rely on frictionless trade across the UK, and how that could be impacted by constitutional change. (S5O-04683)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): Both Scotland and the UK have benefited enormously, in terms of jobs, from being part of the European Union single market, with all the economic benefits that flow from being inside the world's largest trading bloc. In terms of population, the single market is seven times the size of the UK alone, and offers huge opportunities for an independent Scotland.

The UK Government's decision to impose trade barriers through its extreme Brexit policy will hit manufacturing particularly hard. Scotland's manufacturing exports to the EU, and to countries with which the EU has trade deals, are worth more than Scotland's manufacturing exports to the rest of the UK.

The question that people in Scotland will be asking is this: who should be trusted to rebuild our economy after the global pandemic? Should it be Boris Johnson's ultra-Brexiteer Tory Government, or a Scottish Government that is equipped with the full powers of independence?

Michelle Ballantyne: I am sad to say that the cabinet secretary did not answer my question.

There is no doubt that Covid has had a devastating impact on jobs. The cabinet secretary has taken every opportunity to make clear his lack of respect for the democratic decision of the UK to end UK membership of the EU, but the fact remains that more than 60 per cent of Scotland's trade is with the rest of the UK. The Fraser of Allander institute estimates that more than half a million jobs rely on that trade.

As the UK completes our withdrawal from the EU, can the cabinet secretary guarantee that the Scottish Government will put jobs first, and will not compromise Scotland's frictionless trade with the rest of the UK?

Michael Russell: Michelle Ballantyne is labouring under a fallacy that we hear from her colleagues all the time. If it were true that one had to be within a single political relationship in order to trade, the UK would not be leaving the EU. However, the UK has based its entire argument on the fact that that is not the case. What we have is a double standard, and the only thing that drives

that double standard is extreme dislike of the people of Scotland having a say about their own future. That is antidemocratic, and will damage Scotland far more than anything that anybody else does. The reality is that the danger to jobs comes from the member's party's Brexit. She should hang her head in shame.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): On that theme, what impact does the cabinet secretary believe the UK Government's decision to leave the Brexit transition period in the middle of a global pandemic and an economic recession will have on jobs and the wider economy in Scotland?

Michael Russell: The contrast between that question and the previous question is stark, because Gillian Martin's question acknowledges the damage that Brexit will do—in particular, the damage that it will do during a global pandemic. It will make an appalling situation even worse.

The EU is the largest single market in the world, and it is Scotland's largest international trading partner, with exports to it being worth £16.1 billion in 2018. All forms of Brexit, especially the ridiculously damaging forms that are the only things left on offer, would harm Scotland's economy and result in lower household incomes in the long run, compared with what would happen with continued EU membership. That is the reality, and it is time that the Scottish Conservatives admitted to their own role in that shameful reality.

Brexit (Glasgow Economy)

4. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to ensure that a no-deal Brexit does not impact on the Glasgow economy. (S5O-04684)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): Johann Lamont is right to be concerned about Brexit—not just a no-deal Brexit but the low-deal Brexit that is all that remains on offer. The economic and social impacts of European Union exit will be felt across all regions of the country, including, of course, in Glasgow. Scottish Government modelling indicates that, if no deal is reached and we end up trading with the EU on World Trade Organization terms, that could lead to a loss of up to 8.5 per cent of gross domestic product in Scotland by 2030 compared with what would happen with continued EU membership.

The Scottish Government continues to direct all the resources that are available to it to support resilience and mitigate the impacts of leaving the EU. That includes our work with local authorities such as Glasgow City Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to identify specific interventions that can, as far as possible, mitigate the effects on our communities and businesses.

Johann Lamont: At the beginning of this year, before the pandemic hit, Glasgow's budget was already cut by an astonishing £42 million. Indeed, Glasgow has been at the forefront of unjust and brutal cuts over the past decade. With the added threat of a no-deal Brexit and all the financial implications of that, will the cabinet secretary use his authority to ensure that the Scottish Government reviews the funding to Glasgow as a matter of urgency with a view to protecting the economy of our largest city?

Michael Russell: Glasgow suffers from what has historically been called elsewhere "the Highland problem". The full resources that should be available to the people of Glasgow in their area are not available to them, because they go elsewhere. Exactly the same has happened in the Highlands, and exactly the same has happened in Scotland.

I agree with Johann Lamont that the solution is to ensure that the resources of Scotland are applied to the problems of Scotland. If we do that, we will be able to tackle our long-standing issues and face up to the threats that come from Brexit, the Tory Government and Scotland not being independent, for example. I have to say to Johann Lamont that the solution is more obvious: support independence and you will get the outcome that you are looking for.

Brexit (Engagement with United Kingdom Government)

5. **Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its latest engagement has been with the United Kingdom Government regarding the Brexit negotiations. (S5O-04685)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): The joint ministerial committee on European Union negotiations, at which the four Governments in the United Kingdom are supposed to collectively oversee negotiations with the European Union, has not met since 3 September, despite repeated requests by the devolved Governments. I admit that there were attempts from both sides to find a date but, in particular, the committee did not meet in the run-up to the European Council meeting on 15 and 16 October—the Prime Minister described that meeting as a crucial milestone—and nor was there any discussion with the Scottish Government about the UK Government's response to the European Council.

That is consistent with our experience throughout the Brexit process. At every stage, the key decisions have been taken—usually wrongly—by the UK Government, and it has taken no account of the overwhelming vote in Scotland to remain in the EU.

A meeting of the JMC(EN) has been arranged for this Thursday, and I will once again press Scotland's interests at that meeting. However, it is clear now that, because of the UK Government's position, the only possible outcomes to the negotiations are either a damaging low deal or, even worse, no deal at all.

Shona Robison: Given the hard Brexit that the UK Government is seeking, does the cabinet secretary believe that, even if the UK Government agrees a deal with the EU, there will be considerable disruption following the end of the transition period in just over two months' time?

Michael Russell: It is inevitable that there will be disruption at the end of the transition period. That is absolutely clear, and the UK Government has admitted as much. It is in no sense ready for what is about to take place, and that is a tragic situation.

The Scottish Government will work as hard as we possibly can and we will do everything within our power to protect the people of Scotland but, as I have said repeatedly, we cannot do everything. There is an appalling mess of the UK Government's making. It has been aided and abetted by the Scottish Conservatives and it has not been opposed by the Labour Party with the vigour or intention that it should have shown. That is a serious set of circumstances. As I say, the Scottish Government will do everything that it can in the circumstances, but we know where the blame lies.

New Zealand Government (Engagement)

6. Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what engagement it has had with the New Zealand Government. (S5O-04686)

The Minister for Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth): The Scottish Government values the strong and enduring relationship that we have with New Zealand, built over hundreds of years of migration, cultural exchange and trade. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our officials have been sharing our respective experiences and learning as we aim to minimise the negative impact and transition through and out of the crisis. Through the wellbeing economy Governments initiative, which includes Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland and Wales, we collaborate with the New Zealand Government as we pursue our shared ambition of delivering wellbeing economies that build inclusive, sustainable, and resilient societies.

Tom Arthur: The minister anticipated my supplementary on the wellbeing economy Governments partnership, which describes its aim as being

"To deepen understanding and advance shared ambition of building wellbeing economies."

Does the minister agree that the ambition of building a wellbeing economy is even more important as we look to the future and to rebuilding after Covid-19, and that we should agree more generally that New Zealand, a small independent country, is an example that Scotland could learn much from?

Jenny Gilruth: Mr Arthur is absolutely correct. International solidarity has arguably never been more important. It is imperative that we learn from others as we continue to combat the impacts of Covid-19.

The group that Mr Arthur alluded to and which I mentioned in my original answer is focused on promoting the sharing of expertise and on delivering wellbeing through the economic approach. In April, a policy lab was held virtually and it focused on a comparison of the overall responses to the pandemic and how a wellbeing lens could help to guide economic recovery. A further three of those virtual policy labs have been organised to analyse specific emerging issues across all member Governments in light of the pandemic.

Mr Arthur's point on independence for Scotland is something that I whole-heartedly support.

Island-based Veterans (Support)

7. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports island-based veterans. (S5O-04687)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): The member will be aware that, on 21 January, I presented to Parliament the Government's response to the extensive consultation undertaken on the strategy for our veterans, at which time I clearly set out the commitments that we have made to the veterans community in all parts of Scotland and the actions that we are taking between now and 2028 to improve service delivery and mainstream support across five cross-cutting factors and six key themes. Additionally, the Scottish Government's support for the armed forces and veterans community is reported annually to Parliament, and with the agreement of the Parliamentary Bureau, I would anticipate that the 2021 update will occur next month.

Among the many visits that I made last year in developing my understanding of the way in which we support our veterans on the ground, I travelled to Mr McArthur's Orkney constituency to meet the council and NHS Orkney to learn more about how they are supporting veterans who are living there. I must say that I was most impressed.

Liam McArthur: I thank the minister for his response, for his endorsement and for having made the trip up to Orkney.

The Scottish Government recently announced an additional introductory discount for veterans across Scotland who are participating in the veterans railcard scheme. However, for isles-based veterans, the benefits of that discount are cancelled out by the cost of full-price ferry travel to the Scottish mainland. Will the minister consider applying that discount more broadly for islanders by extending it to cover ferry travel to the Scottish mainland as well as on ferry routes from the smaller isles?

Graeme Dey: As we have heard, in October, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government launched the veterans railcard at a discounted price for veterans in Scotland. The railcard, which offers a 34 per cent discount on travel, will be available at an overall cost of £15 until March 2021. That introductory price compares with £21 elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Sitting alongside that, Transport Scotland's national concessionary travel scheme for older and disabled people provides free bus travel throughout Scotland for those living in Scotland who are aged 60 and over and for eligible disabled people. In addition, the scheme provides four ferry journeys to or from the Scottish mainland each year for qualifying island residents. Injured veterans with mobility problems or those in receipt of the war pensioners mobility supplement are eligible for that. However, we have no plans to extend the scheme to include all military veterans.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Many of the veterans on our islands, such as the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland, come from the merchant navy. What actions has the minister undertaken to connect with the merchant navy and its veterans to ensure that they are supported?

Graeme Dey: I have made a concerted effort in the veterans community to acknowledge the role of the merchant navy. Unfortunately, merchant navy veterans are all too often forgotten, and that is very wrong. I attended a merchant navy day event in my constituency to commemorate their role. If Mr Corry, in his role in the cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community, has any further suggestions, I am more than happy to engage with him on that.

Remembrance Sunday (Permitted Events)

8. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what events it will permit on remembrance Sunday. (S5O-04688)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): The remembrance period in November serves a vital purpose in

allowing everyone in Scotland a moment to pause, reflect and be thankful to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. However, remembrance events this year will require to be scaled back from previous years, as a consequence of the need to control the coronavirus pandemic.

This year's national service of remembrance will be held at the Scottish national war memorial inside Edinburgh castle, with representatives from the Government, the armed forces and faith organisations laying wreaths. It will have significantly reduced attendance compared with previous years, and strict controls will be in place, in line with the current guidance on services in places of worship which, sadly, is necessary. As a consequence, the service will be closed to members of the public.

I understand that it will be disappointing for many people that the national service will not be open to the public, but we encourage the people of Scotland to participate in remembrance in whatever way they can do so safely. We have been working closely with Legion Scotland and Poppy Scotland, in addition to local authorities, to ensure that remembrance events that take place can do so safely and in line with Scottish Government guidance.

Willie Rennie: Even in the middle of our global pandemic, we must not forget the sacrifices that were made in wars past to protect our freedoms today. I will be attending two safe events in North East Fife: one in St Andrews and one in Cupar with my colleague Wendy Chamberlain MP, which will be video recorded for later viewing on social media and through wider opportunities.

I am keen to encourage people across the country to show imagination in finding ways of marking the day. What advice can you give to organisations? Where can they go to get support and how can they make sure that we remember those who have sacrificed their lives for us?

Graeme Dey: Presiding Officer, I hope that you will allow me a bit more time to answer, because that is a terribly important question and I recognise a lot of interest in it out there.

Following discussions with Legion Scotland and Poppy Scotland, the Scottish Government has advised all local authorities that local remembrance events can proceed as long as they adhere to the relevant guidance for outdoor events or places of worship in their area. All gatherings that involve more than six people from two different households will need to be organised as an event in line with that guidance and will require the approval of the relevant local authority. As part of that, organisers will be required to limit the number of people attending, to maintain social

distancing at all times and to complete a risk assessment, to limit the risk of transmission of the virus. To help ensure consistency of approach, the current guidance for those categories of event has been issued to all local authorities and key stakeholders, along with the associated checklist that details the steps that must be taken before events can proceed.

Like Mr Rennie, I will attend an event in my constituency, in Carnoustie. I am very much aware of the terrific effort that the organisers have made to ensure that it can be conducted safely.

That is the position regarding direct participation, but there is also the issue of non-participatory attendance. Members across the chamber will be aware of events in their constituencies that normally attract the wider public, who look to pay their respects in quite large numbers. My message for that wider public is this: please do not go there this year.

To pick up Willie Rennie's point about virtual coverage, Legion Scotland and Poppy Scotland, for example, will be broadcasting the national service of remembrance from the Scottish war memorial, so that everyone can participate virtually from the safety of their own home. I encourage members of the public to tune in to that service and pay their respects in that way, in the hope that by next year we can return to our normal way of paying tribute on remembrance Sunday.

Economy, Fair Work and Culture

Covid-19 (Support for Central Scotland Businesses)

1. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what further support it will make available to businesses in Central Scotland that continue to be affected by Covid-19 restrictions. (S5O-04689)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): On 21 October, the First Minister announced an extension to the restrictions that were imposed on 9 October, and further additional financial support for the businesses affected by those restrictions.

More than £40 million has been earmarked for the Covid-19 restrictions fund for the current period, including grant support for businesses that have had to close because of restrictions, and hardship grants to businesses that are not required to close, but whose business has been impacted, including pubs and restaurants outwith the central belt and some businesses in the hospitality supply chain.

There is also a £9 million scheme to contribute to support for furloughed employees, and an £11

million contingency fund to help other businesses that need support, but are not eligible for either the new grant or employment support schemes. Yesterday, we announced that the first phase of awards through the contingency fund will provide one-off support to nightclubs and soft-play centres that have been closed since March. Details of the support that is available are on the Scottish Government's website. Future business support arrangements are set out in "Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework".

Monica Lennon: I have been contacted by businesses in Lanarkshire that are struggling after seven weeks of restrictions, including taxi firms that do not qualify for any support. For example, Wellman Cars, which is based in Hamilton, is fighting to survive and protect jobs. With further restrictions expected, will the Scottish Government give urgent support to taxi companies and others that are falling through the cracks? Given that ministers are advising against use of public transport just now, what more can the Scottish Government do to help taxi firms to get key workers to their work safely?

Fiona Hyslop: As part of the initial Covid response, we worked with taxi companies in particular in order to help to provide them with additional income. There was, for example, a scheme to support contracting to get patients to the health support that they need.

As part of the response in Aberdeen, we also provided Aberdeen City Council with a discretionary fund, some of which could be used for taxi services, which were identified as a particular sector in which demand might be limited by closures elsewhere, although they were still able to operate.

The contingency fund that I have just described has an element of discretion that will allow local authorities to identify businesses such as taxis, so I encourage Monica Lennon to talk to her local council to see whether it can use its allocation to support important businesses, such as the one that she mentioned in her question.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Nightclubs can currently apply for support grants, but only if they have not opened at all since March. They can do so by, for example, changing their licence in order to open as a pub. That is the situation that faces Brian Fulton of Holdfast Entertainment, who spent £12,000 trying to adapt his premises in order to keep going, only to have to close again after one week and then find out that he cannot now, as a result, receive support. Does the cabinet secretary recognise how unfair it is to penalise people who are doing everything they can do to save jobs? Will she allow nightclubs that are simply trying to survive to apply for support?

Fiona Hyslop: I recognise the issue, and it is being addressed as we speak. On nightclubs in particular, those that provide curated music have been able to apply to the cultural venues fund that is being administered by Creative Scotland, but those that do not provide curated music are now being provided with a nightclubs fund because it is important that we support them.

Maurice Golden has raised an important point. Because of the challenges that businesses are facing, many are adapting and many will have to do that for some time to come, either because of a collapse in demand, or perhaps because they can no longer open because of the level that their area is on. Adaptation of business will, therefore, be really important.

So many businesses have changed in the past few weeks because of the collapse of the furlough scheme, as was. Many people anticipated that and therefore changed their business. We do not, however, want to penalise people for adapting their businesses. I therefore take Maurice Golden's point very seriously. It is being addressed as we speak, as I said, and an announcement will be made shortly for businesses such as the one that he mentioned.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I declare an interest, in that my cousin owns a recording and rehearsal studio.

The Covid-19 business hardship fund is restricted to hospitality businesses and gyms, but they are not the only businesses that are affected. Will the Government urgently review the criteria for the fund in order to include other businesses, many of which are in the commercial culture sector, that are unable to operate under the current restrictions—especially the disallowing of multiple households from meeting indoors—or will she give a commitment that those businesses will have access to the contingency fund?

Fiona Hyslop: I just talked about the current scheme, which has the contingency fund and two other elements—one for businesses that are closed and the second for those that are not closed or being required to close, but whose revenues are being impacted. As we move on to the next scheme, which supports the strategic framework, that element remains. Businesses whose demand has collapsed or has been reduced but that are not required to close can apply for that lower level of funding support. We will keep a regular eye on how that develops.

The schemes have obviously been developed quickly, and there is always room for adaptation and change. As Claire Baker is, I am keen to ensure that the culture sector—in particular, music—continues to be supported. That is why we are focusing so much on the sector as part of our

use of the £107 million in consequentials and the additional Scottish Government support.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Last week, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an open-ended commitment to support businesses in England for as long as is necessary. He can do that because he can borrow to pay for it, whereas the Scottish Government cannot.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the United Kingdom Government must provide the same funding guarantee to Scottish businesses or, if it will not do that, that it should provide the Scottish Government with the necessary financial powers to protect the future of Scottish jobs and businesses?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes—obviously, I agree. Our concern is that that the support will be demanded; we know that business grants for businesses that are affected by the tier 2 restrictions in England have not generated further consequential funding, at this stage.

We definitely and urgently need clarity on funding. My colleague Ms Forbes wrote to the chancellor on 20 October about the issue. The £700 million that was provided to Scotland as part of our consequentials is meant to last for six months, until the end of the financial year. It is meant to cover public health, transport and a host of other public service areas.

It is unfair for businesses not to have the same guarantee of funding, should they move between different levels, be required to close or be impacted even if they remain open. They should not be restricted in their ability to access funds, and we do not want the limited amount that we have to run out before the end of the financial year. We urgently need clarity in order that we can make sure that Scotland is treated as fairly as England and other parts of the United Kingdom, in that regard.

United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (Discussions)

2. **Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the UK Government regarding the timeline for the draft consultation on the UK shared prosperity fund. (S5O-04690)

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): Scotland's European Union structural fund programmes close in two months, but the UK Government has failed to provide appropriate detail about their proposed replacements. Preliminary conversations took place in Scotland in late 2018, but despite my best efforts there has been no substantial engagement

since. Recently, a scheduled meeting with the UK minister with responsibility for communities and local government was cancelled without explanation, and no alternative date was provided.

None of that is acceptable, but I assure Mr Beattie and other members that we will keep trying to get meaningful engagement with the UK Government on the matter.

Colin Beattie: Professor David Bell wrote a media article last week and concluded:

"A future UKSPF ... needs to be devolved: Whitehall doesn't know best when it comes to understanding the needs of communities and businesses in Scotland."

Does the minister share that view, and should we be concerned that Westminster will grab those powers and funds from Scotland?

Ivan McKee: I am increasingly concerned that Westminster is seeking to grab those powers and funds from Scotland. Michael Gove, when he spoke at the Finance and Constitution Committee last month, was unable to give his word that Westminster will not, without the Scottish Parliament's consent, pass legislation in respect of devolved areas.

That position was endorsed by Paul Scully MP, who stated in an interview that the shared prosperity fund will be controlled directly by Westminster, bypassing the Scottish Government. I have written to Mr Scully to demand confirmation and clarity on those plans, but to date I have received no response. It is clear that there is strong support for that funding and those powers staying in Scotland, and I will keep on fighting to achieve that.

Scottish Growth Scheme

3. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the Scottish growth scheme. (S5O-04691)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The aim of the Scottish growth scheme has always been to unlock investment—public sector, private sector and European—to support businesses, especially young technology-based businesses, that cannot readily access the capital that they need from traditional sources such as banks. The scheme is demand led and, despite the impact of the current Covid pandemic, as at 30 September 2020 it has unlocked investment of some £273 million in debt and equity for 481 companies.

Finlay Carson: I thank the minister for that answer, but—as she will be well aware—£500 million was promised when the scheme was launched. Given the current climate, what more will be done to ensure that as many businesses as

possible across the country can have access to the money that was promised to them three years ago?

Fiona Hyslop: As the Conservatives well know, it is a scheme, not a fund. It is not £500 million of public resources that have to be allocated or distributed—it is demand led, as I said. As the member appreciates, there are challenges just now, which is why we have ensured that, in the marketing and promotion of the scheme, we are targeting those companies that are in need. In particular, we are appointing fund managers who can identify micro and smaller companies that can benefit as they evolve, develop and react to opportunities in these difficult times.

We will continue to help and support businesses through the scheme, but I point out that one funding stream, which includes European investment funds and the European regional development fund, will be cut off as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

Lockdown (Treatment of Staff)

4. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take in relation to hospitality and other businesses that may be treating their staff unfairly during the lockdown restrictions. (S5O-04692)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): In the absence of powers over employment law, we are employing all levers that are available to us to embed fair work practices in workplaces across Scotland and to keep fair work at the heart of our economic recovery. That is why, on 19 July, we issued a refreshed joint statement with the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and business organisations, outlining our shared commitment to fair work practices in Scotland. Although we are very conscious of the challenges facing employers and businesses at this time, adopting fair work practices is now more important than ever.

Rona Mackay: Many workers in the hospitality trade have been treated very unfairly during the pandemic. Some high-profile venues have disregarded their rights, often by denying them furlough and eroding their terms and conditions. Does the minister agree that there must be an increased focus, now and post-Covid, on the treatment of workers, particularly those in the hospitality trade?

Jamie Hepburn: I agree with that premise. I am acutely aware of the need for us to embed fair work practices in the hospitality sector and across the whole economy. Although I do not know the specifics of the examples to which Rona Mackay

referred, I would be happy to receive the details if she wanted to provide them. Such things are happening, which is very concerning, and we must collectively commit to addressing those issues.

The Scottish tourism recovery task force that Fergus Ewing and I jointly chair recently published a series of recommendations in the area, and we will take that work forward in due course.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): We appreciate that there are limitations around employment law, but it is vital that steps continue to be taken to deal with unfair working practices and unscrupulous employers. Concerns have been raised throughout the pandemic about unfair fire-and-rehire policies. Does the minister share my revulsion at that practice, and does he agree that steps should be taken to stop it?

Jamie Hepburn: That practice has been reported as a concern over the recent period, and I will be able to discuss it with the STUC and its affiliates. I have concerns about that type of practice not being wholly compatible with our aims around fair work. Ms Maguire correctly makes the point that employment law is reserved, but I have recently written to Gavin Newlands MP, setting out the Scottish Government's broad support for his private member's bill, which seeks to tackle the matter. Ms Maguire and other members will follow with interest where Mr Newlands's bill ends up going.

Covid-19 (Impact on Highlands and Islands Businesses)

5. Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has carried out of the impact of Covid-19 on businesses across the Highlands and Islands. (S5O-04693)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): We are liaising with local authorities and enterprise agencies so that we may better understand the impact of Covid-19 and the wider actions that are required to enable recovery in local communities and wider regions.

A recent report published by Highlands and Islands Enterprise found that the impact of Covid-19 on the regional economy will be significant. The report emphasised the importance of tourism and visitor spend in the local economy. I will continue to examine the regional impacts to ensure that the specific needs of Scotland's regions are supported.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: The cabinet secretary will be aware that there are many parts of the region where the loss of even one business or a small number of jobs can have a disproportionate impact on the local economy and community.

Building on the work that the cabinet secretary has said Highlands and Islands Enterprise is already doing, how are Business Gateway offices being utilised in identifying areas where businesses or jobs are at risk, and how are they being tasked and resourced to target interventions and support accordingly?

Fiona Hyslop: Business Gateway can provide support and will be the first point of contact for many businesses. The online support that is available across Scotland is helpful for all businesses.

Jamie Halcro Johnston raises an important point about resilience in particular communities. At the discussions that took place at the convention of the Highlands and Islands on Monday, in which I took part, the leader of Highland Council raised that concern in relation to resilience over the winter period. We are acutely aware of the point. Part of the consideration during Monday's discussions at the convention sought to identify what could be done in different areas. It was clear that resilience and opportunities in different communities vary from one part of the Highlands and Islands to another, so support must be particularly responsive to the needs of individuals.

Jamie Halcro Johnston mentioned the impact that just one or two businesses can have: we are very much alert to that, and I thank him for drawing that point to everyone's attention.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will be aware that businesses in the Highlands and Islands have faced restrictions while having to work hard to serve those who were encouraged to take staycations this year. I have been asked by businesses whether, in the future, rather than locking them down together with the whole of Scotland or a wider area, it is worth allowing them to stay open and serve their local community. In that way, they can provide a service to their local community and save jobs in remote rural communities.

Fiona Hyslop: That is an important point. The adoption of more localised, local-authority-based levels for restrictions brings with it some consequences—some intended and some unintended—and issues around travel potentially represent one of those. What is expected has pretty much been set out, but I absolutely agree that people's ability to serve their local community will be important for the resilience of those communities in the future.

The discussions that have been taking place with the hospitality and tourism sectors, which have involved my colleague Fergus Ewing and others, have been addressing some of those

issues. Things may develop, and we will see what the final document looks like and what it says.

Rhoda Grant makes a point about how we can continue to provide opportunities, particularly in relation to businesses serving local communities, depending on their size. The situation can be variable—the Highlands and Islands is an enormous area—but that can be part of the continuing considerations.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am concerned that the current grant scheme is no longer fit for purpose. Yesterday's changes will reduce the number of businesses that are compelled to close, particularly in hospitality, even though those businesses will in reality remain closed, because the restrictions that are still in place are so tight that they will not make it worth opening. The changes could result in a reduction of a third in the grant that would be available to them.

Will the cabinet secretary reconsider the grant scheme as well as the balance of support between hardship and compulsion to close, to ensure that we get that right and support the businesses that need it?

Fiona Hyslop: We are open to continuing to discuss and consider the issues around access to different types of support, depending the position of a business. If businesses are required to close, they have the opportunity to benefit from the £3,000 grant. However, they can also benefit from the job support scheme. That scheme is set at a rate of 60 per cent. If businesses that are impacted can access the job support scheme, they can be financed and supported in relation to employees that work only one day a week. That is at a different level.

I hear what the member is saying and the point has been raised in the discussions that we have had. We have had to develop schemes rapidly: we announced our funding for the current closures on the same day as we heard the latest job support scheme changes, so it is a moveable feast, as the member can see.

Businesses want to know what they can access and we have to incentivise their being able to open and trade when that is possible, rather than having people see closure as a better option. If the member is saying that, by allowing, through the levels, more businesses to stay open, we might penalise them in terms of grants, I hear him and we will reflect on the point.

United Kingdom Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

7. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what communications it has

had with the UK Government regarding extending the furlough scheme. (S5O-04695)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government has made repeated representations to the UK Government about extending the furlough scheme, including in correspondence with UK ministers.

We have consistently raised concerns about the importance of extending support and about the many people who continue to fall through the gaps in UK provision. We welcome the recent changes to the job support scheme. Under the new scheme, when the business is open, an employee will get a minimum of 73 per cent of their normal wages, compared with 80 per cent under the original furlough scheme. Similarly, the self-employed are provided with only 40 per cent of a three-month average income, which is completely inadequate and fails to protect otherwise viable businesses and livelihoods during these unprecedented times.

We appreciate that the recent changes that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced go some way towards addressing the shortfall. However, the Scottish Government believes that that support does not go far enough—or indeed for a long enough period of time—to effectively mitigate the on-going impact on workers and the economy.

Christine Grahame: Further to the reference to the job support scheme—I have my doubts whether it will do what it says on the tin—has the Scottish Government made an estimate of the resulting job losses, which are already happening in Scotland as furlough has petered out and the new, rather inadequate, scheme has been introduced? Those losses are already happening in my constituency of Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale.

Fiona Hyslop: Constituency MSPs will clearly be aware of what is happening in their area. The Scottish Government is as yet unable to provide an estimate of the number of job losses in Scotland, given that the job support scheme was updated only at the end of last week and that it has taken three announcements about it in the space of a month to even get to this point.

The issue causes great worry and anxiety to businesses. The chancellor has been too slow; we are now three days away from the end of the furlough scheme and, as Christine Grahame pointed out, many businesses already face redundancies and some have completed the redundancy processes by now. The chancellor also needs to do more to set out what support he will provide to the 160,000 workers in Scotland who are still on full-time furlough.

Covid-19 (Support for New Ways of Working)

8. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to support businesses adapting to new ways of working as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04696)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): We have worked and continue to work in collaboration with industry, trade unions, regulators, local authorities and others, including equality organisations, to publish and refine sectoral guidance to support the continued safe recovery of our economy.

To date, we have provided an unprecedented package of support to businesses. As we look ahead to a new levels approach, we will continue to work collaboratively to understand and ensure, as far as we can and with the resources available to us, the support for businesses that are required to close or that are otherwise affected, by protective measures.

Maurice Corry: I thank the minister for a difficult-to-hear response; I think that I picked up its main theme. I thank the minister for the answer, as far as I could hear it, and I remind him that the Government's own digital growth fund has not paid out anything like the £36 million promised by the Scottish National Party in 2017.

Will the minister confirm to us here today that the digital growth fund is still open? If it is still open, for how much longer will it be so?

Jamie Hepburn: The digital growth fund is not directly in my purview. I commit to taking that question away and coming back directly to Mr Corry with a comprehensive update. I hope that he has heard that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. That concludes portfolio questions. We will move on in a moment to the next item of business.

Miners' Strike Review

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Humza Yousaf on the miners' strike review. The cabinet secretary will take questions following his statement. I encourage all members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak button.

14:52

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): I am pleased to inform Parliament of the outcome of the independent review of the impact of policing on affected communities in Scotland during the miners' strike from March 1984 to March 1985. As members know, that was a bitter and divisive dispute and it is clear from the report that very strong feelings about the strike remain in our mining heartlands to this day.

In 2018, the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Michael Matheson MSP, commissioned an independent review group to investigate and report on the impact on mining communities of the policing of the strike. The purpose of the review was to provide an opportunity for those who were affected by the strike to share their experiences as a means to aid understanding and reconciliation. I will come back to that word "reconciliation" throughout the statement.

The review demonstrates Scotland's leadership in making sure that the experiences of those affected by the strike are properly heard and understood. As you may know, this Government has pressed the United Kingdom Government to undertake a UK-wide public inquiry, which it has so far refused to do.

The report reflects the significant amount of evidence that the review group considered, which includes UK Government Cabinet papers and files, and various academic papers and past reports on the strike. The report also draws heavily on the powerful testimonies that were heard during the review's public engagement events in former mining communities, as well as on written submissions. The evidence received through those processes has helped to bring openness, understanding and a degree of closure to all those who contributed.

I know that the review group's report and the Scottish Government's response have been keenly awaited, not least by individuals and communities from our mining heartlands. That is why I am pleased today to outline the Scottish Government's response to the report, which will also be published today.

I thank the members of the review group for their hard work and commitment in producing the report. The group is ably led and chaired by John Scott QC, who is a solicitor advocate, and the other members are Kate Thomson, former assistant chief constable with Police Scotland, Jim Murdoch, professor of public law at the University of Glasgow, and former MP Dennis Canavan.

The group took engagement events to the mining communities and met a broad range of people with many different perspectives, encouraging as many of them as possible to come forward and have their voices heard. The group paid close attention to what they read and heard, and they reflected the evidence with honesty and compassion in their report.

I thank the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Association of Retired Police Officers for their contributions to the review, and of course my thanks go to the miners, police officers and other members of the mining communities who provided such powerful and personal accounts of their experiences of the strike.

Although more than three decades have passed since the main miners' dispute, the scars from the experience still run deep. The report indicates that, in some areas of the country, the sense of having been hurt and wronged remains corrosive and alienating. That is true for many who were caught up directly in the dispute but also for their families and the wider communities.

I was struck by the degree of commonality between miners and police officers as they described their experiences of the strike. For example, many miners and police officers were young men with families. They spoke about how frightened they felt at times on the picket lines and about their appreciation for small acts of compassion from those who were "on the other side".

I turn to the recommendations in the report. The report recognises that, although the constitutional, legal and cultural landscapes have changed since the strike, the strength of feeling that was felt at the time of the strike continues to be felt in mining communities today. With that recognition, the report takes the view that it is impossible to separate out the impact of policing during the strike from other key influences such as the National Coal Board and the criminal justice system.

The report makes reference to the testimony of miners on a range of issues, such as state interference in policing, wrongful arrest, miscarriages of justice and unfair dismissal. In particular, it makes reference to their view that the National Coal Board management in Scotland were unfair and inconsistent in their policy of

dismissal, with many miners being dismissed for relatively minor offences. It is reported that 200 miners were dismissed in Scotland, which is 30 per cent of the total number of UK dismissals, at a time when Scotland's miners made up only 7 per cent of the total number of UK miners. It is clear that a sense of unfairness remains.

In adopting a truth and reconciliation approach, the report makes a single recommendation, which is that

"subject to establishing suitable criteria, the Scottish Government should introduce legislation to pardon men convicted for matters related to the Strike."

The report states that the pardon is intended to provide redress for miners who suffered disproportionate consequences for taking part in the strike. The report indicates that a positive step should be taken to recognise that, and that there is a moral responsibility on the state to provide something proportionate to the miners to aid the reconciliation effort.

The report suggests that the pardon could be granted on the same basis as the pardon scheme under the Armed Forces Act 2006. That scheme recognised the exceptional circumstances in which world war one soldiers were convicted of offences such as cowardice. The scheme did not quash convictions or create rights, entitlements or liabilities, but it offered the restoration of dignity to deceased soldiers and comfort to their families.

Having considered the matter carefully, I can confirm today that the Scottish Government accepts the recommendation in principle, and that we intend to introduce legislation that will give a collective pardon to miners who were convicted for matters related to the strike. In the spirit of reconciliation, the pardon is intended to acknowledge the disproportionate impact that arose from miners being prosecuted and convicted during the strike, such as the loss of their job, and to recognise the exceptional circumstances that gave rise to the former miners suffering hardship and the loss of their good name through participation in the strike.

It will be a collective pardon, which will apply both posthumously and to those living, and which will symbolise our desire as a country for truth and reconciliation, following the decades of hurt, anger and misconceptions that were generated by one of the most bitter and divisive industrial disputes in living memory. The Scottish Government will right the wrong that was done to our miners.

In taking forward the recommendation, there are of course some matters to work through—not least the detail of the pardons scheme, such as the qualifying criteria. In so doing, the Scottish Government should not be seen as casting any doubt on decisions that were made at the time by

the judiciary, or as seeking to place blame on any individual or group of individuals.

On the next steps, today's statement marks the beginning of a new phase of activity in relation to the miners' strike. The next steps in the process will be for me to consider carefully the criteria that might apply to the pardons scheme, so that the rationale is well thought through and informed by the views of stakeholders.

A moment ago, I said that it will be a collective pardon, rather than one that requires an individual to make an application. That is because we recognise the difficulties that there may be, for some, in sourcing the records to enable an individual to make a robust case. We must therefore take the time to explore the issues that are associated with the granting of a collective pardon and take a view on what would be reasonable and ethical.

In due course, primary legislation will be required. In bringing forward the legislation, the Government will be sending an unequivocal message to all who have been disproportionately affected by the events of the strike. We will be asking the Parliament to recognise the hardship and loss of dignity that have been suffered by affected miners. In bringing forward a bill for a collective pardon, we hope to bring a degree of closure and a restoration of dignity for a number of miners, their families and their communities.

In addition, I confirm that I will of course continue to press the UK Government to hold a full UK-wide public inquiry into the events of the miners' strike of 1984-85.

The strike was divisive in many ways, with miners and police officers finding themselves in extremely challenging situations, and with police and community relationships coming under what can only be described as unprecedented strain. In welcoming the report and accepting in principle its single recommendation, I recognise that policing has moved on considerably since 1984-85. Serving communities lies at the heart of modern policing, and the review will help to ensure that that value of community policing is even more firmly embedded in current practices.

I encourage people to read the report and to consider with an open mind what we want the real legacy of the strike to be: reconciliation between police officers, who were upholding the law in circumstances of a scale that they had never encountered before, and miners, who were protecting not only their jobs and way of life but their communities. Undoubtedly, we can together help to heal the wounds of the past and recognise that, between miners and police officers, there was that thread of common humanity.

I will end with a couple of quotes from those involved in different aspects of the strike. First is a quote from a police officer who was himself from a mining community:

"I was brought up beside miners all my life and had nothing but respect for them for doing a very dirty, dangerous, hard job - that view has not changed of the honest hard working men I met and knew."

It is only right that I give the very last word to a miner:

"We were not on strike to have a fight. We were on strike for our lives."

The 1972 strike

"was a strike about money. This was about jobs and communities."

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement, and I acknowledge his careful but thoughtful and well-chosen words, in particular towards the end of the statement, when he rightly highlighted both the police officers' upholding of the law in exceptional circumstances and the miners' protection of their jobs, their way of life and their communities.

With that in mind, I also acknowledge the calibre of the review group and its full and comprehensive report. A matter such as this, with such a degree of nuance and need for understanding of all the facts and all perspectives, required nothing less than that report, which, as the cabinet secretary said, merits reading.

Colleagues will explore the many issues around the statement, so I will confine myself to three simple questions. First, is the cabinet secretary reassured that enough police officers were spoken to during the review, given that the interim report noted that very few attending the public meetings identified themselves as retired police officers? Secondly, what does the cabinet secretary anticipate to be the timescale for the primary legislation, given the current pandemic and the crowded timetable between now and dissolution? Finally, will the cabinet secretary seek the views of the police and miners' representatives when formulating the criteria for granting a collective pardon?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Liam Kerr for his questions and his comments about the statement, which are much appreciated.

On the question about police officers, I spoke not just to John Scott QC, who did everything that he possibly could do in the review group—and the group certainly did everything that it could—to make the atmosphere as welcoming as possible to all contributions. That can be difficult, because I

know from the miners to whom I spoke—I suspect that members across the chamber will say the same—that feelings are still very raw for a number of miners, so passions can get quite high.

I took the time to talk personally to the Retired Police Officers' Association Scotland and some individual retired police officers who were involved in the strike at the time. I found their testimonies very powerful, too. In particular, one retired officer was close to tears when he was telling me that some of his family did not even speak to him because he had to police the picket line and that some of his family refused to speak to him when he joined the police. I heard some powerful testimony from police officers, which is captured in the report. If, when he gets the chance to read the report, Liam Kerr has any further concerns, he can of course bring them to me.

On the question about legislation, that will not be for this parliamentary session. I suspect that that would be incredibly difficult to do given the crowded legislative landscape that we have, in relation not just to Covid but to what was announced in the programme for government. However, the period between now and dissolution will give us time to work through what the qualifying criteria will be and so on.

On Liam Kerr's third question, I assure him that when it comes to working through that qualifying criteria and legislation, we will consult as widely as we can with those who have been affected.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I have campaigned on this issue for most of the 10 years that I have been in this Parliament, but that is absolutely nothing compared with the 36 years of campaigning by former miners and their trade union.

The release of the Cabinet papers under the 30-year rule and the information that came out of the Hillsborough inquiry were the game changers in this campaign, confirming the long-held view that the miners' strike and the arrests during it were politically motivated miscarriages of justice. Scotland was the scene of one of the biggest mass arrests anywhere in the UK, with 300 arrested in one day at Stepps in Lanarkshire. The cabinet secretary was right in saying that Scottish miners were just 7 per cent of the workforce but made up 30 per cent of those who were dismissed after arrest. Most of those were on trumped-up charges of minor breaches of the peace, but the effect on miners was that they were made redundant and lost their jobs and livelihoods, many were blacklisted and many never recovered.

I am delighted, proud and, I have to say, moved that the pardons scheme that I put to the review has been accepted in full. I give my unequivocal thanks to the panel led by John Scott and to the

previous justice secretary, Michael Matheson, who met us, listened to us and took the bold move of initiating the inquiry. I also pay absolute tribute to the cabinet secretary for accepting the recommendations of the report in full. From the bottom of my heart, I say thank you.

The demand for justice does not diminish through time. Today shows us that determined, dogged campaigning works, and I hope that this decision today will put pressure on the UK Government for a full inquiry into the events at Orgreave and the policing of the strike in England and Wales, because burning injustices will not go away.

Enacting the pardons will require legislation. Will the cabinet secretary agree to meet party representatives to discuss how we could expedite that before the end of this parliamentary session, because the numbers get fewer every year, and time is of the essence?

Finally, if the pubs were open, I would be going for a pint tonight, but I will have a few beers at home instead.

Humza Yousaf: It would be absolutely churlish not to recognise the enormous efforts of Neil Findlay on this issue. He has been a dogged and ferocious campaigner for the rights of miners. I read his article at the weekend about his own family's history within the mining communities and, as I say, it would be absolutely churlish not to put on record his very considerable efforts. Having spoken to the miners on many occasions—in fact, most recently just about an hour ago—I know how thankful they are to Neil Findlay for being a close ally and a close friend, so it is appropriate to put that firmly on the record.

On Neil Findlay's questions and comments, I agree with his concerns about the political motivation and interference by the UK Government at the time in relation to the strike. We heard powerful testimony about those concerns and I echo his calls. The Scottish Government continues to push the UK Government for a full inquiry and of course if there is any way that we can make that case and even team up with and ally ourselves with mining communities in England, we would be happy to do that.

I will take up Neil Findlay's offer to hold a cross-party meeting to see whether there is any opportunity to bring forward the legislation. I will say that it is important to work through the detail. I understand his urgency, but I assure him—given that he is not standing again, if I am not mistaken—that even if the legislation happens in the next parliamentary session, we will still be listening to what he has to say about it, given his efforts and his contributions. However, I will take

up his offer and I will meet party representatives about that.

Again, it is only right to put on record my thanks and the Government's thanks to Neil Findlay for his efforts in this regard.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. I am conscious that this is an emotive subject. However, I am also conscious that we now have eight minutes to get through 11 potential questioners; we are not going to manage that, so I would encourage everyone to be as succinct as possible.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I very much welcome the cabinet secretary's statement today, particularly about bringing forward legislation to give a collective pardon to convicted miners. Miners from Polmaise pits 3 and 4 from Fallin in my constituency were the first to strike and the last to return, despite the hardship and provocation that they endured. Sadly, many of those good men have died and will not witness this important day, but I know that their families will be very proud of them.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the unsung heroes of the miners' strike were often the partners and families of the striking men who were wrongly convicted? They too showed courage and fortitude. Speak to miners and their families today and they would contend that they went back to work unbroken. Thatcher and the Tories badly underestimated the resilience and solidarity of communities such as Fallin.

I sincerely thank John Scott QC and Dennis Canavan, who is a constituent of mine, as well as the other members of the review team, for doing such a magnificent job.

Humza Yousaf: I am pleased that the member mentioned Fallin; I have been reading an extract from a book by John McCormack about Fallin and the role that those miners played. As Bruce Crawford says, they went out three weeks before anybody else and they returned a week later. If my memory serves me correctly, I think that they held the record of being out for 56 weeks in total. They are undoubtedly the unsung heroes. I agree with the points that the member makes and I add my thanks to John Scott QC and the review panel—in particular to former MP Dennis Canavan.

When it comes to the political dimension, we will continue to press the UK Government in relation to its role in the miners' strike of 1984-85.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): When considering and setting the criteria for the collective pardons scheme, can the cabinet secretary offer any reassurance to police officers who may be concerned about any potential consequences?

Humza Yousaf: They should not worry about consequences; that is not the aim or the purpose of having a collective pardons scheme. It is about aiding truth and reconciliation. I have spoken to the chief constable about the review, and he will be putting forward a comment on behalf of Police Scotland. He is welcoming of the review group and has made a commitment that Police Scotland will work closely with the Government on what needs to be done, where appropriate.

I understand that Margaret Mitchell will not have had the chance to see the report, but John Scott goes into some detail on what he thinks the qualifying criteria should be, and I think that that is probably a good basis on which we can start discussions.

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): As the son and grandson of miners and as an MSP who represents the former mining community of Airdrie and Shotts, I welcome the report, on which I congratulate John Scott QC, and I very much welcome the statement from the cabinet secretary.

I have two questions. First, I accept that this is a collective pardon and I understand the reasons for that, but can the cabinet secretary confirm that the individual criminal records of the people who are being pardoned will be corrected and will have any conviction deleted from them?

Secondly, will the cabinet secretary use what devolved powers he has to influence the UK Government to ensure that all powers of the state are used to ensure that never again will any group of workers be treated in this disgraceful way simply for exercising their right to strike?

Humza Yousaf: To take the second question first, of course, I will push the UK Government in that regard. I can also give a commitment on behalf of the Scottish Government that the structure of policing that we have now through the single national police force and the Scottish Police Authority affords the police a degree of independence from the Government in terms of operational policing. That is precisely why we have the structure of policing that we have in Scotland: we want to ensure that there is no political interference in operational policing.

On the first question, the issue of criminal records is challenging. Given that we are going back 35 or 36 years, it is unlikely that the criminal records of many of those who were convicted of offences such as breach of bail or breach of the peace will exist. Therefore, if the criteria for the collective pardon involved there being an actual criminal record, many miners would lose out on it. That issue notwithstanding, I am happy to look at the issue of what records exist and do not exist in the police system. However, the police tell me that, at this stage, something called the 40/20 rule

would apply. That rule states that, once a person reaches the age of 40, any information about a non-custodial sentence that has been on record for at least 20 years will be removed from the criminal history system. That means that many of the records of the miners will have been removed. We are exploring the issue carefully, but it is quite complex.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The many ex-miners I represent will be absolutely delighted with the cabinet secretary's statement. However, in all sincerity I say to him that they will not understand why we cannot deal with the legislation in the five months remaining in this parliamentary session. They know that we cannot in all certainty bind a future Parliament and they know how many of their victimised comrades have already passed away during this long wait. When we wish to, we can legislate quickly. Therefore, I ask the cabinet secretary to consider seriously how that could be done in this case.

Humza Yousaf: On the basis that I will undoubtedly incur the wrath of the Minister for Parliamentary Business, I say that I will absolutely take up the point that Mr Gray and Mr Findlay have made. In all sincerity, I would love to be the cabinet secretary who brought forward that legislation and led that effort, and Mr Gray is correct in what he says about our not being able to bind a future Parliament.

As I said, I will take Mr Gray's point on board, but I hope that he will recognise the enormous pressure on parliamentary business that there already is in relation not only to Covid but to other legislation that has been announced.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I warmly welcome the collective pardon and pay tribute to the dignity of the mining communities and their determination to see justice done.

The report acknowledges that the injustice went beyond the individuals who were arrested and that women and their families in mining communities carried a very heavy burden in the years that followed. What programmes will be put in place in communities such as Fallin, Alloa and Lochgelly to continue the reconciliation work into the future and to educate people of the next generation about the struggles of the past as well as of their rights today?

Humza Yousaf: I lost some of what Mark Ruskell said, due to technology, but I agree with his point. The Government continues to work with mining and ex-mining communities, including some of the ones that Mark Ruskell mentions, to make sure that that history is not lost and that education about the struggle that the fathers and forefathers went through is not lost. I am more

than happy to engage in a conversation about anything further that the Government can do in that regard. My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government, to whom I spoke before the statement, is also very keen to be involved in that discussion.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): This morning, former miner and Labour MP Davie Hamilton said:

"The vast majority ... the only conviction they ever had was during the miners' strike",

and that

"Many have now passed away but their families are still there."

He also said that the pardon will right the wrong of "grossly excessive punishments".

I add my support to Neil Findlay's call for a UK-wide initiative. I am interested to hear from the minister what discussions he has had with the UK Government on that proposal and what the chances are of success.

Humza Yousaf: I suspect that the member knows the answer to his second question. I am not holding my breath for a positive response from the UK Government, but that will not stop us putting the pressure on. I was waiting for the review group's report to be published. It has now been published and I will take those conversations up with the UK Government, as my predecessor did in previous years. Perhaps we can look towards our colleagues on the Conservative benches to exert pressure on the UK Government.

The first point that the member made is important. In the review group's report, he will see that the qualifying criteria that John Scott QC lays out include people not having had previous or subsequent convictions. That is a good basis on which to begin the conversation.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I, too, welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement today, and I praise the work of the review group on the excellent report that it has prepared.

Can the cabinet secretary provide assurance that he will approach the setting of the proposed criteria for inclusion in the collective pardon in a sympathetic manner by seeking to be as inclusive as possible? That will be very important, particularly for the families of those miners who have sadly passed away and for their communities, including my Cowdenbeath constituency, where the attack that was visited on miners and their families by the Thatcher Government is felt deeply to this day.

Humza Yousaf: Annabelle Ewing articulates her point extremely powerfully. I will be very

sympathetic in my consideration of broad qualifying criteria. We must also accept that there must be qualifying criteria, and the report gives us a good basis on which to look at those. John Scott suggests that we look at a number of qualifying criteria. He says that the relevant offences should be restricted to

“breach of the peace or breach of bail”

relating to the strike and to people who had no previous or subsequent convictions and whose case was

“disposed by way of a fine”.

That is a good basis to start from. We might want to look at whether those parameters are correct. As Annabelle Ewing requests, I will engage in a sympathetic way and with an open mind.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I am conscious that it is a powerful, emotive subject in which a lot of members are engaged. A number of members have waited patiently to get their comments and questions on the record, but we have run out of time this afternoon and there is a lot of business still to get through. I apologise to Gordon Lindhurst, David Torrance, Christine Grahame, Claire Baker and Claudia Beamish.

NHS (Winter Preparedness)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Jeane Freeman on winter preparedness in the national health service. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement.

15:24

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The rise in positive tests for Covid-19 confirms not only that the pandemic is still with us but that the virus will seize any opportunity to spread. Today, I will set out the steps that we are taking to prepare our NHS to respond to that and to wider winter pressures.

Earlier this year, I put our NHS on an emergency footing, and that emergency remains. The plan published today is directly linked to the social care plan that I will publish next week. They are interconnected and interdependent. I will return to Parliament next week to set that out in more detail.

Scientific evidence indicates that, prior to a vaccine, further waves of infection are probable. Previously, the incredible commitment of our health and social care staff, as well as the unstinting support and perseverance of the Scottish people, prevented the NHS from being overwhelmed. Our overriding priority at this time is to ensure that that continues to be the case. Not only is that vital to saving lives and providing care to those with Covid-19, it is vital if we are to ensure, as far as we can, that care can be provided safely for the other health needs of our nation.

We need to make every effort to prepare the NHS for the pressures that it will face in the coming months, as we do every winter. However, we do that this year with additional demands because of a significant resurgence of Covid-19 and the uncertainty of Brexit, given that the threat of there being no deal at the end of the transition period remains.

A few weeks ago, I set out the key pressures that are on our NHS. Those are: the critical public health measures of test and protect and flu vaccination, to deal with Covid-19; the demands of dealing with rising Covid cases and holding capacity for any surge in case numbers; and the need to restart and maintain critical healthcare services in the community and in hospital to deal with those who have been waiting as a result of the earlier lockdown and to do what we can to prevent that number from significantly increasing. That all needs to be done while putting in place the necessary Covid-safe measures of increased personal protective equipment, physical distancing

and enhanced cleaning, all of which inevitably decrease the volume of patients that can be seen in any one clinical or theatre session.

All those demands are here now, and are faced by a workforce who have already had a very tough year. Therefore, it is inevitable that difficult decisions will have to be taken to prioritise NHS capacity and resilience to address those demands. That is why I am publishing our NHS winter preparedness plan today. I am doing so to set out those challenges and to capture the range of actions that we are taking and the resources that are being made available to support what has to be a multifaceted response.

Last month, I announced £1.1 billion of funding for NHS health boards and integration authorities to meet the costs of responding to the pandemic. Today, I am announcing an additional £37 million to ensure that our health and care services are in the best position to respond to those unprecedented winter challenges. Those resources will support our key priorities for the next phase: our vaccination programmes, test and protect and sustaining our essential services.

Our objectives on vaccinations are twofold: to vaccinate nearly 2.5 million people for flu—an increase of 50 per cent over last year—and to be ready to deliver a safe and effective vaccine against Covid-19 as soon as one is available. The first of those is under way using a range of delivery routes, with health boards aiming to deliver vaccinations to all high-risk groups by 31 December. Many are operating seven days a week to do that.

Alongside that, work is under way on a national plan with local delivery for the Covid-19 vaccine, learning the lessons from the flu programme. As soon as a Covid-19 vaccine becomes validated and available, our initial focus will be on protecting the most vulnerable from harm. As that work crystallises, I intend to return to the chamber to provide more detail to members.

Our test and protect strategy is a vital element in the battle to disrupt the spread of the virus. We are increasing overall Scottish testing capacity from the current position of around 27,000 tests per day to at least 65,000 by the winter, drawing on NHS Scotland and UK-wide Lighthouse laboratory capacities. Three new NHS regional testing hubs will be fully operational by early December, contributing an additional 22,000 daily tests to the 65,000 number.

We are also working through what additional capacity new processing technologies can offer and what new test routes can bring to our plan to increase the cohorts of individuals who are offered regular asymptomatic testing. That is in line with the clinical review that was published last Friday.

Our contact tracing record remains strong. Over the four-week period of 21 September to 18 October—weeks when case numbers were rising—91 per cent of positive cases were successfully completed within 48 hours, and 75 per cent of that number were completed within 24 hours. It is a vital service—our second line of defence—so we continue to actively ensure that health boards use the resources that are provided so that we have the necessary capacity, as well as back-up resilience through the national contact tracing centre.

Members will recall the planning that we put in place to deal with hospital and intensive care unit Covid cases in the early months. The need to repurpose approximately 3,000 acute beds nationwide for Covid-19 patients remains. Our health boards retain the ability to double ICU capacity within one week, treble it in two weeks and quadruple it to over 700, should circumstances demand. Today, in some of our acute settings, we can see the importance of retaining that capacity as hospital and ICU cases rise.

Those beds need staff—trained, skilled staff—so an increase in Covid cases will inevitably limit capacity for other services. We need to be ready for that and plan for the possibility that resumed non-Covid services might have to be limited or paused so that we can direct capacity to accommodate Covid or winter pressures.

Those pressures will impact differently across the country—we can see that today. However, although that is the case, we need to have an approach that strives for as much equity of access for patients as we can and, unlike in the early response, strive to maintain as much non-Covid healthcare as possible.

We are putting in place a national framework to ensure a consistent approach to prioritisation for planned and unplanned care across the country, alongside actions to mitigate the impact in local areas if we face the situation in which services need to be suspended for any length of time. The pressure on acute capacity and the patient-centred approach of our NHS, which works to make sure that people receive the right care in the right place, make the work that is under way to redesign urgent care all the more important. That redesign work, which is being undertaken with the full involvement of clinical colleagues and boards and is overseen by the mobilisation recovery group, which I chair, aims to help patients know where to go for urgent care when they need it.

It is a significant programme of work, and it will not be completed in six months or even a year. It will be undertaken carefully and in stages. In order to test it and make sure that it works and is safe and accessible, the first phase of the redesign

programme will be implemented at a pathfinder site over November, from which we will learn lessons, from patients as well as from the service. We then aim for a national roll-out in December, which will be supported by £20 million of investment and a major information campaign to ensure that people know how to access the right care in the right place.

Although our response to Covid-19 is fundamentally important, so too is our ability to continue to provide care and treatment for other health needs, both urgent and routine. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to provide treatment for cancer and other life-threatening conditions. Recently, health boards have begun to safely restart a number of diagnostic and screening services and elective procedures. Last month, we wrote to health boards and their integration authority partners to confirm the provision of more than £78 million to ensure that NHS boards continue to restore as much of their elective activity as circumstances allow. That funding will support additional activity, with more than 70,000 out-patient appointments, more than 13,800 elective procedures and more than 98,000 diagnostic tests.

The NHS Golden Jubilee hospital continues to play an important role, with an additional 1,600 urgent and cancer patients seen between March and September, and a plan to treat a further 13,000 across all relevant surgical specialties before the end of March next year. It is operating as a Covid-light site.

Since July, more than 4,000 out-patients have been seen in the NHS Louisa Jordan hospital, with numbers continuing to grow. The facility offers us crucial additional capacity in orthopaedics, dermatology, oral medicine and imaging, as well as remaining ready to stand up to care for Covid patients if we need it to.

The curtailment of many services for patients in the early stage of the pandemic has meant that many people who need care are waiting longer than any of us would want them to. I am truly grateful to them for bearing with us as far as they have, and I assure them that we are doing all that we can to get the care to them as quickly as possible. The place to start is with clinical judgment so that we prioritise planned and unplanned care based on clinical need and those with the greatest need are treated first. That should be done in a consistent way across the country.

I said at the outset that addressing all those demands raises perhaps the most significant demand of all: the demand on NHS staff, who have already had such a tough year. We have asked much of them, and we are asking that again. There are not words to express how truly

grateful I am to them. However, more than words, we need to ensure that they have the support that they need. I intend that all the practical on-the-ground support that we saw in the early phase remains and that the significant additional support for mental health and wellbeing stays in place, and I intend to ensure that staff hubs and rest areas are maintained and to establish a mental health network, backed initially by £5 million of funding.

We know that, like the year so far, the next few months will not be easy. They will once again require difficult judgments and difficult choices to be made. I am all too aware of the sacrifices that our response will entail, from the amazing but weary front-line workers to people across our communities who may need to wait longer for treatment than I would want. I am absolutely determined that we will do everything in our power to be ready for those challenges. We have learned a great deal from the first wave of the pandemic, and we are better prepared.

Our “Winter Preparedness Plan for NHS Scotland—2020/21”, which was published today, sets out the range of actions that we are taking to support our incredible healthcare services and to work with them to manage the next phase. That is nothing more than they and the people of Scotland deserve.

The Presiding Officer: We will move to questions, the first of which is from Donald Cameron, who is joining us remotely.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement and the publication of the plan.

As we move into winter, it is more critical than ever that we ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society receive their flu vaccinations. However, as we have seen over the past few weeks, the roll-out of that vaccination programme has been chaotic and confusing, with issues in NHS Ayrshire and Arran due to unprecedented demand, problems with booking appointments in NHS Tayside and NHS Fife, and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde having to apologise for notifying people about their appointments after they had taken place. Ministers need to get a grip on that because, if the Scottish Government is struggling to organise a vaccination programme for flu, people will rightly worry about it being able to organise an effective Covid vaccination programme when the time comes.

In that regard, can the cabinet secretary explain why the Covid vaccination programme appears to be using the same model as the flu vaccine programme—that is, a national plan with health board delivery?

On the cabinet secretary's comment that there is a possibility that non-Covid services may have to be limited or paused this winter, will she set out in exactly what circumstances that will happen, given the existing NHS backlog and the fact that we all know about the incredible damage that can result from cancelling planned operations?

Jeane Freeman: I do not believe that the flu vaccination programme has been shambolic across the country. Let me be clear: there have undoubtedly been problems in a number of areas, some of which boards have acted quickly to resolve and some of which boards are still trying to resolve. I am acutely aware of that. However, in other parts of the country, the vaccination programme has worked relatively smoothly. I have received almost an equal number of complaints from individuals and comments from individuals who have told me that the programme worked well for them. However, there are undoubtedly lessons to be learned.

Mr Cameron is wrong. The Covid vaccination delivery programme will not follow the same model as the flu programme, because lessons need to be learned. There are a number of ways in which it will be different. The plan will be a truly national one, with the delivery models that boards will use determined nationally in consultation with them, so that all boards will make maximum use of all the routes that are available—not only hubs and walk-in and drive-through centres, but community pharmacies, general practitioner practices and local mobile delivery units for vaccinations, particularly for remote and island communities.

As I said earlier, as soon as that final plan is crystallised and we have all the details in place, including the milestones and delivery timetables, I will come back to the Parliament to make sure that members are informed and can ask me questions about that.

On the member's second question about where we might have to pause or slow down the delivery of non-Covid healthcare services, I need to say two things. The delivery of non-Covid healthcare services has slowed down already, because use of PPE, making sites Covid-safe and physical distancing inevitably reduce the volume of services that can be delivered. NHS Louisa Jordan and NHS Golden Jubilee are a significant help to us in trying to address some of those mitigating measures. In addition, our boards are now operating a mutual-aid arrangement, in which nearby boards help each other. Some of that is happening between NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lanarkshire, which, as I am sure members will appreciate, is under particular pressure with Covid cases. That mutual-aid arrangement will be formally in place across all our boards where it is practical and feasible.

If we have to significantly pause any services for any length of time, those decisions will not be taken lightly, and they will be taken with the medical directors and others in affected boards. Where we can, we will prioritise on the basis of clinical need, so that the patients who most urgently need non-Covid healthcare—not urgent care—will be seen first. We will work our way through that and will look to deploy as many additional resources as we can to ensure that people do not wait longer than they have to.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement and record Scottish Labour's gratitude to all healthcare workers who are working incredibly hard to keep our NHS going.

The additional financial support is welcome, but there are already serious signs that our NHS is struggling to cope with Covid-19, never mind winter pressures and normal business. The cabinet secretary knows that, in the summer, health boards raised fears about resilience and their ability to deliver the expanded flu vaccination programme. It is fair to say that that programme is not going smoothly in every part of Scotland. There are real concerns. Donald Cameron mentioned NHS Ayrshire and Arran, where staff were told that their flu jabs had been suspended, and other boards have apologised for putting our older citizens at the back of the queue.

As well as confirming when the flu vaccination programme will get back on track in all parts of Scotland, can the cabinet secretary confirm how many wards are currently closed due to Covid-19 outbreaks? Can she give further assurance that our hospitals are properly equipped with PPE and access to testing, because not only have wards closed, we are also aware of tragic cases in which patients have died after getting Covid in hospital. Could the cabinet secretary give an update on that? People are worried about going into hospital, and that is no good at all. I would appreciate further reassurance on that.

Jeane Freeman: I need to be clear that I am not saying that the flu vaccination programme across Scotland has gone smoothly. There are some boards where it has gone very well, but there are others where it has not, either because they have been overwhelmed by telephone enquiries and were not staffed up to deal with that, or where they have used the Scottish immunisation and recall system—SIRS—which is used to plan appointments for childhood vaccinations. As we all know, and as Ms Lennon knows, because she is nodding away, the SIRS programme is about childhood vaccination and, rightly for that group, puts the youngest first. However, that is not appropriate for flu, where we need to prioritise the oldest and most-at-risk patients first. We will most

certainly not be using that programme for the Covid vaccination programme.

The board that is most high profile in that regard is Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Absolutely rightly, it has apologised. To my mind, it has taken a wee bit too long to do that, but it has done it. It has apologised and offered reassurance that everyone who is over the age of 65 who has not received an appointment letter so far will receive one this week, and that it will run parallel programs, make every effort to give people as much local accessibility as it can and will staff up to do that.

Ms Lennon has my personal assurance that where individual boards, including Greater Glasgow and Clyde, have encountered issues, I look every single day to see whether they are making the improvements that I need them to make. In Fife, for example, the board has made those improvements. In Grampian, I am assured today that there is no call waiting on the health board's phone lines, because it has staffed up to answer them.

We learn as we go. That is no great comfort to patients who are anxious and so on, but we learn as we go and we will apply what we learn to the Covid vaccination programme. Members will be able to scrutinise and check that we have applied all those lessons.

I do not have an accurate number for closed wards and I would not want to estimate it, but I am happy to ensure that Miss Lennon gets that number later today, if it is possible for my officials to get it to her, or first thing tomorrow.

With regard to resilience, we published a PPE plan today that I hope gives members assurance about the forward planning for PPE. As Ms Lennon knows, thanks to the efforts of my colleague Ivan McKee, if rubber gloves are excluded, 90 per cent of our needed PPE is now sourced in Scotland through Scottish companies. That includes not just the demand from the health service, but the demand that we met in the first phase across social care, primary care, pharmacy and dentistry. We watch PPE constantly, but I am confident that we have the right infrastructure and the right forward ordering in place, and that the resilience of our domestic supply of PPE will enable us to provide what is needed. The modelling that has been done has been based on the demand in the early phases.

Ms Lennon is right to point to the issue of hospital-acquired infections. The most recently published statistics indicate an increase in the number of "probable"—that is how they are described—Covid infections that were acquired in hospital. The nosocomial group, which, as members know, identified those NHS staff who should be subject to regular testing—which is

under way—is looking actively at how we extend testing of NHS staff in acute and primary care, to ensure that we are protecting not just the staff but the most vulnerable people.

I am happy to pick up later any areas that I have not touched on.

The Presiding Officer: I highlight the fact that we have taken 10 minutes on the first two questions. I allow extra time for questions from front-bench members, but 11 members are waiting and we now have two minutes and 20 seconds to get through the remaining questions. I will allow some more time, but it will not be possible to get through all the questions. I recently wrote to all members and ministers to ask them to be brief and succinct, and for such sessions to proceed at pace, and I again make that appeal.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): The cabinet secretary has already referenced Fife in her remarks. As the member for the Cowdenbeath constituency, I was well aware of the initial problems with the roll-out of the flu vaccine for over-65s. I agree that quite a lot of progress appears to have been made since then.

Looking to the next phases of the roll-out, will health boards be encouraged to facilitate greater take-up at community pharmacies, from the point of view not just of the quantity of vaccine that will be made available to them, but the number of community pharmacies that can be included in the process?

Jeane Freeman: The simple answer is yes—we certainly will encourage health boards to do that. We wrote to boards on 25 September to encourage the increased use of community pharmacies, and we will continue to encourage that. We cannot make community pharmacies take part, but many of them are keen to be part of the programme. Their participation will require us to look at the scheduling of the supply of vaccine to the various routes through which the flu jab is delivered.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I know that the cabinet secretary is aware that the application of Covid restrictions to so many non-Covid conditions has significant health implications. What long-term planning is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that the backlog can be addressed once we are on the other side of the Covid pandemic?

Jeane Freeman: That is a really important question. We are doing two things. First, we are trying to maintain non-Covid healthcare services as we deal with Covid cases, as I have outlined, which is different from what we did with the steps that we took during the lockdown earlier in the year. We are doing that in order to deal with the backlog and to ensure that it does not grow any

further. There was a decline in the backlog of non-Covid cases between the end of the lockdown and the beginning of September, and we want to maintain that using NHS Louisa Jordan and the Golden Jubilee, as I have described.

In addition, clinical prioritisation will let patients across the country know what to expect, and I am very keen that that happens. The prioritisation numbers go from P1 to P4. We will set that out in more detail. Individual cases will then be clinically assessed so that people know which they are. P1 and P2 are considered to be urgent cases and will be dealt with within that timeframe. P3 will be dealt with within three months, and the timeframe for P4 will be over three months. That work will apply the numbers to clinical prioritisation and will allow us to demonstrate, in different scenarios, how well we can work through the backlog of cases.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): The winter months can place additional pressure on primary and community care services. How are health boards working to ensure that my constituents can access those services closer to home throughout the winter period?

Jeane Freeman: I am sure that Ms Maguire will remember that one of the things that I have said repeatedly in the board mobilisation plans is that we need to focus as much on primary and community care as we do on acute care. That includes making best use of the pharmacy first programme, which was launched some time ago, and making best use of the entirety of our primary and community care practitioners—not just general practitioners, but practice nurses, allied health professionals and so on. Some of that has been picked up in the plans that we have published on, for example, rehabilitation and work to deal with long Covid, so that we direct people to the right care in the right place. That has also been picked up in the redesign of urgent care programme. Again, I will be happy to provide members with more detail on that, as it is finalised. As the pathfinder site works its way through during November, we will see whether we can roll it out further from December onwards.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Given that planned operations are still at only half the level that they were at last year, will the cabinet secretary publish information on how long patients with different conditions will have to wait for elective surgery and treatment so that we can feed that information back to those patients who have written to us? Will that be impacted by staffing shortages as NHS staff get Covid and have to self-isolate or opt for early retirement?

Jeane Freeman: As I said to Mr Whittle, as the work is undertaken across the boards to apply the clinical prioritisation framework to individual cases, the most important people who will need to know

what the situation is will be patients themselves. I am determined that each of them will be written to in clear and understandable language that tells them the decision that has been made on their case and what they should expect. We will make the overall situation across Scotland—broken down, as far as is possible, into individual boards—available to members so that they know what the situation is in the area that they represent.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): The plans describe a new urgent care pathway that encourages people who might not require emergency treatment to seek a clinical assessment by phone prior to travelling to accident and emergency. The statement confirms that the redesign of urgent care will be tested out. Will any corresponding impact that the redesign will have on primary care, which is already under significant strain, also be highlighted? The cabinet secretary will be aware of the concerns that the British Medical Association has raised in that regard.

Jeane Freeman: The modelling that underlies the redesign of urgent care—which is independent modelling that clinicians undertook for us—shows that, for approximately 20 per cent of the people who go to accident and emergency, that is not the right place for the care that they need.

The intention is to ensure that we can help patients to determine where they should go. Obviously, if someone feels that their situation is life-threatening and very urgent, they should go straight to A and E, but for many people, GP surgeries, out-of-hours services, the pharmacy first service and, in some cases, the Scottish Ambulance Service, which has highly trained and qualified paramedics, will be the right and the best place to go and will be more local.

Primary care and the BMA have been actively involved in the redesign work, and they will be involved in the pathfinder project and its evaluation, which will include consideration of its impact on them. That evaluation work will be overseen by Sir Lewis Ritchie, who is a general practitioner with particular expertise in remote and rural general practice. That is important, because we need to ensure that the redesign works for all of Scotland, not just our urban centres.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The dramatic increase in the number of people from high-risk groups who qualify for the flu vaccine has led to chaos in its distribution. That programme will continue until the turn of the year. At the same time, there are strong indications that a viable Covid-19 vaccine could be approved for use within weeks. Given that the same high-risk groups will, I presume, be first in line for that vaccine, how does the Scottish Government

intend to manage any overlap between those two distribution programmes?

Jeane Freeman: The overlap for those vaccinations will be determined by what the clinicians and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation tell us about how a Covid vaccine should be used and what its interaction should be with the flu vaccine. They will say whether there should be any period of time between people getting the flu vaccine and their getting the Covid vaccine, and whether they will need one shot of the Covid vaccine or two. All that is still to be determined; in part, it will be determined by the nature and volume of the vaccine that is approved as being clinically safe for use that comes first.

The broad answer to Mr Cole-Hamilton's question is that we will not know until we get that clinical advice, which will be fed into the overall delivery programme.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I want to ask the cabinet secretary about capacity. The roll-out of flu vaccinations in the Grampian area has been slightly problematic, and staff capacity seems to be an issue in dealing with that, the pandemic and everything else. With that in mind, what consideration has the Scottish Government given to the very real possibility of a no-deal Brexit on 31 December? What impact will that have on our NHS, which will be in the middle of what we already know will be a very difficult winter?

Jeane Freeman: I have a couple points to make. NHS Grampian has recruited additional staff and, as I said earlier, this morning it gave us an assurance that there is currently no call queue on the appointment booking line, which was one of its big pinchpoints. We have asked NHS Grampian and all boards to make sure that their call-handling facilities are adequately resourced, as well as the locations where vaccination takes place.

In the health service, we have been planning for Brexit for some time. The concerns that remain around its impact on the supply of medicines and other consumables now apply to the vaccine. If the vaccine requires to go to Europe and back before it is finished and ready for use, which is a strong possibility, the impact of Brexit could make that a slower process than we would either want or need. However, that is not yet clear, because it will depend on which vaccine comes first and on our continuing work with the UK Government.

There is undoubtedly uncertainty around all that, depending on the impact of Brexit. Even those of us who are least worried about Brexit would say that there is a risk of some impact. Whether the impact on some of those programmes will be small

or great is yet to be determined, but we are planning in order to mitigate it as best we can.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to Maurice Corry, Joan McAlpine, Lewis Macdonald and Fulton MacGregor; we have run out of time and have no room for any further questions.

Energy Inquiry

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Before we start, I should say that there is absolutely no time in hand, so members must not overrun their timings for their speeches—I am sorry.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-23100, in the name of Gordon Lindhurst, on behalf of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, on its energy inquiry.

15:59

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): We have all faced a dilemma before, and at times we may even have been tested by a trilemma, but how many of us have had to contend with a quadrilemma? That is the Royal Society of Edinburgh's term for the puzzle that is our energy policy. The RSE says that it is crucial to strike a balance between a quartet of potentially competing concerns: climate change, security, affordability and acceptability. The RSE's work, which has been two years in the making, has provided the springboard for our own committee inquiry. The two areas that we focus on are electric vehicles—or EVs, if you will—and local energy.

I will touch on a handful of the recommendations that we make under those headings, but first I will reflect on the RSE's findings, as set out in its "Scotland's Energy Future" report. The report breaks things down to the fundamentals—it asks where our energy comes from, how we use it and how responsible we are for what we consume. It works from the premise that we must reduce carbon emissions, and it considers the options that are open to us as policy makers and decision takers, the private sector and the public sector, and individuals and communities—in short, the nation as a whole.

The RSE acknowledges that the paradoxes of demand and supply present a profound challenge for any energy policy, however well put together. The "energy quadrilemma" is one way of looking at that challenge. As an example, what if workers in the oil and gas sector lose their jobs and find nothing to replace those jobs? That is the concern of the chair of the Economic Development Association Scotland. He says that the onus is on key, and often competing, players to come up with win-win scenarios and to learn to collaborate. He likens the situation to

"a Rubik's cube of horizontal (energy), vertical (industrial) and spatial (regional) positions that must be managed, if not mastered, by Scottish policy makers."

Given the complexity of the task—a quadrilemma, a Rubik's cube and a whole-

systems approach—we are sympathetic to the RSE's call for an expert advisory commission. Such a body would cover all aspects of energy, including policy, economics and technology, and it would take an independent, continuous and—yes—whole-systems approach.

This is not the first time that the committee has considered the matter. In 2017, we reported on the draft energy strategy and asked whether a national agency was needed to oversee the transition of the energy system. We returned to the issue a year later, when we looked at the case for a publicly owned energy company, and now here we are again. Our recommendation is that a long-term strategic framework be put in place—a framework that is based on good governance, policy expertise, cross-party buy-in and long-term ownership, and which could include the establishment of an independent expert advisory commission on energy policy.

I am sorry to say that the Scottish Government's response has been somewhat underwhelming. It points to the existing Scottish energy advisory board, a forum that, according to its own website, last met in June 2017. It undertakes to review its membership by the end of the year.

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): I am grateful to the member for taking an intervention, and I will keep it brief. This is just to correct the record: the Scottish energy advisory board has met a number of times since 2017. I will provide details to the committee convener.

Gordon Lindhurst: I am delighted to hear that, and I stand corrected, if what I have said is incorrect.

It was two years ago that the committee made the case for an

"independent body, one that can provide oversight, continuity and a long-term framework ... positioned at the heart of energy policy and market transition, strategic in its long-term thinking and planning while prepared and flexible enough to react to change as it happens."

I am grateful to the minister for his intervention, if it indicates that that is what the Government is seeking to move towards.

The minister may not have read this quote from P G Wodehouse, who said:

"Routine is the death to heroism."

That is perhaps what the committee would like us to avoid in our approach to this matter.

Strategic oversight is something that we also need more of when it comes to EVs. The Scottish Government is committed to phasing out new petrol and diesel cars by 2032, and it is rumoured that the United Kingdom Government will bring

forward a ban to 2030. We asked how that transition will be nationally co-ordinated, strategically planned and supported by reliable infrastructure. We put that point to the Scottish Government and to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

We heard of considerable variation at local level in the quality of provision. Dundee won praise—Edinburgh, not so much. Councils are doing their best with the resources that they have, but staff leading on infrastructure planning often do so as an add-on to their day job.

COSLA's response to our inquiry came as little surprise. COSLA stated,

"we wholeheartedly recognise the importance and intent"

of one of the committee's recommendations: that examples of innovation and best practice be collected from around the country. I could pick out a few other phrases: "progressive mainstreaming", "sustained collaboration", "critical junctures" and "intrinsically multi-agency"—we get the idea.

Local energy was the third and final strand of our report, and that brings us on to public awareness and community engagement, which was a recurring theme of the inquiry. Some of our witnesses found the scorecard to be less than impressive. The RSE underlines the need to develop policy that is acceptable to the public and that is sustainable and just, and to be up front about the choices available, about what is achievable and about the changes that have to happen. Otherwise, what chance do we have of changing our habits—be it the kind of car we drive or how we heat our home?

The refrain is that we need to start doing things with people, not to people, and that we need to move beyond a top-down approach. No longer is it enough simply to focus on technocratic and engineering solutions; we should view the broader policy agenda alongside "local happenstance", as it has been called. Whether it involves ground-source heating for homes near local parks, flooded coal mines or brownfield sites, or solar energy for new builds, what works for one community may not work for another.

Two of my committee colleagues visited the ReFLEX project in Orkney, and they saw for themselves what is happening to connect electricity, transport and heat—the aim being not only to deliver affordable locally generated energy and to decarbonise the islands by 2030 but to export the model elsewhere in Scotland, the UK and beyond.

The Committee on Climate Change advises the Scottish Government on green recovery. One of its six principles is to lead a shift towards positive long-term behaviours, which it sees as

"an opportunity to embed new social norms, especially for travel."

It suggests that the Scottish Government should lead the way with its own work, with public communications and infrastructure for example.

According to Tacitus—I refer to the ancient Roman historian with whom all members are familiar, not to the cat of the same name, who lives in Kirkliston—

"good habits are here more effectual than good laws elsewhere."

The context was public virtue in the first century, but the point still stands. If we can change how we think about energy, we can change how we consume it. Smart meters are not so smart if they teach us only that the kettle uses a lot of electricity but not the necessity of heating our home better.

The fourth aspect of the quadrilemma—public acceptability—becomes ever more critical.

I now have a quadrilemma in the sense that I am over my time and the Presiding Officer is indicating that I should finish up, which I shall do at this point. I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say on the matter when he rises to speak.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the findings set out in the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee's Energy Inquiry, which were published on 8 July 2020.—[Gordon Lindhurst]

16:11

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in today's debate and to discuss the committee's inquiry into energy policy in Scotland in more detail. I do not have any PG Wodehouse or Tacitus—feline or human—quotes to give the chamber, but I welcome the convener's comments.

I welcome the findings of the committee's report, and I assure the members of the committee that consideration has been given to all the recommendations that were made to the Scottish Government and to addressing the quadrilemma that the convener mentioned, which our Scottish energy strategy flagged up.

Before I turn to the inquiry, I would like to give my thanks and appreciation to the many individuals across the energy sector who have made significant efforts in maintaining the energy supplies and the critical national infrastructure that delivers our energy during these most challenging of times. Those efforts have been important in supporting all parts of Scotland's society and economy and in enabling us to continue to

function as we have focused on dealing with our new set of priorities and ways of life.

Although we know that the pandemic is by no means over, we need to start to think about how to drive urgent recovery across our economy—and to act now. It is critical that we work collectively to create a supportive environment for the energy sector as we strive to recover from the economic shock.

The report from the advisory group on economic recovery represented a clear call to action that went beyond the Scottish Government and the public sector. In our response this summer, we underlined how committed we are to ensuring that our economic recovery is green, fair, sustainable and resilient, but we cannot achieve that on our own.

The Scottish Government is fully aware that its hopes of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and a 75 per cent reduction by 2030 will require a national endeavour. It is key that we engage communities and citizens across Scotland and support them as best as we can in driving a positive step change in attitudes to and behaviours in climate change.

Moving on to the committee's inquiry, I reiterate my earlier point that the Scottish Government gave great consideration to the recommendations that the committee provided. The first recommendation suggests that the Scottish Government has a long-term framework in place that covers all aspects of energy. As the Scottish Government continues to move forward with its net zero ambitions, it remains guided by the three core principles that were set out in "The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish energy strategy"—its 2017 publication.

Those principles are that we take a whole-system view, which the convener referenced, and that we deliver an inclusive energy transition and a smarter local energy model. Early next year, the Scottish Government will demonstrate how those principles underpin the programme of work that it is delivering, with the publication of its energy policy position statement. The Scottish Government's intention, if re-elected, would be to refresh the energy strategy in 2021 after appropriate consultation of stakeholders, the Scottish energy advisory board and the strategic leadership groups that underpin that.

The statement will coherently set out how our policy actions across the energy sector collectively support delivery of the climate change plan update and will address how the Scottish Government's efforts in respect of energy will ensure a green economic recovery as it remains aligned to its net zero ambitions. I am also delighted that I was able to publish today our new "Offshore Wind Policy:

Statement", a key component of our strategy that sets out our ambition to have 11GW of offshore wind capacity in Scottish waters by 2030.

Turning to the key themes of the committee's inquiry, I welcome its recommendations on electric vehicles. I hope that colleagues will recognise that we are beginning to make real progress in that area. In the 12 months leading up to March this year, we saw a 45 per cent growth in the number of ultra-low-emission vehicles registered for the first time in Scotland, and we are supporting that growth by investing in world-leading infrastructure. For example, since 2011, the Scottish Government has invested over £30 million in ChargePlace Scotland. That investment has provided almost 40 public charge points for every 100,000 people living in Scotland, which compares with 30 charge points per 100,000 people in England and fewer than 20 per 100,000 people in Wales and Northern Ireland.

In these challenging economic times, it is essential that we explore as many partnership working opportunities as possible. Our £7.5 million strategic partnership with Scotland's electricity distribution network operators is a good example of that. The partnership has been put in place to ensure that Scotland has access to a world-leading electric vehicle charging network and to the electricity infrastructure that is needed to support that. Working collaboratively will help to achieve the best outcome for electric-vehicle users, electricity networks, energy consumers and wider society.

Although our effort to achieve our ambitious climate change targets is a national endeavour, it is also important to consider the benefits and challenges on a local level, as the convener outlined and as is addressed by the committee's inquiry. The Scottish Government, through our community and renewable energy scheme—CARES—remains committed to supporting the growth of community and locally owned energy in Scotland.

Our recent CARES funding call focused on green recovery across Scotland, making up to £4.5 million of funding support available. That call, despite the UK Government's removal of the feed-in tariff regime, received over 170 expressions of interest—a record number—and a wide range of projects aimed at improving the services provided to local people were approved. In the future, there will be a greater focus on decarbonisation as a driver for community-led action to bring new and exciting opportunities to communities.

Initiatives such as CARES and EV charging infrastructure are not the only steps that we must take to drive positive societal behaviour in response to the climate change crisis. We know from analysis that was carried out by the

Committee on Climate Change that over 60 per cent of the changes that are necessary to achieve our ambitions will require at least some element of societal or behavioural change. That is why we are pursuing an ambitious approach to considering and implementing the social changes that are required to achieve net zero.

The publication of our public engagement strategy has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but we will publish that as soon as is practically possible and it will help us to adapt the way that we engage with the public in the light of our changed social and economic circumstances. In the meantime, we are developing the tools that are needed to support that work, including our recently launched public-facing website Net Zero Nation.

I again welcome the committee's report. I look forward to hearing members' contributions and to responding to them as best I can in the time that is available for my closing remarks. I reiterate the point that I made to the convener. The Scottish energy advisory board has met. It is going through reform and a review of its membership, which we will communicate to the convener and to other interested members in due course, but it has provided valuable advice to Government, not least during the coronavirus outbreak. I look forward to engaging with members on its valuable work.

16:18

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West)
(Con): I direct members to my entry in the register of members' interests regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Although members across the chamber will agree that our focus should be on tackling the coronavirus, it is vital that we do not let the virus undo our commitment to tackling the climate emergency that our world faces.

If anything, the recovery from the pandemic will give us further opportunities. Drax Power, which operates—among other assets—Cruachan power station in Argyll, which provides 35 per cent of the UK's storage capacity, has noted that, from an energy perspective, Covid has provided a glimpse of how our system will work in the future, when we will have an even larger supply of renewable energy.

That is why the energy inquiry by the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee has been so important. However, this is not the first time that an economy committee of the Scottish Parliament has put forward detail on how to tackle Scotland's energy future. In 2009, the then Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's seventh report outlined its determination to deliver on Scotland's energy future. The Scottish National Party was in power in

2009, yet here we are, 11 years later. It is worth looking at a couple of points from that report.

The report states:

"The Committee reaffirms its call on the Scottish Government for a rapid publication of its detailed energy efficiency action plan. Delay beyond 2009 is not acceptable."

It continues:

"The Committee recommends the rapid introduction of heat initiatives".

It also says:

"On heat, the Scottish Government has committed itself to an objective of 11% of heat demand being produced by renewable energy by 2020".

However, here we are, in 2020, still debating energy efficiency action plans and still to pass a heat networks bill.

In fact, it took several months of working with Opposition parties to ensure that energy efficiency plans for homes were introduced by 2030 and not a decade later, as the SNP initially proposed. Currently, the SNP Government is on course to miss its renewable heat target, with only 6.5 per cent of heat demand met from renewables in 2019, which is a 5 per cent increase on the 2018 figure. At that rate, the 2020 target will not be met until after 2040—some 20 years too late. [Interruption.] I cannot take an intervention, as I am short of time.

The déjà vu feeling of a wasted decade and failed targets is nothing new when it comes to this tired SNP Government. It has been in power since 2007, and Government ministers have nobody but themselves to blame for missed targets and opportunities wasted. There is no use in setting the most ambitious targets in the world—just to get a headline—when the ambition is matched only by an inability to understand the businesses that are needed to deliver them.

The latest in the list of disappointments lies in the incompetence of the SNP and is Derek Mackay's legacy to Fife. A failure to back up £40 million of taxpayers' money with any consent requirements for local employment or training strategies has made the future of Burntisland Fabrications bleak. Although Scotland will still see the benefit from the offshore wind projects through their contribution to our energy mix, SNP ministers will not be forgiven for failing to deliver on their promises of what the green energy revolution would mean for the Scottish economy.

Just yesterday, Renfrewshire Council abandoned its £4.5 million investment in improving the energy efficiency of 75 homes because only one suitable bid was received and it was too expensive.

In my constituency of Aberdeenshire West, the admirable but underresourced Warmworks Scotland, which delivers the Scottish Government's flagship programme, recently told me that it had improved 147 homes, but that was over the past five years. With more than 68,000 homes in Aberdeenshire requiring improvements, the work will take 465 years at that rate.

We find local companies losing out on contracts and local projects not being delivered because the SNP Government does not understand that warm words in Holyrood are not turning into warm homes around Scotland. The energy industry itself has been ready and willing to work with our Governments to move forward, but the green jobs are not being created at the speed that is necessary to tackle the issue.

However, none of those failures should detract from the hard work that the committee has done on its inquiry, and we must recognise that many organisations, including the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scottish Renewables, Ombudsman Services and Smart Energy GB, are supportive of the committee's recommendations. The broad support for the committee's report should be a driving force for the Government to make changes and implement the recommendations, because we do not want to be back here in 11 years' time, reviewing recommendations that were—yet again—not taken forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for keeping to your time.

16:23

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee's energy inquiry is based on the Royal Society of Edinburgh's "Scotland's Energy Future" report. The committee also considered electric vehicle infrastructure and locally owned energy. If anything, that tells us about the complexity of our energy systems from generation right through to supply to the customer.

We know that we need to decarbonise and that we need to take industry, communities and customers with us. A just transition is about not just the workforce but customers. The costs of various schemes are included in consumers' bills. Unfortunately, it is only those with resources who can access schemes to insulate their houses and install microrenewables. Those in fuel poverty cannot afford to do that, but they still have to pay towards the schemes. I am not against the schemes, but I am concerned about the unfair distribution of funds and the inability to use them to tackle fuel poverty. That is why I am keen that, as we scrutinise the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill,

we ensure that tackling fuel poverty is at its heart. Ombudsman Services tells us that

"to achieve a just transition to net zero, we need confident, engaged and empowered consumers. Decarbonising our economy will require a high level of trust from consumers".

I cannot speak of a just transition without speaking about the lack of a just transition for our workforce. We are home to some of the best renewable energy in the world, yet where are the jobs? BiFab workers in Fife and on Lewis are seeing their futures disappear, while multinational companies line their pockets from our natural resources. That is simply not right, and I call on the Scottish Government to put it right. The actions of a Government should never lead to the decimation of an industry. On Lewis, the community is clear that it wants to cut loose from BiFab—a company in which the Scottish Government is a shareholder—because it believes that it can do a better job in attracting work to the island. Frankly, I cannot see how it could do a worse one.

We must also encourage community generation, and that is why communities must be at the heart of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill. However, we cannot simply impose solutions on communities without buy-in.

This is all interconnected. I will use an example from my own region. The subsea cable from Skye to Harris has broken down, and that means a return to using the old diesel-powered generator to provide electricity for the islands. Because that connection is down, the renewable energy that is generated on the island cannot be distributed. That means that clean energy is going to waste while fossil fuels are being used to generate electricity. That has a knock-on impact for many of the small-scale community generators that feed into the system, because they no longer have a market for their clean energy.

For many years, I have been pushing for an interconnector to those islands, which would have distributed energy, had it been built. The campaign will go on, while a new cable is laid to replace the damaged cable. That just shows just how disorganised our system is. Surely the replacement cable should provide additional capacity, and surely there should have been a better back-up than a diesel-powered station from the last century—yet that is what serves us.

Someone once told me that our distribution network is pretty much as good as wet cotton strung between poles; it certainly cannot cope with Scotland's potential for renewables. It also seems that we cannot harness—

Paul Wheelhouse: Will the member take an intervention?

Rhoda Grant: I think that I—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I was about to intervene, myself. Please conclude, Ms Grant.

Rhoda Grant: It seems that we are unable to harness our natural resources for a just transition. I welcome the committee's inquiry but recognise that there is much to be done.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Andy Wightman to open for the Scottish Green Party. You have four minutes.

16:27

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I welcome the committee's findings. I thank the clerks for their work, and all those who gave evidence.

Energy is a bit of a wicked policy area as it involves geopolitical, environmental and economic issues; legacy infrastructure; new technology; and, particularly in the Scottish context, an unsatisfactory mix of devolved and reserved powers.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh has already been cited; its report was a very helpful springboard, as the convener said. It highlights how interconnected this area of policy is to others such as transport, housing and climate. In his opening remarks, the convener mentioned Professor Little's comment that it also requires a whole-systems approach.

I regret that we do not have more time to debate such a vital topic, but the inquiry revealed that some excellent work is happening on the ground. The committee visited the Alexander Dennis bus factory in Falkirk, and had a very inspiring visit to Orkney to look at the smart grid ReFLEX project, which I am sure Liam McArthur will say more about.

I want to focus on a few of the committee's key findings. The first that struck me was the RSE's recommendation of a reduction in energy consumption. We know that that is possible through modal shifts, and we also know that it is possible to build houses that consume no net energy. The RSE report makes it clear that that is the most effective way of tackling the quadrilemma.

The committee also makes the case for a national body to co-ordinate action on such things as decarbonisation, resilience, infrastructure and behaviour. I think that that will be a key issue, which the minister has already said something about in relation to his forward plans.

Electric vehicles was the second area that the committee was interested in. As an owner of an electric vehicle, I have a personal as well as a political interest in the subject. There is a growing number of such vehicles in Scotland. However, to

tackle climate breakdown, we must push for them to be the default choice as soon as possible. As we discovered in Orkney, electric vehicles also play a critical role in smart grids as storage available to balance supply and demand in local grids. Modern technology exists to do that automatically, with automatic markets where consumers can buy and sell electricity.

As Mr Lindhurst was talking about Tacitus, I was observing on my smartphone a member of my family driving into Edinburgh. Electric vehicles, being electric and having computers at their heart, are at the core of the autonomy movement. Indeed, in Beijing, electric vehicles speak to traffic lights and traffic lights speak to electric vehicles to work out when it is best to let traffic through. Beijing also has systems that can prioritise public transport. It is therefore about more than just the energy question.

We heard from a number of witnesses that the EV charging network here remains something of a lottery. Even the new Electric A9 chargers are unreliable. I think that the minister said that they were world leading, but I used one recently that delivered two seconds of electricity before cutting out and displaying an error message, and such incidents are far too common.

The final element of the inquiry was local energy systems. It is regrettable, as others have said, that so much of Scotland's renewable generation is controlled not by local co-operatives and businesses but by large corporations, including state-owned corporations of foreign Governments, such as Vattenfall from Sweden. For all that we like to compare ourselves with similar-sized European countries such as Denmark, the minister will know that the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill is a reminder—certainly in my opinion—of how far we have to travel. For example, Denmark's district heating schemes are the responsibility of the municipalities, which also own most of the pipe network, with consumer co-operatives owning the rest. In addition, all suppliers of heat must, by law, operate on a not-for-profit basis. In contrast, the proposed arrangements in Scotland exclude local authorities and are designed to attract investment from large corporates, and there is no not-for-profit requirement. What is normal in Denmark should be normal here.

The brief inquiry generated a lot of fascinating evidence and there is broad consensus among experts about how to proceed, but we have a long way to go before we have a properly integrated, long-term energy policy in place.

16:32

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I start by acknowledging that I am in receipt of feed-in

tariff payments and renewable heat incentive scheme payments.

I warmly welcome the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee's findings and recommendations. I know that the inquiry has been a considerable undertaking for the committee and I congratulate Gordon Lindhurst and his colleagues on their efforts, not least in ensuring that a visit to Orkney took place as part of the evidence-gathering exercise. I understand that the visit took place in February, so it was not like ministers' fair-weather summer tours in recent years. Andy Wightman said that the visit was inspiring, and it is clear that it profoundly influenced the committee's findings.

Given the brief time available to me in the debate and Mr Wightman's spoiler alert, I will focus my remarks on what is going on in Orkney that chimes with the committee's findings, not least that on the need to draw on examples of best practice from around the country.

The committee makes clear the importance of the Scottish Government adopting a long-term strategic framework that covers all aspects of energy and takes a whole-systems approach. In that respect, Orkney offers some timely lessons and can help lead the way as we strive to achieve our climate change ambitions.

As the committee heard from the Association of Decentralised Energy in its written evidence,

"Smart, decentralised energy systems will be absolutely crucial to achieving net zero by 2045."

The association explained:

"In a net zero electricity system, most of that large centralised plant will have been replaced with variable renewables ... As a result, we will depend far more on small-scale peaking plant, storage, interconnectors and demand-side response to balance energy and maintain the operability of our networks."

In that context, the work that is being undertaken in Orkney through the ReFLEX and SMILE project is highly relevant. The project will look to connect electricity, transport and heat networks in an overarching system, using advanced software to balance supply and demand. That work draws on recent experience in Orkney and strong local buy-in. It aims to deliver affordable locally generated energy and decarbonise the islands by 2030, further burnishing Orkney's reputation as a leader in innovation, development and applied solutions.

I give credit where it is due, as the project is supported by the UK Government's industrial strategy challenge fund, although that does not excuse the wider lack of support and direction at a UK level. The project is also an example of how innovation often emerges through adversity. Despite Orkney having significant renewable

energy resources and producing 130 per cent of its electricity needs through existing installed renewable generation, the local grid is constrained, resulting in significant curtailment. That limits efficiency but also the capacity that is needed to meet inevitable increases in demand to support electric vehicles and electrified heating systems.

Given that Orkney has some of the highest energy prices and levels of fuel poverty in the country, the ReFLEX and SMILE project is about addressing more than just environmental challenges, and it does not diminish the urgent need to secure a long-awaited interconnector for the islands, to which Rhoda Grant referred.

The project will last for three years and will include the installation and operation of technologies, including hydrogen fuel cells for electricity and heat; domestic and commercial energy storage; vehicle-to-grid charging infrastructure; ground-source heat pump systems; building management systems; and integrated grid-smart community-led transport systems.

A new local energy company will be established to offer advice to consumers and businesses on their energy needs, as well as providing affordable leasing options for new domestic and commercial batteries, electric vehicles and charging points in Orkney, with reduced up-front costs for users. I just hope that the Government's new ChargePlace Scotland contract is up to the task—I certainly echo Andy Wightman's concerns.

Orkney is an ideal location for demonstrating how self-contained smart energy networks can work, connecting hydrogen storage, huge batteries and electric ferries and cars with clever software to remove fossil fuels from an entire energy system and reduce costs to consumers. There is no reason why the lessons learned in Orkney cannot inform decisions made elsewhere in Scotland, as well as the Government's long-term strategic framework. Islanders and the Scottish Liberal Democrats are up for meeting that challenge. I look forward to working with others to make sure that it happens.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I ask members to keep to time, please. The speeches in the open debate should all be four minutes long.

16:36

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I start by reminding Liam McArthur that some ministers [*Inaudible*] bad weather, especially snow.

However, to move to the subject in hand, I join others in thanking the committee for its work on

this subject; as Brexit approaches and the economic impact of Covid-19 is felt, these issues become even more important than they were at the beginning of the year. The focus on electric vehicle infrastructure is important, because transport continues to be such a difficult sector to decarbonise; getting the right infrastructure in place is essential.

However, dealing with the engineering and technology is only part of the challenge; a change in the behaviour of people in the population is also required. Such things require that little phrase, “buy-in”. The report recognises that, and I believe that we cannot guarantee that buy-in; if we do not get it, we will have a problem, so how do we generate buy-in?

The report references the idea of local energy in Scotland and of active community buildings—places where people could go to see, touch and experience technology. Familiarity with such things and understanding why and how certainly play a role in motivating people to action. Therefore, these are the types of ideas that we should continue to support. However, buy-in can also take the form of ensuring that people are, at the very least, no worse off and, at best, better off, than they were before.

One way to ensure that is of course the just transition that others have referred to. There are huge opportunities for things such as carbon capture and storage in my constituency. Carbon capture and storage represents an excellent transition technology. Indeed, it would ensure many jobs for those skilled workers who are currently working in the oil and gas sector. However, there are many ways in which we can create buy-in beyond that. We should simply ensure that we work the equation from the various angles that it lends itself to.

Finally, I will briefly mention the idea of energy security, which is considered in the report. The report mentions the implications of exiting the European Union and the fact that 40 per cent of Europe’s gas comes from Russia. Both circumstances present the possibility of complications with energy issues but there is also the issue of the carbon cost of having to import from countries that are perhaps not as well established in their own climate change goals. It is not just a question of the lights going out but a question of potentially exacerbating the climate change issue. Therefore, once again, I believe that increasing our levels of energy independence is an important part of energy security. In other words, we should import carbon-neutral fuel. However, the basis of our expansion into that ideal position would first be built on the strength of our own energy security.

16:40

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Gordon Lindhurst on making what was probably the most entertaining contribution that I have ever heard him make in this chamber. I also congratulate the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee on its energy inquiry and its subsequent comprehensive report. It made for fascinating reading. I also want to praise the Royal Society of Edinburgh for its report of last year, “Scotland’s Energy Future”, which, in itself, followed a two-year inquiry. A lot of work has gone into this.

First, I want to talk briefly about two of the RSE’s 10 findings, which are around housing. It said that enforcing higher standards of energy efficiency in new-build housing and infrastructure should be a regulatory priority and that building regulations around energy efficiency, and their enforcement, should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are more responsive to research and development and are consistent with policy targets. It went on to say that reducing Scotland’s energy demand could play an important role in meeting many of its energy goals and that improved energy efficiency will be key to achieving that. It said that reducing demand for energy could assist in significantly reducing Scotland’s carbon emissions and that improved energy efficiency would require substantial investment and faces a serious obstacle in Scotland’s ageing and varied housing stock. It is right about that.

Members will know—unless they have not been paying attention—that I chaired the tenement maintenance working group, which was a cross-party group, although it was not a CPG. Crucially, it included experts in the field and, last year, we produced a set of recommendations aimed at dealing with a property condition ticking time bomb. Nearly a fifth of our housing—467,000 homes—is pre-1919, and 68 per cent of those have disrepair to critical elements. We called for three things to be done. First, there should be regular building inspections; secondly, there should be compulsory owners associations, so that there are bodies that take responsibility for maintaining properties; and, thirdly, we should establish building repair funds. There was a lot of detail behind all three recommendations.

The issue that we were dealing with is exactly what the RSE was talking about in relation to Scotland’s ageing and varied housing stock. Dealing with property maintenance is essential, and improving energy efficiency is part of that. I have seen at first hand, as part of work that was done by the Local Government and Communities Committee when I served on it, the difference that that can make. We visited Dundee, Lewis and Harris, and saw how retrofitting not only has health

benefits—physical and mental—but keeps the bills down.

I want to briefly touch on electric vehicles, which the committee also wrote about. Michelle Ballantyne will have more to say on that, and she speaks from first-hand experience as one of the growing number of MSP converts to electric cars—there is a bit of a Tesla army in this place. The UK and Scottish Governments have introduced quite stringent and challenging policies, but I just say this: if we want to persuade people to ditch petrol and diesel cars, we are talking about them using electric vehicles—or hydrogen vehicles, but electric seems to be winning that battle at the moment. However, as we have heard already, there are challenges with the charging network—I see you asking me to close, Presiding Officer, and I am going to do so. We need to make things reliable and we need to make it easy for people to use an electric vehicle.

Once again, I congratulate the committee and my good friend Mr Lindhurst.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I was trying to be subtle, Mr Simpson; you did not have to mention it.

16:44

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): As others have observed, the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee mentioned in its report the need to be honest with the public about the changes that people will have to make over the coming years when it comes to dealing with what has been called “the energy quadrilemma”. That is no mean balancing act, but members will not be surprised to hear me say that, in Scotland’s case, our islands have a role to play.

That fact is illustrated—perversely enough—by the failure in the past few days of the cable between Skye and Harris, which leaves the northern half of my constituency suddenly detached from the national grid. To a great extent, that leaves Lewis and Harris reliant on their old diesel power station; even in the past few hours, people have got in touch with me to express concern about that. The islands also produce their own power from renewable sources, which will pick up a bit of that strain until the cable is replaced, but I earnestly hope that SSE will replace it soon and ensure that the new cable is big enough to be future proofed.

One lesson from that episode is that, increasingly, the islands are looking to their electricity connections to the mainland as a means of exporting and not merely importing power. The loss of the cable poses just as many challenges about how to keep community wind turbines

turning profitably as it does about how to keep the lights on.

The potential that exists in the islands for renewable power, including wind, is phenomenal, as is our virtually untapped and limitless source of wave energy, if the technology can be developed to exploit it. Meanwhile, hydrogen technology could also provide an income stream for community turbines, while enabling the development and use of hydrogen ferries, as others have mentioned.

The Arnish construction yard in Lewis continues to be one of the best places in Europe to build major components for offshore wind. It is a matter of deep concern in my constituency that long-hoped-for contracts are not coming the way of Arnish, despite the significant investment that the Scottish Government has put into BiFab. I make no apology for using this debate to make the case for Arnish.

The Scottish Government has shown a great deal of commitment to all those issues, despite many of the big questions about energy being reserved to the United Kingdom Government.

I end by making the case again for the long-awaited interconnector between the Isle of Lewis and the mainland. SSE, Ofgem and the UK Government all now have a duty to make it a reality, ensuring that, in the future, the Western Isles are in an even stronger position to contribute to solving the same national energy challenges that the committee has rightly outlined to us today.

16:47

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): This is a valuable debate, in which we can all learn from each other about local energy experiences, successes and challenges. I commend the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee for its work in looking at the Government’s energy policy.

I stress that, in my view and in the view of Scottish Labour, there is no equitable path to protecting the climate without an industrial strategy for sustainable energy. The 2013 interim target for a 75 per cent emissions reduction is stretching by design and had cross-party support in our Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. It inspired bold and radical transformation of our economy and society. The energy sector has already reduced its emissions considerably, which is commendable, but sustainable energy output is the linchpin to decarbonising many other sectors and there is no time to spare to get it right.

As we have heard, the RSE calls it the energy quadrilemma and rightly acknowledges the economic, environmental, social and reliability

needs of the sector. However, climate action is not just a defensive play; it is a chance for Scotland to have a world-leading future-proofed power sector. It should be the Government's priority to enact a strategy to deliver that vision; that has been a long-term call from the Scottish Labour Party and is recommended in the committee report. The recommendations lay out the many areas in which the Scottish Government must make its position clear and act faster.

Scottish Renewables notes that an overarching and long-term strategy must be key in building investor confidence, which would in turn make for the private investment that the sector needs so badly.

As others have said, the immense disappointment about BiFab undermines any of the SNP's warm words that give the climate ambition or just transition their true worth. The chance for a vibrant renewable energy manufacturing industry is slipping through our fingers, and I am afraid that the SNP Government's excuses are becoming empty.

This new industry requires proper public and private investment at a scale and pace to compete. It feels like the SNP has surrendered before trying, quite frankly. I hope that today's Scottish Government announcement about offshore wind will push that forward.

In his closing remarks, will the minister tell me whether the just transition commission was consulted? Also, will the Scottish Government set out all the avenues that it tried and tested before seeming to give up on workers at BiFab and in Scotland's offshore fabrication industry? As Rhoda Grant said, those who are working there could not do worse, and I am sure that they could do a lot better.

The committee recommends better prominence for public engagement, which is absolutely welcome. Friends of the Earth Scotland and Platform found that 91 per cent of their survey respondents had not heard of the term "just transition". They also found that a high level of concern about job security existed, and a low level of confidence in Government support.

Embedding equity into our emissions reductions pathway remains a challenge, and it is one that my party argues needs a long-term, statutory just transition commission. I ask the minister to highlight whether the Government will consider extending the commission's lifetime in view of the excellent work that it has done so far in relation to the green recovery more widely.

Looking at the rest of the report, I welcome the recommendations for decarbonising transport. That sector is in dire need of intervention through technology, long-term behaviour change and

modal shift. Ombudsman Services state that confident, engaged and empowered consumers and communities will be key to moving in a fair way to net zero. That is relevant to transport as well as to home energy providers. Covid-19 has meant that people are heating their homes more during the day, that they have more cost challenges and that they are often using cars instead of public transport to stay isolated.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can I ask you to wind up, please?

Claudia Beamish: I will do.

A national energy company could take on the energy quadrilemma with vigour and could be a key part of our climate future—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Beamish, you are a star, but that is not winding up. I am just going to move on. Thank you very much.

16:52

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I welcome the important work that has been done by the committee in conducting a health check on Scotland's energy policies. It is particularly encouraging that the Royal Society of Edinburgh's "Scotland's Energy Future" report, as well as the interlinked issues of electric vehicle infrastructure and locally owned energy, were considered.

Today it is beyond any doubt that the monumental challenge of global warming has forced us to continuously rethink and adapt our energy policies. Achieving a net zero economy that is fair to all is an all-encompassing task that will affect all areas of our daily lives. I therefore strongly agree with the committee's conclusion that an independent expert advisory commission, as recommended by the RAC, would be a step forward.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government has already signalled its willingness to establish an effective advisory and monitoring body to assist in making the right decisions when progressing energy-related policies.

I also share the committee's conclusion that we must give public engagement greater prominence as we transition to more sustainable energy. Scotland underwent a previous energy transition when the coal industry vanished, at a significant social cost to many people and their communities, including in my constituency. We must learn from the social problems that other countries have faced recently, including the yellow vest protest in France that was partly a reaction to Government measures that were taken to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

It is therefore cause for optimism that the Scottish Government has commissioned new research, via the climate exchange partnership, on how to communicate climate policies effectively in a post-pandemic Scotland and also on how to engage the public and raise awareness about the need to act on global warming.

To ensure continued public support for Scotland's energy transition, it will also be essential that we reduce any negative economic impact. That is especially important at present, considering the devastating impact that the pandemic is having on employment. Where energy production industries face closure, we must ensure that they are replaced with new, greener energy sources that provide jobs in the same area.

In my constituency, Hunterston B nuclear power station will cease generating power in January 2022, before moving into defuelling and then decommissioning. Currently, Hunterston B employs 520 highly skilled staff and 250 contractors on the site, contributing more than £54 million to the North Ayrshire economy every year. Although the defuelling and decommissioning process will provide jobs to the workforce for years to come, the Scottish and UK Governments must work in partnership with North Ayrshire Council to ensure that we create a new employment future for local communities. I am therefore delighted that the First Minister has made a strong commitment in that regard.

Hunterston A, which closed in 1989, and B station, as well as the neighbouring Hunterston Port and Resource Centre, with its deep-water port, provide prime sites for investment, with excellent energy grid, road, rail and sea links. Given the site's unique infrastructure to support technological advances in new power generation, manufacturing and aquaculture, along with a strong local skills and talent base, developing Hunterston presents us with a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

To help the area's transition, funding through the Ayrshire growth deal to support a centre for research into low-carbon energy and circular economy at the Hunterston strategic west Scotland industrial hub will be a significant step forward. The Scottish Government is determined to drive a green economic recovery with investment in renewable energy at its heart, so our priority must now be to ensure that we attract additional private sector interest in clean energy, to guarantee the presence of sustainable jobs at Hunterston and, indeed, elsewhere in Scotland. Developments at Hunterston and elsewhere will be a boon, especially for young people, who are overwhelmingly supportive of achieving a net zero

economy and who need more opportunities to secure high-quality local jobs in renewable energy.

We will be able to successfully deliver Scotland's energy transition only if we have the wider public on board. We can achieve that by attracting innovative and sustainable industries to Scotland and creating opportunities for future employment in areas where we already have fantastic infrastructure and a skilled workforce, such as at Hunterston in North Ayrshire.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That, Ms Beamish, is how to keep to your time.

16:56

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): Dealing with the energy quadrilemma in four minutes seems to be a real gallop, so I will try to focus on one area, to which Graham Simpson alluded. I am a recent convert to being an EV driver. I have recently gone from being a petrolhead to whatever the new terminology is—nobody has yet told me, but I am looking forward to it being dubbed by the younger generation.

I am very keen that we move to EVs, not least because I have discovered all their merits. However, I have also discovered some of the problems that come with them. What has become clear is that we need a joined-up approach, with a consistent national framework. The reports by the RSE and the committee are great at identifying some of those things. I want to gallop through a few of them.

How we deliver the framework is probably one of the biggest issues. Will it be private, public or a hybrid? Who is co-ordinating it and how will it come together? Who should pay for installation and who is responsible for the maintenance? The Royal Society noted that we need to amend the powers that councils have, especially where planning is concerned. Lesley Deans, from Clackmannanshire Council, highlighted the issues well, particularly those regarding flatted or private developments. Planning requirements already cover parking and other standards. Now we should be considering making charging points a requirement for private developers, otherwise nobody in cities will be able to drive EVs.

Let us face it: if we do not do it, the risk is that ridiculous situations will arise, with people stringing charging leads down communal stairs or out of windows. I have to say that I am a person who has plugged in my car through somebody's window—that is not where we want to go.

We also need better data gathering. Ms Deans told the committee that she did not know how many EVs were in her local authority area. Instead, she bases her estimates of usage on

information from residents who contact her directly. There is no centrally available data to help decision makers with their choices. Ms Deans told us that the situation is further complicated in a small local authority area such as Clackmannanshire by trying to work out whether EV drivers from other areas are using the charging points in that area. I was certainly one of those drivers; before I had my charging point installed at home, I drove into Edinburgh to charge up most days. For the first six weeks that I drove my electric vehicle, I never paid for any energy. It was free everywhere that I went. I am not recommending that, but it is something that we need to consider.

It is a shaky foundation on which to try to drive forward a non-combustion-engine future. It requires people like us to make the transition—there are quite a few of us in the Parliament who are already doing that, and I have friends who are too. However, a lot of people tell me that they are worried about whether and how they will be able to charge, and whether it will be reliable. We need to get the foundation right if we are going to get everybody converted.

There is also the matter of local authority finances. Obviously, our councils were struggling before Covid; now, with the pandemic, things are even worse for a lot of local authorities. They are finding that upkeep is costing them huge sums and that charging points that are currently free to use with the council picking up the tab are not sustainable. We need an appropriate sustainable model, otherwise questions will start to arise from people who are not benefiting.

If a private developer installs a charging point as a result of planning requirements, who will pay for its upkeep? Will that fall to the residents, the council or the private developer?

Councils do not require funding just for upkeep, of course. As part of the net zero 2045 strategy, local authorities will be changing their fleets to environmentally friendly vehicles. The roll-out of hydrogen-powered refuse trucks in Glasgow, for example, required £6.3 million of funding. That was for just one arm of Glasgow's council vehicle fleet. A lot of investment is due.

The evidence that was presented to the committee on the subject of maintenance pointed out that charging points have only a 10-year lifespan. That means that, in theory, some charging points will have to be replaced twice before we hit 2045. The funding from Transport Scotland covers warranty and maintenance agreements, but it does not seem to cover replacements, and warranties on charging points last for only four years. Councils are already banking money for future replacements. Is that the best way to go about it?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will have to pull the plug on you. I am sorry.

Michelle Ballantyne: So my talk is short.

I am enthusiastic, but the minister must look at some of those points.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you.

To avoid curtailing the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice to move decision time to 5.30. I invite the business manager, Graeme Dey, to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be moved to 5.30 pm.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excellent. I hear that Mr Lyle is present.

17:02

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, Presiding Officer.

I was not on the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee when the inquiry took place, but I have been involved in other work on energy that that committee has done. I suppose that I have read the report with fairly fresh eyes, and I wanted to comment on a few points that struck me as I read it.

One of the RSE's 10 guiding principles concerns energy security, including the need for diversity of storage options. It seems to me that, although we are focused on Scotland and the UK, energy is an international commodity, as the report points out in paragraph 25. Therefore, we need to look at energy security as a local and a world issue.

There is no point in relying heavily on interconnectors if there is energy insecurity at the other end of the cable, and electricity is, of course, notoriously difficult to store. Pump storage, such as at Cruachan, was designed for the smoothing of supply and demand, and it is unlikely to provide a greatly increased capacity for storage. Battery technology moves forward gradually, but generally not as fast as its most optimistic proponents hope for.

That is why hydrogen seems to me to be an inherently good solution to a number of the issues that we face. Hydrogen is easier to store than electricity. It can refuel a vehicle more quickly, and it can be used, at least to some degree, in the existing gas network for properties. However, I accept that there are challenges with it. Those challenges include the space that is required to store hydrogen and the inefficiency and cost of

converting wind power to hydrogen and then to electricity. At a recent ScotRail briefing that some members attended, we were told that German railways are trying both hydrogen and batteries in trains but that their present thinking is that batteries are the better way ahead.

I very much agree that reducing demand is a key part of the answer to our energy strategy for the future. We need to find ways of doing our present activities using less energy, but we also need to look at whether we need to do all our current activities. Covid has helped us to see that we may not need to travel to the office as often as we used to. Although I love to visit other countries, including by flying, maybe many of us need to look at doing that less often.

Still on transport, I noted in the Government's response to the report the warning of potentially increased car use and reduced confidence in public transport because of Covid. That concerns me after many years in which all of us have been encouraged to use buses and trains as much as possible. There needs to be careful messaging on that, especially in order not to discourage use of public transport more than we already have.

The RSE report and the committee report refer to the energy quadrilemma. As I understand it, the new factor is acceptability to the public. I think that that is right. As I have just been saying, we all need to look at changing our behaviour, but there is also a place for Government, whether national or local, to lead the way in order to change public opinion.

One example of that would be district heating networks for new properties. The Commonwealth games village in my constituency was built for the 2014 games and is now a mixture of bought and social rented houses and a care home. Frankly, I do not think that the public were consulted too much on whether that development should have district heating or not. However, the housing is high quality and was snapped up quickly. Yes, there were teething problems with the district heating but, on the whole, it seems to be positive and I welcome the plans for a future licensing regime.

That is an example of a different kind of housing development. The public will gradually get used to the concept as more of their friends and neighbours experience that kind of heating. Just the fact that we see so many more electric cars being charged on our streets and in our car parks increases confidence among people who are realising that more drivers out there are successfully living with electric cars.

I commend the committee for its report and I am sure that we will be returning to the subject many times in future.

17:06

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): As a member of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate on the important subject of energy and the energy transition. My thanks to my fellow committee members, the clerks and participants who gave evidence for their hard work on the inquiry.

The committee's aim was to conduct a health check on Scotland's energy policy and the inquiry looked at a rich variety of areas. The subject is very close to my heart, as I have long advocated making better use of our natural resources to provide the energy that is needed to run our heating systems. I will give an example from my constituency, Midlothian North and Musselburgh, where there is an abundance of flooded mine shafts that are considered to be a threat and a danger. On the contrary, I consider them to present opportunities to develop geothermal energy from the water that they contain, which would provide my constituency with both jobs and relatively cheap heating sources.

I believe that it is important that we examine the impact that our energy supply has on the environment and consumers, which is why I welcome discussions on the topic and collaboration to find innovative, renewable and effective routes to securing our energy. We need to look at how we achieve Scotland's energy transition and how Scotland's electricity and gas network infrastructure will continue to support that. It will be necessary to look at the whole picture and to find creative, smarter models that will make that possible.

Despite the quadrilemma that was posed by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and so eloquently expounded by Gordon Lindhurst, progress has been made, although there are clearly challenges ahead of us. Technology tends to move swiftly and sometimes unexpectedly. The committee looked extensively at electric vehicles, or EVs. The challenges of providing sufficient physical power to support that means of transport is not insignificant. Although a number of alternatives were explored, such as hydrogen power, there clearly needs to be a greater level of confidence among consumers in the availability of charging points—or whatever the alternative fuel for vehicles may be. Electric vehicles scarcely make up 3 per cent of vehicles that are on the road. Not enough charging units are yet available to provide that confidence for the public.

It is interesting to look at locally owned energy, in which the creation of local energy systems is clearly linked to a reduction in the pressure on electric supplies. That would enable existing

electric supplies to better cope with the potential exponential demand from EVs. A major grey area that was identified was how to substitute our current gas-fired heating systems with a low-carbon alternative. The alternative was not easy to identify, although work is clearly continuing at pace. The most obvious alternative is hydrogen, but its low calorific value and tendency to explode need to be overcome. I am sure that we will see great strides on that in the future.

The committee achieved its aim of conducting a health check on Scotland's energy policy, as covered by all those strands, as complex as they are. The energy transition opens new opportunities for industry and local communities. However, it is extremely important that we progress in a joined-up and cohesive way, and that all the different strands of energy production, including technologies that are not yet developed, are brought together and are capable of having systems that speak to each other and can provide a joined-up energy network across Scotland.

One key consideration is how that transition can address fuel poverty, and it was encouraging that the Scottish Government and the committee were significantly focused on that element. It is to be hoped that new energy sources will open up new opportunities to improve that key policy area.

Genuine behavioural changes in society must be hoped for and nurtured to support these energy initiatives. We need the public to embrace new technologies, but we need them to do so voluntarily and with a degree of enthusiasm and an acceptance that, frankly, there is little choice if we are to protect our environment.

I am glad that the Scottish Government is continuing to work with Scotland's electricity distribution network companies to identify how innovation and smarter management of our electricity networks can reduce the need for grid upgrade and reinforcement and the associated costs and disruption.

It is important that we look to the future on this, and make sure that we are thinking ahead. Overall, I think that the committee carried out a thorough and comprehensive investigation into energy, which is particularly commendable given the disruptions that were caused by Covid-19 and its fallout. I know that the Scottish Government will be keen to consider all the points that the committee raised, and that that will result in effective and workable legislation, which will enable Scotland to take the lead in developing the abundance of opportunity that is available to this nation.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to closing speeches.

17:11

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland)

(Lab): The RSE's report on Scotland's energy future has underpinned the debate. As others have done, I want to reflect on its conclusions:

"Energy continues to be unaffordable for a sizeable minority of the population, communities are concerned over what a transition will mean for their jobs and families, and recent events have highlighted concerns over how secure our supply of energy truly is."

Those are big challenges, and recent events have particularly highlighted the challenge of achieving a transition that sustains communities and jobs, nowhere more so than on the Isle of Lewis and in Fife, where—as Rhoda Grant and Alasdair Allan have both said—BiFab appears to be facing an existential crisis once again.

If energy transition means anything, it means redeploying people and skills from existing energy industries to the energy industries of the future. The yards at Arnish on Lewis and at Methil and Burntisland in Fife, which did so much to equip Scotland's offshore oil and gas industry in the past, now face the risk of closure because BiFab has failed to compete for contracts to supply the offshore wind industry of the future. The committee report highlights the importance of a long-term strategic framework for energy policy and of independent advice on our energy future. The BiFab situation is surely an urgent and topical example of what those things are needed for.

Policy papers, advisory groups and vision statements are not enough; there must also be the political will to take the decisions and make the investments that can turn vision into reality. Securing renewable energy jobs cannot simply be left to market forces, and I hope that when the Government makes a statement on BiFab next week, it will support that view. What we need instead is decisive action to secure the investment that Scotland's yards require, not only for their own sake, but as a first step in a strategy to secure future jobs as part of our energy transition.

The RSE also said:

"There are many options available to Scotland to meet our energy needs. There is, however, no single solution to all of our problems and all of them will require acceptance of trade-offs and a willingness to compromise."

Those are wise words, and they express the scope and scale of the challenge in taking forward energy policy in the 2020s.

We have heard today about the need to step up the pace of providing charging facilities for electric vehicles. Over 100 years of growth in the manufacture of internal combustion engines might already be coming to an end, but ambitious targets for phasing out new petrol and diesel cars and vans over the next 12 years can be met only if we

have comprehensive charging infrastructure across the country.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the longer-term options. Investment is bound to focus on the targets for 2030 and 2032, but Government must also lead and enable investment now for the period beyond those dates.

Electric vehicles might be a transitional solution instead of a permanent one, as fuel cell technologies and hydrogen-powered transport become technically and financially more competitive, as John Mason and others have mentioned. More likely, as the RSE report suggests, is that electric vehicles will be part of a mixed economy in the 2030s and 2040s, so we need to invest in that infrastructure now but also have an eye to what else we will need in 10 or 20 years' time.

Hydrogen already offers solutions for larger vehicles. Aberdeen led the way on hydrogen buses with support from the Scottish Government, among others, and it will shortly take delivery of the world's first fleet of hydrogen-powered double-decker buses.

Road freight also needs a more sustainable long-term solution than electric charging. Hydrogen and fuel cells could offer that solution. The electrification of mainline railways, such as Aberdeen to the central belt, would make a lot of sense, but electrification will not be the right answer everywhere. Scotland should also seek to take the lead on hydrogen power for trains, and for ferries.

The minister also rightly focused on behaviours and culture, and referred to the importance attached to them by the Committee on Climate Change. As has been mentioned, the Covid crisis has made that challenge all the greater. More people are using more heat and power at home, more people are driving to work instead of taking the bus or the train, and those things will make energy transition all the more urgent and behaviour change all the more important. Those are challenges for housing policy and transport policy, as well as in the energy field, and it would be good to hear from the minister a renewed commitment to working across policy areas to meet those challenges in the future.

17:16

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the committee and RSE for their work. The current crisis has highlighted the need to build back better, with improved health outcomes, reduced inequality and more resilient communities. A green recovery that has climate change at its heart is a means of achieving all

three, and our energy policy will be key in making that happen.

We have heard a range of views in today's debate, but there is consensus around the need for a green recovery. Gordon Lindhurst, speaking on behalf of the committee, highlighted the variation in the provision of charging points across Scotland and the need for improvement in that area. He gave a witty and interesting speech—which was somewhat unlike him—centring around the idea of a quadrilemma, which was very helpful in informing the debate.

Paul Wheelhouse talked about the intention to expand offshore wind capacity. That is to be welcomed, but we should also be thinking about decommissioning capacity for turbines.

Gordon Lindhurst: I wonder whether the member would share of his own largesse of witticisms and excellent speeches and assist me on future occasions.

Maurice Golden: I think that Mr Lindhurst's scale of improvement has been such that he does not need my help.

I want to highlight to the minister that there is also a need to look at decommissioning capacity for turbines, because this is an opportunity to develop high-skilled jobs in Scotland.

The minister also recognised the importance of behaviour change in achieving our ambitions, and that is an aspect that I warmly welcome.

Rhoda Grant spoke about the need for communities to be at the heart of our decision-making process, and said that our network needs to be improved. Liam MacArthur spoke of the inspiring committee visit to Orkney and the excellent work that is being carried out in his constituency on ReFLEX and the smart island energy projects. I still think that there is an opportunity to develop an anaerobic digestion facility that would help with the flexibility of energy production in Orkney.

The SNP has rightly set an ambitious target for generating energy from community and locally owned sources, but sadly it looks set to miss that target. However, that highlights the need to properly support local energy initiatives, especially as they can help to provide regeneration funds for communities in the years ahead. Every community should benefit, however, not just those that have access to the infrastructure. That is why the Scottish Conservatives have proposed a renewable energy bond to help to share the wealth among communities. That principle of benefit for all must be at the heart of our energy policy, such as with the transition to electric vehicles. There is a target for 8,000 public charging points by 2030, but by March this year, only 1,265 had been

installed—a point that was well made by Michelle Ballantyne, who is looking to move on from becoming a petrolhead.

The committee has called for the SNP to explain how it will meet the target, but I would also like the minister to say more about where charging points will be installed. If everyone is to benefit from the improved air quality and reduced running costs that electric vehicles bring, they need to be viable not just in leafy suburbs but in the remotest villages and in areas where deprivation levels are higher.

I know that the Scottish Government supports the project PACE pilot from Scottish Power to help to address that. That support and the pilot are both welcome, but I urge Scottish ministers to recognise how much more must be done. That includes better supporting the electrification of public transport to further widen the reach of clean transport among people on the lowest incomes.

We can further help people on low incomes by improving the energy efficiency of our homes and making them easier and cheaper to heat. I am proud that the Scottish Conservatives led the way on that, securing this Parliament's support for an energy performance certificate band C upgrade, where possible, by 2030—a point that was made by my colleagues Alexander Burnett and Graham Simpson.

As the committee suggests, politicians need to

“be honest with the public about what is achievable, what choices must be made ...”.

The public must be carried with us, knowing what is expected of them and what benefit they will derive from future energy policy and, ultimately, from meeting our 2045 net zero goal.

17:21

Paul Wheelhouse: I welcome the debate again. I have taken many of the interesting points on board. Unfortunately, I cannot respond to all of them in the time available. I thank the committee again and the people who gave evidence for their contribution to developing Scotland's energy policies.

I want to correct something. I mentioned earlier the number of meetings that the Scottish energy advisory board has had. I can update the convener and colleagues and say that the previous three meetings were held on 17 June 2019, 9 July 2019 and 16 July 2020. Meetings were unfortunately disrupted by Covid earlier this year, but we met SEAB in July and will continue to do so. In reference to the recommendations that have been made, I am confident that we have an effective advisory and monitoring body in SEAB to support the Scottish Government in making the

correct decisions when progressing our energy policies.

Gordon Lindhurst: Can the minister confirm where those meetings were publicised? If he does not have that detail to hand, it would be helpful if he could confirm that to the committee later.

Paul Wheelhouse: I am happy to do that. I do not have the details to hand, but I will certainly get that information to Mr Lindhurst and the committee as soon as I can.

Dr Allan and others, including Rhoda Grant, made reference to issues relating to energy security, which was understandable in the context of what has happened recently in the Western Isles. I want to update members on that. There is no impact on the supply of electricity to homes and businesses on Lewis and Harris as a result of the fault. Contingency measures, including the co-ordination of additional fuel deliveries to the Battery Point and Arnish power stations, are in place to ensure a continued safe and secure supply of electricity.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks is currently undertaking further fault investigations. Once those are complete, it will instigate a restoration plan that will involve either repair of the existing cable or, potentially, an end-to-end renewal depending on where the disruption has taken place. We continue to engage with SSEN and other key stakeholders on the islands to ensure that the issue is dealt with. There are options for batteries to be installed to allow some of the renewable capacity to be used as an alternative to using the fossil fuel-fired power station.

Kenny Gibson raised important issues around the Hunterston B power station. Of course we will work closely with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, EDF, North Ayrshire Council and our economic development agencies to support the North Ayrshire economy in the event that the plant is to close. He is right to identify that there will be no immediate shock to jobs because there will be plenty of jobs involved with nuclear defuelling in the initial period. I hope to work with him and others if we have the opportunity to do so.

Stewart Stevenson also raised an important point around energy security and focused on zero-carbon fuels. We had a very positive meeting with him recently looking at the opportunities for St Fergus with regard to carbon capture, utilisation and storage and the development of hydrogen at that site. There is massive potential for exporting hydrogen to other countries—Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium in particular—in relation to that opportunity for the north-east economy.

Graham Simpson, Maurice Golden and others referenced building standards and they were right

to do so. Those will be critical and my colleague Kevin Stewart is working extremely hard to make sure that we have the right environment in place to support decarbonisation of our building stock.

Several colleagues mentioned the BiFab issue. As they rightly identified, the cabinet secretary, Fiona Hyslop, will make a statement on that next week, so I will not go into too much detail now, other than to say that we are doing everything that we can to support the business within the state aid guidance. Members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the cabinet secretary after her statement.

On the wider point around interconnection to our islands and energy security, I hope that members who have been critical of the Scottish Government would recognise that it has been at the heart of the issue, not only driving the development of wind in our remote islands but putting the case for interconnection to UK ministers and to the regulator. We have had great success with Shetland, receiving a decision by Ofgem to proceed, and we are working hard with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Orkney Islands Council to ensure that similar investment is made in both those areas.

Andy Wightman: Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I believe that I am short of time, but if the Presiding Officer will give me some time back, I can give way.

The Presiding Officer: I will allow a brief intervention.

Andy Wightman: This may be the last energy debate that we have in the current session of Parliament, but the minister has not yet addressed the Scottish Government's commitment to establish a publicly owned company. Will he be able to give us any update on that any time soon?

Paul Wheelhouse: I will, in due course. It has not been a major feature of today's debate, but I will be happy to come back to Mr Wightman and the committee on the matter. It is certainly still our intention to establish a public energy company. Some of our work with local authorities has been disrupted by Covid, as staff availability at the local authority end has been affected by the deployment of staff resources to support the pandemic response, but we are working hard on that. We have had positive discussions with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and COSLA on progressing a white-label model, and we will be happy to come back to the committee and Parliament with further detail.

I know that I am short of time, but I will address a few other points that were made. On energy efficiency, Alexander Burnett was right to highlight

the role of pumped hydro storage, although unfortunately that was the only point in his speech with which I agreed. We need the UK Government to provide a route to market for that important technology. Mr Burnett was right to identify Cruachan—I have just consented to a 1,500MW scheme at Coire Glas, and I would like that to be developed as a major capital project for the Scottish economy, but we need movement on a route to market.

However, I very much disagree with Mr Burnett in other areas. We are making great progress—we have identified £1.6 billion of funding that is available from now until 2025 for heating buildings and to support the scaling up of our existing heat decarbonisation energy-efficiency delivery programmes. That is in addition to the £500 million that we are spending in the current session of Parliament. I remind Mr Burnett that there was no equivalent scheme at UK level for England in terms of public funding for energy efficiency when we made our commitment to the programme that is currently going through this Parliament. That support means that we are well placed to ensure that heat and energy efficiency supply chains benefit from a green recovery as our programmes restart.

By the end of this year, we will publish our updated energy efficient Scotland route map and a heat decarbonisation policy statement to provide a comprehensive overview of our policy on heating buildings. It is important for the regulators to have clarity about our policy intention in Scotland, and those publications will help in that regard.

I will respond to one or two other points from members. Claudia Beamish alluded to the just transition commission, which is due to report by March 2021. Its future will be a matter for the cabinet secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, to determine at that point.

Kenneth Gibson was right to say that the transition from coal was not well managed in Scotland or across the UK as a whole. It is important that we reflect on how we support the oil and gas industry, as Lewis Macdonald mentioned. We are working with the strategic leadership group for oil and gas on energy transition to try to get it right this time round for that very important sector.

I welcome Michelle Ballantyne's conversion to electric vehicles—she is ahead of me, but I hope that I will catch up with her one day. A number of members referred to project PACE, which is a good example of how distribution network organisations can support local authorities to deliver charging networks at a lower cost. In North Lanarkshire, I believe that there has been a saving of £2.6 million for the council, which is a great example.

I will tie up my speech there. I thank all members for their speeches and I look forward to hearing from the deputy convener of the committee.

17:29

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): As the deputy convener, I am happy to sum up on the committee's behalf. I will pick out a few areas that I hope will be of interest to members and to the public. I thank our clerks, all those who contributed evidence and all our fellow committee members, past and present, who contributed to the report.

As the convener said in his opening remarks, the committee wanted to consider the Royal Society of Edinburgh's "Scotland's Energy Future" report, which was published in June 2019, linking it to consideration of electric vehicle infrastructure and of local energy options and solutions.

The convener covered some of the areas of interest, including the energy quadrilemma, which has been mentioned by several members. What we mean by that is looking at climate change, ensuring affordability, providing energy security and developing an energy policy that the public will accept and that is both sustainable and fair. He also mentioned strategic oversight of energy policy and issues surrounding public engagement. We ask all our fellow members to do what they can to promote that issue in their respective communities across Scotland.

I will touch on some of the key areas that the committee considered. One consists of issues relating to security of supply. There are also electric vehicles, the cultural change that we need in order to bring about the transition, and local energy and the role of local authorities.

Starting with security of supply, it will be no surprise for members to hear that that subject featured throughout the RSE's report. Professor Rebecca Lunn's initial remarks to the committee were along the lines that Scotland is part of an interconnected electricity supply network, operating in European and global energy markets, with interconnectors to France, Germany, Norway and Ireland. If Scotland does not produce more energy but continues to consume at current rates or higher, we will be left with extremely poor energy security. Those interconnectors mean a "degree of reliance" on others, according to Professor Gareth Harrison, citing post-Brexit uncertainty and its potential long-term impact on investment.

Contrasting that with the counterbalance of generating our own supply, the picture changes significantly. Over the past 10 years, Scotland has almost always met its own electricity demand via

our own generation. In 2019, that was the case 98.4 per cent of the time. The Scottish Government's priority, of course, leans more heavily towards ensuring our own capability to generate the energy that we need in Scotland, and the interconnectors may allow us to export our excess energy and become a world leader in clean energy production and supply. The report emphasises that reduction in overall energy consumption is the best way to tackle the energy quadrilemma that has been outlined by the convener and others. To get further along that road, we need to drive behavioural change in business and industry and to take the public along with us on that journey.

That leads me nicely to the second area that the committee considered: electric vehicles and the cultural change that is needed to make EVs work. It is fair to say that there was quite a bit of confusion during the earlier evidence sessions about the electric vehicle revolution. Where exactly are we with it? Who is driving the policy? Are we paying enough attention to the charging point infrastructure? How are we persuading the public to make the transition to electric vehicles?

We heard that things are improving, and the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland's electricity to 2030, which was published just last year, outlined the investments that are being made in our electricity networks to deliver our ambitions on electric vehicles. As was mentioned by several members, Scotland is well ahead in providing electrical vehicle charging points. I will make a shameless plug for East Ayrshire Council, which has 67 public and fleet chargers already in place across the area.

It is fair to say that the committee was a little unclear about some aspects, such as the proportion of high-speed chargers that are available in our communities, the cost of charging and whether that will be regulated or even re-emerge as subject to tax when the Treasury realises the extent of its impending losses in fuel duty revenue, which is currently about £28 billion per year.

What might become of our beloved garage networks? Will they evolve into electric charging bays where people can stop and have their lunch while their car charges up, or might they disappear altogether because people want more localised, perhaps home-based, charging solutions?

Ultimately, the committee heard that, for people to make the switch in the numbers that are required to tip the balance in favour of EVs, some improvements in the cost of buying EVs or a kind of incentivised used-EV scheme that clearly delivers good value for money will be needed.

Interestingly, one aspect of the uncertainty was that the estimated demand for electricity could double with a move to EVs, but the consequent benefits for better air quality and lower or zero emissions were obvious to all of us. We clearly need to be in a position to meet that energy demand, and consumers need to be confident that that will happen before they decide to switch over.

I want to mention the final area of the committee's work, which is local energy and the role for our local authorities. The RSE's report reminded us that local energy systems will cover decentralised energy generation projects, district heating solutions—which the committee is examining separately—and various smart technologies to support—[*Inaudible.*]

The committee heard that local communities can, under such schemes, take direct responsibility for the generation and storage of the energy that they need and use and, perhaps through community ownership, get the benefits of reduced costs as well as profit. Our colleague Claire Mack of Scottish Renewables pointed out that we must not conflate local energy systems with local ownership, however, because there is a difference. Indeed, local energy systems are likely to involve organisations and owners of all types.

In summary, we have heard good contributions today both from members of the committee and from other members, and I thank all who made a positive contribution. The importance of clean, sustainable and affordable energy to the people of Scotland is one of the fundamental challenges that we face, so I hope that the work that the committee has done will shine a light on the issues that lie ahead and make a positive contribution in helping the Scottish Government to shape its policy in the months and years to come.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes our debate on the energy inquiry.

Business Motions

17:36

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-23153, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 3 November 2020

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Ministerial Statement: BiFab

followed by Ministerial Statement: Fireworks

followed by Ministerial Statement: Winter Preparedness in Social Care

followed by Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee Debate: Arts Funding

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.30 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 November 2020

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Health and Sport;
Communities and Local Government

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 5 November 2020

12.20 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12.20 pm First Minister's Questions

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Social Security and Older People

followed by Ministerial Statement: Young Persons' Guarantee

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.05 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 10 November 2020

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

Wednesday 11 November 2020

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Finance;
 Environment, Climate Change and Land
 Reform
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.10 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 12 November 2020

12.20 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 12.20 pm First Minister's Questions
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Rural Economy and Tourism
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Pre-release Access to
 Official Statistics (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.05 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 2 November 2020, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-23156, on the stage 1 timetable for a bill, and business motions S5M-23157 and S5M-23158, on stage 2 timetables for two bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Liability for NHS Charges (Treatment of Industrial Disease) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 15 January 2021.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 20 November 2020.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 27 November 2020.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:37

The Presiding Officer: The next item is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I call Graeme Dey to move motions S5M-23154 and S5M-23155, on designation of a lead committee and motions S5M-23159 to S5M-23162 on approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health and Sport Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Supplementary Legislative Consent Motion for the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Meetings of Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/284) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 15) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/288) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 16) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/301) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Act 2020 Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2020 [draft] be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:37

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that motion S5M-23100, in the name of Gordon Lindhurst, on an energy inquiry, be agreed to.'

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the findings set out in the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee's Energy Inquiry, which were published on 8 July 2020.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the Parliamentary Bureau motions. Does any member object?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motions S5M-23154, S5M-23155 and S5M-23159 to S5M-23162, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health and Sport Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Supplementary Legislative Consent Motion for the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Meetings of Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/284) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 15) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/288) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 16) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/301) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Act 2020 Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2020 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. We will shortly move on to a members' business debate in the name of Colin Beattie, on the anniversary of German reunification.

We will pause for a few moments to allow members and ministers to change seats. I urge members to be careful, when leaving the chamber, that they observe social distancing, wear their masks and observe the rules around the Holyrood complex.

Reunification of Germany (30th Anniversary)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-22911, in the name of Colin Beattie, on the 30th anniversary of German reunification. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament celebrates that 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of German reunification, which took place on 3 October 1990; remembers all those who were instrumental in bringing about the fall of the Berlin Wall, a wall that divided Europe, on 9 November 1989, and acknowledges that this event marked the end of the Cold War; supports the notion of further peace in Europe; values international cooperation, especially with Scotland's neighbours in Europe; believes that these global partnerships are extremely important, especially now in a modern, globalised society where international cooperation is imperative to an interconnected world; believes that national challenges, such as those that have been presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, can be eased when working together with other countries to solve problems; extends Scotland's well wishes and friendship to all those who are commemorating the reunification of Germany, the fall of the Berlin Wall and celebrating continued peace and prosperity across Europe, and sends its best wishes to the people of Germany on this occasion.

17:41

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I am delighted to have the opportunity to debate such an important topic, commemorating an event that brought unity and peace to our continent 30 years ago and changed Europe for the better.

I am the convener of the cross-party group on Germany. It is an honour to be a member of a group that highlights the importance of our close relationship and co-operation with Germany as well as discussing that country's rich culture and history. I am pleased to lead the debate today and to provide an opportunity for us all to appreciate how far our democracy in Europe has come in the past 30 years.

The reunification of the Federal Republic of Germany with the German Democratic Republic on 3 October 1990 was a momentous event that will now seem a distant memory for some, given the strength and stability that we currently see there and the unity that we are now used to across Europe. Few of us, however, have forgotten the tumultuous and chaotic precursor to that event: the fall of the Berlin wall on 9 November 1989.

As we do with most historic events, we like to place neat timelines and precise fixed dates around our European history. It makes it much more presentable and palatable, yet there was

nothing neat or precise about the demise of the GDR and perhaps the biggest shift in European geopolitics in recent times.

The wall became a symbol not only of the divided Germany but of the battle between communism and capitalism. It became a focus on two different, starkly divided, regimes. The GDR seemed monolithic and secure—it was supported by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It seemed that that division of Europe would last for ever.

As late as January 1989, the East German leader, Erich Honecker, said that the wall would still exist in 50 or even 100 years. However, events happening elsewhere indicated that the so-called "iron curtain" was crumbling. In May 1989, Hungarian border guards began to remove fortifications from the border with Austria. What followed was nothing less than amazing.

Those of us who are old enough can remember the startling television news reports from that time. To see columns of East German Trabant motor cars wheezing their way across fields and country roads in Hungary was incredible. No one knew what was really happening. The expectation was that the communist authorities would intervene. Perhaps, remembering what had happened in Prague in 1968, we even thought that Soviet Russia would intervene militarily.

All of that was perhaps even more surreal for me. I was living and working in Bangkok at the time and was seeing it from a distance and through multiple perspectives. It was difficult to comprehend what was happening and unbelievable to watch communist structures falling apart. The power of individual citizens working together was prevailing over the Soviet dictatorship. That was happening everywhere in eastern Europe, but nowhere more so than in hard-line East Germany.

Hungary opened its borders and thousands poured over into the west. Nearly 6,000 East Germans who presented themselves at the West German embassy in Prague were allowed to leave for the west. By October, the GDR leader, Erich Honecker, had quit and, by November, it was estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million people were demonstrating in Alexanderplatz—one of the largest demonstrations in the history of East Germany.

Soon after, the Berlin wall symbolically fell, the crossings opened and East Germans were free to travel to the west. Families who had faced a literal wall being built between them were reunited after decades. Thousands flooded over the border into West Berlin. Subsequently, of course, the Berlin wall was literally demolished, piece by piece, as democracy prevailed. As political events hurtled

out of control in East Germany, it took many months for the conclusion to be reached that artificially perpetuating a divided Germany was in no one's interest. On 3 October 1990, just over 30 years ago, and after some 40 years of division, Germany was reunited.

It must be difficult now to understand how it felt when the division of Germany ended. For me, it was a continuation of the democratic process in Europe; for Germany, it was the beginning of the huge task of rebuilding East Germany. The economy in the GDR was on the verge of collapse, with a crumbling infrastructure, outdated factories and high unemployment. I remember that, in the early days, a figure of €100 billion was allocated to the work that was required. In fact, the investment amounted to almost €2 trillion over the 20 years following reunification. All of that went into reshaping the infrastructure in East Germany.

It was a time for courage among European leaders, and particularly among West German leaders, who had to conceive a new future for this new land. The fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany was, essentially, the final nail in the coffin of the cold war, and other Warsaw pact countries followed very quickly in throwing off the yoke of Communist dictatorship. Germany showed the way.

The end of the cold war ushered in a new era of peace and economic growth across Europe, especially for those countries in the European Union. Indeed, joining the European Union became the gold standard for the emerging democracies, and they have prospered hugely as a result.

We live in a globally interconnected world, where co-operation and joint action on the huge challenges that face us are essential. Scotland wishes to play its part in this fast-moving partnership-driven world. International co-operation is essential in this new world of ours. Germany's contribution to Europe has been massive, and the economic success of Germany since reunification has been notable. The country has made impressive social developments and has become a key player in international co-operation through its roles in the European Union, NATO and the United Nations. In Angela Merkel, it has an excellent role model of a leader, and it has been at the forefront of difficult international issues that have required cross-country co-operation. On matters such as the refugee crisis, terrorism and global climate change, Germany's contribution to our global society is remarkable.

We should reflect on the progress that has been made in the 30 years of co-operation that resulted from the events that we are remembering this evening. Therefore, let me extend my personal well wishes, my well wishes as convener of the

cross-party group on Germany and what I believe are the well wishes of all Scots to the people of Germany on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the reunification of Germany following the fall of the Berlin wall. I look forward to continued peace and prosperity across Europe and to a closer Scottish and German friendship over the coming years.

17:48

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I thank Colin Beattie for submitting this motion for debate, and I recognise his excellent convenership of the cross-party group on Germany. That group has a meeting this evening, starting at 6 o'clock, and I beg your indulgence, Presiding Officer, as I would like to leave shortly before then, because Colin Beattie has asked me to convene in his place so that he can stay and listen to all the speeches in this debate and join us later.

Many members know about my long-standing connections with Germany and with the German language, which I studied first at school. My first visit to Germany was at the age of 16, to the Ruhrgebiet and the Friesian islands, and I subsequently worked in Wilhelmshaven, in the hospitality industry—waitressing and cleaning, as it was known then. I am qualified to teach the German language—well, I was; I am probably a bit rusty now—after studying it at the University of Strathclyde and the University of Birmingham, and I eventually worked for a German oil-drilling company in Aberdeen, where the working languages were English and German.

Thinking back, I must have been working at the drilling company at the time of the fall of the wall and the very quick reunification. I honestly cannot remember there being much celebration at the time, but maybe that was because everything happened so very quickly, and people were in a state of shock.

Nonetheless, the process showed that, whether nations are coming together or going their separate ways, things can be done quickly and easily where all parties act in good faith. In this case, it was helped by the fact that West Germany has had strong post-war leaders. Since reunification, Germany has had only three leaders: Helmut Kohl, who was in office from 1982 to 1998 and supervised the reunification; Gerhard Schröder; and Angela Merkel—or Mutti Merkel, as she is known—who has been in office since 2005 but is shortly to retire. She comes from the east, which has been helpful in giving her a strong sense of leadership in bringing East and West Germany together. As we know, that has not been easy, but she has made many bold decisions—

helped, as I said, by the fact that she comes from the east.

Germany has always had strong support from the west—who can ever forget the “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech by John F Kennedy? In more recent times, with the Scottish Government and devolution, Scotland has built strong links with Germany. In 2018, Fiona Hyslop opened the Germany innovation and investment hub, and in June that year the First Minister led a delegation of 12 Scottish companies with the aim of growing exports to Germany, which are currently worth around £2 billion. Looking inward, I note that there are 155 German companies in Scotland, which currently employ around 18,000 people.

Although I have visited Germany many times over the decades, until recently I had not visited Berlin—what an omission. It is a wonderful, vibrant, international, safe city. I have learned a lot about the history of not only Berlin itself but the wall, and I look forward to making more, longer visits in the future.

I will finish by mentioning the work of an artist from north-east Scotland, Sandy Cheyne, who lives in Newtonhill in my constituency. He was living and working as a teacher in Berlin at the time of the wall, and he captured its fall in some wonderful paintings, which were displayed in the Rendezvous gallery in Aberdeen 30 years on. He described that time as “the most exciting period” of his life, and few would disagree.

17:53

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): Presiding Officer,

“The German people, conscious of their responsibility before God and mankind,

Inspired by the determination to promote world peace as an equal partner in a united Europe”.

Those words are from the preamble to the basic law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was born from the ashes of the second world war. I think that it is fair to say that Germany has worked hard to live up to its stated aspiration, and it has largely succeeded in spite of a lengthy and painful division into east and west.

The regime in East Germany acted in many ways like the one that preceded it, telling people what to believe, what to think and what to say. I will offer a single illustration, if I may, of that in action. The mother of a friend of mine grew up in East Germany. She wanted to become a doctor but was told that she could only become a nurse. Why? She was not told why at the time. Was it a lack of academic grades, ability or interest? No. It was simply because, as a young girl one summer, she had attended a Christian children’s camp and

was thereby tarred for life. In East Germany, myriad files that were kept on people’s lives held details of similar cases. I think that Angela Merkel herself, who of course came from a minister’s family, was told by her mother that, as a Christian, she would simply have to be much better at what she did than other people in order to succeed.

We must always beware of such a suffocating state system arising at any time in any country, including our own. People losing their jobs because of what they believe, think or say—does that sound familiar? I remember being in East Berlin when the wall still stood; I remember the empty shelves in the shops and the mood of the people there and then. Colin Beattie spoke of the euphoria when that symbol of division came down.

However, the whole wall did not come down, because part remains as a reminder of the past. We should be wary of mindless destruction of remnants of the past—of symbols that should be kept to remind us of our own fallibility. That original euphoria gave way to quiet determination, which was needed by the German people over the years of work on reunification.

Not everything in former East Germany was bad—communities and families can often thrive in difficult circumstances—and, indeed, not everything in West Germany was without its faults. Following reunification, there have been points of disagreement.

A few years after the events of the fall of the wall and reunification, I was with a friend, Henry, on a walking trip on the East German-Czech border. Henry is a proud Markkleeberger—I hasten to add that Markkleeberg is near to, but not part of, Leipzig; in Edinburgh, the term “Leither” will explain the distinction to a Scots audience. He parked the car, only to be immediately reprimanded by a fellow East German for parking in the wrong place. “Blöder Wessi!”—translated, that is “Stupid West German!”—the stranger added, noticing the West German number plate on the car. Henry replied very politely but with a most German response, noting that there was no sign prohibiting parking. He added, with feeling, “Und im übrigen bin ich kein blöder Wessi!”—“And I’m not a stupid West German!”.

Fraught relations sometimes came to the fore in the time following reunification. Sometimes it was somewhat humorous, as in that case. However, there were also many difficulties in the real sense that the German people, on both sides of the former border, succeeded in overcoming. At the end of the day, their determination, hard work, commitment, planning and—indeed—humour have won the day.

To quote Psalm 133:1:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

17:58

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Colin Beattie on securing this important debate. I am sure that, if Covid-19 were not with us, the celebrations marking such an historic occasion would have been a joy to behold.

I studied German in high school and took part in a student exchange. When I was 15, the German kids came over to the Renfrew region of Strathclyde Regional Council, as it then was. When I was 16, we went over to the Kreis Herford region in West Germany. As well as attending school for three days in the region, we spent the second week in West Berlin and also went on a day visit into East Berlin.

We had a tour of the Reichstag and it was remarkable to see die Mauer—the wall—out of a window only metres away from the building that used to be the seat of the German Parliament. Looking over the wall into no-man's-land and seeing the other wall on the eastern side is an image that will stay with me for the rest of my life, as will being informed that there was no doubt that somebody was watching us from the other side, because of where we were standing. Whether that was true or not, it was a nice wee story to be told, and it was akin to being in a spy movie.

The visit to communist East Berlin was one of the most surreal journeys in my life. We used the underground, passing through dimly lit stations that had not seen any investment in decades. It was like a scene from a spy movie. We were informed of the dos and don'ts in East Berlin and it seemed quite harsh. That memory stayed with me as a 16-year-old boy from Port Glasgow: I felt a genuine sense of sorrow for the people of East Germany but also hope for them.

The politics of the 1980s and 1990s certainly shaped my life, living through the cold war with the daily update of the west versus the east, which always painted a picture of oppression and fear about the east. When a state takes to shooting its own people as they are trying to escape to a better life, it is no wonder that such a picture was painted. Colin Beattie also touched on the cold war. When, as an MSP, I go into schools, a question that is always posed concerns how I got involved in politics and what stimulated my political thoughts. When I talk about the cold war, I feel as though I am giving a history lesson to many younger people now—indeed, I am, because it was many years ago.

I am thankful that it was many years ago and that things have moved on. I remember watching

the images on television of the rallies leading up to the night when the wall came down and genuinely shedding a tear of joy. Even then, I knew that it would never be easy reconnecting 18 million people overnight and there would be many challenges ahead. However, if any country could do it, it would be the former West Germany, once again becoming a unified German nation.

At university, I studied at the Fachhochschule in Dortmund and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, but one of the things that I took from my time there in 1995 was talking to German students about how they felt that reunification had developed and what their thoughts were about the future. Something that struck me was the hope that people from the western part of Germany had about the east and their aspirations for the people from the east.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am sorry that I cannot participate in the whole of this very interesting debate. I was in Germany in 1990 when the wall came down as one of the soldiers who were based out there. Stuart McMillan talks about tears of joy. Would he accept that it was quite a moving experience for us, having been on the front line, as it were, of the cold war, to open the gates of our barracks and welcome in the East Germans and look after them until their country could take them back after the wall had come down? Will he pay tribute, as I often do, to all my fellow soldiers for the welcome that was given to those people in what were probably the most difficult times they had faced?

Stuart McMillan: I absolutely agree with Edward Mountain and I genuinely pay tribute to those soldiers and to everyone who was involved at that time in trying to make the transition, which was clearly going to be a momentous activity in world history, as easy as possible.

I admire what Germany has undertaken and its actions in recent years in accepting more than 1 million refugees. That is a lesson for all Governments about humanitarianism. After reunification, I remember that some people were fretting because of history. However, even as a 16-year-old boy and right through until now, I have taken the position that reunification was not about looking back and going back; it was about bringing people together and, to use a phrase from today's politics, building back better. Germany did that and I am proud of what the German people have achieved.

The second half of Colin Beattie's motion is absolutely accurate and indicates the interdependencies of the global economy. With every nation facing Covid-19, how we all act together to try to deal with it is extremely important. I want to pay tribute to Germany's activities on that.

I have one more very brief point, if you will allow me, Presiding Officer. One of the Berlin stickers on my pipe box states, "Berlin ist ganz toll", which means, "Berlin is really great". Actually, I believe that Deutschland ist ganz toll. Well done to Germany for delivering hope, ambition and security and for what it has achieved since the fall of the wall and reunification.

18:05

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I am pleased to take part in the debate, in part because I am a member of the cross-party group on Germany—although I note that my membership is marked somewhat rather more by my sentiment than by my presence—but also because I have German heritage on my mother's side.

It is remarkable that German reunification took place only 30 years ago, because we take for granted so much of what Germany is today, which stands in contrast with where Germany was 30 years ago. As Colin Beattie remarked, we view Germany as something of a rock of Europe, as an example of good governance and stable Government, and as a progressive nation. However, at the time, many people viewed German reunification with suspicion and even outright hostility. Apparently, Margaret Thatcher would go round with a map of the boundaries of pre-war Germany in her handbag in order to warn of the threat. George H W Bush was at the forefront of overcoming such sentiments and ensuring that reunification happened.

We also take for granted just how much progress has been made since reunification. I first came to remark on those issues when I first visited Berlin in 1994, as a student taking part in the European Youth Parliament. I had the great privilege of debating in the Reichstag building, which has been mentioned. In 1994, it was remarkable just how visible the wall still was. Sections of the wall were still present and, where the wall was not there, it was still possible to see where it had been. Even if the wall could not be seen, people still knew very well when they were in the former East Berlin and when they were not. When I revisited Berlin in 2002, visitors could not tell which part of Berlin they were in. The progress that had been made on buildings and on people's livelihoods was remarkable.

Colin Beattie's motion is right to mark not just the historical event of reunification and the progress that has been made, but the lessons for us for the future. In my view, the lessons are threefold. First, reunification was as much a human and popular process as a political one. In many ways, the events that led to reunification began with a picnic that was held in Sopron, just over the border in Hungary, where thousands of

people from East Germany, after the Hungarian border had become liberalised, took the opportunity to meet for a picnic. In the subsequent weeks and months, tens of thousands of East Germans moved, having taken their cue from that picnic. Reunification became an inevitability not because of political will, but because of popular will and popular movement of people—in spirit and opinion, and in person.

Secondly, there was the effort of reunification. It took €2 trillion over 20 years, and even today the fiscal transfers continue. In the former East Germany, almost a quarter of public spending comes from revenues that consist of fiscal transfers from the west to the east. That happens because of a common recognition and a collective will to ensure that German reunification is a success, not just as an historical fact but on an on-going basis. Indeed, 90 per cent of Germans view reunification as a good thing.

Finally, because of federation, Germany is a strong federal republic, with a strong basic law, and its Parliament recognises both the Länder and the federal Government. The upper house consists of representatives who are appointed by the Länder.

We can learn lessons from those three things—popular will, the effort of reunification and strong federation. At a time when our politics is marked by exceptionalism, withdrawal and creating new borders, we can all learn lessons from the bringing down of borders and acting in the collective interest.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I bring in Mr Gibson, we will hear from Mr Corry.

18:10

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Dan Johnson made some very interesting points. I was very fortunate to live and work in Germany in 1980-81, when I was serving with the Black Watch. At that time the wall was up and everything was very much divided between east and west. I was greatly struck by the difficulties. Members who know Berlin will probably know that in East Berlin there was a massive tall tower with a round edge and that at certain times of day, when the sun shone on it, it showed a picture of a crucifix. In those days, the East German police insisted that it be covered with hessian at those times in order not to shine Christianity over East Berlin.

Daniel Johnson's main point was about the success of reunification. A lot of that success was down to the parity of the deutschmark in both countries. That was something that Chancellor Kohl made a real play of sorting out. It was a big gamble, but it worked.

I was fortunate also to serve in the Balkans in Bosnia, and I was involved in the question of currency implications. We used the German reunification model to ensure that we created a new currency in Bosnia. We used the marka as the new currency and linked it to the deutschmark at one-for-one parity. That was also very successful. Many things stemmed from German reunification that worked not just in Germany, but in the Balkans.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Corry. I should explain that Mr Corry had wanted to intervene on Mr Johnson to make that point, but members cannot intervene on members who are making their speech remotely because that causes difficulties.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Hold on a minute, Mr Gibson.

Maurice Corry: Freiheit!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are into chaos.

Kenneth Gibson: I will sit down until I am called.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I now call the last of our speakers in this debate, Mr Kenneth Gibson.

18:12

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): As long as I am not the least.

I congratulate my colleague, Colin Beattie, for securing debating time this evening. Sadly, I will have to add a note of disagreement with Maurice Corry's comments. Replacing the ostmark one for one with the deutschmark, when the East German economy was only about 30 per cent to 40 per cent as productive as the West German economy, meant that there was mass unemployment in the east because, in effect, they were paying the same wages for far inferior products and lower levels of productivity. That has led to some of the continued social problems that persist in the east of Germany. That was a catastrophic decision by the west that has not benefited the east in the long term.

On 9 November 1989, the Berlin wall, which seemed in my youth to be immovable, fell. For 28 years, the "anti-fascist protection barrier", as it was ludicrously called by the so-called German Democratic Republic, had separated the people of Germany, Europe and the world. Less than a year after its fall, east and west became one. As former Chancellor Willy Brandt put it in his legendary comment,

"Now what belongs together can finally grow together".

Despite taking only 339 days to complete, reunification was not without difficulties and had to overcome numerous hurdles. Let us not forget that Mrs Thatcher's UK Tory Government of the day was a fierce opponent of reunification—as Daniel Johnson suggested. According to the memoirs of the late Chancellor Helmut Kohl, he never forgot the hostility that he faced at a European meeting in December 1989 after unveiling his 10-point plan for reunification. Mrs Thatcher told astonished heads of state during dinner that

"We beat the Germans twice, and now they're back".

Despite those reactionary views, we now regard 3 October 1990 as a successful and astonishingly peaceful coming together of a once-divided German nation, which liberated 18 million Ossies from the stagnation that was imposed by the Socialist Unity Party—that is, the communist party—or SED. For those who want to see what it was like in the old DDR, "The Lives of Others", "Deutschland 83" and "Goodbye Lenin" are well worth watching. The anniversary of Germany unification is rightly a cause for celebration in Germany, Scotland and the rest of the world.

We must also remember those who fell victim to the paranoia of the SED. According to the Berlin wall memorial, at least 140 people were killed along the 96-mile-long Berlin wall by East German border guards between 1961 and 1989. More than 1,100 people died trying to escape East Germany, and innumerable others perished as a result of the suffering and despair that the wall brought to their personal lives.

The wall has now been gone for longer than it existed, and although the physical markers of division have disappeared, some disparities persist. Länder in the former West Germany continue to be considerably more prosperous than those in the former East Germany, where wages are lower and ordinary households own less than half the wealth, on average, that is accumulated by households in the west.

A recent study by the Berlin Institute for Population and Development found that half of all Germans still believe that there are more differences between easterners and westerners than there are commonalities. Although that shows that the healing of painful separation has not yet been fully completed, the peaceful co-operation between states from the former eastern bloc and from the west gives us cause for optimism. Since the end of the cold war, many former Warsaw pact states have embraced democracy and the mixed economy, and have subsequently joined the European Union, as a result of which there has been more movement between European nations during the 21st century than ever before. It is a

little-known fact that Chancellor Brandt predicted that development, and referred to all parts of Europe, not just Germany, growing together once the cold war ended.

We must also remember, however, that the fall of the Berlin wall did not end the presence of physical barriers in Europe. In recent years, we have seen the rise of people who put up new walls. In the summer of 2015, Hungary, which was, as we have heard, instrumental in the fall of the Berlin wall, erected a razor-wire fence on its border with Serbia to keep out refugees. More than 20 years after the Belfast agreement was signed, more than 100 so-called peace walls still separate neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland as an enduring legacy of sectarian conflict. The once-unthinkable erection of physical barriers between Northern Ireland and the Republic is a realistic possibility, sadly.

Our celebration of the 30th anniversary of German reunification comes with a responsibility. The process that began with reunification is not yet ended. We must all strive to keep the spirit of 1990 alive by ensuring peaceful co-operation between all European countries without the presence of walls separating the nations of Europe.

18:17

The Minister for Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth): I congratulate my colleague Colin Beattie on securing this evening's debate, and I thank him for his work on the cross-party group on Germany, of which he is convener. This Parliament shares an important relationship with Germany, which I value hugely, not least in a personal capacity, as my Uncle Knut was standing on the wall in 1989 with many others as it was finally demolished piece by piece.

As Colin Beattie rightly said, the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 did not just bring about the reunification of Germany. The heroic actions of many brave German citizens helped to bring an end to the cold war, leading to the reunification of a continent.

I stand here to respond to the motion today, not simply to mark that anniversary but to offer a reflection on Germany's reunification and what it means for Scotland's role in Europe and the world 30 years on. There are many lessons that we can draw from the process of reunification and the integration of the modern German state into the EU, not least on the value of international dialogue and the importance of international agreements being embedded within a strong, fair, rules-based European and international order.

As Colin Beattie told us, reunification changed Europe for the better. Not only has Germany

achieved its own peace, which we must never take for granted; since reunification, Germany has been central in promoting peace and prosperity across Europe and internationally. As Daniel Johnson said, we view Germany as the rock of Europe.

In our interconnected world today, it has never been more important to uphold our internationalist values and the principles and operation of international law. Scotland will always champion those values and principles.

I cannot pretend, like Colin Beattie, that I am old enough to really remember the fall of the Berlin wall, but I asked my cousin, who was born in Berlin, about what she remembered about the wall. This is what she told me:

"It was a huge release of emotion when the wall came down. The wall represented oppression, division and hate but, confusingly, almost an element of security. Many people - Westerners - were frightened about suddenly being without a boundary, afraid the East Germans would pour into the west, full of resentment and need. Thankfully, those were the minority, though, and most people were full of joy. There was an electric optimism in the air."

She continued:

"It is important to note that my family was on the west side, which says a lot about how I experienced the wall. I was born into that division and my experience was going through check points where men with guns would circle your car and maybe make your parent get out to open and unpack the boot so that they could examine all your belongings before allowing you to pass. It was all threat and intimidation. As a kid, I was genuinely very afraid of the uniforms and the aggressive manner. I still get anxious around military uniform and any sort of weaponry now.

Crucially, we were allowed to pass so that we could travel to Scotland to visit family. We never experienced any of the desperation that so many East Germans lived with or the life-risking attempts that they would make to try and cross over for better opportunities or to try and see family from whom they had been separated."

As we have heard today, it was very much a tale of two cities with two polarised experiences. Colin Beattie told us that the wall became the focus of two different regimes. We should remember that in terms of how it was for the people who lived there and who experienced it. Gordon Lindhurst illustrated that with the example of his friend's mother, who attempted to become a doctor and was blocked from doing so.

As we stand here faced with the danger of no deal or a bare-bones deal and the harmful barriers that that will entail, it is more important than ever that we look to our shared history for guidance. Three decades ago, courageous Germans made a stand and brought down the wall, toppling that barrier to co-operation, inclusion and solidarity—values that I am proud that Scotland shares with our German friends and family. As Kenny Gibson told us, peaceful co-operation can give us cause for optimism. As committed supporters of the EU, we will continue to strengthen the bonds between

Scotland and our European friends in order that, together, we can truly tackle the collective challenges that we face.

Scotland's bilateral relationship with Germany continues to grow, helped by the work of the Scottish Government's Germany hub in Berlin. Maureen Watt extolled the virtues of visiting Berlin, which I am keen to do when we are able to do so again. That bilateral relationship includes promoting bilateral discussion and mutual support in priority areas such as climate change and low-carbon growth, economic development and renewable energy, and health and education.

We are also enthusiastic about the wider relations and collaborations between Scotland and Germany across politics, civil society, and business. It was powerful to hear from Stuart McMillan about his experiences of visiting Berlin and being shown no-man's-land. He described it as a scene from a spy movie and told of how he felt a genuine sense of sorrow but also one of hope; that has been a common theme of most of this evening's contributions.

Moving forward to the current day, our relations with Germany include the recent memorandum of understanding between the German wind energy cluster, WAB, and the Scottish DeepWind offshore wind cluster, which has great potential for bringing about mutual benefits in that key technology for our common green transition. We know that by working with Germany and its 16 states in key areas such as green technologies and health, resilience and wellbeing we can find solutions to the challenges that we face more quickly and effectively.

This Government is proud of the relations that we have built with German states in key policy areas, such as in the area of hydrogen with Hamburg, Bavaria, and North-Rhine Westphalia; our climate work with Baden-Württemberg as members of the Under2 Coalition; and our work with—I will pronounce this properly, Presiding Officer—Rhineland-Palatinate in education and culture. We will continue to strengthen those relations as we mark the final months of Germany's EU Council presidency, despite the hurdles put in our way by events outwith our control and shaped by doctrines that really do belong in the past. However, as Colin Beattie told us, democracy must prevail.

I place on record my thanks to the outgoing German consul general, Barbara Quick. Her tireless work in promoting and strengthening the bonds between our two countries during her short tenure was greatly appreciated. Although the consulate's annual Edinburgh celebration of German unity day sadly had to be cancelled this year due to the pandemic, I am pleased that we are nonetheless able to mark the occasion in

Parliament. I congratulate Colin Beattie once again on securing this vital members' business debate and thank all members for their contributions.

I wish our German friends and my German family a happy—albeit somewhat belated—German unity day. I am pleased to say that this Government and this Parliament will continue to stand together with Germany and our European neighbours in the months and years ahead.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Vielen Dank an Alle. Dieses Treffen ist abgeschlossen.

Meeting closed at 18:24.

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