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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 27 April 2022

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

Portfolio Question Time

Covid-19 Recovery and Parliamentary Business

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is Covid-19 recovery and parliamentary business. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question. I call for succinct questions, and answers to match.

Covid-19 (Recovery Strategy) (Resilience)

1. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government, as part of the delivery of a cross-government Covid recovery strategy, what efforts it is making to ensure the resilience of Scotland's response to any future pandemic. (S6O-00990)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The "NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026" sets out key ambitions and actions to be developed and delivered now and over the next five years. The recovery plan is backed with more than £1 billion of targeted investment, which will drive the recovery of our national health service not just to its pre-pandemic level but beyond.

In addition, the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill will help to build resilience against future public health threats, including any future pandemics. The provisions in part 1 of the bill will, if it is passed, allow Scottish ministers to respond swiftly, flexibly and proportionately to any infection or contamination that presents, or could present, significant harm to human health.

Finlay Carson: As the pandemic begins, thankfully, to ease, I know that the Scottish Government has been in consultation with various personal protective equipment suppliers about the need to stockpile for future pandemics. However, concerns have been voiced about the huge costs in the procurement of PPE, and that suppliers and users could potentially be left with out-of-date and useless equipment, which is what happened the last time.

Can greater consideration be given to encouraging domestic manufacturers such as Alpha Solway, which is based in Dumfries and makes 150,000 respirators a week? Its production could increase to more than 2 million respirators a week, which would be enough to meet the entire needs of the NHS, because of its investment in using its own raw materials. Would the cabinet secretary look into that as a more cost-effective way forward for the long term?

John Swinney: If my recollection is correct, Alpha Solway was providing supplies to the Scottish effort through the PPE network. I am very grateful to the employees and leadership of Alpha Solway for all that they contributed.

In all such circumstances, the development of the domestic supply chain is very important. That was a key priority for my ministerial colleague Ivan McKee, who did a tremendous amount of work in dialogue with the business community to enable us to manufacture more of the required PPE in Scotland, rather than relying on imports. Fundamentally, I agree with Mr Carson about the importance of that point.

I need to raise the issue of stockpiling. If we stockpile for the possibility of a pandemic and no pandemic arises, it is inevitable that there may well be stock that cannot be used within particular periods of time. However, efforts can be made to recondition stock to make sure that we maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the arrangements. I assure Mr Carson that those arrangements are very much at the heart of the pandemic learning that we have undertaken, and that we certainly want to encourage the domestic supply chain to the maximum possible level.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I agree entirely with Finlay Carson that we need to be taking steps now to ensure the resilience of Scotland's response to any future pandemic. Does the Deputy First Minister agree that that is the entire purpose of the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill, which the Conservative Party is vehemently and opportunistically opposing?

John Swinney: As I said in my original answer to Mr Carson, the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill will help us to build resilience against future public threats, so it needs to be taken seriously and engaged with by Parliament. Without those legislative protections in place, the speed of our response to a pandemic and our ability to respond to its changing dynamics would be limited. I therefore encourage members of Parliament to engage constructively with the Government on the bill to produce a statute book that will simply bring us into line with powers in relation to pandemic management that have

existed in England and Wales for more than a decade.

Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Culture is one of the sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. What lessons has the Scottish Government learned from the experience of Covid in order to shield the culture sector from the impact of future pandemics?

John Swinney: The Government has taken action in a range of different sectors, of which the culture sector is one. We wanted to ensure that we provided the sector with the maximum amount of support possible to enable it to navigate its way through the difficulties, when audiences could not be present and artistic performances and other events could not take place, and then to deploy its important cultural contribution in the aftermath, when people will perhaps need it even more in order to recover mentally and socially from the trauma of the pandemic.

The Government's funding arrangements were designed to sustain the sector. There is on-going funding in the normal budget arrangements that are in place, and I know that my colleague Neil Gray, the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, is actively engaged in dialogue with the culture sector in order to maximise its contribution to Scottish society.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 2 is from Alex Rowley. He is not in the chamber, so we move to question 3, from Carol Mochan.

Covid-19 (Long Covid)

3. Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how long Covid has been factored into its Covid-19 strategic review. (S6O-00992)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Our strategic framework update in February 2022 confirmed that on-going assessments of the Covid-19 threat will combine assessments of potential disease impact and the risk of infection. As well as covering current and expected infection fatality rates, the assessment of disease impact will consider factors such as long Covid.

Accurate data is vitally important in understanding the prevalence of long Covid. Data from the Office for National Statistics Covid-19 infection survey is currently the best source of evidence on the estimated prevalence of long Covid in Scotland. Our chief scientist office is funding nine Scotland-led research projects, with a total funding commitment of £2.5 million, to improve understanding of the long-term effects of Covid-19 on physical and mental health, and to help with developing effective clinical interventions to support recovery and rehabilitation.

Carol Mochan: Given that answer, can the cabinet secretary explain why the Scottish Government is yet to host a debate on the important issue of the long-term effects of long Covid, and why the scheduled debate on that issue last week was changed to a different topic?

John Swinney: The Government is committed to having a debate on long Covid and that will happen very shortly. With regard to the Government's ability to set out a complete picture of the response, that would involve funding announcements—which members might object to hearing during a local authority election campaign.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): General practitioner colleagues of mine up and down Scotland despair at the absence of a pathway for long Covid patients, and no one sitting in the comfort of the chamber should pretend that there is one. I and my colleagues face patients who are crying in despair over their long Covid symptoms, but the Scottish Government still does not know how to deal with that, despite the tried and tested models that are running in Hertfordshire.

Given that more than 100,000 Scots now suffer with long Covid and cannot wait for the research that the cabinet secretary tells them is being performed, when will the Scottish Government realise the devastation that is being wreaked across Scotland and finally start caring for people with long Covid by getting long Covid clinics up and running? What is happening now does not work.

John Swinney: I do not agree with the picture that Dr Gulhane has set out, and I do not think that it reflects the position or intended approach of the national health service in Scotland. It is very clear—the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has set this out to Parliament on countless occasions—that the pathway for patients who have long Covid must be assessed by individual clinicians. There is no way that Dr Gulhane can say to me that every long Covid case presents in exactly the same fashion; that would be an absurd clinical proposition to put forward. Individual clinicians must therefore make an assessment of individual patients, and the national health service must meet those needs.

Research projects are under way. I would have thought that, rather than rubbish those research projects, Dr Gulhane, as a clinician, would be interested in hearing what they might produce. It is really odd for a clinician to rubbish evidence gathering that is part of the process of gathering intelligence and information to enable us to take the right decisions. That approach strikes me being as evidence-led policy making, and if Dr Gulhane, as a member of the Scottish Parliament and as a clinician, cannot see the benefits of

evidence-led policy making, I think that he has some serious questions to answer.

**Covid-19
(Vaccination Certification Scheme Costs)**

4. Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the total costs of the Covid-19 vaccine certification scheme. (S6O-00993)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Scotland's Covid certification scheme was an important part of our domestic response to Covid-19. The app continues to be a vital part of supporting people to travel internationally, given that the scheme also provides Covid-19 status.

I confirm that the Scottish Government has directly allocated more than £7 million to date. I have asked my officials to place a table of that breakdown in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

Craig Hoy: So, John Swinney wasted £7 million on a domestic Covid passport scheme, which was quietly switched off by the Scottish National Party Government last week. The Deputy First Minister was warned that domestic certification would not work, that it breached data protection laws, and that it would damage business and cost jobs. Will the Deputy First Minister now say that he is sorry to the businesses that were damaged and for the jobs that were lost, and will he apologise to the Scottish people for wasting £30,000 a day of their money on his botched scheme?

John Swinney: What a lot of absolute baloney—by Mr Hoy's standards, it is a colossal amount of baloney.

Mr Hoy must surely understand the basics of this point: regardless of its domestic application, the Covid status app was necessary to enable people to travel from Scotland to other countries. Surely the Conservatives must understand that point. The costs that have been incurred were necessary to enable us to produce an app that would allow Scottish people to visit other countries. If the Conservatives are saying that they did not want people in Scotland to have an app that allowed them to travel internationally, that is an interesting message. I would be fascinated to know whether any Conservative members have used their app for international travel in the past few weeks and months. It would be fascinating to have an answer to that question.

As for the Government "quietly" making an announcement about the domestic app, the Government published its stance on the domestic app openly and transparently, just as it always does in relation to our policy agenda.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Given that a number of countries still require proof of vaccination before allowing individuals to enter, will the Deputy First Minister confirm that the app will continue to operate to ensure that people in Scotland can continue to travel internationally without issues?

John Swinney: As I delicately explained to Mr Hoy, the app was originally designed to be used for international travel, and we expect that the app will continue to be required for that purpose until at least June 2023. To repeat the point in case the Conservatives did not understand it, the app enables people from Scotland to travel to other countries and to access venues, because countless other countries require individuals to demonstrate their Covid vaccination status in order to gain entry.

**Covid-19 (Recovery Strategy)
(Lateral Flow Test Provision)**

5. Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of any potential impact on its Covid recovery strategy of its decision to end the universal provision of lateral flow tests. (S6O-00994)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Our decision to transition from regular lateral flow testing for the general public is based on the latest available evidence and advice from public health officials and clinicians. Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish Government has made decisions based on expert advice, and we will continue to do so as we support recovery.

Some groups will remain eligible for free lateral flow testing, including unpaid carers and personal assistants, people who are visiting a hospital or care home, and people in relation to whom it is advised as part of a clinical care plan.

Alongside our evolving response to the pandemic, the Scottish Government's Covid recovery strategy will continue to focus effort and resources on bringing about a fairer future, particularly for those who have been most impacted during the pandemic.

Mercedes Villalba: One of the stated aims of the Scottish Government's Covid recovery strategy is to improve access to services where provision was restricted by the pandemic. Although health and social care workers will continue to be able to access free lateral flow tests, other front-line workers from teachers to hospitality staff will no longer have access to them for routine workplace testing. That could lead to access to services such as schools and restaurants being disrupted, especially as

Scotland's infection rates remain high. Will the Government consider expanding access to free lateral flow tests to all front-line workers to ensure a fair and safe Covid recovery?

John Swinney: I understand the significance of Mercedes Villalba's point, particularly in relation to individuals who had their access to services disrupted during the pandemic, such as those accessing day centres and other provision of that type, which I suspect lies at the heart of her question.

In recognising the fact that we are emerging from what I might describe as the intensity of the pandemic into a position in which we are managing the pandemic and its prevalence in the community, we have tried to take a proportionate approach with regard to the availability of lateral flow testing. Where there might be a risk of greater intensity of infection in healthcare settings, we enable that arrangement still to be applied. We will, of course, continue to review that approach on the basis of infection levels in society.

Although we have had a period of intense Covid infection in our community, it is encouraging that that is showing signs of consistent decline, which is very welcome for the forthcoming period.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Although it is welcome that testing remains free of charge to those with health conditions, what consideration is the Scottish Government giving to expanding the availability of free lateral flow tests to those, such as family members, who are close contacts of people in high-risk categories?

John Swinney: The vaccination programme is the principal measure that we put in place to ensure population-wide resilience, and we have had phenomenal participation in that programme.

With the availability of new Covid treatments, the reliance on the testing approach is not as significant as it was in the past. As I have indicated, we are using lateral flow tests in a targeted way to support clinical care and to protect those in high-risk settings. From 1 May, anyone eligible for Covid treatments, unpaid carers and anyone visiting a hospital or care home can still order lateral flow tests online or by phoning 119.

Covid-19 (Recovery Strategy) (Cost of Living Crisis)

6. Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of any potential impact on its Covid recovery strategy of the reported cost of living crisis. (S6O-00995)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):

The Scottish Government is acutely aware of the impact that increases in the costs of energy, food, transport and other essentials are having on people across Scotland, and we are taking immediate action to support those who are most impacted by the cost of living crisis.

Our £290 million cost of living support package is supporting 1.85 million Scottish households, we are investing up to £113 million of additional investment through our tackling child poverty delivery plan and we have increased the value of a further eight Scottish social security benefits.

The key levers to address the cost of living crisis are reserved to the United Kingdom Government, but it has repeatedly failed to take the steps necessary to address the crisis. I take this opportunity to urge it either to take the steps that are required to protect people, or to devolve the powers that would allow this Government to take further action.

Jackie Dunbar: For many people, this month's pay cheque will be the first since the national insurance hike. That comes as energy bills skyrocket and new research reveals that folk face yet another hit, with the average food bill potentially increasing by a staggering £271 this year.

Will the Deputy First Minister outline what steps the Scottish Government is taking to support households that are facing not only acute challenges from the pandemic but a cost of living crisis of the Tory Government's making? Does he share my view that Scotland's recovery would be best served if this Government had the full powers over welfare, energy and the economy that would come with independence?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before the Deputy First Minister responds, I urge that, in his response, he sticks to the question, which is to do with the Covid recovery strategy, among other things.

John Swinney: I agree with the point that Jackie Dunbar has made. The Government is taking a range of actions within the devolved powers that we have at our disposal and our limited resources to help people who are facing the cost of living crisis. Through our cost of living support measures and our spend on unique Scottish social security payments, which are not available elsewhere in the United Kingdom and include bridging payments and payments that mitigate the bedroom tax, we are set to invest almost £770 million in tackling the cost of living crisis this year. That is an indication of a Government that is engaged in addressing that crisis. I only wish that the United Kingdom Government would either engage in tackling the

crisis or devolve powers to enable us to do exactly that.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): In yesterday's debate on multiple sclerosis week, we heard that people living with MS face additional costs of between £600 and £1,000 a month. Can the cabinet secretary set out what specifically the Government is doing to support disabled people to meet the extra fuel costs during the cost of living crisis?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Again, if the Deputy First Minister could link his response to the Covid recovery strategy, that would be really helpful.

John Swinney: There is a direct link to the Covid recovery strategy, Presiding Officer, in that at the heart of that strategy is the Government's determination to tackle the inequalities that existed before the pandemic. As I have said, those inequalities affect many individuals with disabilities, and they were exacerbated by the pandemic—hence my answer earlier to Mercedes Villalba, as well.

The Government is focused, in the Covid recovery strategy, on tackling inequalities. The decision that the Government has taken to upgrade a number of Scottish benefits by 6 per cent is a substantive contribution to assisting individuals who will access those benefits—many of whom have disabilities—to be able to manage the significant challenges that households face. I do not in any way understate the significance of those challenges, which I recognise are acute. I only wish that the United Kingdom Government was contributing more to the process.

Covid-19 (Recovery) (Support for Young People in Glasgow)

7. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how its policies across government will support young people living in Glasgow to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00996)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): We know that young people across Scotland have had an extremely challenging time during the pandemic. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting all our young people as they recover. Improvement of the wellbeing of children and young people is one of the central outcomes in our Covid recovery strategy. Together with our partners in local government, business and the third sector, we are delivering policies that will help young people, including those who live in the city of Glasgow.

For example, as part of the young persons guarantee, Developing the Young Workforce

Glasgow is helping to support young people who have additional barriers to positive destinations. Glasgow's local employability partnership is also prioritising the support of those who are furthest from the labour market to achieve a positive destination.

Pauline McNeill: As the Deputy First Minister highlighted, young people between the ages of 18 and 24 have been at the sharp end of the pandemic, but they are the most likely to have experienced extended worklessness during it, especially if they shielded and gave up their jobs. Youth unemployment in Glasgow sits at 9 per cent, which is almost three times the national average, and young people who return to work are more likely than the average person to be in insecure work and not to be in a union.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that more needs to be done to protect young people who are in work, as there are some scandalous stories of their poor treatment, not just in Glasgow but across the country? How is the Scottish Government ensuring that young people in Glasgow and across the country can access decent and secure jobs that provide them with the ability to develop good-quality careers?

John Swinney: Fundamentally, I agree with the proposition that has been put forward by Pauline McNeill, and I contend that the Government's agenda is designed to support that.

The young persons guarantee gives the assurance of a good pathway for every young person, no matter how far they are from the labour market. Indeed, the Covid recovery work that the Government is doing places special emphasis on ensuring that we are able to reach those who have the greatest challenges in getting into the labour market. The young persons guarantee provides that flexibility. For some young people, accessing further education or individually focused support might be required to enable them to overcome obstacles to entering the labour market.

As I have discussed with the Glasgow economic leadership group, which I met last Wednesday, we are very focused on ensuring that the tremendous resource base of talented young people in Glasgow is properly nurtured, supported and assisted so that they can contribute significantly to the city's economic recovery. The Government is committed to working with our partners in Glasgow to enable that to be the case.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): The Scottish child payment will clearly have a positive impact in supporting low-income families to recover from the pandemic. Will the Deputy First Minister detail how many children in Glasgow are expected to benefit? Will the Scottish Government monitor the impact by

surveying directly those who are in receipt of the Scottish child payment to find out what they think?

John Swinney: We expect around 50,000 children in Glasgow to benefit from the Scottish child payment in each of the next five years. We are currently undertaking an interim evaluation of the Scottish child payment. Mr Doris will, of course, be aware that, in recent weeks, the Government has announced enhanced rates for the payment, as part of the tackling child poverty delivery plan. Once the payment is fully rolled out to those who are responsible for children under 16, we will carry out a full evaluation of the policy development. Both those evaluations will involve engagement with those who are in receipt of the Scottish child payment to ensure that we capture the experience and the benefit for those individuals.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Young people in Glasgow and across Scotland will be sitting exams in the coming weeks, and, unfortunately, a number of them may miss the exams due to Covid. That is likely to lead to a large increase in the number of appeals going to the Scottish Qualifications Authority in the summer. Is the cabinet secretary confident that the SQA is properly resourced to be able to deal with the likely increase in the number of appeals?

John Swinney: I am confident that if the situation results in an increased number of appeals, the Scottish Qualifications Authority will have the resource planning in place to enable that to be properly addressed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 8 is from Paul O’Kane, who joins us remotely.

Covid-19 (Recovery Strategy) (Contact Tracing)

8. **Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the potential impact on its Covid recovery strategy of its future plans for contact tracing. (S6O-00997)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The “Test and Protect Transition Plan”, which was published on 15 March, outlines the phased way in which test and protect will transition and support the effective management of Covid, primarily through adaptations and health measures that strengthen resilience and recovery, as we rebuild for a fairer future.

Paul O’Kane: I have previously raised in the chamber with the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care the importance of ensuring that test and protect staff have their contracts honoured and are suitably redeployed, so that we do not lose the expertise

and knowledge that they have gained during the pandemic. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in learning from Covid-19 and as part of the recovery plan, we should ensure that contact tracing systems are evaluated and refined to incorporate lessons learned, and that those systems should be maintained within the national health service so that they can be rapidly activated in case of further outbreaks or of future epidemic illness or public health emergencies?

John Swinney: First, I want to express my very warm thanks to the test and protect workforce, who have done an absolutely phenomenal job during the pandemic, in difficult circumstances. When many of us were working from home, many of the individuals in that workforce were working in very challenging conditions.

I agree with Mr O’Kane that it is important that we learn from the experience of the pandemic. That is part of building up resilience as a population for the handling of any future pandemics. That is why the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill that I have brought to Parliament is so critical. It will ensure that we have that pandemic awareness in place and the ability to handle such issues. Arrangements certainly need to be put in place to ensure that the learning can be built into the workings and approaches of the NHS to enable us to be properly resilient for any future pandemics.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on Covid-19 recovery and parliamentary business. I will allow a short pause before we move on to the next portfolio questions to allow the front-bench teams to change places, should they wish to do so.

Net Zero, Energy and Transport

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next portfolio is net zero, energy and transport. I remind members that questions 1 and 7 are grouped together and that I will take any supplementaries on those questions once both of them have been answered. Any member who wishes to request a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question. I again appeal for succinct questions and answers.

Fuel Poverty

1. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment has been made of the impact of rising energy costs on fuel poverty in the most deprived communities. (S6O-00998)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): We are doing all that we can within our devolved powers

to support households, including support through our £10 million fuel insecurity fund and expanded support to improve home energy efficiency. However, only the United Kingdom Government has the powers over energy pricing and obligations that are necessary to fully address the cost pressures on households.

Our analysis suggests that the increase in the energy price cap could move an additional 211,000 households into fuel poverty, which represents a 43 per cent increase from 2019. For the most deprived 15 per cent of communities in Scotland, the increase is estimated to be even greater—it rises to 54 per cent.

Bob Doris: I have been contacted by community heat customers in the Wyndford estate who are facing eye-watering price increases for heat and hot water—tariffs are to more than double. I have had a constructive meeting with SSE, but the relationship between rising wholesale gas prices and the additional cost of running community heating is unclear.

I made specific suggestions to lower costs, which included urging SSE to rethink the tariff increases. Will the cabinet secretary join me in urging SSE to do that and in urging other community heat providers to constrain prices, given that one of the underlying purposes in the first place for many heat networks, including that in the Wyndford estate in my constituency, was to tackle fuel poverty?

Michael Matheson: I am aware of the issue that the member raises. I can advise him that my officials have met Citizens Advice Scotland representatives to discuss the issue and have been in contact with SSE to raise concerns about affordability and debt among community heat customers in Wyndford. I assure the member that we will continue to press SSE to help to resolve those issues, but he will recognise that there are complexities given the nature of the energy market and the fact that energy prices—even electricity prices—are being driven largely by the wholesale gas price at the international level. I encourage the member and any of his constituents who are experiencing difficulty in the interim to contact Home Energy Scotland, which can provide them with advice and support to help them in reducing their overall energy costs.

Fuel Poverty

7. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to help people experiencing fuel poverty as a result of increased energy bills. (S6O-01004)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): We

recognise the immense financial strain that households are experiencing as energy prices rise. As powers over energy markets are reserved, we are pressing for more action from the United Kingdom Government to help hard-pressed consumers.

Meanwhile, we are doing everything that we can within our powers to help. Through our £290 million cost of living support package, we are giving 1.85 million Scottish households £150 of extra support in April. We are also allocating a further £10 million to continue our fuel insecurity fund, which has since 2020 helped households that are at risk of severely rationing their energy use or self-disconnecting entirely.

Fulton MacGregor: Increased energy bills mean that many people in my constituency of Coatbridge and Chryston and across the country have to choose between heating and eating. Given that energy powers are largely reserved, as the cabinet secretary said, does he agree that the crisis demands immediate action from the UK Government and that cutting VAT on energy bills would be a simple and effective way to support people during this very difficult time?

Michael Matheson: We have set out a range of measures that the UK Government should take to help to avert the crisis that many households face—the question whether they can afford to heat or to eat—given the very significant increase in energy prices and the prospect of those prices increasing again in the autumn, when the price cap is reviewed. In the short term, one measure that the UK Government could take is to cut VAT on energy bills, which would help to reduce pressure on household budgets. We urged the UK Government to take action on that issue in January and again in the past month.

It is important for the UK Government to recognise the crisis that many households face with not just the increasing costs of energy bills but the increased cost of living in general. It must respond much more effectively than it has done with its severe lack of response to date.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): Presiding Officer,

“Energy is not a luxury; people have to be able to heat their homes. That is why it is so important that we do everything that we can, within our powers and resources, to help people to do that.”—[*Official Report*, 10 March 2022; c 24.]

Those were the First Minister’s words in the chamber last month. Labour-run North Ayrshire Council is tackling rising energy costs by pioneering publicly owned energy production, but we need that kind of ambition on a national scale. Will the Scottish Government look again at a

model of publicly owned energy for the whole of Scotland?

Michael Matheson: The member makes an important point about a person's basic right to be able to heat their home and about the fact that Scotland has one of the highest levels of fuel poverty in the whole UK, which is largely because of our rural environment.

The member will recognise the reality that we would require to be an independent country to operate a national public energy company that could deal with energy production and retail, because we would need the powers to borrow in the market in order to invest in the market and we would also have to have control over the energy market. That is why countries in Scandinavia have been very successful and effective in such an approach and why we believe that the best way to control our energy use in Scotland and our energy market in the future is through our having full control over those issues and making such decisions right here in Scotland.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): How will the Scottish Government ensure that sufficient funds are available to those who need insulation or replacement heating systems for their homes—especially those who are on restricted incomes or in rural and island areas with high levels of fuel poverty?

Michael Matheson: Given the experience that households are having now with energy prices, we are increasing our support in three areas. One is expanding Home Energy Scotland's advice service, which provides free impartial advice to households. Home Energy Scotland has seen a 20 per cent increase in the support that it can provide.

We are widening the eligibility criteria for the Scottish Government's warmer homes Scotland fuel poverty programme, which will expand the programme to more households, including those that are occupied by people who are between 60 and 75 years of age. We are also increasing funding for individual fuel-poor households through the area-based energy schemes. Alongside that, we are expanding our wider energy programme with insulation programmes for properties.

We are taking forward the measures that we can take forward to help to reduce people's energy costs, because the cheapest energy that people get is the energy that they do not use. That is why we need to ensure that energy efficiency is a key strand of our work, which will help to reduce energy use not only in the short term but in the medium to longer term. That will also help to tackle our climate change challenge.

Cost of Living Crisis (Home Heating)

2. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to make homes easier to keep warm, in light of the need to tackle the reported cost of living crisis. (S6O-00999)

The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie): The Scottish Government has allocated more than £1 billion since 2009 to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency. More than 150,000 fuel-poor households have benefited from our investment.

This year alone, we have committed a further £336 million to help make homes warmer and less expensive to heat, as part of our £1.8 billion commitment over this session of Parliament, which is the most ambitious programme in the United Kingdom. Last October, we published our "Heat in Buildings Strategy", which sets out our commitment to addressing the dual challenges of reducing carbon emissions and tackling fuel poverty.

Gillian Mackay: Does the minister agree that there is a stark contrast between the UK Government's approach to energy policy, which places all its bets on expanding nuclear power and squeezing out even more oil and gas while neglecting the much quicker and more significant impact that investing in energy efficiency can bring, and that of the Scottish Government, which is seeking to do everything that it can to ease energy costs for hard-pressed households?

Patrick Harvie: I agree completely that there is a stark contrast between those two agendas. The issue is not just the different view about whether expanding the fossil fuel industry in the midst of a climate emergency is viable but the UK Government's extraordinary decision to publish not only a heat in buildings strategy but a UK energy security strategy that does not emphasise energy efficiency and demand reduction. The Scottish Government is committed to placing a high priority on that.

Scottish ministers wrote to the secretary of state on 18 March to set out wider views on energy policy, including the need to accelerate the decarbonisation of electricity, which, in part, supports the decarbonisation of heat and transport; to reform the network charging system; to create new business models for green hydrogen; and to rebalance policy costs to protect consumers.

As the cabinet secretary said in his response to question 1, since March, we have announced wider eligibility criteria for energy efficiency upgrades and the warmer homes Scotland programme, as well as measures to ensure that

the maximum number of people benefit from our area-based schemes, including the focus on fabric-first insulation upgrades.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The cost of heating homes by using domestic heating oil has risen dramatically in recent months—by even more than that of gas and electricity. Given the prominent use of domestic heating oil in rural communities, does the minister agree that, because of their running costs and carbon footprint, homes that use domestic heating oil should be a priority for support to install low-carbon heating systems? If so, how will the Scottish Government enable that to happen?

Patrick Harvie: That is a high priority. I regularly see correspondence from members who are supporting constituents to access the wide range of support through advice and grant and loan schemes that the Scottish Government provides to enable people to increase energy efficiency measures in their homes and switch to zero-emissions heating. I hope that Brian Whittle and other members across the chamber will support their constituents to access that support.

Aberdeen City Region Deal (Transport Projects)

3. Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress regarding the transport projects funded from the £254 million announced in 2016 and as part of the Aberdeen city region deal. (S6O-01000)

I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am still a councillor on Aberdeen City Council.

The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth): In 2016, the Scottish Government committed to invest up to £125 million in the Aberdeen city region deal, matched by the UK Government. Alongside the deal, the Scottish Government announced an additional £254 million of investment in the north-east's infrastructure. That includes £200 million to improve journey times and increase capacity on key rail links between Aberdeen and the central belt and £24 million for a new grade-separated junction at the Laurencekirk A90/A937 south junction.

The option selection process for the rail improvement project is nearing completion and we expect to complete the project by the end of 2026. We also continue to push forward with the statutory process for the A90/A937 Laurencekirk junction improvement scheme, and we are working with objectors to the scheme, including Aberdeenshire Council, to resolve concerns wherever possible. Delivery of the scheme itself can commence only if it is approved under the

relevant statutory procedures, at which point a timetable for the construction phase can be set.

Douglas Lumsden: In 2008, the SNP first promised £200 million to reduce rail journey times between Aberdeen and the central belt, but no improvement has been made. That was another broken promise from this SNP Government, just like when Alex Salmond said that the first decision that he would make if he was elected First Minister in 2007 was to dual the road between Ellon and Peterhead, with the decision being made within 100 days of his gaining office. If we fast forward more than 5,000 days, the north-east is still waiting. When will this Government stop the soundbites, stop breaking its promises to the people of the north-east and start delivering on the commitments that it has made?

Jenny Gilruth: I thank Mr Lumsden for his supplementary question, but I must remind the member about the broken promises in relation to six city deals across Scotland that remain short-changed by Westminster to the tune of £420 million, or approximately £439 per household. That is not levelling up. It is very clear that the UK Government is not able to match Scottish Government funding.

As I have outlined, we have invested £379 million in Aberdeen while only £125 million has come from the UK Government. That is the same Conservative Party Government that reneged on the investment in carbon capture and storage that was promised to the people of the north-east in 2014. The north-east can certainly do better, so I will take no lectures from Mr Lumsden on broken promises.

As I outlined, by 2026 an additional £200 million will have been invested in increasing rail passenger and freight capacity between Aberdeen and the central belt, as ministers previously committed to do.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Does the minister share my disappointment that the United Kingdom Government has failed to match the £379 million in Scottish Government spend on city deals, resulting in a shortfall of £254 million, which is the equivalent of £1,125 for every household in the north-east?

Jenny Gilruth: Absolutely. I am really disappointed that the UK Government has refused to even match our £500 million just transition fund, despite the £300 billion in oil revenues from the North Sea that has flowed to the Treasury since the 1970s.

The future for the north-east is bright, and I am proud that we are putting our money where our mouth is when it comes to ensuring a just transition to sustainable energy and greener jobs with our £14.3 million skills investment to provide

immediate training and enterprise opportunities for up to 3,000 people across the region.

Good green jobs do not just happen, which is why, on Monday of this week, the First Minister announced annual funding of £100,000 for the Scottish Trades Union Congress to support officials to liaise with workers and Government, to continue to influence and shape our delivery of a just transition.

Low-emission Zones (Glasgow Taxi Drivers)

4. Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the reported concerns of taxi drivers in Glasgow that they may be forced to leave the profession unless further support is offered when low-emission zones come into force. (S6O-01001)

The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth): To help taxi drivers to prepare for low-emission zones, the Scottish Government offers grant funding towards the cost of retrofitting taxis to the latest Euro 6 standard through the low-emission zone support fund. Those grants provide up to 80 per cent of the capital cost of retrofitting, which is capped at £10,000 per vehicle.

From 2019 to 2022, the LEZ support fund has made more than £5.5 million available to households and businesses, and the Scottish Government is offering a further £5 million via the LEZ support fund for 2022-23.

I understand the challenge that the introduction of LEZs presents to taxi drivers, and I have agreed to have a meeting with taxi representatives and unions to discuss the matter further. We are looking for a suitable date in the diary for that meeting.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: The minister will be aware that many taxi drivers in Glasgow feel that that support is not enough.

Taxis provide employment, as well as an essential service that enables people in Glasgow to get around—especially disabled people who cannot access other forms of transport. Therefore, I am deeply concerned that only a limited number of second-hand taxis are available that can meet low-emission standards. What other specific action will the Scottish Government take to help drivers to upgrade vehicles and ensure that they are not forced to spend extortionate or unreasonable amounts in purchasing new ones or, worse still, forced out of the profession altogether?

Jenny Gilruth: As Pam Duncan-Glancy outlined, the Glasgow taxi fleet includes a significantly higher number of older taxis than the fleets of other cities in the country do. That might be partly due to Glasgow City Council licensing

conditions being less stringent than those in other parts of the country.

As far as the provision of support is concerned, the low-emission zone retrofit fund that I mentioned provides grant funding of up to 80 per cent of the cost of retrofitting. As part of the LEZ retrofit fund, the clean vehicle retrofit accreditation scheme offers further opportunities that allow taxis to be retrofitted with new engines so that liquefied petroleum gas fuel can be used or with new exhausts for the existing diesel engine. There is also the low-emission zone support fund, which is available to eligible microbusinesses.

As I outlined in my initial response, I will meet taxi drivers and unions soon to discuss in more detail what more support we might be able to provide.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): The minister will be as pleased as I am that the low-emission zone scheme for Glasgow has been agreed to. I know that the changes will be challenging for some, but they will deliver significant benefits.

How will the scheme help to improve air quality in Glasgow city centre, which is part of my constituency of Glasgow Kelvin? What other impacts can we hope to see as a result of the lowering of emissions in the city centre?

Jenny Gilruth: Kaukab Stewart is right to say that the issue is not without challenge, but Glasgow's low-emission zone has now been formally submitted to the Scottish ministers—through Transport Scotland, of course—for final approval. Glasgow City Council remains on track to introduce its scheme by the end of May.

Forecasting has shown that the LEZs will significantly reduce harmful transport emissions in parts of city centres where air quality really needs to improve. LEZs will also contribute towards the meeting of emission reduction targets and are part of a range of actions that we are taking to make our transport system cleaner, greener and healthier.

Scottish National Investment Bank (Forestry Sector Jobs)

5. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how many jobs in the forestry sector have been created as a result of the Scottish National Investment Bank. (S6O-01002)

The Minister for Environment and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): That information is neither collected nor held by the Scottish Government. It is a matter for the Scottish National Investment Bank, which makes independent decisions about which investments to make and

what information to collect, monitor and publish about those investments.

In August 2021, the bank committed £50 million to the Gresham House forestry fund. That investment is under 12 months old and has therefore not been subject to the bank's annual reporting cycle. However, it was estimated that it could sustain more than 200 existing jobs and create 500 more in Scotland.

Rachael Hamilton: The SNIB is to plough millions into forestry. However, there are issues over tree species and jobs: as the bank itself admits, 54 per cent of the trees will be non-native. We know that major flaws are associated with large-scale Sitka spruce plantations, especially with carbon sequestration and greenwashing. It is estimated that only 200 jobs will be created, which is not an impressive return for £50 million—which I believe has gone to Guernsey—and it is hardly a resounding success story for protecting rural communities.

Why was such a deal signed off through SNIB when it has such a poor return for the environment, net zero progress, job creation and rural communities?

Màiri McAllan: As I thought might be obvious to the member, the bank invests on a commercial basis, alongside private money. It makes independent investment decisions, which do not involve the Scottish ministers. I am content, however, that that particular investment rises to a number of the objectives of the Scottish Government, including on carbon sequestration, commercial planting, support for biodiversity and the creation of good, green jobs in our rural communities.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): My understanding is that investment such as tree planting is generally a long-term endeavour and that the bank has only recently been set up. Rachael Hamilton and the Scottish Tories should be aware that Scotland has a very positive story to tell regarding forestry. It is worth nearly £1 billion per year in gross value added, and it employs more than 25,000 people. [*Interruption.*] I ask the minister how the forestry initiatives to be carried out under the auspices of the SNIB will help to complement the Scottish Government's tree-planting goals and support our drive towards net zero?

Màiri McAllan: I could hardly hear the question, Presiding Officer. However, the commitment to the forestry fund has been set up focusing on wide-scale new planting, with an estimated carbon sequestration potential of a staggering 1.2 million tonnes of carbon. As I have said, there are also commitments to biodiversity support and to

sustainable forest management, both of which are in line with Scottish Government objectives.

For our part, Scottish Forestry will set out research this year on the different sequestration potential of the planting of different types of woodlands, as well as on the jobs that flow from those kinds of projects.

Winchburgh Railway Station

6. Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Transport Scotland, Network Rail, Winchburgh Developments Limited and West Lothian Council relating to the provision of a railway station at Winchburgh. (S6O-01003)

The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth): Winchburgh Developments Limited is responsible for the provision of a new station at Winchburgh. The Scottish ministers and the principal funder of Winchburgh Developments met twice in 2020 to discuss the proposed railway station. In 2021 there was one further meeting between the chief executive officer of Transport Scotland and the principal funder of Winchburgh Developments.

I am shortly meeting with the local constituency MSP, Fiona Hyslop, to discuss the matter, on which I know that Ms Hyslop has campaigned tirelessly for some time. Like her, I am keen to ensure that we all work together, including with the local authority and the developer, to make progress on the new station.

Foysoil Choudhury: The people of Winchburgh were first promised a railway station 15 years ago, but Transport Scotland would not let West Lothian Council make the station a condition of the development. We now hear that, as a result, there may be no station at all. Would the minister consider visiting Winchburgh with me to see for herself the massive scale of development and the folly of a nation in a declared climate emergency forcing hundreds of new residents into cars and private transport?

Jenny Gilruth: It is important to remember, and it may interest the member to know, that there are no cases of developer-funded stations in Scotland at the moment. I think that there are at least two cases of developer-funded stations in England. However, funding towards those new stations is requested through the rail enhancement budget, and it is worth noting that the proposal for a station at Winchburgh came from the developer, not the Government, along with the developer's offer to fund the station itself. That came at a much lower estimated cost in terms of the costs associated at the time.

Mr Choudhury talked about a meeting. I have previously committed to meet Ms Hyslop. If the member will let me first meet Ms Hyslop, I will be

more than happy to follow that up with further detail for him.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): The city region deal for Edinburgh and south-east Scotland was signed off by six local authorities, the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish Government. The deal included 5,000 new homes in Winchburgh. Thanks to a West Lothian official, we know that Transport Scotland blocked an attempt to make the construction of a new station at Winchburgh a condition of planning permission for the houses. With a hammer blow of taxes hanging over the families who choose to live in Winchburgh but work in Edinburgh, will the cabinet secretary now prioritise funding for the station, which will provide a genuine alternative to the car for many?

Jenny Gilruth: I have to remind the member that the proposal came from the developer. It did not come from Transport Scotland, nor am I aware of any Transport Scotland officials blocking the proposal.

As I outlined in my previous response, I am more than happy to meet the developer to ensure that the proposal comes to fruition, but the proposal originally came from the developer, which also committed to fund it.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I thank the minister for agreeing to meet me and I point out that the cabinet secretary previously visited Winchburgh to see the potential there.

Winchburgh is likely to grow to a similar size to Linlithgow, which has one of the busiest stations in Scotland. Of course, the financial crash in 2010 caused significant disruption to everything, not least the development of Winchburgh. There is a bit of rewriting of history, in relation to what West Lothian Council could and should have done with regard to development.

Does the minister agree that the most sensible thing to do is get all the relevant public bodies together? Network Rail has already indicated to me that there is a possibility of driving costs down, given previous experience of building stations. Creative solutions can and should be found. The Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal may be a vehicle through which we can make sure that we close the funding gap. My constituents—most certainly those who have bought houses in Winchburgh—deserve a station, and we all need to work positively and proactively together to make it happen.

Jenny Gilruth: Fiona Hyslop is absolutely right. We need to get all relevant parties around the table and we need to look at creative solutions, so I give her that commitment.

On the city region deal, of course, as has been mentioned, global priorities have perhaps changed since the time of its inception. The Scottish Government recognises that those priorities can change, and we are always looking to discuss potential changes to the deal, should partners—this has to be about local authority partners—wish to propose them and provided that they meet the associated eligibility criteria. I note that the recent West Lothian Council board notes state that the developer and the council will ask the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal for a contribution to the station.

Campaign for North East Rail

8. Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its engagement with the Campaign for North East Rail. (S6O-01005)

The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth): I am due to meet the Campaign for North East Rail and MSPs at a meeting planned for early in the summer, to discuss the campaign's proposals. I thank the campaign group for submitting its response to the second strategic transport projects review consultation, which closed on the 15th of this month. All responses are now being considered, and they will help to inform the final set of recommendations, which we plan to publish later in year.

Maggie Chapman: I thank the minister for that response and her acknowledgement of CNER's published response to the STPR2 process.

The minister will be aware of the importance of connecting the towns of Peterhead and Fraserburgh to the rail network, if they are to benefit from and be a part of creating the new economy that the north-east so desperately needs. Can the minister give assurances that the Campaign for North East Rail's response will be included, and that the campaign group will be incorporated in design decisions for the next promised feasibility study, so that local knowledge and expertise can be taken on board to ensure that the next study will take into account the needs of north-east communities?

Jenny Gilruth: Although, as the member will know, STPR2 has not recommended an extension of a rail line to Ellon and onwards to Fraserburgh and Peterhead as a strategic rail priority, I recognise that that may be a regional priority. There remains a path for such rail projects to come forward; we saw that in my constituency in 2019, with the Levenmouth project. That has to be subject to a strong business case being developed and suitable funding being identified. Further work on that would be for partners to take forward.

I am committed to meeting campaigners, plus MSP colleagues. We will work with regional partners on any proposal for a rail link between Dyce and Ellon and further north to Peterhead and Fraserburgh, if they decide to take such an option forward.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Since 2016, I have been campaigning for new stations at Cove and Newtonhill—something that the Campaign for North East Rail is also keen to progress. According to a recent study from Nestrans, most respondents in Cove and Newtonhill are in favour.

Now that the multimodal study has been published, can the transport minister tell me when Transport Scotland will issue its formal response and when people in the north-east will get the stations that they deserve?

Jenny Gilruth: I thank Mr Kerr for his question. I do not have the detail of that in front of me but I will be more than happy to write to him with further detail.

United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-04159, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the United Kingdom shared prosperity fund's implications for Scotland. I encourage all members who want to participate in the debate to press their request-to-speak button or to type R in the chat function.

I call Richard Lochhead to speak to and move the motion. I can give you about 13 minutes, minister.

15:01

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): In this chamber, we have discussed many times the value to Scotland of European Union membership. That value could be measured in many different ways and was not solely monetary. Nevertheless, EU funding has played an important role in our country's economic and social development over many decades.

As if Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will were not bad enough, the UK Government has now broken two key promises. It promised that EU funding would be replaced so that Scotland would not lose out financially from Brexit, and it promised that devolution and this Parliament would be respected and strengthened post-Brexit. As the recent announcement illustrates, UK ministers have reneged on both of those key promises to Scotland.

Even before devolution, Scotland controlled its share of EU funding. We delivered about £6 billion of investment to thousands of projects that directly benefited Scottish communities. We were respected as equals by the EU. Now, we have the UK Government's replacement for four decades of EU funding, the shared prosperity fund. Given the publication of the fund's prospectus, let me reinforce a point that I have made before: it seems that, for the UK Government, "levelling up" means losing out for all of Scotland.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am interested to hear the minister say that. Councillor Iain Nicolson, from Renfrewshire Council, which is set to get the largest investment—£38 million—said:

"Delighted to receive official letter tonight confirming Levelling Up Fund award of ... £38 million. This will transform Paisley Harbour, Abercorn Street with improved connections to Glasgow Airport and our Advance Manufacturing site which is ... under construction."

That is from *The National* on 28 October 2021.

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

Richard Lochhead: I thank Liz Smith for her intervention, which gives me the opportunity to say that one of the big issues with the fund is that it goes only to local authorities, and many organisations and national projects will lose out as a result.

The UK Government made a promise that the lost EU funding would be replaced with an equal, if not greater, fund. It also told us that it would respect devolution. For members who have doubts about that, let me quote UK Government ministers themselves. In 2020, Simon Clarke said:

“The key point is that we want to make sure that this gives the Scottish Government meaningful control over key aspects of resources.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 22 January 2020; Vol 670, c 101WH.]

In 2020, Simon Hart said:

“nothing contained in the proposals for the shared prosperity fund will in any way drive a coach and horses through the devolution settlement.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 15 January 2020; Vol 669, c 1007.]

In 2021, Robert Jenrick said:

“The UK shared prosperity fund will ensure that at least as much, if not more, funding goes to communities in Scotland than would have been received if we had stayed within the European Union.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 22 February 2021; Vol 689, c 622.]

However, here we are, in 2022, and we know that all those promises have not been delivered on. All the promises have been broken. The UK Government is offering Scotland £212 million over a three-year period, which is way below our expectations and way below matching EU funding.

The Scottish Government calculates that £183 million per year is required to replace EU funding. Multiplying that over the same three-year SPF period, Scotland should receive at least £549 million, so the UK Government’s figures simply do not add up. That £212 million equates to a 60 per cent reduction in real terms, and we know that, from this smaller pot, the Highlands and Islands are getting an even smaller share. Whereas they previously received 19 per cent of the total awards from the EU, they now stand to receive just 11 per cent of the SPF allocation for Scotland. Let us think about that for a second. The flagship of EU investment in Scotland—the area recognised as having some of the greatest economic barriers to development—will now receive just £24 million over three years. The Highlands and Islands, like the rest of Scotland, are certainly losing out.

It is a struggle to understand the UK Government’s claims that the SPF is a full replacement. No amount of mental gymnastics can lead to that conclusion, but I want to test it. Did the UK Government perhaps decide to mirror

the 2014 allocations, with no inflationary uplift? No. If we use the figures from the most recent EU programme, our annual average allocation was £111 million. Therefore, over three years, we should be receiving £333 million. If that is the case, we are £121 million short, or 36 per cent down on what we got in the EU programme. Would the Barnett consequential have delivered for Scotland? No. We are not even getting a Barnett share of funding, which would be more than £252 million for three years. We are £40 million, or 16 per cent, below that figure.

Any way we cut it, the £212 million that has been allocated to Scotland falls way short, so how is the UK Government justifying its claim that it is offering an equal replacement? It seems that it is adding the unclaimed funding from the current EU structural fund programmes to the shared prosperity fund value to make a new total and saying that it is matching the funds. We have to ask: how can it possibly be the case that the UK Government can include funding that it is claiming to also fully replace? The EU funding is already committed to serving EU priorities, so how can it be part of the shared prosperity fund? It does not make sense—it does not add up.

Maurice Golden is laughing, but I would like to hear him explain how the UK Government can claim to be matching those funds. The UK Government seems to be treating us all like fools. Perhaps the member is treating us like fools as well.

Neither the Scottish ministers nor the office of the chief economist for Scotland agreed to or endorsed the overall quantum or the allocations to each local authority in Scotland. There was no opportunity to do so, because no formal governance was established ahead of the launch of the shared prosperity fund to provide a forum for agreement. How on earth can the fund have been appropriately launched and managed without any governance or role for the Scottish Government?

For close to three years, Scottish ministers have been calling for the devolution settlement to be respected and for the UK Government to preserve the powers that we have been elected to exercise. Those justified requests were all ignored. The review into intergovernmental relations set out proposals for how each of the four nations’ Governments might work together more effectively. Mr Gove responded by stating that he wished to work more cohesively and transparently with us all. Although Scottish ministers expressed a willingness to engage, the First Minister said that the real test would be whether the UK Government was capable of acting with good will and trust. It is clear that it is failing that test as well.

Scottish ministers have been excluded from any decision-making role in the fund, and the recently shared terms of reference for a joint ministerial board make it explicit that UK ministers will always have the final say. The devolved Governments have been invited to join the board as advisers, but our job is not to serve the UK Government. We were not elected to advise Westminster; we were elected to lead, to make decisions and to take responsibility for the future wellbeing of Scotland. I agree with the Welsh Minister for Economy, who stated:

“The proposed role of the Welsh Government also falls short of ... genuine co-decision making ... On this basis, it has not been possible to endorse the approach the UK Government is taking”.

Likewise, the Scottish Government cannot endorse the shared prosperity fund, as it entails losing out on funding and losing our democratic right to devolved authority.

We often hear Opposition MSPs speak about the city region and growth deals in Scotland as a very good example of partnership working between Governments. I do not disagree, but it is vital that I point out the differences between the shared prosperity fund and those deals. The city deals programme was founded on the basis of equal funding and a robust governance structure whereby no approvals or key decisions are made without agreement. That is a different dynamic, with a different agenda, that establishes parity of esteem between Governments and their regional partners. By contrast, the UK Government has deliberately designed the shared prosperity fund so that it is the sole decision maker and funder, with no call to match funds and no role for the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government cannot be an equal partner when it has no say in how the money is being used. No one should be misled by the attempted comparison to the city deals—the shared prosperity fund is not a fund of equals.

That disingenuous behaviour is also seen in the role that has been given to members of Parliament in relation to the fund. The application process is structured so that investment plans must receive endorsement by local MPs. That is a deliberate manipulation of the system to politicise public funding and make claims that MPs endorse the fund, when, in fact, funds are put at risk if MPs do not give their endorsement. Approval cannot be forced and called endorsement without twisting the truth.

It is a cold irony that, at a time when we are witnessing the worst cost of living crisis for generations, with some people facing the horrendous choice between heating their homes and feeding their families, the UK Government is allowing only local authorities to access the shared

prosperity fund. By cutting out the third sector and employability organisations that previously received EU funding, the UK Government is removing any certainty about future funding for organisations that can really make a difference to those who are struggling the most. The briefing sent to MSPs by Citizens Advice Scotland makes that point very well.

Part of the purpose of EU funding is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing regional imbalances, particularly for remote and rural communities. One of the most recognisable EU-supported schemes in Scotland is the LEADER programme, which delivers bottom-up support to communities for rural development. The current programme supports more than 900 projects across rural Scotland, including 400 initiatives for young people and disadvantaged groups. However, the shared prosperity fund does not replace LEADER, nor are there obvious opportunities for beneficiaries to access similar support through the shared prosperity fund.

Indeed, if local authorities cannot make a link between LEADER projects that might approach them for funding and the pre-determined menu of investment options that has been set by the UK Government, it will be challenging for the shared prosperity fund to continue to support those unique projects. There is real concern that, with the relatively small amount of funding that has been allocated to the more remote and rural areas of Scotland, our smaller community groups will lose out. For example, communities in the Western Isles and Clackmannanshire will each have access to just over £2 million in total.

Other opportunities have been lost as a result of our being hauled out of Europe, such as our being hauled out of the European territorial co-operation programmes. If Scotland is unable to continue with those programmes, we will miss out on co-operation with our European neighbours on shared challenges such as climate change, health in rural areas and the preservation of biodiversity.

Not only are we losing out as a result of the shared prosperity fund, but barriers are put being put in the way of achieving our own goals as a result of levelling up and Brexit. Before Brexit, the UK Government at least appeared to recognise our democratic mandate. However, it is clear that we are no longer dealing with a UK Government that respects the Parliament or the devolution settlement. We are witnessing an aggressive move by the UK Government to intervene in devolved areas. That is evident in its union strategy and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, which restores powers to UK ministers to spend in devolved areas—powers that had been devolved by the Scotland Act 1998. The

Opposition might claim that we are witnessing devolution in action, with the money from the shared prosperity fund going directly to councils. However, that cannot be the case when an entire level of devolution is being excluded. What we really have is an example of the UK Government acting as though the Scottish Parliament simply does not exist. That is erasing devolution and ignoring the will of Scotland's people.

I call on the Parliament to agree that the implications of the shared prosperity fund for Scotland are intolerable. We are losing out financially and we are losing our democratic autonomy. The UK Government must reverse both of those broken promises as soon as possible, so that we can deliver for the people of Scotland, our communities and our economy.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund fails to meet the Conservative manifesto commitment to replace Scotland's EU Structural Funds in full; understands that Scotland will receive only £212 million, which is £337 million short of the £549 million estimated to be an appropriate replacement for EU Structural Funds, and calls on the UK Government to immediately increase the value of the fund to at least the level provided previously by Scotland's EU Structural Funds; believes that the failure to do this will leave communities and third sector organisations across Scotland without important resources needed to tackle poverty and inequality; further believes that the lack of decision making for the Scottish Government in the governance of the Fund undermines devolution; considers that this approach will fail Scotland's communities, which have benefited substantially from decades of EU investment, and further calls on the UK Government to fully devolve control of the Fund to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind those who wish to speak in the debate and have not yet pressed their request-to-speak buttons to do so as soon as possible. I advise members that there is a bit of time in hand, so if they take interventions, they will be recompensed for the time.

15:15

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I reiterate the belief among those on the Conservative side of the chamber that, in the post-Brexit era, the UK Government must make every effort to ensure that there is no loss of equivalent funding to the devolved nations in terms of the money that we would have had available had the UK still been part of the EU. Whether it is provided via the community renewal fund, the levelling up fund or the shared prosperity fund, it is absolutely vital that there is at least equivalent funding to address the loss of EU structural funds. In other words, to adopt one of the principles of the Smith commission, there must be no detriment.

However, I stress once again, as I did in the previous debate on exactly the same issue, that

three things matter in the whole debate. Those are, first, the very best interests of Scotland, especially in terms of improving our economic performance; secondly, that our local authorities, which have, for a long time, been asking for more autonomy, should feel empowered; and thirdly, that there is a joined-up approach between Westminster, the Scottish Government and local authorities. I will dwell on each of those for a minute.

In recent weeks, this Parliament has had two debates on the cost of living crisis, and quite rightly so. In both debates, the Scottish National Party set out its very strong criticism of UK Government economic policy. It claimed that the policy direction was all wrong as it ignored the plight of the poorest in society and was failing to address the concerns of Scotland's communities where there is low economic growth and investment and fewer opportunities in the job market.

What I do not understand, therefore, is why the SNP is continuing to moan about the shared prosperity fund when it is designed to do just that—namely, to address the economic imbalance and income gap.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I thank the member very much for giving way. Would she accept that, while we are not criticising getting some money, we are criticising that (a) the fund is too small and that (b) Scotland's share is too small?

Liz Smith: I am afraid that that is not what is coming across from the SNP just now. What is coming across is the allegation that UK Government's economic policy is all in the wrong direction, but the shared prosperity fund is addressing many of the exact issues that the SNP has been complaining about.

On the second point, we know that there are many inside local government—I just quoted one when I intervened on the cabinet secretary—who have felt heavily constrained not only by the weaknesses in their local government financial settlements, which have, year on year, handed down real-term cuts, but by the lack of autonomy that they have had to endure. Again, the shared prosperity fund is designed to provide greater autonomy to local communities—

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Liz Smith: I will not take an intervention just now.

After all, communities are best placed to know exactly what has to be done in their local area. Several SNP-run councils also take that view.

Thirdly, I have no doubt whatsoever that, given the very significant challenges facing the country, voters would far rather see Scotland's two Governments working together than working against each other. They want them to get on with the job, free from the constant negativity and divisiveness that is corroding our political life.

Most voters accept that the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 confers a right on Westminster to provide money in areas of the UK for which it does not have devolved competence—for example, for infrastructure projects such as roads or railways. Far from being an all-out attack on devolution, as the cabinet secretary seemed to imply, that is about spending more money in Scotland.

Scotland desperately needs the investment. That view is shared by local government and by many local community stakeholders; indeed, Kate Forbes said it just six weeks ago. Those stakeholders tell us that that gives them better ownership of what they want to achieve in their local areas and that the bidding process that has been put in place will enhance local scrutiny and hopefully deliver better economic and social outcomes.

In other words, instead of the fund being a so-called power grab by Westminster over Holyrood, it is an extension of devolution in a direction that brings more power to local communities, which are best placed to know what has to be done.

Richard Lochhead: Does Liz Smith not think that voters in Scotland would like to see the UK Government sticking to its promises rather than breaking them?

Liz Smith: Stakeholder groups such as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations have, on several occasions in public, referenced their meetings with the UK Government—as the minister did during the debate on 22 March—and said that there has been seriously good engagement and that, far from breaking promises, they are working well together to ensure much greater economic growth.

The second reason relates to the current economic forecasts for Scotland, which, by whatever measures are used, are extremely gloomy, particularly in terms of weaker economic growth, weaker productivity and weaker trends in the job market. We know that all that has led to weaker income tax revenues, which in turn demonstrates some of the frailties in the Scottish economy. That issue is very much a focus of the Finance and Public Administration Committee's current deliberations. It also demonstrates that, as has been the case throughout the pandemic, Scotland benefits hugely from being an integral

part of the UK. No doubt, that is why there are so few dissenting voices.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Here we go.

Liz Smith: I hear, "Here we go", but why is it that so many people across local authorities have warmly welcomed that? I will deal with—

Christine Grahame: If the Conservative Party is so popular, why have only six Conservative MPs been representing Scotland since the most recent general election?

Liz Smith: Let us see what is popular when it comes to the information that the UK Government is providing with regard to those extra funds. I do not think that those extra funds are in the least bit unpopular; in fact, the situation is quite the reverse—they are extremely popular.

I will deal with three of the SNP's criticisms. It says that there is not the full £183 million of funding to meet EU levels. When calculating the sums, the UK Government took on board the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's annual exchange rate statistics. The SNP has used other statistics that do not reflect that data, and it has included in its statistics the LEADER funding, even though that is being replaced by other funds rather than by the shared prosperity fund. If the minister wants me to, I am happy to provide all the arithmetic that has been undertaken by the UK Government so that it can be measured against the information that has been used by his Government.

To more fully address the concern that the new funding might initially look as though it falls short—which was acknowledged by the Treasury Committee and by Michael Gove when he appeared at the Finance and Public Administration Committee—it is because some EU money will still be in the system until 2024-25.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member take an intervention?

Liz Smith: I will just finish my point. Michael Gove has given a firm commitment that, as that EU money diminishes, which it will, the shared prosperity fund will be ramped up, and he is prepared to be held to account on that. He added—*[Interruption.]* He added, quite rightly, that the shared prosperity fund is by no means the only way in which the UK Government is providing additional funding that goes way above the block grant. He cited examples, which the minister also cited in relation to city deals and free ports. Does the minister still wish to intervene?

Richard Lochhead: I tried to address the disingenuous and misleading point that Michael Gove made, which the member has just repeated, that, once we add the shared prosperity fund to

unspent EU funding, we can say that there is match funding. However, if we were in the EU at the moment, we would be spending not only the previous programme's money but the new programme's money. Therefore, there is a substantial net loss to Scotland, and it is disingenuous to add unspent money from the previous programme and say that it is match funding.

Liz Smith: I really do not understand why the SNP Government has been using the LEADER funding in statistics, given that that money is being replaced by other funds. I do not understand the arithmetic of doing so, and I offer again to provide the minister with the UK Government's arithmetic.

My time is almost up, but I will finish on this point. I would have thought that levelling up and the shared prosperity fund are very good news for Scotland. It would be nice if, just for once, the Scottish Government could acknowledge—without resorting to the usual grudge and grievance, which are constant hallmarks of the SNP-Green coalition—that that money is extremely welcome and that we desperately need it to address our economic concerns.

I move amendment S6M-04159.1, to leave out from “agrees” to end and insert:

“warmly welcomes the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda, including the Shared Prosperity Fund, which will replace previous EU Structural Funds and which will provide £212 million of funding to Scotland by 2024-25, and further welcomes the UK Government's focus on boosting productivity, skills, innovation, jobs and sustainable economic growth across Scotland, and on increasing the transparency of funding and the accountability for decision-making across Scotland's local communities.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Paul Sweeney to speak to and move amendment S6M-04159.2. You have around seven minutes.

16:24

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): It was around two months ago when we discussed the UK shared prosperity fund in the chamber, and I am delighted that the Government has chosen to give more time to consider the implications of the fund for Scotland's economy.

A substantial number of questions remain unanswered on record as to what would replace the structural funds, including whether the replacement would be as comprehensive as the previous EU funds and the extent to which Scotland would benefit from the new shared prosperity fund.

Over the past five years, we have been assured on numerous occasions that the UK fund would at least match the level of EU funds that it is replacing. Indeed, I remember that the

Conservative amendment in the debate in March stated just that. I note that that has been dropped from today's Conservative amendment, and I wonder whether that is a tacit admission of what we all now know to be a matter of fact: the UK shared prosperity fund is worth less to Scotland's economy than the European structural and investment funds that it purports to replace.

It does not surprise me that the Conservatives are unwilling to admit that its replacement fund is miserly in comparison with EU funds. I am not the only person asserting that. As we have heard already, the Scottish Government believes it to be significantly less than EU structural funds. The Welsh Government agrees, as do the Northern Ireland Executive and the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. In fact, the Westminster Treasury Committee, which is chaired by a Conservative member—a former Treasury minister—stated that the shared prosperity fund is 40 per cent less than the EU funds that it is replacing and questioned why one of the centrepieces of the UK Government's levelling up ambitions was to be reduced to such an extent.

We completely agree with the Scottish Government motion when it states that the UK Government should

“immediately increase the value of the fund to at least the level provided”

by the EU structural and investment funds.

We are in the middle of a cost of living crisis, a climate crisis and a productivity crisis. We have had more than a decade of austerity, and communities across the country are truly struggling as Britain undergoes the sharpest fall in living standards in my lifetime. People are struggling to put food on the table and to find money to feed their electricity meters. Families are generally struggling to make ends meet. I despair at the hardship that millions of families are facing across the country. We see gross inequalities in our communities every day in our inboxes and in our constituency surgeries.

One in four children is living in poverty, and almost a quarter of all households are living in fuel poverty, which is a figure that is rising exponentially by the day.

Liz Smith: The member makes strong points around the considerable concerns about poverty. Nonetheless, does he at least accept that one of the ambitions of the shared prosperity fund is to target areas where there are specific issues so that a levelling-up process is under way in those areas?

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

Paul Sweeney: I absolutely accept that that is the intent of the fund, but I dispute the efficacy in meeting its intention. When we see those metrics, they do not give us great hope for optimism.

This is the first time since the Victorian age that life expectancy has fallen in this country. Food bank use is rising, too. The worst part is that each of those economic ailments is a symptom of political choices. A political choice has been made to reduce the value of the shared prosperity fund to 40 per cent less than the EU structural funds, and that will compound the misery that families face in Scotland.

I turn my attention to the Labour amendment, which references the funding cuts that Scotland's local authorities have experienced. We know that those have been disproportionate and that the Scottish Government has hammered local authority budgets during the past decade.

Every year, councils across Scotland are forced to make cuts as their budgets are slashed disproportionately. It is the Scottish Government's centralising instinct and approach to economic sustainability, and its tacit acceptance of Tory laissez-faire economics, that sees Scotland's productivity lag drastically behind the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This year is no different, with £250 million of cuts imposed, which is on top of a cumulative total of £6 billion during the past decade.

John Mason: Does the member have a suggestion as to where the £250 million that he would like to give to local authorities would come from?

Paul Sweeney: I know that Mr Mason asserts that this Government operates within a fixed budget envelope, but it has extensive revenue-generating powers that it has not innovated in the slightest because it is intellectually incurious about that. Therefore, the Government's revenues are constrained by a lack of innovation on the revenue-generating side. I would suggest investigating options; annual ground rents would be one particular opportunity, and the former MSP Andy Wightman offers some interesting views on that. I would direct Mr Mason toward revenue rather than simply managing decline on an ever more constrained budgetary envelope.

We know that the cuts have been disproportionate. It is independently verified that, although the Scottish Government's budget goes up in real terms, local authorities continue to feel real-terms constraints, and that is having a disproportionately difficult effect on our communities. Although we know that that is happening, we still have concerns about the UK Government's approach to providing funding directly to local authorities and bypassing the

Scottish Government entirely. There are concerns at all levels.

The Tories might not like it, but we have had a devolution settlement since 1999 for a reason. As we have found out in recent months and years, they are quite happy to disregard the devolution settlement whenever it suits them. Breaking the Sewel convention and legislating despite repeated refusals by this Parliament to agree to legislative consent motions is the most obvious and egregious example of their disdain for devolution.

We agree that the funds should be administered as close to communities as possible—the principle of subsidiarity. Ideally, we would like local authorities to be involved heavily in decisions about allocation of the funding, but we are clear that, if that is to happen, it cannot be used to mask further cuts to local authority budgets in the long run.

I will close on the issue of co-operation, as it is of fundamental importance. Who administers the fund might be important to us, but all that the majority of people of Scotland are concerned with is whether their communities are being adequately served and whether public investments are efficiently targeted.

There are undoubtedly differences of opinion between the Scottish and British Governments, but we need them to work collaboratively on this matter. A situation in which the two Governments argue incessantly about the process of administration rather than focus on the delivery of funds will be utterly intolerable and tedious. Let us be clear: communities across Scotland will also suffer as a result. Therefore, we need clarity on the delivery mechanisms for the funds.

As Citizens Advice Scotland points out, because of the current local and regional geography for implementing the funds, voluntary organisations with a national footprint will struggle to access funding and deliver the economies of scale and scope and social impact that are needed for transformative change in poverty and equality outcomes.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing, as the Conservative front bench spokesperson said: to improve the lives of people across Scotland and to use the funds to alleviate the hardship that millions of families face this year and for years to come, by improving living standards. It could not be more important that we get this right. Although Labour's criticism of the Scottish and UK Governments is well documented, and both are guilty of power grabs at their respective levels, we will work constructively to ensure that the funds are impactful and achieve the outcomes that we all want to see.

I move amendment S6M-04159.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, to leave out from “further believes” to end and insert

“recognises the importance of joint working between the Scottish and UK governments in order to achieve the common goal of strengthening Scotland’s communities; notes the benefits of previous EU funding, but also the concerns with the transparency in how it was administered and awarded in Scotland; further notes that cuts to the structural funding equivalent by the UK Government coincide with cuts to local government budgets by the SNP administration in cooperation with the Scottish Green Party to the detriment of communities across Scotland, and calls for the replacement for EU funding to fully match what has been available in the past and be administered as close to communities as possible.”

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

15:33

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): The disrespect that the UK Government regularly displays in its dealings with the Scottish Parliament and Government, and by extension its arrogant dismissal of the democratic voice of the Scottish people, must be resisted.

At the same time as the Tories fall into line to defend a law-breaking Prime Minister, they want to give away more powers to Boris Johnson’s Government. Having disregarded the interests of the Scottish people as they pushed through a destructive Brexit, with its significant loss of trade and freedom of movement, the supine Scots Tories are rolling over yet again in this latest move to undermine our constitutional rights.

Despite there being worked-through plans by the Scottish Government for a Scottish shared prosperity fund that involved local authorities and communities, the UK Government has sought to foist decision making and policy on Scotland with the likes of the Subsidy Control Bill and the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, of which the shared prosperity fund is just one small part.

I agree that the issue is not just about the loss of £337 million to multiple areas across Scotland; it is fundamentally about power. Who could not be alarmed by the UK Government, with its paltry six Tory MPs in Scotland—as Christine Grahame pointed out—and with the Tories not having won here since 1959, giving itself explicit powers to directly spend money across Scotland, without a legislative consent motion being agreed to for the 2020 act?

What are other voices saying? The Fraser of Allander Institute, working with the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the University of Stirling, said:

“The Internal Market Act can therefore be seen as enabling a range of UK government interventions that bypass not only the Barnett formula but the devolved

administrations themselves. Perhaps most significantly, these interventions will include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund”.

When Michael Gove appeared before the Finance and Public Administration Committee in February, I asked him whether he was happy to have created a methodology, without consultation with the Scottish Government, that placed Orkney and Shetland in the lowest category of transport connectivity need, alongside the City of London. His bizarre response, noted in the *Official Report*, was:

“The conclusion about whether funding has been distributed equitably will come at the end of the process. It is a bit like deciding who the hero or heroine of a play is going to be on the basis of which character appears first and before you know how the play is going to turn out.”

I can well understand Mr Gove viewing his work as being akin to a piece of fiction, but the trouble is that it is actually a farce. It is certainly not grounded in any real understanding of the needs of our communities. He has created a methodology that does not distinguish between the needs of Shetland and those of the City of London. Arguably, that is not unlike Boris Johnson being unable to distinguish between the truth and lies.

When the committee convener raised issues about the involvement of MSPs, frankly, Mr Gove misled the committee. To again quote from the *Official Report*, he said:

“It is an important requirement that they are consulted”.—[*Official Report, Finance and Public Administration Committee, 24 February 2022; c 24, 7.*]

However, a review of the publication “UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus”, which was published on 13 April, gives a prominent and well-articulated role for MPs but only a flimsy passing mention of MSPs.

Criticism is levied not only by the SNP but by Vaughan Gething, the Minister for Economy in Wales, who describes the prospectus thus:

“While this overall funding package compares relatively favourably to other UK nations, it does not meet the UK Government’s commitment to at least match the size of the EU structural funds Wales has previously and would have qualified for.”

Basically, that means that Wales does badly out of this deal, but not as badly as Scotland.

I therefore ask the minister whether he will consider providing additional guidance to local authorities to ensure that any projects that come forward are compatible with Scotland’s economic strategy, and to require consultation with MSPs alongside consultation with MPs. That is surely the least that we can do. I for one will be insisting on being included in consideration of projects that affect my constituents.

At every step of the way, there has been a failure to respect the distinctive needs of Scotland and a deliberate undermining of the role of the Scottish Parliament. To add insult to injury, a fund has been set up through which a minister in charge of English housing has devised an incompetent methodology for the allocation of funds. Scotland can do so much better than that, but it appears that that will be only as an independent country.

15:38

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Members would be forgiven for thinking that hundreds of millions of pounds that are coming directly to Scotland's communities to address poverty and inequality and to create jobs and opportunities would be welcomed. However, as always, the SNP would rather take the opportunity to promote its agenda of grievance and gripe.

We need only explore its motion to see how baseless its opposition is to the shared prosperity fund. The motion says that the fund will leave Scotland "short", as a replacement for EU structural funds, but that fails to recognise that Scotland is still receiving legacy EU funding. As that tapers off, UK funding will increase to replace it and, by 2025, the shared prosperity fund will fully match Scotland's EU structural funds in real terms.

The motion says that

"third sector organisations across Scotland"

will be left

"without important resources needed to tackle poverty and inequality".

Anyone who has ever been involved in EU funding, particularly those in Scotland's third sector, would shiver at the sheer mention of EU funding, because there were so many issues with it, including late payment of funds. Payment was often so delayed that the resulting cash-flow issues would put organisations under severe financial pressures. On occasion, in order for them to survive, cash-flow bail-outs would be required from public sector partners.

Richard Lochhead: George Osborne, the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, has said that what is happening just now is unfair. Is that SNP grudge and grievance?

Maurice Golden: I do not know the context of that comment, but arguing against funding going to Scotland's most deprived communities is exactly what the SNP is doing.

EU bureaucracy was so rigid that it made the claim process overly burdensome. Feedback from across the third sector includes evidence of delayed claims, which were sometimes worth

hundreds of thousands of pounds, because of the smallest clerical errors. The threat of an EU audit would hang over third sector organisations, which knew that, if they were selected for an audit, the resources involved in complying with it would be very draining. Due to excessive restrictions on what could be claimed, and the significant management and administrative costs involved in running EU-funded projects, organisations would often be worse off as a result of delivering EU projects.

The motion says that

"communities and third sector organisations across Scotland"

will be left

"without important resources",

but EU structural funds could be such a poisoned chalice that—once bitten, twice shy—many organisations would refuse to bid for EU funding due to their previous experiences. The result was that communities and third sector organisations missed out on vital EU funds for years because of refusal by many to entertain the idea of making an application.

The UK Government is determined to learn from that experience and has committed to the shared prosperity fund adhering to the following tenets: bureaucracy will be slashed, there will be far more discretion over what money is spent on and requirements for match funding will be scrapped.

The motion claims that

"the governance of the Fund undermines devolution",

but by providing funding directly to local authorities, the fund embodies devolution at its purest level. It ensures that councils, which are democratically accountable to local people, decide on funding for local priorities.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): The House of Lords, the Scottish Affairs Committee and the Institute for Government all state that the UK Government should engage with the Scottish Government on delivery and design of the fund. Are they wrong? They recognise that the fund undermines devolution.

Maurice Golden: Let us be clear. It would be far better if the SNP got behind the fund and supported and encouraged bids, because it seems that, when money is made available for SNP councils to help the most deprived communities in their areas, they do not want it.

Let us take the example of Dundee. The UK Government's levelling up fund identified the city as a top priority for funding, but the SNP council could not get its act together and the bid was never submitted, even when other Scottish local authorities managed to submit bids. That was a

terrible dereliction of duty by the SNP council, which failed people, businesses and the communities that live and work there.

As it has with everything else, the SNP has a woeful track record of spending public funds, having blown billions of pounds on a catalogue of calamities, including the CalMac ferries fiasco, late-opening hospitals, staggering overspends on information technology projects, compensation for malicious prosecutions, mismanaged Government bail-outs and the scrapped named person scheme.

It should come as solace to Scotland's people and its communities that the shared prosperity fund is bypassing the SNP Government and its unmitigated ability to make a shambles of public spending decisions, and will instead go straight to Scotland's local councils, which will enable them to directly address priorities and needs in their local communities.

I urge Parliament to support the amendment in the name of Liz Smith, which warmly welcomes the UK Government's levelling up agenda—including the shared prosperity fund—to boost productivity, skills, innovation, jobs and sustainable economic growth across Scotland to make it truly stronger.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call John Mason to speak for around six minutes.

15:45

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

Our subject today is the UK's shared prosperity fund, but I suggest that we really need to think more widely about the kind of country in which we want to live. We are just coming out of the pandemic, so now seems like a good time to have a vision for where we are going.

Do we want to live a country where there is vast and growing wealth in London and the south-east of England, which will inevitably suck in some of the best talent from Scotland—not to mention from Wales, Northern Ireland, and the north and midlands of England—and, therefore, in a country where we would live permanently with many people in Scotland and England struggling all their lives with poverty and making ends meet? Alternatively, do we want to live in a country—the UK or Scotland—where, although differences would, of course, exist between the people who are better-off and those who are less well-off, no one has far too much and no one has far too little?

We are debating the shared prosperity fund, so first let us think about those words. For “prosperity”, some of the synonyms that I have

seen include “abundance”, “fortune”, “luxury”, “plenty”, and “riches”. Clearly, some people in the UK and Scotland are in that position—we think particularly of Rishi Sunak and his wife, of Russian oligarchs, of some football players and so on.

The other word is “shared”. Sharing, as I understand it, means that someone who has a lot gives away some of it to someone who has less, so one person ends up with less, and one with more. We learn as children to share toys, treats and so on. Perhaps we are in danger, as individuals and as a society, of forgetting that sharing—even sacrificing—what we have is a good thing that benefits us all.

However, is that what is actually happening now in the UK? Is there really a redistribution of prosperity, or are the richest individuals and regions largely just keeping their riches? Is the so-called shared prosperity fund more about passing on a few scraps that the rich do not need?

Liz Smith: I thank Mr Mason for giving way. He sits on the same committee that I sit on, and he is well aware of the very significant issues around the inequalities to which he has just alluded. To tackle those inequalities, we surely have to inspire greater productivity, economic growth and investment. Those are the principles that underpin the shared prosperity fund. Does he accept that?

John Mason: I only partly accept that: I accept that we want to grow the economy of Scotland and the UK sustainably.

Let us look at some of the figures. We need to consider how the current prosperity and wealth—the UK is one of the wealthiest countries in the world—are shared, and whether the shared prosperity fund is helping that sharing. I have worked out that if the fund is to be £2.6 billion over three years, that is about £13 per head of the population per year. To look at it another way, if we say that half the population will gain and half will lose, then it is a transfer of £26 from the richest people to the poorest. When we consider that even moderately well-off people can spend hundreds of pounds on a foreign holiday or £26 on one meal, the fund does not look like a serious sharing of prosperity.

It is worth thinking about some of the wealth that is sitting around in the UK. It is said that we want to attract Russian and other wealthy people to the UK so that their wealth will be spread around and benefit all of us. However, is their wealth really shared around?

Liz Smith: Will the member give way again?

John Mason: No. I am sorry.

Do we all benefit? Roman Abramovich is reputed to have assets that are worth £12.1 billion. I accept that not all those assets would be here in

the UK, but that sum in itself is more than four times the total shared prosperity fund for three years.

Why does the UK encourage and support tax havens in the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, the Cayman Islands and elsewhere? Who benefits from that? Is it the ordinary people of Glasgow? Is the prosperity that is linked to those places being shared?

Liz Smith: Will the member give way on that point?

John Mason: No. I am sorry, but I have given way already.

I will return specifically to the UK shared prosperity fund. I was grateful for a number of the briefings that came from the third sector, despite what Maurice Golden said. Action for Children, Barnardo's Scotland and the Prince's Trust all make the point that it looks as though there will be no reduction in bureaucracy and red tape from when we had European funding. There will also be gaps between the EU funding that ends in December this year and the UK SPF becoming mature and established.

Citizens Advice Scotland considers that the voluntary sector is being largely ignored and will find it difficult to access funds. It also considers that there is too much emphasis on physical assets.

Once again, the Labour amendment wants more money from the Scottish budget for local government, but it fails to say where that money would come from, although I accept that, in response to my intervention, the suggestion was made that there should be more taxes. I presume that, otherwise, the NHS budget would have to suffer.

The Conservative amendment celebrates £212 million, which is roughly £40 per head in Scotland over three years, or again £13 per head each year. I welcome the £13 per head, but it is hardly going to level anything up, nor could it be described as sharing prosperity.

The cross-party group on industrial communities that is headed up by my colleague Colin Beattie, works closely with the Industrial Communities Alliance, which has produced some helpful reports in recent years. It looks largely at older industrial Britain as a whole, including the midlands and the north of England as well as Scotland and Wales. A report entitled "Beyond the Pandemic" that the ICA commissioned from Sheffield Hallam University, and which came out last December, points out that

"Older industrial Britain was in need of Levelling Up before the pandemic and that remains the case today."

Although we are obviously specifically concerned about Scotland, we can argue, along with other parts of the UK, that a much more serious approach to shared prosperity or levelling up should be being taken.

Another ICA report on state aid from 2019 compares regional aid in the UK with Germany, which spends more than three times as much, and France, which spends more than eight times as much, despite the UK having some of the widest regional and local differences in prosperity in Europe.

The first bullet point in the ICA's 2021 report says that the shared prosperity fund should be

"a genuine replacement for EU funding"

and that it should be allocated according to need and

"strong targeting on less prosperous local economies."

I fully endorse that.

Today we are debating a shared prosperity fund that largely ignores the huge amount of wealth and prosperity that is washing around the UK, and which does very little in the way of sharing much of it. Is that really the kind of country that we want to live in? I do not.

15:52

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):

We are told in the ministerial foreword to the prospectus for the shared prosperity fund, which was announced exactly two weeks ago, that it is about

"levelling up opportunity and prosperity and overcoming deep-seated geographical inequalities that have held us back for too long."

Those are fine words; a worthy statement of intent—beguiling, even, were they not coming from the party that slashed regional assistance down the years, emasculated assisted areas and abandoned entire communities. This is the party that told the people that the market would adjust, that it would deliver, that there would be trickle-down from the overheated south to the depressed regions and nations of the north. It was a myth—a deception, but one that was dogmatically clung on to while regional divides got wider and regional disparities got deeper.

This is the same party that, through its doctrinaire approach to fiscal policy and its programme of privatisation in place of public provision, which Boris Johnson announced just yesterday he wants to let rip again, not only exacerbates the cost of living crisis, but fuels those regional inequalities that have held us back for too long.

Michelle Thomson: I am sorry to interrupt the member. He is giving a fine speech, all of which I agree with thus far. However, he is the first member in the debate who has clearly recognised that macroeconomic policy fundamentally resides with Westminster. That is something that the Scottish Tories either do not know or do not understand. Would he agree with that?

Richard Leonard: Yes, I accept that, under the terms of the devolution settlement, important macroeconomic decisions on monetary policy, fiscal policy and currency policy are retained at UK level.

However, I want to go on to talk about another element of regional policy that I think is central to this debate, because it impinges on the real lived experience of people. The Conservative Party is a party that has reversed civil service dispersal, from closing the National Savings and Investments Bank at Cowglen, where 6,000 people once worked, to axing the Department for Work and Pensions processing centre at Coatbridge, at a cost of 250 jobs, in 2017. Just this month, in the past few days, it has closed the tax centre at Cumbernauld, so that, in one fell swoop, 1,300 jobs have been lost to the town.

It was remarkable that, in his evidence to a committee of this Parliament just eight weeks ago, Michael Gove could not help but attack regional policy, economic planning and the developmental state. He lectured us:

“We cannot direct investment in the way that we did in the past. The shadows of Ravenscraig and Linwood show that”.—[*Official Report, Finance and Public Administration Committee*, 24 February 2022; c 14.]

I say to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that if he thinks that Ravenscraig, which was the largest hot strip steel mill in western Europe, was a failure, he should go and speak to the people of Lanarkshire and the generations who were employed there for decades, who saw the sun rise, as well as set, on those cooling towers, for whom there would have been a long-term future if investment had been applied to modern steel technologies, instead of capital being starved, before being jettisoned, with all the hopes of the people along with it.

Turning to the Scottish National Party, I am bound to say to it that this is not a game. In a Scottish Government press release that was issued on 13 April, the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise was quoted as saying:

“communities across the country will miss out on around £150 million of investment in 2022-23.”

That is wrong. Under the terms of the withdrawal agreement, the EU funds will continue, so that is wrong, and the minister knows that it is wrong. It

does not help the quality of debate or the integrity of our democracy to continue to propagate that statement this afternoon.

Richard Lochhead: I explain to the member that the minister is not wrong—he is perfectly correct, because it is possible to spend existing EU funds from the previous programme up to 2021 and funds from the new European programme from 2021 onwards at the same time. Therefore, we are losing out; the funding is not being matched by the UK Government. The minister was perfectly correct in what he said.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you the time back for the interventions, Mr Leonard.

Richard Leonard: Thank you very much.

I turn to what people are witnessing out there in communities across the country: cumulative cuts to local authority budgets by the SNP. Our communities are missing out on that money. In the region that I represent alone, in the past nine years, £135 million has been stolen from Falkirk Council, £371 million has been axed from South Lanarkshire Council and £455 million has been robbed from the people of North Lanarkshire. That has hit our schools, closed community centres, squeezed elderly care and sacrificed good-quality local jobs. As we come out of the pandemic, at the very time when we need new investment in jobs and services, those cuts are getting deeper and even deeper, so I think that the claim that the SNP Government makes this afternoon has an air of a hollow ring to it. It is picking the wrong fight.

As the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said of the shared prosperity fund,

“the UK government has ‘taken back control’ only to stick to an arbitrary, poorly designed, out-of-date funding allocation mechanism.”

Instead of being a spending programme of seven years, the new funding programme is only three years long, which deters the kind of long-term planning and investment that we need.

What we now need is transparency on how the shared prosperity fund will be administered and awarded in Scotland. We need new investment in Scottish local government and a fair funding formula, so that the shared prosperity funding is additional. We need a comprehensive, planned approach to regional policy that is sustainable and long term.

In the end, our purpose must be to build an economy and a society that work not just for people at the top but for all, where a secure and warm home should be a human right, where everyone is entitled to good health and dignity in old age, where lifelong learning and the right to food are established as statutory rights, where decent jobs and useful work are available to all,

and where every job is a green job in a full-employment economy. That is what our goals should be, that is where our ambition should lie and that is what the Scottish Labour Party is fighting for.

16:00

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I despair, listening to Richard Leonard, at Labour being prepared to prop up a Tory Government and a failed union yet again. No wonder Labour's vote in Scotland is shrinking into the distance.

This is a significant debate. It is not just about short-changing Scotland to the tune of £337 million of former European structural funds, and breaking a promise to ensure that post-Brexit Scotland would receive, as a minimum, the £549 million that it would have received. That is bad enough, but the UK Government has blatantly and deliberately set about undermining the principles of devolution.

That is also at odds with the UK Government's own 2018 commitment to

"respect the devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and ... engage the devolved administrations to ensure the fund works for places across the UK."

Alister Jack, the Tories' spokesman in Scotland, said:

"We intend to work with the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to facilitate collaborative work".

"Collaborative" is a weasel word, because the UK Government has utterly bypassed the Scottish Government and has dealt directly with individual regions and councils. Does that matter? Of course it does. First, this is no UK gift or act of generosity; it is our money, garnered through our taxes, national insurance, VAT and so on. Secondly, it is a naked use of those funds by the Tories not only to undermine devolution but to stem the rising case for independence.

Consider this: Scotland voted to remain in the EU by a thumping 62 per cent. Boris's "oven-ready" deal turned out to be a pig's breakfast, and that £350 million a week for the national health service on the side of a bus was just that—something scribbled on the side of a bus.

When it comes to the NHS and the care sector, we have staff shortages directly as a consequence of Brexit—and we can add lorry drivers, bus drivers, additional red tape and lorries stacked up at ferry ports. It is yet another Boris boorach—he is an ace at those. All of that impacts on the economy. As for reclaiming our fishing waters, we might ask the Scottish fishing industry and

processors about that as their produce languishes in those stationary lorry parks.

The actuality of Brexit is not done. I reference Northern Ireland, which also voted remain, by 56 per cent. It now has transborder issues with Éire and with the rest of the UK. There is also that border down the Irish Sea, which was not to be a border and, in Boris-speak, never was a border. After all, if he does not know what a party is, he will not know what a border is. Now he is trailing a piece of legislation to overturn the Brexit deal. By the way, whatever happened to Alister Jack's tunnel under the Irish Sea—or was it a bridge? It has been abandoned, just like the commitment to respect and work with the devolved Governments.

Did the Scottish Government have plans in place to administer and allocate those former EU funds? Of course it did, but it was right to indicate well in advance:

"We do not know which funds will be replaced. We have no idea what conditions may be placed on the funding. We do not know how long the fund will be for or when it might start."

Well, we ken noo.

We can add to that the UK's levelling up fund, which has been referenced by others and which, in my patch, has placed Scottish Borders in priority group 1, with access to £20 million to assist areas with high deprivation.

Of course there is deprivation in the Borders, but what principle is in operation here? In Clackmannanshire, the rate of deprivation is 40 per cent, yet is not on the hit list. Why not? Perhaps because Borders has a Tory council and, in John Lamont, a Tory MP. It is all about helping your buddies and shoring up your vote; it is not about prioritising areas of high deprivation, so let us not kid on about that.

In a BBC interview, my friend Alister Jack gave the game away yet again, when he spoke about the formation of a new cabinet union strategy committee, headed by the Prime Minister, specifically to counter independence. He had the nerve to say:

"This is actually true devolution in practice. Scotland has two governments, and this is the United Kingdom Government spending money, new money, directly with local authorities."

Here we go. Scotland directly opposed Brexit, yet the Tories ripped Scotland out of the EU, undemocratically. Scotland was told that if it voted yes in 2014 it would be ripped out of the European Union, but the unionists did it for us. Here the Tories have 31 MSPs to the SNP's 64, and they have only six MPs from Scotland at Westminster, compared with our 45. Wherever we look on the Scottish political landscape, we see that it is undemocratic.

It is worth repeating that the people have spoken time and again. They have rejected the Conservatives and, indeed, Alister Jack, who acts like a colonial governor who is long past his sell-by date.

Failing at the ballot box, the Tories rely on English MPs to impose policies on Scotland and funnel funding for political purposes with no democratic mandate. In 2014, they argued against independence. Well, here we are. Thanks to the union, we are out of Europe. If the Tories think that Scottish people want to continue with this kind of Tory rule and all that it entails, why do they not agree with us and put that to the test with a referendum?

16:07

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Eight weeks ago, when we last debated the UK shared prosperity fund in this chamber, I highlighted three issues that the UK Government's approach to it tells us about its priorities: it does not care about meeting its own manifesto commitment to match, as a minimum, the funding that our communities, organisations and services would lose as a result of Brexit; it does not care about existing devolved decision-making processes or enhancing community participation and engagement in decision making; and it does not care that the funding, if allocated differently with a coherent strategic approach, could have played a significant role in developing the infrastructure and supporting the organisations and services that our communities will need in the future, as we try to reorient our economy towards wellbeing and the just transition. Leaving aside the broken promises for now—although it comes as no surprise that the UK Government breaks its promises to Scotland—let us unpick what that means for communities and organisations across Scotland.

The UK Government says that it is operating the equivalent of a no-detriment policy for the amount of funding that Scotland is to receive compared with what it would have received if we were still in the European Union. However, as we have already heard, the £212 million over three years represents a 60 per cent cut to the money that Scotland would have received. It is disingenuous in the extreme to suggest that continuing but declining EU money can be counted into the fund to make up the difference. That is not replacement.

Even if we take that statement of equal replacement at face value, it is clear that, regionally, there is definite detriment: some parts of Scotland will be worse off as a result of the UK Government's approach. How can, for example, the Highlands and Islands be put in the same

priority category as the City of London? Some in this chamber might want to reflect that such an approach will do little to tackle the widening gaps between the financial centre of the south-east of England and parts of Scotland that benefited significantly from EU support.

As Michelle Thompson noted earlier, when Michael Gove was asked about that disparity at a recent meeting of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, he said:

"The conclusion about whether funding has been distributed equitably will come at the end of the process."—*[Official Report, Finance and Public Administration Committee, 24 February 2022; c 24.]*

The end of the process will be too late for many communities. What will we say to areas that have not had equitable funding? Do we just shrug our shoulders and say, "Oh well, you missed out. It wasn't equitable, but that's just tough luck; there's nothing we can do now"? It is not good enough to say that the UK Government will address inequities in the allocation process once the process is finished—it will be too late by then; the money will have been allocated. There must be a way to continually assess and review, with proper community participation and engagement, to ensure that inequities are tackled before the process is finished.

We have heard from many speakers this afternoon about how the UK Government's approach represents an attack on devolution. Organising funding allocations around Westminster constituencies indicates a level of either ignorance of or contempt for local and Scottish Government organising structures, never mind the lack of specifics around community participation or the requirement for Westminster constituency MPs to support bids.

The approach also means that strategic planning that cuts across regional boundaries will be impaired. Rather than enabling people to use the money to organise investment in the infrastructure of the future, including the infrastructure that is needed if we are to deliver the just transition, the approach seems to be focused on priorities that do not match those that the Scottish Government and many of our communities have identified for themselves. There is no clear prioritisation for delivering on net zero ambitions, tackling poverty and inequalities or reorienting our economy towards care and wellbeing.

For me, perhaps the core of the fund's failure is that organisations and services that have been supporting our communities for years, if not decades, will suffer. The fund represents a real cut to communities and the services on which they rely. The whole levelling up agenda is supposed to alleviate poverty and inequality, but how that is

supposed to happen is not identified in the plans. The allocation approach is regressive in comparison with the European regional development fund and the European social fund's distributive methods. As Citizens Advice Scotland said, the proposals for the fund mean that it will be difficult for national voluntary organisations to access funding, which will mean missed opportunities for many people.

Therefore, the shared prosperity fund does anything but share prosperity. It will not help us to deliver the infrastructure that we need for Scotland's future; it will not help organisations and communities to deliver the services and support structures that are needed to tackle poverty and inequalities; and it will not help us to invest in the fabric on which our society relies.

This UK Tory Government insists, yet again, on impoverishing us, now and in the future, following decades of failure to future-proof our economy and develop and sustain an industrial strategy that supports our society.

What we need instead is long-term planning—*[Interruption.]* I cannot take an intervention; I am just about to close and have no time.

We need genuine community regeneration that recognises local variations and specificities, by having governance and engagement structures that centre local voices. What the UK Government has developed is not that.

16:13

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): EU funding has supported infrastructure projects and community initiatives across our country since the 1970s. Projects that are crucial to our communities in Scotland have brought significant benefits to many areas.

That includes European LEADER funding, which the minister talked about in his opening speech. In Dumfries and Galloway, the funding has supported projects and businesses such as Dark Art Distillery in Kirkcudbright, which produces gin, Wigwam Holidays in Wigtown, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, and 7 Stanes and Glentress in the Scottish Borders.

It is hugely disappointing that future projects with as much potential as those will likely lose out. Supporting such projects is exactly what levelling up means to me; but the levelling up fund should be renamed “the losing out fund”, because Scotland will receive considerably less funding than it received before Brexit.

Liz Smith: Will the member take an intervention?

Emma Harper: I will take an intervention from Liz Smith if she can explain how the funding will be equivalent to EU funding, after this boorach.

Liz Smith: I think that it is the member's colleague, who I quoted earlier, who can explain that to her, because he has made it clear that the funding

“will transform Paisley Harbour, Abercorn Street with improved connections to Glasgow Airport and our Advance Manufacturing site which is currently under construction.”

Emma Harper: I am coming on to funding. The member talks about an area outside Dumfries and Galloway, which is the region that I was referring to.

Finlay Carson: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Emma Harper: No, I will not take another intervention.

This whole thing sticks in my thrapple. The UK Government's shared prosperity fund is a failed attempt to replace the European social and regional development funds by cutting the funding given by the EU to communities the length and breadth of Scotland. Here are some of the facts: Scotland will receive £212 million, which is £337 million short of the £549 million that is estimated to be an appropriate replacement for EU structural funds. The overall Scottish allocation for the UK shared prosperity fund, which was earmarked to succeed the European funds, is only £212 million over three years. Even the third year of funding delivers less than Scotland received before our forced exit from the EU.

Finlay Carson: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Emma Harper: No, I am sorry—I have taken one already. I do not have time.

The Scottish Government has calculated that a sum of £162 million per year would be needed to replace the European regional development fund and the European social fund, increasing to £183 million per year when LEADER funding and the EU territorial co-operation programmes are added. Those are the facts.

The UK Government has clearly failed to replace the EU funding and it has had five years to sort this. Again, Presiding Officer—“levelling up” means losing out. Scotland will receive considerably less funding than before Brexit. Not only does the shared prosperity fund provide Scotland with less benefit than we received as a member of the EU, but the lack of inclusion of decision making by the Scottish Government in the governance of the fund undermines devolution.

The Scottish Government has tried to engage constructively with the UK Government to ensure that funding is delivered in a meaningful way, consistent with the Scotland Acts and aligned with our fair work and equal opportunity aims. Unsurprisingly, the UK Government has undermined devolution by failing to give the Scottish Government a decision-making role and failing to meet the needs of Scottish communities, including third sector organisations.

The UK Government continues to develop and implement the levelling up fund without the consent, agreement, or engagement of this Parliament or the Scottish ministers. The Scottish Government has been excluded from meaningful or formal involvement in the process. Had Scotland remained in the EU, we would have had full involvement with the development of plans for this new programming period.

UK Government ministers are dictating where and how spending is allocated and bypassing our democratically elected Scottish Government, which previously set priorities for EU funding on behalf of Scottish people. One of those UK ministers, as my colleague Christine Grahame has mentioned already, is Westminster's man in Scotland—the Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack. In February, he said:

“It wasn't so long ago that the UK was sending huge sums of money to Brussels then receiving some of it back in the form of regional aid”

and that the shared prosperity fund

“is far more effective than relying on the whim of ... bureaucrats ... the way of the past.”

That simply flies in the face of actual facts, as has been shown during the debate.

Through the shared prosperity fund, Scotland will receive reduced funds compared to what would have been received with EU membership. I have written to the Secretary of State asking him to show us how the UK shared prosperity fund will benefit Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders. However, as with my 12 other letters to him, on other issues, I have received zero responses—zero, nil, none.

The UK Government must fully devolve control of the fund to our Parliament. It is the Scottish Government that should decide how the policy and the funding are delivered in Scotland, in line with the agreed devolved settlement, not by out-of-touch ministers in London, fower hunner mile away.

It is not only the SNP saying that, as my colleague Fiona Hyslop mentioned in an intervention. It is supported by the House of Lords, the Scottish Affairs Committee, and the Institute for Government, all of which have said that

devolved Governments should control funding in their own areas.

I support the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to stand up for this place, for the people of Scotland, and for devolution. Again, this losing out fund leaves Scotland worse off than we would have been with EU membership.

16:19

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

It is only a few weeks since we last held a debate on the topic of the UK shared prosperity fund and I am a little bit surprised that, after such a short space of time, the Scottish Government has brought the subject back to the chamber. Perhaps it did not get enough negative headlines from its original attempt to stir up a grievance over the issue because, despite all the rhetoric that we have heard, it seems that it is getting very little traction outwith the ranks of the SNP.

Earlier in the debate, Liz Smith referred to the approaches that have been taken by bodies such as COSLA, which has been very supportive of much of the shared prosperity fund's agenda and has welcomed the fact that the money is going straight to local councils. We have also heard from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, which takes a very different tone from the one that we have heard from SNP speakers in the debate. Indeed, the blog that Anna Fowlie, chief executive of the SCVO, published yesterday, concludes by saying:

“There's much to be welcomed in the UKSF prospectus, particularly multi-year funding. It could offer opportunities for our sector.”

That is a very different tone from the one that we have just heard from SNP members.

Michelle Thomson: Murdo Fraser has chosen to miss out a bit:

“When the Internal Market Act became law, it was evident that devolution had been blurred, some would say undermined.”

That was in the report too, or did he just miss that bit?

Murdo Fraser: I noticed that Michelle Thomson did not reference the part of the blog that talked about the politicisation by the SNP and the SNP's approach to the grievance agenda. I dare say that, if the member wants to contribute again, she can make those points. Maybe the minister will do that when he is winding up.

The motion that is before us today in the name of Richard Lochhead makes a number of assertions. Every one of them is incorrect. At the start of the debate, Liz Smith set out the reasons why SNP scaremongering over the UK's shared

prosperity fund was based on an incorrect set of claims. It is worth reiterating some of those points.

I will start with the issue of money. It is accepted that the UK shared prosperity fund will be worth £212 million to Scotland initially. The SNP's motion claims that an appropriate replacement for EU structural funds would be £549 million. However, the SNP, of course, is not comparing like with like. It seems to have included LEADER agricultural funding in its figure, when that is being funded separately.

Liz Smith made the point that legacy EU funds are tapering down, and Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has made it very clear that the shared prosperity fund will increase to replace those funds as they reduce over time. The commitment from the UK Government is very clear that the shared prosperity fund will match former EU funding—a fact that the SNP just does not want to recognise.

Let us listen again to what Anna Fowlie said, as she provides an objective voice in her blog. In relation to funding, she says:

"It appears that by year 3, and if you include other funds like Levelling Up, Scotland might not come out of it too badly."

That is a very different tone from the one that we have heard from members on the SNP benches.

We did not hear from the minister or anyone in the SNP about what has happened to the £190 million. I raised that in a debate that we had in March. Last year, it was being reported by the Scottish Government that Scotland was facing a £190 million clawback from the EU due to irregularities in EU funding. What has happened to that £190 million? If the minister would like to intervene and tell me what has happened, I will happily give way. If not, he can deal with that point when he is winding up. All the rhetoric and fake indignation from SNP members is rather put into perspective by the fact that we are facing a £190 million clawback due to the SNP's incompetence in handling EU money. That puts it all into some context.

Of course, what upsets SNP ministers and their colleagues is that money from the shared prosperity fund will go directly to councils, bypassing the Scottish Government. I can understand why the Government, with its tendency to centralise everything and its emasculation of councils, wants to go down that route. However, that approach has been warmly welcomed by those in local government, including some SNP councillors.

The SNP never likes to admit it, but Scotland has two Governments—one in Westminster and one in Edinburgh—and both have a role to play in

contributing to local economic development, supporting skills and supporting the third sector.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I am delayed in making this intervention, because I am slightly confused. Murdo Fraser is constantly telling us that he wants issues to be put to local authorities to allow them to make the decisions, yet his entire party is campaigning against the parking charges that are going to be devolved to local authorities. Local authorities are going to be making those decisions locally, yet he is saying that we are not doing enough to give them local decision making. That does not make sense.

Murdo Fraser: Well, there we have it—the SNP in Perth is campaigning for the car park tax to be imposed on the people of Perth and Kinross. I am going to get that on the front page of every local newspaper between now and next Thursday—Mr Fairlie wants the hated car park tax imposed on people across Perth and Kinross. I very much welcome that clarification from him.

It is ironic that the SNP never complained about EU structural funds when the money was coming from the EU and the EU was setting the criteria. I was on the Finance and Constitution Committee in the previous session of Parliament, and I remember when we met people from the third sector who told us just how difficult it was to deal with EU funding, as Maurice Golden said in his contribution today, and just how obsessive the funding rules were. For example, everything had to be badged so that it was clear that the funding came from the EU.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I ask you to conclude, Mr Fraser.

Murdo Fraser: The idea that there was in the past some golden age of EU funding for the third sector is simply baloney.

Liz Smith set out very well why the UK shared prosperity fund will be good for Scotland, for local authorities and for communities. That is why we should support it and support her amendment.

16:26

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): From listening to the debate, I think that there are a number of questions that need answered. Is Scotland getting its full share of replacement funding? It is clearly not, and I suspect that it is not getting that replacement funding as quickly as the saved EU spend is being made available to the UK Government. Where is the remaining funding? If it is being held back, who has it? It is not extra money—it is replacement funding. Where is it?

From listening to the debate, we could conclude that the UK has top-sliced funds that were due to

Scotland and used them for pet political so-called levelling up schemes, bypassing devolution, and has then been rationing spend, using the rationale that some continuing EU-funded schemes are yet to conclude. In the meantime, Scotland is losing out on millions of pounds of funds that are being saved now by the UK Government but are not being spent now. Top-slicing and rationing—not for the first time, a UK Government is selling Scotland short.

Is there a plan to tackle structural inequalities geographically or socially? Is there a coherent aligned strategy? Who decides? It is not the Scottish Government. How can the funding that is there go further through strategic alignment with other funding streams and priorities in a devolved Scotland? I am thinking, for example, of big net zero projects such as the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, which I understand has already expressed its concerns.

The absence of support for voluntary or community-based organisations that are tackling social inequality is very worrying, as we have heard from Citizens Advice Scotland, which is concerned about the focus on physical infrastructure at the expense of people.

There is also the matter of where gets the funding and why. The ludicrous position regarding how other EU funds have operated to the detriment of geographical needs in areas such as the Highlands is out of touch and out of line with need. Brexit has not finished—if anything, it is just getting started. Almost six years on from the vote to leave the EU, which Scotland did not vote for, there is still no clear or concise plan. It appears that it will be 10 years after the vote before EU replacement funds are matched, so Brexit has not even been done. It is almost as if the leaders of the vote to leave the EU did not expect to win, were doing it for internal Tory party manoeuvres, were shocked when they won and have been scrambling around ever since trying to put together an EU replacement plan without even understanding the international legal agreements that they have signed up to in the process.

The Scottish Government, working with COSLA and other partners, even proactively presented the UK Government with a plan that would have worked to replace EU structural funds. However, the UK Government has ignored the Scottish Government and COSLA, and it has once again ignored Scotland.

When the UK Government does come up with EU replacement schemes and funds, they fall well short not only of what is reasonable, expected or deserved but of what was promised in the 2019 Conservative manifesto. The promise may not have been written on the side of a bus, but it was made.

Even the most ardent Brexit supporter must be despairing of the UK Government. Only yesterday, a report by the London School of Economics and Political Science centre for economic performance stated that the UK's count of product-destination export relationships per quarter shrunk by 30 per cent in 2021 following the EU trade and co-operation agreement. The centre reports a reduction in imports of 25 per cent, which will also affect exports. As we heard in the Economy and Fair Work Committee, it is not viable for lorries to return to the continent empty; therefore, export trade, as well as supply lines, will be disrupted. Replacement trade deals are not replacing those lost exports in any shape or form. The UK trade policy observatory stated that free trade agreements

“barely scratch the surface of the UK's challenge to make up the GDP lost by leaving the EU”.

Where are the plans?

The Office for Budget Responsibility has pointed to a Brexit loss of more than £1,250 per person over the coming years, which is more than 178 times the most optimistic prediction of the benefits of the replacement trade deals. The OBR has also warned that UK trade “missed out” on much of the recovery in global trade and is lagging behind all other G7 economies.

I say to members to take tent—if this is the best of Brexit Britain under Boris Johnson's Conservatives, it is evidence of a shrinking UK Government. It is shrinking our exports, it is shrinking funds that are owed to Scotland with the fund that we are debating today, it is shrinking its influence and it is shrinking the respect with which it is held internationally. The evidence of lockdown parties during Covid is a clear demonstration that it is shrinking in its credibility, trustworthiness and values.

Scotland deserves so much better. We need decisions that are made in Scotland for Scotland. We need to be part of the European Union, with its genuinely shared decision making and its single market, which is the biggest in the world.

We can and will forge our own future by reflecting the values and vision of our country and what its people can achieve. Scotland can step out of shadows of the UK Government with independence, and join the world as a modern and progressive country.

The Presiding Officer: We now move to closing speeches.

16:32

Paul Sweeney: It has been interesting to listen to the debate, as much for what was not said, as for what was said. Diving into the technical detail

of the administration of the fund is not what the people of Scotland need right now, in the midst of three intersecting crises—the cost of living, climate and productivity. We need to take bold, strategic and imaginative steps to address each of those crises. They are interdependent, and we need to get them right first time, because we cannot afford to wait.

The arguments that have played out today about the technical details of how inflation and exchange rates are calculated and used to uprate, and how that determines the extent of shortfalls, miss the point most spectacularly.

We agree with the Government and we agree with the Treasury Committee. In fact, the broad consensus is that, notwithstanding the technical arguments, the shared prosperity fund does not address the scale of the challenge. The Conservatives cannot dispute that and it must be addressed. Although we agree with the broad intention of the fund, it will not deliver the stated outcomes. That is worse than just admitting that it will not deliver. We need to get a grip of the issue.

The role of structural funds is to support our communities, and fighting over which centralised administration should administer them wastes energy and serves nobody. The funds must be delivered

“as close to communities as possible”,

as asserted in the Labour amendment, which is a positive enhancement to the Government motion.

It is vital that the Tory Government reassesses the amount that it is making available, in line with calls from devolved Administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is an opportunity to build on and vastly improve what was available through the European Union, rather than to have cut resources and managed decline.

That is true in Scotland, too, because, cumulatively, we have seen £6 billion cut from local government over the past decade. I noted the points that various members made about that during the debate. For example, Maurice Golden talked about Dundee cutting off its nose to spite its face, as it is not applying for funding because of who is administering it. I find that to be egregious misconduct in public office, frankly.

My Glasgow colleague John Mason mentioned what I understood to be, in economic geography, the core-periphery model and the nature of economies of agglomeration. The point made was that, somehow, London’s growth will affect and be to the detriment of Scotland. I am not quite sure how one addresses that, unless the member is proposing immigration and capital controls, which I am sure would be problematic to say the least. We have to build with the grain of where great global

cities are going, which is where Glasgow’s opportunities lie.

However, the cuts to Glasgow City Council over the past 10 years have been disastrous. We see that tangibly in the member’s constituency. The People’s Palace, which is a great international icon, is lying derelict, with its glasshouse falling apart as a result of the city’s parks budget being cut by 70 per cent in the past decade, because non-ring-fenced funding for the council has been cut by more than £1 billion. Now, the only option for the council is to apply to the UK Government levelling up fund to get money to repair the glasshouse.

The system is broken and there needs to be more humility from all parties about how we fix the fundamental failure of local government since the settlement in 1996. That issue has not been brought out in today’s debate at all, which is a great pity.

When we look at the economic geography of Glasgow, we see that it has a high level of gross value added but that it has relatively low household incomes. However, the neighbouring local authorities have quite low levels of gross value added but high household incomes, because people are coming into Glasgow, earning money and retreating to the suburbs, where they pay no tax towards the city region, its economic growth or for its public amenities.

The inequality of economic geography is as much of a problem in Glasgow as it is in London. We need to assess that dispassionately and with greater rigour when we are looking to solve the problem of inequality in Scotland. I am afraid that the approaches that the Conservative UK Government and the Scottish Government are taking will not solve that—and that is certainly the case on the basis of the engagement in the debate.

I agree with the point about tax havens and the extraction of wealth, but that is happening in Scotland as much as it happens anywhere else, when we look at land ownership and rent extraction by private owners of our country’s natural treasury. We need to fundamentally address that. I say that partly in response to John Mason’s question about where we raise revenue from. We need to get to grips with that. My colleague Richard Leonard made that point; the state has hitherto poorly managed state aid and allocations, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies agrees with that. We need a much more fundamental debate about state aid effectively functioning as a means of crowding in wealth to our communities and building investment and prosperity, rather than it being a function of transferring wealth from the state to private capital, which is usually foreign owned. That is an

extraction of profits, with the assets physically retreating, as we saw with silicon glen. It is largely a story of failure in Scotland.

Mr Leonard spoke about Ravenscraig and Linwood. I agree that those were opportunities that were destroyed in a vicious orgy of economic vandalism by the Conservative Government 30 years ago. We still need to learn lessons from that today. Recently—in the past three years—there was a long campaign in the north of Glasgow to save the Caley railway works. The experience of that campaign showed me that *laissez-faire* economics is very much *de rigueur* at both St Andrew's house and in Whitehall. The ping-pong between both Governments abrogating responsibility was, frankly, a disgrace. The upshot is that we have 163 years of railway engineering lying rusting on Springburn Road, when the Scottish Government could have bought the works and utilised the site as a national centre of engineering excellence.

Those are just a handful of examples of how funds are not being well utilised and directed.

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Mr Sweeney.

Paul Sweeney: That is why we need a fundamentally new approach, as the Labour amendment to the motion suggests.

16:39

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Here we are, for the third time in less than a year, debating the investment that is going to Scotland's communities via the UK's shared prosperity fund. For the third time, the SNP has manufactured yet another row to complain about that.

As surely as night follows day, an SNP grievance follows a positive funding announcement from the UK Government. I think that this is the only Government, anywhere in the world, that takes issue with money being passed directly on to the people who they are elected to represent.

The central complaint at the heart of the motion is that the Scottish Government does not get to have its own way over how this funding is distributed for local communities. It does not get to put its own spin on spending announcements. It does not like the fact that local communities will get to spend the money on their local priorities and not those of the SNP.

Let us look at the Government motion in more detail. It reiterates the complaint that the shared prosperity fund falls short of what would have been provided through the former EU structural funds. My colleagues Liz Smith and Murdo Fraser

have gone over the figures and, as Liz Smith so aptly put it, our party fully supports the principle that any funding distributed from the UK shared prosperity fund should at least match what was distributed from EU structural funds. Indeed, it is the stated ambition of the UK Government that it exceeds that. The UK Government has confirmed that the funding will match the previous EU funding from the European social fund and the European regional development fund. By 2025, it will match those funds in real terms.

Today, we hear that the funding announcement does not directly match that amount. However, as Michael Gove confirmed to the Finance and Public Administration Committee in February, the fund

"ramps up over time as the EU legacy funding diminishes ... As those funds wind down, the UK shared prosperity fund will ramp up to fill the gap, until eventually all legacy EU funding of projects ends." —[*Official Report, Finance and Public Administration Committee*, 24 February 2022; c 1, 2.]

Of course, it is deeply ironic that the SNP has come to this chamber to complain about missing money. What has happened, as Murdo Fraser said, to the £190 million clawback? The SNP is a party that has gone wildly over budget on two ferries that have not even left the dock. It is a party that has overseen £40 million blown on malicious prosecutions against the administrators of Rangers Football Club. The SNP has some brass neck coming to the chamber to complain about how money is or is not being spent.

The motion also repeats the suggestion that the shared prosperity fund undermines devolution, and that point has been made by many in the debate. At no point since 2007 has the SNP complained about the EU injecting funds into local communities, but now that the UK Government is doing the same, it is aghast. As I have said many times before, the Scotland Act 1998, which underpins the devolution settlement, allows direct investments from the UK Government to devolved policy areas. There is nothing to prevent that happening. That is not undermining devolution; it is strengthening it. It is itself devolution. The Scottish Conservatives fully support the UK Government working more closely with local government in Scotland to deliver on their priorities—something which has been sorely lacking under the centralising SNP Government.

Of course, the shared prosperity fund is not the first intervention by the UK Government to support communities in Scotland. Several cities and regions are benefiting from £1.5 billion-worth of growth deals. There will be two new free ports in Scotland, backed by £52 million of investment. Glasgow is to benefit from a share of £100 million in research and development funding for an innovation accelerator. I could go on—for example, the UK Government is creating new jobs

by moving some of its departments out of London and into Scotland.

The SNP Government goes on to claim that third sector organisations will be impeded by the shared prosperity fund—again, a claim that does not stand up to scrutiny when the facts are considered. Let me tell the SNP Government what Scotland’s third sector has said about the shared prosperity fund. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations represents thousands of small voluntary bodies working in a huge range of places across Scotland: 2,000-plus charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises. Its chief executive said:

“Scottish Ministers’ outrage at funds going straight to local decision-making feels disingenuous when community empowerment is a key strand of Scottish policy.”

That is, the Government’s

“outrage ... feels disingenuous when community empowerment is a key strand of Scottish policy”.

Richard Lochhead: I have looked at Anna Fowle’s blog. She also says that she expects the shared prosperity fund to replace the EU funds that were lost to Scotland through Brexit and to respect the Scottish Parliament and Scottish devolution. Will the member accept that both of those promises made by the UK Government have been broken?

Donald Cameron: I will not accept that for one minute. I have covered those matters previously, and I will cover them again, if the minister really wants me to.

The chief executive of the SCVO is not wrong about the disingenuity of what is happening. Civic Scotland knows exactly what the SNP is up to: it is preaching community empowerment on the one hand and then complaining about it on the other. She goes on to say that the UK shared prosperity fund

“does strongly encourage engagement with the third sector”,

that

“There’s much to be welcomed in the ... prospectus, particularly multi-year funding”,

and that

“It could offer opportunities for our sector.”

What makes the SNP position all the more absurd is the fact that many of its councillors back the new fund. In fact, SNP-run councils have received £172 million in the first tranche of investment from the levelling up scheme. The shared prosperity fund will make it easier for communities to access vital funds. Gone are the days of EU bureaucracy, which often made the process of accessing funding too cumbersome for

smaller organisations and charities, as Maurice Golden so powerfully argued.

The UK Government has confirmed that

“there will be far more discretion over what money is spent on”

and that

“EU requirements for match funding, which impacted on poorer places, will be abolished.”

It adds:

“Instead of regional agencies, funding decisions will be made by elected leaders in local government, with input from local members of parliament and local businesses and voluntary groups.”

That means local decisions being taken by local decision makers, which is something that is anathema to the SNP.

Yet again, we have come to the chamber to hear more grievance from the Scottish Government. Rather than welcome the positive news of more funding for local communities, less bureaucracy and more local decision making, we get another confected row. We on the Conservative benches believe that the people who make the best decisions on funding are local communities, which is why we back the shared prosperity fund and Liz Smith’s amendment.

16:46

Richard Lochhead: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate, which is about the future of Scotland, our economy and our communities, and about ensuring that we have appropriate investment to align with all the country’s priorities to create a fairer and more prosperous country.

Liz Smith and Murdo Fraser seemed pretty bored by the fact that we are, once again, debating the fate of EU funds and the shared prosperity fund. However, the reason for today’s debate is that, since we debated the issue previously, the UK Government has confirmed its plans and published its prospectus for the shared prosperity fund. From that, we now know that we have two key broken promises. First, the lost EU funds as a result of Brexit, which Scotland did not vote for, are not being replaced by the UK Government as promised. Secondly, the promise to respect Scottish devolution and the Scottish Parliament is not being fulfilled—it is another broken promise. That fundamental milestone from the UK Government is why we are back in the chamber today to have this debate and a vote.

Murdo Fraser: In the previous debate on the issue, at the beginning of March, I asked the minister whether he could update members on the £190 million that the EU was threatening to claw

back from the Scottish Government due to irregularities in the handling of EU structural funding. He did not respond to that question then. Can he do so now?

Richard Lochhead: First, I am certainly not aware of that figure. Secondly, all Governments, including the UK Government under the Conservative Party, have to deal with clawbacks and with compliance and audit requirements. I am sure that we will continue working with the EU authorities.

The Conservative Party wants to talk about what we are getting through the shared prosperity fund and not what we are not getting through it. According to the Conservative Party, our highlighting of the nearly 60 per cent shortfall in funds that we required from the EU replacement funds is manufactured SNP grievance. However, those issues are being highlighted throughout the UK. I noted previously that former Tory chancellor George Osborne has said that the current allocations are unfair. The Welsh First Minister, Mark Drakeford, said on 13 April that his nation stands to lose out by £1 billion over three years while having less say over how the money is spent. He said:

“This is not levelling up, it’s levelling down.”

The director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership in the north of England said that the shortfall amounted to a 43 per cent cut over three years, while authorities will lose the long-term security provided by the seven-year allocations offered by the EU. He said:

“We were promised that no nation would be worse off post Brexit but, when you take out the smoke and mirrors, the data doesn’t lie.”

There have been references to the Westminster Treasury Committee, which stated that the shared prosperity fund represents a 40 per cent cut from the equivalent EU funds, and a think tank in the north of England, the Institute for Public Policy Research, which said that the fund represents a 43 per cent cut in real terms. However, according to the Conservative Party, that is all SNP grievance and manufactured complaints. The issue of broken promises amounts to the fact that we now have a shortfall over the next three years of £337 million—we have to recognise that.

I will address a couple of issues that members raised. The Tories spoke about welcoming the autonomy of local authorities. We should remind the Conservative Party that the UK Government has given local authorities a menu to choose from—we heard from Conservative members that it is important for addressing the cost of living crisis—but that fixed menu of options that the money has to be spent on covers things such as landscaping, local art exhibitions and a range of

other issues; it is not for the urgent issue of addressing the cost of living crisis. Please understand what the UK Government proposes to deliver.

I have to pick up on Richard Leonard’s point that we were wrong to say that we face a £150 million shortfall in the coming financial year—a point that the Conservative Party also made. It is a technical but important point. We are allowed to continue to spend money from the previous programme for two or three years after the programme period, and we are doing that at the moment. We would have been entitled to call down from the new European programme, but we are not part of that due to Brexit. We could have spent that money at the same time as we spent money from the previous programme. The UK Government is ignoring that lost cash, so we are losing £150 million in the coming year that is needed to tackle the cost of living crisis and other issues in our society.

I should also mention that the Cornwall Live news website has a headline that says:

“Cornwall set to get less than half of its replacement EU funding but Conservatives welcome announcement”.

We could equally have a headline in this country that says, “Scotland is getting only 40 per cent of what is required from EU replacement funding, but Boris Johnson’s Conservatives in the Scottish Parliament welcome announcement”. I ask the Conservatives to please look at the truth of the issue and stand up for their constituents, their communities, the Scottish Parliament and devolution.

There are various differences between the shared prosperity fund and the EU structural funds. The EU funds were delivered over a seven-year period, which gave recipients of investment certainty and the ability to develop long-term strategic plans—strategic plans are important for this country’s future—that would not fall prey to political cycles or the whims of the endless conveyor belt of UK Cabinet ministers. The shared prosperity fund is connected to the UK Government’s budget cycles and, as such, lasts for only three years. That is a big reduction in certainty, which impacts not only planning but the sense that key themes for investment priorities may frequently change.

I also want to talk about the issue of scale. Michelle Thomson made the point that it is important that the limited shared prosperity fund that we are getting is aligned with Scottish Government priorities, but, because devolution and the Scottish Parliament are being ignored, that will be more challenging. I assure Michelle Thomson that the Scottish Government will continue to liaise with local government to make

sure that we are aligned on this country's priorities for net zero, Covid recovery and other areas.

That lack of a strategic approach is important. Moray, which I represent, is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, and I have made the point to the chamber several times that the University of the Highlands and Islands was established largely thanks to European funding. The new shared prosperity fund would not make that possible, because no one local authority would necessarily be able to support the establishment of a region-wide university to provide higher education to give young people an incentive to stay in their local area.

As I said, under the Conservative Party's shared prosperity fund, the Highlands and Islands, which is an area that faces some of the biggest development challenges, will have a smaller share of a smaller pot. Douglas Ross, who is sitting here and who represents the Highlands and Islands region, will vote for a cut in funding for the Highlands and Islands, which will get a smaller share of a smaller pot under his London Government's proposals. That is why we have to resist this.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The minister is asking us to resist this. Does he honestly believe that this is anything other than devolution working in practice—two Governments able to invest anywhere in Scotland? What the people across Scotland, the Highlands and Islands and Moray do not understand is why the SNP Government does not want that investment going into their local areas.

Richard Lochhead: One of the ironies is that Douglas Ross sits in both the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, which perhaps illustrates that he has never really been a fan of Scottish devolution. If one takes his argument to its logical conclusion—

Douglas Ross: We have two Parliaments.

Richard Lochhead: Douglas Ross wants to just scrap the Scottish Parliament and let Westminster take all the decisions.

With regard to the strategic projects of scale that were funded with European funding, which will face massive challenges because of the way in which the shared prosperity fund is designed, we have Zero Waste Scotland's resource efficiency circular economy accelerator programme, which received £22 million of ERDF funding—

Maurice Golden: Will the minister take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: The minister is closing.

Richard Lochhead: Apologies—I have taken a few interventions.

That national project is good for small and medium-sized enterprises, it develops our circular economy in Scotland and it supports community-based organisations. We also have Skills Development Scotland's apprenticeships programme, which gets £77 million through the ESF—the current European programme—and which has helped thousands of Scots to learn new skills, gain qualifications and work at the same time. All those things will be nigh on impossible under the shared prosperity fund, not just through a lack of funding but because of the way in which it is designed in the first place.

The Scottish Funding Council's developing Scotland workforce programme receives £40 million via the ESF, providing additional college and university places to address regional skills gaps and shortages in key employment sectors.

The Presiding Officer: Could you conclude, minister?

Richard Lochhead: I will come to a conclusion shortly.

We also have NatureScot's green infrastructure fund—

The Presiding Officer: You will come to a conclusion now, minister. Thank you.

Richard Lochhead: Just to finish, Presiding Officer, I urge Parliament to express the fact that we want the UK Government to fulfil its promises and pledges that were made to the people of Scotland through Brexit by voting for the motion today.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. That concludes the debate on the UK shared prosperity fund's implications for Scotland.

Business Motions

16:56

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 3 May 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 May 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm General Questions

2.20 pm First Minister's Questions

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

followed by Scottish Government Debate: National Walking Month – Improving Health and Strengthening Communities

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.30 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Tuesday 10 May 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee Debate: Inquiry into the Scottish Government's international work

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 11 May 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Justice and Veterans; Finance and the Economy

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 12 May 2022

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 2 May 2022, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: I now call Jamie Greene to speak to, and move amendment S6M-04176.1, for up to five minutes.

16:57

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I thank members for their forbearance on the comments that I would like to make.

We have been asked today to approve a stage 1 debate on the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill next Tuesday. The standing orders of Parliament are clear and state that a stage 1 report must be published at least five sitting days before Parliament considers the general principles of a bill.

Rule 9.6, paragraph 3A, of the standing orders states that

“The lead committee shall report to the Parliament in time to allow the report to be published not later than the fifth sitting day before any date allocated in a business programme for the Parliament to consider the general principles of the Bill under paragraph 4. The Parliament shall not consider the general principles of the Bill earlier than the fifth sitting day after the lead committee report is published unless it decides to do so on a motion of any member.”

There will be no full sitting days of Parliament between the stage 1 report’s suspected publication date and the stage 1 debate—none. To be clear, the stage 1 report has not even been published yet, as it is still being drafted by Criminal Justice Committee clerks as we speak—much to their credit. The Parliament is asked simply to breach standing orders for no obvious reason. If the Government has a good reason for that breach, it has not been made clear to us.

We have proved that, as a Parliament, we are more than capable of truncating the scrutiny process for emergency legislation, and I agree with that being done. However, there is no emergency here—none whatsoever. Indeed, I have proposed in my amendment another use for that debating slot. That is my first point.

The second point is that I am in the ludicrous position in which I want to tell the chamber why we should not have the stage 1 report next week due to the contents of the report, but I am restricted from talking about the report because it has not even been published yet. I can say to members, however, that it is at least 70 pages long and contains a large number of detailed technical responses to the bill as proposed by the Government, all of which require detailed scrutiny and analysis.

My third and final point is more than just procedural, as important as procedure is. It is that all members and stakeholders outside Parliament who participated in the consultation and gave evidence to the committee need time to digest the contents of the report and, more importantly, that I want to hear their feedback on the committee’s conclusions and recommendations that are contained therein. That is how we legislate, and how we legislate well.

It is not just Tory members who are deeply uncomfortable about the truncated timetable that is being forced upon us to scrutinise and pass the bill.

Presiding Officer, although decisions on the timetabling of debates is a matter for members to vote on, as we will do, are you comfortable for Parliament to breach standing orders for no good reason, as the Government is asking it to do? Can you intervene in any way to ensure that we do not breach standing orders on timetabling?

Finally, I make an appeal to members who have heard and followed my remarks. There is wide-ranging consensus on and support for the Government and what the bill seeks to achieve, which have been given in good faith that we would be afforded the time that is needed to make good law and to scrutinise it properly. Let us do our job properly. I ask members to support my amendment and give us much more time to digest the stage 1 report, and thereby to have a full and informed stage 1 debate within the normal timetable that people expect from us and—more important—that standing orders ask of us.

I move, as an amendment to motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam on a business programme, to leave out

“followed by Stage 1 Debate: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill”

and insert—

“followed by Scottish Government Debate: Long COVID”.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Greene. The Parliamentary Bureau makes recommendations to the Parliament. The Parliament has an opportunity to debate those recommendations, which it is doing, and the Parliament will vote on what it has heard.

I now call Pauline McNeill. You have up to five minutes, Ms McNeill.

16:57

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Presiding Officer, Labour will support the amendment to the business motion. I would like it to be noted, however, that that is no reflection whatsoever on the hard work of the committee members.

As Jamie Greene set out, the Criminal Justice Committee was asked to scrutinise the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill using a fast-tracked timetable so that we could bring in the new much-needed offence of supplying fireworks to a person who is under the age of 18 in enough time for the November bonfire season. I agreed, while not fully realising that other aspects of the bill would require much deeper scrutiny than was first thought, including aspects in the stage 1 report that was signed off today around the complexities in the creation of a new licensing scheme, which will require close consideration.

Had I known that the Government would not allow for the usual five days prior to the stage 1 debate, as is required under standing orders, I would have made more objections in the first place against a shortened timetable for completion of the

stage 1 report. It does not set a good precedent not to comply with standing order rule 9.6.3A.

As Jamie Greene has done for his party, I place on the record that we support the intentions of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill, and commend the work of the Government and stakeholders. However, we must be prepared to uphold the integrity of the scrutiny process, and it should not be squeezed into a stage 1 debate on Tuesday when stakeholders will not have had time to respond, and we only have the Government's promise that we will see what it has to say before we have that debate. It is quite unprecedented that the committee report will be published tomorrow afternoon, as the May day holiday is a potential barrier to many who will want to brief members of Parliament who might want to take part in the debate. It is completely unsatisfactory.

The debate could be held on Wednesday; I am not clear why it cannot be. This is one of the first pieces of legislation that has been made in session 6 of the Parliament, and we should be seen to be treating it with respect.

The committee struggled to get data on the crime of fireworks misuse—on which I think the Parliament is unanimous—so that it can understand the picture across Scotland. The data came so late that we cannot influence the stage 1 reports.

Members can see that many factors are making it difficult for the committee to properly scrutinise this important bill. It is therefore unhelpful that, at the end of the process, the Government has chosen to give us no time to consider our response to the report. I hope that there is a way of saying how we intend to go forward in this parliamentary session, which is still in its early stages, and that we will do the right thing and oppose the business motion. Let us let stakeholders give a proper response to the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill. Let us scrutinise it properly. I ask all members, please, not to make an assumption that, just because there is a stage 1 report, the Government has got everything right. I assure members that they will want to discuss quite a number of things when they see the report.

The Presiding Officer: I invite George Adam to respond on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

17:04

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I will endeavour to put the minds of colleagues in the Opposition parties at ease on the matter.

The Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill is extremely important to many of

our constituents, as most of us will be aware. Every now and then, a bill comes along that deals with problems that constituents have, and the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill is one such bill. It is because it is an extremely important bill that we all agreed that the timetable should be as it is. We wanted to help the many constituents who have such problems and have to deal with the antisocial behaviour that happens through use of fireworks.

I am led to believe that all the members of the Criminal Justice Committee believe in the fundamentals of the bill at stage 1, and I do not think that anything has been said today that says otherwise. The crux of the matter will come when we move on to stage 2, when members of the Opposition parties will have an opportunity to contribute and to ensure that they get across their points. My whole idea was to ensure that we had plenty of time for stage 2 within the truncated timetable.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

George Adam: I ask the member to let me continue.

The bill is very important to our constituents, and we must do our utmost to ensure that it delivers for them.

Liz Smith: Will the minister give way?

George Adam: I ask the member to listen for a wee bit longer. There are clear practical advantages to the process of parliamentary scrutiny of the bill concluding in advance of the summer recess, for the reasons that I have already mentioned.

Given the fireworks-related issues that are faced every year by our communities, stakeholders and—significantly—the emergency services, it is important that we progress the positive changes and introduce the restrictions that are proposed in the bill as soon as possible, in order to reduce incidents and harm. The proposed timetable will enable the proxy-purchase provision to be implemented in time for the bonfire period this year, and it has been agreed with the committee.

On that basis, the committee's stage 1 report will be published on the morning of Thursday 28 April, and the Minister for Community Safety intends to provide the Scottish Government's response to the committee's report on Monday 2 May. The proposed timetable will also enable work to operationalise the remaining provisions in the bill to start immediately following royal assent, so that positive change will be in place for people and communities as soon as possible. I make a plea to members not to forget that it is the people whom we represent who are the important ones, here.

On that note, I hope that I have managed to put my colleagues' minds at rest and allay their concerns.

Pauline McNeill: On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

An amendment has been lodged in Parliament concerning a breach of standing orders in relation to the five-day requirement. Although the minister responded on other issues, he did not give Parliament an explanation of why it is necessary to breach standing orders. I have yet to hear what the minister has to say about that. Why could he not have scheduled the debate for Wednesday? If he had done that, an amendment to the motion would probably not have been lodged. Surely any member who speaks in such a debate must address the substantive point and not dance around it.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you for that point of order. It is, of course, always a matter of courtesy and respect that questions that are put to members are answered.

The standing orders make it possible to vary the period in question. That is the issue that has been debated, and the Parliament is about to make known its view, through voting.

The question is, that amendment S6M-04176.1, in the name of Jamie Greene, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:09

Meeting suspended.

17:13

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S6M-04176.1, in the name of Jamie Greene. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)

Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

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

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-04176.1, in the name of Jamie Greene, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, is: For 47, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)		Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)		
Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Debate: National Walking Month – Improving Health and Strengthening Communities
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)		
Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)		
Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)		
Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Approval of SSIs (if required)
Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)	5.30 pm	Decision Time
Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)		
Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)		
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)	Tuesday 10 May 2022	
Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)	2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)	<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)		
Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	<i>followed by</i>	Topical Questions (if selected)
Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)		
Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee Debate: Inquiry into the Scottish Government's international work
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)		
Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)		
Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)		
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)	<i>followed by</i>	Committee Announcements
Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)		
Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)		
White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)	<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)	5.00 pm	Decision Time
Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)		
Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)	<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
	Wednesday 11 May 2022	
	2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
	2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Justice and Veterans; Finance and the Economy
	<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business
	<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
	<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
	<i>followed by</i>	Approval of SSIs (if required)
	5.10 pm	Decision Time
	<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
	Thursday 12 May 2022	
	11.40 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
	11.40 am	General Questions
	12.00 pm	First Minister's Questions
	<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
	2.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
	2.30 pm	Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills
	<i>followed by</i>	Stage 1 Debate: Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill
	<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
	5.00 pm	Decision Time
	<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
	(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 2 May 2022, in rule 13.7.3, after the word	

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-04176, in the name of George Adam, is: For 64, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 3 May 2022

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill
followed by Financial Resolution: Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 May 2022

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm General Questions
 2.20 pm First Minister's Questions
 3.05 pm Portfolio Questions: Health and Social Care; Social Justice, Housing and Local Government;

“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.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-04208, in the name of George Adam, on suspension of standing orders.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 17.2.1(b) of Standing Orders, for the purposes of consideration of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill at stage 1, Rule 9.6.3A of Standing Orders be suspended.—
[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S6M-04208 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-04208, in the name of

George Adam, is: For 63, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 17.2.1(b) of Standing Orders, for the purposes of consideration of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill at stage 1, Rule 9.6.3A of Standing Orders be suspended.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:20

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-04178, on approval of a statutory instrument, S6M-04179 and S6M-04180, on designation of lead committees, and S6M-04181, on committee meeting times.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (Amendment) Order 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Children and Young People Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Criminal Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Online Safety Bill (UK Legislation).

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Public Audit Committee can meet, if necessary, at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament between 11.40 am and 12.00 pm on Thursday 28 April 2022.—[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:20

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Liz Smith is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-04159.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04159, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund: implications for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The voting app did not work on my device. I would have voted no.

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

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-04159.1, in the name of Liz Smith, is: For 28, Against 82, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-04159.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-04159, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on UK shared prosperity fund: implications for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

There is a point of order from Rachael Hamilton. *[Interruption.]* I apologise, Ms Hamilton. We appear to be unable to connect with you at the moment.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)

Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)

Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-04159.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 19, Against 91, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-04159, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the UK shared prosperity fund and its implications for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 81, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund fails to meet the Conservative manifesto commitment to replace Scotland's EU Structural Funds in full; understands that Scotland will receive only £212 million, which is £337 million short of the £549 million estimated to be an appropriate replacement for EU Structural Funds, and calls on the UK Government to immediately increase the value of the fund to at least the level provided previously by Scotland's EU Structural Funds; believes that the failure to do this will leave communities and third sector organisations across Scotland without important resources needed to tackle poverty and inequality; further believes that the lack of decision making for the Scottish Government in the governance of the Fund undermines devolution; considers that this approach will fail Scotland's communities, which have benefited substantially from decades of EU investment, and further calls on the UK Government to fully devolve control of the Fund to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on four Parliamentary Bureau motions. As no member objects, the final question is, that motions S6M-04178, on approval of a statutory instrument, S6M-04179 and S6M-04180, on designation of lead committees, and S6M-04181, on committee meeting times, all in the name of George Adam, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (Amendment) Order 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Children and Young People Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Criminal Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Online Safety Bill (UK Legislation).

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Public Audit Committee can meet, if necessary, at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament between 11.40 am and 12.00 pm on Thursday 28 April 2022.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time—

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

At today's portfolio question time, we had a significant number of Government responses that had little to do with the questions that were asked, along with Government back benchers asking supplementary questions, which, again, had little or nothing in common with the original question. It seems to me that every response now pivots to include Westminster or independence, no matter the topic. I appreciate that political spin—*[Interruption.]* Okay, laugh it up—honestly, you are a shocking bunch of nonsense. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Can we have silence, please, to hear Mr Whittle? Thank you.

Brian Whittle: I appreciate that political spin will always be part of this place but, fundamentally, we are here to represent our communities, and surely that has to remain a significant element of what we do here. We bring questions from our constituents to the Government in the hope of getting answers for them but, quite frankly, these sessions are becoming absolutely farcical and the Government is treating the Parliament with contempt.

I seek your advice, Presiding Officer, on how we can bring the questions in the chamber back to what they were designed for.

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Whittle for his point of order. I have not had an opportunity to view the session to which he refers. As he will be aware, the content of ministerial answers is not ordinarily a matter for me. However, I expect, as a matter of courtesy and respect, that answers will address the questions. It is also very important that supplementary questions are linked to the substantive question.

That concludes decision time. We now move on to members' business. I would be grateful if members could leave the chamber quietly.

Honouring Emergency Workers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a member's business debate on motion S6M-03342, in the name of Graham Simpson, on honouring emergency workers. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. As ever, if a member wishes to speak in the debate, they should press their request-to-speak button now or as soon as possible. I call Graham Simpson to open the debate. You have around seven minutes.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the campaign by the Lanarkshire Police Historical Society for officers murdered in the line of duty, including Constable George Taylor and Detective Sergeant William Ross Hunt, both of Strathclyde Police Force, to receive posthumous UK bravery awards; further recognises what it sees as the need for those who lose their lives while on public duty to receive recognition; notes the view that the UK Government should agree to create a new award for all emergency workers who are killed while serving the public, and that this should be retrospective; recognises what it sees as the sterling bravery shown by Constable George Taylor and Sergeant William Ross Hunt in the face of what it understands was horrific violence; congratulates the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Iain Livingstone, on agreeing to honour both men, and notes with sadness the long wait that their families have had for both men to be acknowledged.

17:32

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I start by thanking all the members from across the chamber who signed the motion, thereby allowing the debate to take place. At the heart of it is something that I think that we can all agree with: those who serve us in the emergency services are heroes and deserve our thanks and recognition.

I want to set out the background to why I lodged the motion. In 2020, I was contacted by retired police officer George Barnsley of the Lanarkshire Police Historical Society. He asked me to look at two cases in which he believed officers had been overlooked for posthumous awards. If members will allow it, I will take a bit of time to go over the cases in chronological order.

The first involved Constable George Taylor. On 30 November 1976, Robert Mone and Thomas McCulloch escaped from Carstairs state hospital. During the escape, they murdered another inmate and a male nurse, and they fled wearing nurses' uniforms. Shortly afterwards, Robert McAllan was driving his car in Carnwath when he saw a man lying in the road and another signalling to him to stop, which he did. He was asked if he would drive them away, but he refused because he saw a police van coming.

Both officers in the van were attacked with an axe and a knife. George Taylor was killed. Mone

and McCulloch stole the police van, then other vehicles. Officers from Strathclyde Police chased them to Carlisle, where four Scottish police vehicles were joined by reinforcements from Cumbria Constabulary. Mone and McCulloch were forced onto a slip road while trying to move ahead of police who had overtaken them, and they crashed. Despite the crash and the police presence, they used their weapons to attempt to seize a car that had stopped at the crash, but they were eventually overpowered, restrained and arrested. They were convicted of the murders of the inmate, the prison nurse and Constable Taylor.

The second case happened on 5 June 1983 in Larkhall. Detective Sergeant William Ross Hunt was making enquiries into an attempted murder incident. DS Hunt and other officers attended the home address of the suspect at Earn Gardens in Larkhall. The suspect was not at home, so the officers walked back towards their vehicle. At that time, the suspect came back with other members of his family and approached the address. DS Hunt walked towards the group to explain the reason for their visit, but the group attacked him and stabbed him to death. He was 56 years of age and had more than 30 years of police service. Three family members—Hugh Murray Jnr, who was 16, Margaret Smith, 23, and Hugh Murray Snr, aged 51—were arrested and convicted of DS Hunt's murder.

Detective Sergeant Hunt's son, Phil, is with us today in the public gallery, as is George Barnsley. They are behind me.

Neither of the murdered officers has been formally recognised in the honours system, but they are not the only ones. Members will know of the case of Woman Police Constable Yvonne Fletcher, who was killed outside the Libyan embassy in London in 1984. She has never been honoured. There are others.

The Queen's gallantry medal was instituted in June 1974 to replace the order of the British empire for gallantry and the British empire medal for gallantry. The QGM ended the anomaly whereby the order of the British empire for gallantry was awarded for lesser acts of bravery than the George medal but took precedence over it. The QGM is awarded for "exemplary acts of bravery" by civilians and members of the armed forces where purely military honours are not normally granted. It has been awarded posthumously since 30 November 1977.

In December 2020, I wrote to Home Secretary Priti Patel to suggest that the Queen's gallantry medal would be appropriate in the cases that I have described. Since then, I have been passed around various ministers—Chloe Smith, Alistair Jack and more recently the Cabinet Office

minister, Lord True—and there have also been ministerial discussions about it.

The upshot is that a case will not be considered if it is more than five years since the event occurred. We do know, however, that Constable Taylor was nominated for an award shortly after his death. A report dated 28 March 1977 from Chief Superintendent John Lauder to Chief Constable Patrick Hamill nominated individuals for awards. The Chief Superintendent recommended Constable George Taylor for a Queen's bravery award. A letter dated 29 April 1977 from Chief Constable Patrick Hamill to the Secretary of State for Scotland at the time, Bruce Millan, endorsed Constable Taylor's nomination.

After that letter to the Secretary of State, there is no further record of Constable Taylor's nomination. Every English officer involved in the case subsequently received their awards. The Scottish police officers did not.

I have been in touch with Chief Constable Iain Livingstone. He has recognised the sacrifice of both men and wants to honour them with the highest accolade that he can—the chief constable's bravery commendation. He is to be commended himself for doing that.

There is therefore no United Kingdom award for those brave men and other officers like them, and that brings me to the idea of a brand new award, which could fill the gap. It seems to me that, if any member of our emergency services loses their life in the line of duty, their family should get something that says that the nation values and thanks them. If a member of the armed forces is killed on operations or as a result of terrorism, their next of kin receive the Elizabeth cross as a mark of national recognition for their loss. That is quite right. There should be something similar for members of our emergency services.

The Police Federation of England and Wales, the Police Superintendents Association and the Prison Officers Association have all arrived at the same conclusion. I have written to the committee on the grant of honours, decorations and medals, which makes recommendations to the Queen. It would be great if the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government could get behind this.

This would be for George Taylor, William Ross Hunt, Yvonne Fletcher and many others in the police, fire services, ambulance services, coastguards and mountain rescue services. They are, all of them, heroes: brave to the core.

17:40

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I am grateful to be able to speak in today's debate and I thank Graham Simpson for the motion,

which gives us all the opportunity to recognise the efforts of the emergency services. In my case, I recognise those in the north-east in particular.

I know that the substance of Graham Simpson's speech was about the lives of the officers that he has mentioned. What Graham Simpson has outlined today exemplifies not only the bravery of our officers but the potential sacrifice that they and their families make, and it is only right that we recognise that.

I want to talk about what our emergency services did to keep us all safe in the north-east during the recent storms, which caused so much damage and put so many people at risk in the north-east. During storms Arwen and Malik, emergency services and workers were thrown into situations that were considerably more dangerous than anyone had anticipated. The conditions in which they had to work during storm Arwen meant that they were at considerable risk when the rest of us were told to stay safely indoors.

I remember driving home as the storm began to hit the north-east. I was at a constituency meeting on a farm and the lights were flickering and the windows shaking throughout. On the way home, I realised that what was approaching would be a very damaging time for the north-east, and how unsafe it was to be out in the storm. On that Friday afternoon, as I drove home on the road between Oldmeldrum and Methlick, huge tree branches were already starting to fly past the windscreen, and that was just the start.

Overnight, fully mature trees were brought down, blocking roads and bringing down live power cables. Our colleagues in the police and fire services were mobilised immediately to respond to road blockages and falling live power lines, and to co-ordinate the emergency response in really quite dangerous conditions. Sadly, our police and ambulance crews had to respond to one fatality that was caused by a falling tree crashing into the car of a young man at the Hatton of Fintray Road at the height of storm Arwen, and another during storm Malik in Aberdeen city. It is an absolute miracle that none of the emergency workers was injured in doing so.

The fact that there were no fatalities among our emergency workers or civilians was remarkable, given the extent of the hazards that the storm presented. That was in no small part due to the effort of those emergency services and their messaging, their immediate response, and their bravery in the work that they did in subsequent days to remove debris and to close off areas where trees were still at risk of falling. As I say, there were many live power lines.

The damage that was caused by storm Arwen was enormous because of the unusual wind

direction and its intensity. Superintendent Murray Main said that the magnitude of the event had been both significant and unprecedented. Superintendent Main is to retire shortly; I thank everyone who signed my parliamentary motion recognising his years of service and his leadership during those recent storms.

It has always been the case that our emergency workers will go where the rest of us cannot and should not go, but they face abuse, violence and danger every day. I commend the bravery of the officers who are mentioned in Graham Simpson's speech and motion, and I support his call for their posthumous recognition. Indeed, there is a north-east element to one of those cases. The man who killed George Taylor was incarcerated in Peterhead prison and was deemed to be one of the most dangerous prisoners ever to be incarcerated in the old prison there.

I support Graham Simpson's call for posthumous recognition of the officers. Our emergency workers always deserve our gratitude, but in the past few years, they have deserved it more than ever. Once again, I thank Mr Simpson for allowing us time to put our thanks on the record today.

17:44

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank Graham Simpson for a really excellent motion on a very important subject.

I have a great deal of respect for emergency workers. In fact my husband, Joe, was a serving police officer in the criminal investigation department when I first met him. I confess that my heart was in my mouth when he was called out to an incident and went out with his handcuffs and his baton, not knowing when he would come back. I understand how that feels.

I have represented ambulance workers through the GMB Scotland for a while. I was genuinely shocked at the amount of risk that is taken by ambulance workers on a daily basis. We can never be thankful enough for the risks that emergency workers take.

I did not feel that police officers got the full recognition that they deserved during the pandemic for displaying bravery every day on the front line when the Covid virus was at its height.

The number of police officers who are subjected to assaults every year is rising. The latest figures from Police Scotland indicate that more than 3,000 police officers and police staff were victims of assault each year over the past five years.

As we have heard, the murders of Constable George Taylor and Detective Sergeant William Ross Hunt while on duty are shocking reminders

of what the police can face simply for doing their job. I commend the work of the Lanarkshire Police Historical Society—and that of Graham Simpson—in leading the campaign for posthumous bravery awards for those two officers.

Campaigners believe that both Constable George Taylor and Detective Sergeant William Ross Hunt are entitled to a variety of honours, including the George medal and the Queen's gallantry medal. I understand that the campaign is supported by Chief Constable Iain Livingstone, who has backed the families and offered a chief constable's bravery commendation.

I also understand that a UK Government spokesman has said that

"the rules on posthumous gallantry awards stipulate that the event must have taken place in the past five years. This means, regrettably, it is not possible for either case to be formally recognised."

I do not think that that is good enough. It is clear that the sacrifice of all officers, past and present, who die in the line of duty must be recognised, no matter when their deaths took place. I believe that the pandemic awakened us to their incredible bravery.

I agree with the motion that we need a new award for police officers, firefighters, paramedics and prison officers who are killed in service. Although nothing can ever truly make up for a lost life, at the very least an emergency services medal should be received by the immediate family of those who die in the execution of their duties to acknowledge their sacrifice.

I apologise to the chamber: because I have to be at a cross-party group meeting this evening, I will not be able to stay for the cabinet secretary's summing up, but I wanted to say that I fully support Graham Simpson and his work.

17:47

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): I begin by giving credit to Graham Simpson for bringing this extremely important subject to the chamber and by welcoming Phil Hunt and George Barnsley to the gallery.

I declare an interest, as my wife is a serving police officer. While I am standing here talking, she is out there protecting people and putting herself in danger. As politicians, the biggest risk that we face is being heckled by the other side or tripping up over our words, but police officers face real dangers and real unpredictability every single day.

Just last week I received an email from an officer who said:

"put yourself in our shoes, day in, day out. I find myself more often than not using the phrase 'there but by the

grace of God' when it comes to how officers are not seriously injured on a more frequent basis."

He blames a lack of funding, and he talks about the need for more tasers, which is a whole other debate. However, he adds:

"It will take one of my colleagues to be killed before fingers begin to be pointed."

I get that, and I could not agree more.

It is the welfare of front-line officers and, indeed, of all emergency service workers, that matters. Sometimes we think that the main danger is from violence on our streets, but many are exposed to horrific incidents that can cause severe mental health problems. At the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, there was a series of reports in the media of Police Scotland officers taking their own lives. There were four over four months up until January 2020 and at least eight apparent suicides in recent years.

The thing is that we do not know how many there actually were. Why? A freedom of information request to Police Scotland revealed that no record is kept. I asked the Crown Office how many of those tragic deaths of police officers were the subject of fatal accident inquiries. To my great shock, the answer was none. Officers are dying and no one is taking the time or interest to find out why. We know that suicide is complex, but surely fatal accident inquiries should be an absolute given. How can we hope to prevent further suicides if we cannot learn from those that have occurred? Do we really take the issue of police welfare as seriously as is sometimes made out?

As I have said, we owe not just police officers but all emergency service workers a huge debt of gratitude. Graham Simpson has very diligently spotted a gap and he is doing something about it. I think that that speaks to the power of what we, as individual MSPs, can do.

I look forward to seeing what the committee on the grant of honours, decorations and medals says to Graham Simpson, and I agree that it would be helpful if the Scottish Parliament and, indeed, the Scottish Government could support the aims of his campaign. Let us also make sure that the mental welfare of all officers is paramount.

17:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): I thank Graham Simpson for lodging the motion and I thank the members who have made contributions to the debate.

First, the motion asks us to recognise the campaign that has been led by the Lanarkshire Police Historical Society for officers who were

murdered in the line of duty to receive posthumous United Kingdom bravery awards. It specifically mentions Constable George Taylor and Detective William Ross Hunt of Strathclyde Police, who sadly lost their lives in the course of their duties. Today we have heard cross-party support for the campaign; we already know that it has the full support of the Scottish Police Federation, which represents front-line officers.

I will say a word to Graham Simpson about just keeping going on the matter. When I was first elected to Parliament, I was involved in a campaign to have people who were in the Arctic convoys recognised with an honour and a medal, which had been resisted fiercely by successive Governments over a number of years. Many of the people were civilians, not military personnel—as members know. Eventually we won the campaign, but it took a long time. I had the privilege of actually handing medals to some of the veterans. Maybe that is a precedent that the member wants to use in the campaign that he is involved in, when he talks to the UK Government. The Arctic convoys happened much more than five years ago, yet an exception was made. It is incomprehensible to me that a person such as Yvonne Fletcher has never received an award. I just do not know how the system works.

It is only right that members and wider society pay respect to such police officers, and that we remember them and their loved ones—some of whom are here today, as has been mentioned—who have suffered loss. The debate has been valuable in demonstrating that respect. The Government supports consideration of a posthumous UK bravery award.

All UK honours and medals, as has been mentioned, are in the personal gift of the Queen. Official recognition is developed on behalf of the UK as a whole and is not directly within the gift of the Scottish Government.

I will go back to the point about tenacity. I had the case of a chap in my constituency who had won seven medals during his time in the military, the last of which arrived at his post in Germany on the day that he left and was then lost. The trouble that he went through to get that medal replaced, which was extremely important to him, was incredible. Eventually, Mark Francois, who was the relevant minister at the time, agreed to that, but even after he had agreed, the civil servants said, "No, we don't do that", and he had to tell the civil servants. I know that such things are sometimes difficult, but the persistence and tenacity that Graham Simpson has shown can bear fruit.

As we have heard, the Chief Constable has written to the families of Constable George Taylor and Detective Sergeant William Ross Hunt to offer them the highest award that he can offer—the

chief constable's bravery award—without prejudice to consideration of any national honour.

It is also right that we look beyond the subject of police officers, which has dominated the debate to some extent, to others—as Gillian Martin mentioned—who risk their lives while on public duty. We have recognised the important role of other emergency workers and have heard the call for a new UK award for all emergency workers who lose their lives while serving the public. We also support full consideration of that wider proposal.

It is, of course, important that we recognise and honour the police officers, staff and other emergency services workers who daily show their continued commitment to supporting the public. Every day, emergency services workers across Scotland put themselves in harm's way as part of their duties, and often go above and beyond what is expected of them. Their hard work, dedication and bravery have helped to make Scotland a stronger, safer and more secure country.

Graham Simpson: I thank the cabinet secretary. I welcome his words and his advice to keep going. I stress that it is not my campaign; I am involved in it, but there are many others involved, as well.

Given that he has expressed support for the campaign, is the cabinet secretary prepared to write to the UK Government expressing the support of the Scottish Government?

Keith Brown: That question was asked earlier. The member will be aware that I have twice expressed explicit support for the campaign; I will say more on that later. If he will give me the chance to take some advice about protocols in the matter, I will be happy to get back to him on it. What I have said about support for the campaign is now on the public record and will be in Parliament's *Official Report*.

It is important that we recognise individuals who work in the emergency services, and that we recognise the dedication and bravery that they show. We are committed to ensuring that we continue to protect our emergency services workforce. It is simply not acceptable that that they are attacked. It has always puzzled me—that is putting it lightly—why, for example, fire crews who work to protect people, life and property are attacked or abused and sometimes even risk losing their lives while going about their daily duties. Things are thrown at their vehicles and so on. I think that I speak for us all when I say that we will not tolerate attacks on police or other emergency services workers.

No one, in any circumstances, should face abuse or violence while they are at work. We fully support our police, prosecutors and the courts in

dealing with people who offend against emergency workers. The courts already have extensive powers, which were recently reinforced, to deal robustly with people who carry out such appalling behaviour. In Scotland, a life sentence is mandatory for murder and is available to the court as a sentencing option for anyone who is convicted of culpable homicide. It is, of course, for the independent court to decide on the sentence in individual cases. In reaching its sentencing decision, the court will take into account the victim's being an emergency worker and the fact that the accused was committing a crime when the culpable homicide occurred.

The Scottish Government supports the chief constable's pledge, and he has expressed his support for what is being asked and is making representations at UK level. That highlights his commitment to reducing the impact of violence on the police workforce, to improving safety for officers and staff, and to providing appropriate support to the victims of attacks.

The Scottish Government has also introduced restitution orders. They are a financial penalty that can be imposed on offenders who are convicted of assault on police. That sends another signal that such behaviour is unacceptable. It is our intention, and we have made efforts to make sure, that when those monies come in they are used in support of the police officers against whom attacks have been made.

I say again, just to make it clear, that I support the intention to honour emergency workers. The Scottish Government supports the call by Graham Simpson for consideration of posthumous awards for emergency workers who lose their lives while on duty serving the public.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, cabinet secretary. That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 17:58.

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