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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 13 August 2020

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

Portfolio Question Time

Finance

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Good afternoon, everyone. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the campus. I ask members to take care to observe those measures carefully over the course of this afternoon's business, including when entering and exiting the chamber.

The first item of business is portfolio question time and the first portfolio is finance. Questions 1 and 8 are grouped together. [Interruption.] I ask members to stop having private conversations, please. I remind members that questions 1 and 8 are grouped together and that questions 3 and 4 are grouped together.

Furloughed Workers (Support)

1. **Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will allocate to supporting workers in the longer term once the furlough scheme ends. (S5O-04460)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance is joining us remotely.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): I am disappointed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not extending the furlough scheme beyond 31 October, despite our repeated representations to the United Kingdom Government. Of course, he still has the option to do so, and I do not believe that the £1,000 retention bonus in January 2021 will provide enough support for many workers and businesses.

In Scotland, however, we have already started to act quickly to put in place a business support package worth more than £2.3 billion and we have announced the decision to invest £100 million to support those who find themselves unemployed; that is on top of the £33 million that has already been committed for employability support this year.

Iain Gray: I share the minister's disappointment that the chancellor will not extend the furlough scheme, but nonetheless we have to do much more. In my constituency of East Lothian, for example, we face a hospitality industry

unemployment crisis if we do not increase the support. If the furlough scheme ends before a full quality jobs guarantee scheme is in place, thousands of workers in restaurants, bars and cafes could be laid off. The sector directly employs almost 3,500 people in my constituency alone. Will the minister commit to releasing the finance for a fully funded jobs guarantee scheme?

Kate Forbes: I have already worked with Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, to release funding to provide support, particularly to young people but across the workforce. We have refreshed our youth employment strategy—developing the young workforce—and we are working with Sandy Begbie, who is leading activity on the jobs guarantee, to ensure that the £50 million that has been set aside for the jobs guarantee scheme is put in place quickly to ensure that there is a job guarantee for young people, as advised by the advisory group on economic recovery's report.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 8 is from Stewart Stevenson, who is also joining us remotely.

Covid-19 (Support)

8. **Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will allocate to support people who are looking for work or at risk of redundancy as a result of Covid-19. (S5O-04467)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): As I said in answer to the earlier question, we will continue to make the case that the furlough scheme should not end. However, rather than wait for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to change his mind, we have already confirmed investment totalling £133 million in this financial year to support people towards and into work as we gradually restart the economy. That funding will help people have access to or progress into work, as well as support those who are at risk of redundancy. That is in addition to the £214 million that has already been allocated to Skills Development Scotland this year to work with partners and employers to ensure that every individual has the skills and the confidence to get a job. We are in no doubt about the challenges that face people up and down the country and that is why we have moved quickly to put that funding in place.

Stewart Stevenson: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer and for the substantial sums of money to which she refers. It is particularly important that young people are supported.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that creating and protecting jobs in general will only be possible in true partnership with the business community, trade unions, enterprise agencies and the third sector?

Kate Forbes: Yes, I agree. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked collaboratively with businesses, trade unions, enterprise agencies and charities. The recovery must focus on jobs. We have engaged extensively with businesses in recent months and have discussed our ideas about the economic recovery with many organisations and individuals.

That approach underlines our willingness to listen to and collaborate with businesses, and with those who create jobs. We know that it is their innovation and determination that will be the engine room of our economic recovery. The finance that I have announced is about working through those organisations to create and to retain jobs.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The tourism industry accounts for a significant part of the local and Scottish economies. Many of my constituents who work in the Loch Lomond area are worried that they will not see a proper recovery until March next year. In the absence of any continuation of the United Kingdom furlough scheme, will the cabinet secretary do something on a sector-specific basis to protect jobs in the tourism industry?

Kate Forbes: The short answer is yes. Like Jackie Baillie, I have a constituency in which many businesses rely on tourism and are now facing real challenges.

I will quickly make three points. The tourism action group has met regularly to look at sector-related support. Secondly, we recently announced additional support to help hotels to recover and to protect jobs there. Thirdly, I have already shared information about the youth guarantee and the substantial sums of money that we have put in place to ensure that young people in particular have the option to train or to get a job. We will work with employers, including those in the tourism industry, to access that support so that they can keep people employed even when trading conditions are challenging.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): If—as seems to be the case—the UK Government does not understand the Scottish economy, particularly sectors such as tourism, would it not be better for the UK Government to give more powers to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government to deal with that?

Kate Forbes: I agree with John Mason. That is the bottom line.

We will continue, with businesses and other partners, to make the case for the extension of the furlough scheme. I am extremely concerned about the cliff edge in October. We know that businesses and workers will continue to need support well beyond October, whether that is in tourism or in other industries. That is particularly important in local lockdown areas such as those in Aberdeen, Manchester and Leicester.

We will work with the UK Government on a four-nations solution, but if it does not ensure that the relevant support remains in place to protect jobs, we must have the funding or the fiscal flexibilities to do something similar. Without borrowing powers, we are overly reliant on UK Government consequentials.

Local Authority Leisure and Community Facilities (Reopening)

2. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment has been made of the financial pressures facing local authorities as they seek to reopen leisure and community facilities. (S5O-04461)

The Minister for Public Finance and Migration (Ben Macpherson): Since 23 March, we have been working closely with Community Leisure UK Scotland and Vocal Scotland to understand both the financial implications for local authority leisure provision and the community impact caused by Covid-19. We have also engaged extensively with ukactive, the body representing private gym operators.

Community Leisure UK Scotland and Vocal, supported by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, have undertaken detailed analysis of the financial impact of Covid-19. They estimate that the deficit in the local authority leisure sector will be £127 million at the end of the calendar year.

Bob Doris: I thank the minister for that sobering answer. Glasgow Life's clear financial challenges are a key driver in the delay in reopening much of its sport and community estate. I was pleased that the First Minister confirmed to me that the Scottish Government is working with COSLA to see how the Scottish Government can support councils in that area. During those discussions, can there be an examination of how any financial support or partnership financial package will focus on reopening facilities in deprived areas and communities, such as my constituency's Petershill complex, John Paul academy and Maryhill community centre?

Ben Macpherson: As I mentioned, we are aware of the impacts of Covid-19 on local authority culture and leisure services. We recognise the

importance of local authority leisure provision and that communities, as in the places that Bob Doris mentioned in his constituency, will need access to those services as we recover from the pandemic—especially those communities that have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. We also appreciate that Glasgow Life faces a challenging financial position and is making tough decisions. We and sportscotland are in dialogue with Glasgow Life to understand the impact of closures and their specific circumstances in supporting community sport to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. I would be happy to provide Bob Doris with an update in writing in due course if that would be helpful.

Covid-19 (United Kingdom Government Support)

3. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the additional United Kingdom Government funding to support Scotland's people and businesses through the Covid-19 outbreak. (S5O-04462)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): Our position is to welcome the recent UK Government announcement that Barnett consequentialia will not fall below £6.5 billion and I can assure the chamber that every penny will be used for the Covid response. However, I am disappointed that the proportionate and reasonable requests on fiscal flexibilities that I have been making and which Parliament has supported have been dismissed by the UK Government. It is not yet clear what level of additional funding will be required to deal with the exceptional circumstances that we face as the situation continues to develop through the financial year, and I will need to continue to engage closely on that with the Parliament and the UK Government.

Alexander Stewart: A cautious estimate of UK Government spending to help Scotland through this difficult period is £15 billion. That is our share of UK schemes such as furlough, the self-employed support scheme, the chancellor's plan for jobs, business loans, benefit increases and extra cash for the Scottish budget. Does the cabinet secretary agree with the words of her own official, who is quoted in a recent freedom of information request release as saying:

“my view would be that Scotland receives a fair share”

of UK Treasury spending?

Kate Forbes: Of course, the funding is just the nature of where the borrowing powers lie. We cannot borrow, therefore the UK Government has borrowed in order to allocate funding to Scotland and I would absolutely expect us to get our fair

share. The point remains that the Covid emergency, whether in the health service or the economy, requires unprecedented support and we have to respond with one arm tied behind our back because we are dependent on policy choices and consequentialia that come from the UK Government. Conservative members frequently ask me to increase spending in different areas—I am sure that they will in the course of the next few questions—and I have to say that, because we cannot borrow, we cannot create the headroom to accommodate those requests. That is precisely why we are asking for very simple, very straightforward flexibilities in powers in order to do so more responsibly.

United Kingdom Government Covid-19 Pandemic Financial Response (Discussions)

4. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04463)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): I have engaged closely with UK Government ministers throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. The immediate steps taken by the UK Government to support businesses and workers were welcome, and most recently I met the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 24 July, when he visited Edinburgh, and I again raised the need for greater fiscal flexibility to enable us to properly manage the impact of the crisis. I imagine that future constructive engagement will be required in order to make progress on that issue.

Gil Paterson: I declare an interest, given that this question relates to furlough. The business that I own, which my son presently runs, has benefited from furlough.

There is no doubt that the furlough scheme has been essential and beneficial to business. I believe that it needs to be extended, otherwise some of the very good work that it has done might be wasted. From our experience, I believe that the economy is recovering slowly, but businesses are still struggling and need more time and assistance, particularly the many businesses in sectors that have not had any help other than furlough. Will the Scottish Government raise that with the United Kingdom Government, with a view to extending furlough and providing more direct support to help business in the short term, until the economy recovers that bit more?

Kate Forbes: I say at the outset how mindful I am of how challenging it has been for countless businesses the length and breadth of the country in so many different sectors. The initial funding

that was provided could never have replaced the lost income from the lockdown period.

On providing additional funding, we will continue to use all of our resources and all the powers at our disposal to move quickly to support businesses. We have exceeded the consequential that were provided for business support and we have to balance affordability within a fixed budget. I am very happy to continue to make the case for additional resource to provide support for the businesses that Gil Paterson mentioned. Where we can, we absolutely will put support in place, like we did most recently with the hotel recovery programme.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Questions 3 and 4 were grouped together and I have two supplementaries.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The cabinet secretary knows that I am a supporter of a universal basic income. Can she tell us what progress she is making, in her discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on implementing that policy, which her Government claims to support?

Kate Forbes: The short answer is we are making very little progress in those conversations. We are making the case through all sorts of different means, not only through my conversations but through my colleagues' conversations. It is very much a brick wall and I do not see any progress being made through those conversations. We will continue to make the case, but it is clear that in order to make universal basic income a success, we need to have full control over welfare powers, and that is something that we do not have yet.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Countries around the world are increasing spending to deal with the impact of Covid and they are able to do so because they have borrowing powers. Do you agree that it is disappointing that the UK Government has yet to hand over those powers, which would give the Scottish Government flexibility to help to manage the problems that we are having at the moment?

Kate Forbes: Bill Kidd is right to say that countries around the world are using borrowing powers. The UK Government intends to borrow well over £300 billion to finance its response to the pandemic. That is right, and we value the funding that has come from it, but it is unfortunate that the UK Government has not been prepared to grant the Scottish Government a temporary £500 million borrowing facility—that is about one 600th of its own borrowing level, so it is pretty small in the grand scheme of things.

In the proposals that I have outlined to the UK, we have simply substituted a redundant borrowing

power for a more meaningful spending power. Therefore, that leads me to conclude that it has been a political decision to deny us borrowing powers, rather than a financial or technical decision.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 is from Edward Mountain, who is joining us remotely, I hope.

Schools (Funding for Return)

5. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I have activated my camera and microphone.

To ask the Scottish Government what additional funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has made available to allow schools to return from 11 August. (S5O-04464)

The Minister for Public Finance and Migration (Ben Macpherson): The Scottish Government has committed up to a further £135 million over the next two years to support the reopening of schools. We are investing £80 million in providing approximately 1,400 additional teachers and 200 extra support staff to tackle any loss of learning; up to £50 million in costs associated with the reopening of schools; £3 million in youth work; and £2 million in the family learning element of the promise. That is in addition to investing £25 million to support digital inclusion and a further £12.6 million for local authorities to continue their provision of free school meals throughout the summer holidays this year.

Edward Mountain: I have been contacted by a group that represents 60 recently qualified teachers who have all completed their probation and training in the Highlands and are currently on zero-hours contracts with Highland Council. They could play a pivotal role in delivering the safe education that our youngsters need. Can the minister give the Highlands an undertaking that some of the funding that he has just mentioned will be available to give those teachers the ability to have permanent contracts in our region and allow them to play the pivotal role in teaching our children that they want to play?

Ben Macpherson: Decisions concerning recruitment and the specifics that Mr Mountain detailed are for local authorities to take. If he would like to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and copy that correspondence to me, we can look at the detail and see whether there is any assistance that could be provided, but that is a matter for the local authority in the first instance.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mark Ruskell is joining us remotely for question 6.

No-deal Brexit (Funding for Preparation)

6. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will make available to prepare for the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, including to the national health service. (S5O-04465)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): The Scottish Government continues to prepare for the consequences of European Union exit, but I need to make it clear that we will not be able to mitigate all the impacts completely. We also face pressures and uncertainties because of the Covid-19 outbreak. However, we are working closely with other United Kingdom Governments and with the public, private and third sectors in Scotland to ensure that we are all as prepared as possible for all Brexit outcomes.

Mark Ruskell: On 3 August, the UK Government wrote to medicine suppliers asking them to prepare for the end of the transition period and to make stockpiling a key part of contingency plans. Can the cabinet secretary clarify whether additional funding will be allocated to NHS Scotland for stockpiling essential supplies ahead of the potential chaos of a no-deal Brexit?

Kate Forbes: I would expect the UK Government to provide funding for the impact of Brexit on Scotland's public sector services and the economy.

On the specifics, I am unaware of whether the announcement that Mark Ruskell referenced came with Barnett consequentials, so I will need to get back to him on the precise details. However, in general, we believe that, right now, sufficient funding is not being allocated with those requests and policy decisions to help us to mitigate all the impacts.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Emma Harper has a supplementary question.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Today's announcement on the lifting of American tariffs on Scottish shortbread is welcome and good news for shortbread makers, but the Scottish whisky industry is still paying a £200 million price for tariffs on single malt exports to the USA. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on what steps the UK Government has taken to have those crippling tariffs on our iconic and financially critical whisky sector lifted?

Kate Forbes: It is for the UK Government to explain its actions to support our whisky industry, which is important to Scotland's economy. It is clear that Scottish businesses are being hit hard by those tariffs and that jobs and livelihoods are at risk.

At the very least, UK ministers must step up engagement with their US counterparts as a matter of urgency. At the very least, they must put getting those damaging tariffs removed from key Scottish produce ahead of securing any UK-US trade deal. Having left the European Union, the UK Government will have the trade powers that it wanted. Now it must use them and demonstrate that it supports Scottish produce.

Covid-19 (Business Recovery Measures)

7. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what further measures the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will introduce to help businesses recover from the Covid-19 crisis. (S5O-04466)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): As Finlay Carson will know, we have already put in place the substantial figure of £2.3 billion to support business. Examples of support that has benefited business include the provision of £38 million for early-stage businesses, £11 million for the self-employed and nearly £1 billion in business grants and rates relief. I am sure that further economic policy measures will feature in the programme for government.

We recognise the need for additional interventions to support economic recovery. As I said to one of Finlay Carson's colleagues earlier, the way to make such interventions is to ensure that we have the necessary funding, which can then be passed on. There are many calls on funding this year, including for the health service, business support, transport services and local government. We will use the funding that we have and will get it out the door as quickly as possible to support businesses. However, ultimately, we are reliant on consequentials coming to us.

Finlay Carson: The cabinet secretary will know that the office of the chief economic adviser has been undertaking work to assess the regional impacts of the pandemic. It is expected that Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council will be found to be the two councils that have experienced the greatest impact. For a number of reasons, many businesses, such as beauticians, gyms, driving schools and family-run retail, as well as having their reopening delayed, have not been eligible for grant funding from their local council or enterprise agency.

Does the cabinet secretary recognise that it would be of significant benefit for a discretionary fund to be applied in special cases, where businesses have not to date been funded through existing schemes? Given that the business grant scheme in Dumfries and Galloway has a remaining balance of more than £7.5 million, will the cabinet secretary consider, as a matter of

urgency, introducing a discretionary grant scheme that would allow local authorities and enterprise agencies in my constituency to assess claims and provide support on a case-by-case basis?

Kate Forbes: I want to quickly address the point about any underspend. It is worth saying that in order to ensure that money was not sitting in those funds and not being used, we have already redeployed much of that funding through the pivotal resilience fund and the hardship scheme, which, of course, are unique to Scotland.

However, I take Finlay Carson's wider point that businesses are still in need of additional support, and I go back to what I said earlier. Although I do not disagree with Mr Carson, I must ask him where he thinks that the money to provide support to businesses should come from. By law, we must have a fixed budget. Therefore, when it comes to revenue, any additional funding for businesses must come from the health service, the transport system, local government or elsewhere. Every other Government around the world is funding such important interventions through borrowing. Our primary source of income is the UK Government, so either we need additional funding or we need the powers that would give us the ability to provide the support that Mr Carson's constituents need. That is why I ask the Conservatives and Finlay Carson to join us in backing those calls.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Kenneth Gibson has a short supplementary.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): On islands, hospitality and tourism businesses are particularly vulnerable. Islands already receive the special islands needs allowance to help with the provision of public services. Will the cabinet secretary establish an islands fund to assist the private sector, and tourism and hospitality businesses in particular?

In response to the previous question, the cabinet secretary asked where the money should come from. As I have suggested on a number of occasions, it is about time that we scrapped the rates relief for our large supermarkets, which have made a substantial profit out of the current pandemic and are making millions of pounds in rates relief. That money could go towards assisting our businesses.

Kate Forbes: As a representative of island communities, I understand the question and the importance of ensuring that there is support for our island communities.

Many of the businesses in our island communities have benefited from the hardship scheme, as well as local authority grants. Although we are unlikely to take a blanket approach, we will continue to look at where we can use any of the

funds that we have to provide support. However, at the moment, the focus is very much on jobs and on how we can ensure that everyone who faces unemployment—young people, in particular—can get a job or a training opportunity.

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind all members who are entering or leaving the chamber to make sure that they maintain social distancing. Thank you.

Question 1 is from Maureen Watt, who is joining us remotely.

Environmental Issues (Discussions with United Kingdom Government)

1. **Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding environmental issues. (S5O-04468)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): The Scottish ministers have regular contact with the UK Government with regard to environmental issues. With the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism and the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, I participate in monthly four-nation interministerial meetings in which environmental issues are discussed. Communiqués regarding past meetings of the interministerial group for the environment, food and rural affairs can be found on the Scottish Government's website.

Maureen Watt: I understand that the Westminster Government intends to publish an energy white paper in September. According to Scottish Renewables, Scotland has the potential of infinitely more renewable resource than it will need. Is it not imperative, therefore, that the Scottish Government has maximum input to the strategy and is dealt with as an equal partner if England is to meet its obligations on climate change? Is the cabinet secretary in favour of a renewables fund for Scotland?

Roseanna Cunningham: As the Committee on Climate Change has noted, our ability to deliver a green recovery in Scotland will rely heavily on willingness and action from the UK Government, given the substantial responsibilities and regulatory controls that remain reserved. The member is correct to point out that the other side of that coin is that the UK Government requires us to achieve our targets if it is to achieve its targets.

The long-overdue energy white paper will obviously be relevant to the energy system's role

and ability to move us towards net zero emissions. However, until we see the details, we will not know the extent to which its proposals are in tune with Scotland's distinct energy priorities and targets.

Successive UK Governments have squandered Scotland's oil and gas resources, and that must not be allowed to happen again with Scotland's renewable resources. In any discussions with the UK Government, we will seek to ensure that the people of Scotland reap the full benefits of our natural resources, and we will consider all options for how to achieve that, which may include a renewables fund.

Fly-tipping

2. James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what action it is taking to tackle fly-tipping. (S5O-04469)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Roseanna Cunningham. *[Interruption.]* I am terribly sorry. I should take my glasses off so that I can see. I call Mairi Gougeon.

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): Fly-tipping is illegal, dangerous and completely unnecessary. Responsibility for dealing with litter and fly-tipping rests with local authorities. We have developed with Zero Waste Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities a national waste management marketing campaign that sets out how the public can manage waste responsibly during this difficult time, and it includes messaging on fly-tipping.

The national litter strategy, which also includes measures on fly-tipping, is coming to the end of its five-year lifespan. We are currently considering how best to take that forward, and to take forward a review of policy in the area.

James Kelly: Sadly, fly-tipping is a scourge on many local communities, with areas such as the Clyde walkway suffering from people dispersing litter at sites that people enjoy using for walks and leisure. I commend the *Rutherglen Reformer* for the work that it is doing to campaign against fly-tipping.

What action is being taken to review the powers and resources that are available to local authorities to ensure that they have an adequate toolkit available to discourage and penalise fly-tippers?

Mairi Gougeon: I completely agree with what James Kelly said, because I think that all members have seen what appears to be a massive increase in the rate of fly-tipping in their communities. We need to get a handle on how massive and wide a problem that is, so I encourage all local authorities

to use the litter mapping services that I mentioned, so that we can properly map where fly-tipping is taking place and get an idea of the scale of the issue.

Fly-tipping is a massive problem for local authorities. Perth and Kinross Council has set up a fund to try to help landowners in its area. If local authorities want to set up funds to help landowners in their areas, it is within their powers to do so; such initiatives are important.

We are considering what further action, if any, can be taken, working with COSLA, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Zero Waste Scotland. Better national data will help us to develop plans.

I encourage people to report fly tipping to the dumb dumpers and new litter monitoring initiatives, so that we can find out the scale of the problem and do what we can to tackle it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have three requests for supplementary questions, so I ask members to keep their questions quite tight.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Many land-based businesses have reported an increase in rubbish, including rubbish that is left by irresponsible access takers such as dirty campers. Given that in January 2003 the Scottish Parliament passed the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which sets out statutory rights of responsible access, will the minister assure the Parliament that she will take decisive action to address such unacceptable behaviour, which is destroying our beauty spots and frightening tourists away? Will she give serious consideration to the merits of helping local authorities to employ additional countryside rangers, not only to help to police responsible access but to deter wildlife crime and add value to the visitor experience in our wonderful natural environment?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before the cabinet secretary responds, I remind members that when I ask you to give quick supplementary questions and answers, it is because I am trying to be fair to all members. It is not fair to colleagues when people use up all that time.

Mairi Gougeon: I thank Finlay Carson for the points that he made. I completely agree: I have been as disgusted as other members have been with some of the scenes that we have seen in our beauty spots. We live in such a beautiful country and it is shocking and disgusting to see it being destroyed in that way by people who are being irresponsible—the few who are determined to destroy things for the rest of us.

A number of issues have been raised. It is vital that we fully consider all the available options for

tackling the problem. The review of the litter strategy will be important in looking at the scale of the problem and how we can tackle it. This is a serious issue, about which we need to do something.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The minister rightly cited Perth and Kinross Council and the special fund that it has set up. The cost of fly-tipping is often picked up by private landowners and farmers. Would it be possible for the Government to set up a special central fund to enable councils throughout the country to take such action?

Mairi Gougeon: Of course, the ultimate responsibility remains with local authorities and private landowners. However, an urgent multi-agency response is required and, as I said, I am working with all the different agencies to see what action we can take to try to tackle the issue.

As Willie Rennie said, Perth and Kinross Council has set up a fund. Local authorities have the power to do that.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): In an answer to a parliamentary question, the Government said that it does not know the annual cost of picking up litter and dealing with fly-tipping. The current maximum fines are £80 for littering and £200 for fly-tipping. Will the minister find out how much it costs annually to deal with those issues, so that the budget can reflect the problem? Will she look again at the level of fixed-penalty notices and bring them up to a more punitive level?

Mairi Gougeon: Some of the issues that I talked about in my previous answers will be key to getting that information. It is about ensuring that we have an idea of the full scale of the issues and that we can map that properly and get all the available data together. Again, I say that it is about working with other agencies and getting a holistic picture of what we are looking at. As I have said, we also need to look at the litter strategy. All those points will be pivotal in the discussions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 4 is from Murdo Fraser, who joins us remotely. [*Interruption.*] I have just been informed that I missed out John Mason. I am terribly sorry. How could I do that?

Raptor Persecution

3. **John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to prevent the persecution of raptors. (S5O-04470)

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): Tackling wildlife crime and ending the senseless killing of our birds of prey is an absolute priority for the Scottish

Government. The recently passed Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 increases the maximum penalties for the most serious wildlife crimes, including the illegal killing of birds of prey and the possession of banned pesticides, to five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. Police Scotland has also been given more time to investigate such offences, which I know can be a key issue.

The action that we have taken through the 2020 act reflects the seriousness of such crimes and how we view them in Scotland. They are an absolute affront to the people here, and we remain committed to consigning such crime to history.

John Mason: Does the minister share my support for hen harrier day, which was on 8 August? Does she share my concern that the population of hen harriers across the United Kingdom appears to have fallen by 24 per cent since 2004, that 72 per cent of satellite-tagged hen harriers seem to have been killed on grouse moors and that hen harriers are 10 times more likely to die or disappear over grouse moors than they are in other locations?

Mairi Gougeon: John Mason might be aware that I am the species champion for hen harriers, so I absolutely support hen harrier day. Like him, I am appalled to see their continued persecution.

Mr Mason will be aware that we commissioned the Werritty review on grouse moor management. The First Minister has said that our consideration of that report will involve looking at licensing of grouse moors. If we were to go down that route, the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform have stated that it is likely that we would move faster than the five-year period that has been suggested.

I want to make it absolutely clear to anyone who has carried out, or is contemplating carrying out, such despicable crimes against our birds of prey that we are watching and paying attention. Any criminal acts that are carried out now will be taken into account if and when we consider any licensing decisions in the future.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): The problem of raptor persecution has been with us for all of the 20 years of devolution, and a century and a half before that, yet all that has changed is that the scale of killing has continued to increase. Is it not time for the Scottish Government to end the endless reviews and ban the destructive activity of driven grouse shooting?

Mairi Gougeon: As I said in my answer to John Mason, we commissioned the Werritty review, and we will respond to that. I hope that members across the chamber will understand that we had

hoped to have done that sooner, but given everything that the Government has had to deal with over the past few months, that has not been possible. I completely understand the anger of not only members across the chamber but members of the public, because such crimes are abhorrent and should not be being committed.

We want to take all the action that we can to prosecute the people who carry out such crimes. The 2020 act allows us to take a huge step towards that. The fact that that legislation has now been implemented shows how seriously we take such crimes. Given the nature of where such crimes take place, the investigation process can be particularly difficult. We want to tackle the issue as best we possibly can, and we will provide our response to the Werritty report in the coming months.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The evidence seems to suggest that a lot of the birds in question have perished on driven-grouse moors. Given the seriousness of the issue and the outcry across Scotland, does the minister not recognise that the Scottish Government needs to set a date to let us know when it is going to make the decisions that the whole country is waiting for it to make?

Mairi Gougeon: Again, I completely understand the points that the member has made. That is why we took the time to undertake a review, and we are considering its recommendations. Over the coming months, we will respond to the Werritty review. I also highlight the other actions that we have taken and the work that we have done to show how seriously we take such crimes in Scotland and how serious we are about tackling them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 4 comes from Murdo Fraser, who joins us remotely.

Emissions Increase

4. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason source emissions rose by 1.5 per cent from 2017 to 2018. (S5O-04471)

Roseanna Cunningham: As I have already reported to Parliament, changes to the national energy mix and freezing temperatures from the east during the early months of 2018 contributed to a rise in emissions from energy supply and heating use for buildings. However, to set that in context, emissions reductions were recorded in all other sectors, including transport, industry and agriculture.

The figures in question are from 2018, and they predate a huge amount of work by this Government to tackle climate change. Nonetheless, they show that Scotland's emissions

had already gone down by 50 per cent since the 1990 baseline, which is halfway to net zero.

Murdo Fraser: The ambitious climate change targets that the Parliament agreed to have widespread support, but one of the risks that is posed by the Covid-19 situation in relation to transport is that individuals might be more reluctant to use public transport in the future because of the risk of infection, which might drive them back into private cars.

The United Kingdom Government has introduced a number of initiatives to try to encourage greater use of cycling as an alternative mode of transport. Can the cabinet secretary outline what the Scottish Government is doing to promote cycling?

Roseanna Cunningham: On behalf of my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, I point out that significant sums of money were given to local authorities over the period of the Covid emergency to allow them to put in place walking and cycling routes in areas that they deemed to be the most appropriate. Those routes have been shown to be very successful. The Scottish Government's commitment of—off the top of my head—somewhere in the region of £50 million to enable that to happen was extremely important and was evidence of the Government's intention and desire for active travel to be part of the mix.

There is now an issue with the use of transport as a result of the Covid emergency, but we know that and are considering what can be done to address it. The member will know very well that walking and cycling provision will probably not assist him in getting to Parliament from where he lives. There has to be more than just walking and cycling provision if we are to ensure that transport remains sustainable.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Two members wish to ask supplementaries.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): According to the Government's own figures, some of the highest proportions of source greenhouse gas emissions are from methane and nitrous oxide, which are particularly associated with agriculture. Can the cabinet secretary outline what work has been done with the agricultural and land use sector to reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions?

Roseanna Cunningham: Agriculture is home to the majority of methane and nitrous oxide emissions in Scotland, and we are working with the industry and other stakeholders to identify and encourage practices that can reduce those emissions—for example, through the advice that is provided by the Farm Advisory Service and Farming for a Better Climate or through the

requirements of the beef efficiency scheme. We also continue to look to the future and are increasing our understanding of methane-reducing feed additives and the potential for methane capture and reuse.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next supplementary is from Claudia Beamish, who joins us remotely.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary give an update on what new measures have recently been put in place to help us to contribute fairly and quickly, in the early years, towards our 2030 interim target? I am sure that she will agree that we cannot wait for the updated climate change plan before taking new action.

Roseanna Cunningham: As the member is actively involved in the discussions that we are currently having, she will know that the work that is being done will be published in December. However, the Government as a whole is looking very carefully at how we might allocate the low carbon fund, which is worth £2 billion and will clearly be impactful in a number of areas. The point that I want to make is that such issues are not for only one portfolio; all portfolios in the Scottish Government are considering them closely.

Climate Change (Update on Plans)

5. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans to tackle climate change. (S5O-04472)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): As I have already indicated, the update to our 2018 climate change plan will be published in December and will set out a pathway to meeting Scotland's world-leading targets over the period until 2032.

Although the update was previously due in April, the global pandemic has meant that we have been operating in a changed landscape. However, although our starting point has changed, our ambitions have not. We are committed to building a green recovery from Covid-19. The recast plan will draw upon the best available evidence, including advice from the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change, the advisory group on economic recovery, the just transition commission and the sustainable renewal advisory group.

Joan McAlpine: Around the world, emissions fell at the height of the lockdown, but use of private vehicles might increase as public transport is affected by the pandemic. Does that mean that the Government will need to revise its strategy for

increasing use of decarbonised vehicles, even though the "Switched On Scotland Phase Two: An Action Plan For Growth" action plan was welcomed as being extremely ambitious when it was launched in 2017?

Roseanna Cunningham: Despite the impact of Covid-19, we remain committed to the ambitious vision for Scotland's transport system that was set out in the national transport strategy 2. We have continued to progress the switch to ultra-low-emission vehicles since the switched on Scotland action plan was launched in 2017. We have also invested significantly in growing and developing the ChargePlace Scotland electric vehicle charging network, such that it now has more than 1,250 charge points across Scotland, which I think makes it the most extensive network in the United Kingdom.

The pandemic poses many challenges, but we are committed to our ambitious emissions reduction targets and, as part of that, to phasing out the need for petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032, thereby delivering a healthier, cleaner and greener Scotland for generations to come.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have requests for two supplementaries. May I ask that they are brief?

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): This week, a landslide on the A68 connecting the Borders and Edinburgh, and many other landslides on road and rail networks across Scotland, caused heartache and severe disruption. Will the cabinet secretary commit to looking at how deforestation contributes to water run-off and soil erosion, and to there being a Government investigation into how climate change might have contributed to the devastating impact of extreme weather patterns on Scotland's infrastructure?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could I have a brief answer, please, cabinet secretary?

Roseanna Cunningham: The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity has already acknowledged the impact of climate change in respect of the events that took place near Stonehaven. I will certainly undertake to discuss with my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism the issues around deforestation, which, of course, he is working incredibly hard to reverse completely.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It is clear that extreme weather will only intensify in the future, because of climate change. What plans for climate change adaptation exist at major industrial sites such as Mossmorran, where a simple power dip due to the extreme weather is

once again bringing flaring misery to surrounding communities this week?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am aware of the situation at Mossmorran. The weather event that we saw seems to have been unprecedented, although I am not a meteorological expert in any way, shape or form. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency is currently engaging with Mossmorran to ascertain exactly what happened. I think that there is still a question mark over quite what took place there. In those circumstances, we might be best advised to wait for detailed information about the reality of the situation before we jump to any conclusions that are then rolled out and assumed for other areas as well.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are three questions left in this portfolio section. I do not think that I can take any more supplementaries.

Access to Recycling (Glasgow)

6. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what support is available to households in Glasgow to improve access to recycling. (S5O-04473)

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): Local authorities are responsible for decisions on the provision of local waste services within the existing statutory framework. Zero Waste Scotland provides councils with advice and assistance to support and improve recycling services. It also provides information and tips on its website to help householders to access recycling services to reduce waste and increase recycling.

Johann Lamont: I refer to the question that James Kelly asked earlier. In Glasgow, fly-tipping has increased since lockdown, perhaps because there was no access to recycling facilities. Week in and week out, we have seen stories in the local papers about instances of fly-tipping right across Glasgow, and it has been condemned by councillors across all parties.

Does the minister understand that the cuts that have been made year after year to Glasgow's budget mean that there is less money to fund much-needed services such as those? What contact has the leader of Glasgow City Council had with the minister to lobby for the resources that Glasgow so desperately needs to support the front-line workers who have the difficult job of keeping Glasgow clean?

Mairi Gougeon: I am afraid that I do not have that information; I will have to look at it and get back to the member.

As I have said in my previous responses to questions about fly-tipping, I absolutely understand how big a problem it is, and it will

require a multi-agency effort to tackle it. Some local authorities, such as Perth and Kinross Council, which we talked about earlier, have developed their own strategies in an attempt to deal with some of the fly-tipping problems that they have seen. It is within the current powers of local authorities to do that, but we are looking at the problem and at what more can be done.

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 (Targets)

7. **Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that the country meets the targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. (S5O-04474)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): We are taking ambitious action across the board, including through investment in policy development. Our 2020-21 budget included £2 billion of infrastructure investment over the next parliamentary term for measures to support delivery of our climate change plan. It commits £250 million over 10 years to peatland restoration, and a record £53 million to forestry in 2020-21.

More recently, we committed £62 million to the energy transition fund and £66 million for a green recovery as part of our return to work package.

In December, we will publish an update to our 2018 climate change plan to account for the targets in the 2019 act and support a green recovery from Covid-19.

Liam McArthur: The cabinet secretary will be aware that reducing emissions from the transport sector is absolutely critical to Scotland achieving its climate change targets. It will require major investment and support for transmission to low-emission modes of transport. Will Roseanna Cunningham join me in urging the transport secretary to reach agreement with Orkney Islands Council on the replacement of Orkney's ageing internal ferry fleet with vessels that are more fuel efficient, thus helping to reduce emissions, cut costs, and provide my constituents with a service that is fit for purpose?

Roseanna Cunningham: I will make sure that I pass the member's concerns about ferries to my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Nitrogen Balance Sheet

8. **Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its creation of a nitrogen balance sheet. (S5O-04475)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): While we continue to respond to the Covid-19 crisis, we remain absolutely committed to our climate change goals, which include the establishment of a national nitrogen balance sheet to enhance the evidence base in areas such as air quality, agriculture and transport.

Initial work to identify data sources is under way in the Scottish Government. We expect to begin engaging stakeholders on the balance sheet later this year and to complete the legislative process to formalise it well in advance of the deadline of March 2022, which was agreed unanimously by Parliament.

Jeremy Balfour: There have been some delays that the public will understand as having been unavoidable because of the Covid crisis, but since the passage of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, the Scottish National Party has given itself two full years to properly monitor nitrogen flows. Is it not the case that SNP ministers spotted another opportunity to dodge scrutiny and grasped it with both hands?

Roseanna Cunningham: Assuming that the Scottish Parliament's unanimous endorsement of the delay included the vote of Jeremy Balfour, I am a little puzzled as to why he continues to press the matter.

Nitrogen is an important greenhouse gas, and the balance sheet will support national climate change targets. The extension of the deadline for completing the regulatory process was set prior to Covid-19. We have agreed what I consider to be a pragmatic extension of the timeframe. The limited extension of the timeframe will allow us to do the proper work that will be required across stakeholder groups, which will ensure that there is no risk to the quality of the balance sheet when we are able to produce it.

As far as I am aware, Scotland is the only country in the world to have put a nitrogen balance sheet into law. Although there are other countries that do some nitrogen balance sheet work, Scotland is the only place to have made it a statutory responsibility.

Rural Economy and Tourism

15:02

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 1 was not lodged.

Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

2. **Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what

assessment it has made of the impact of the eat out to help out scheme on the rural and tourism economies in Scotland. (S5O-04477)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): Eat out to help out is the United Kingdom Government scheme run by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. It is running every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday between 3 August and 31 August. We do not currently have information on the number of businesses that have signed up to the scheme or on the number of times that it has been used in Scotland.

Graham Simpson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that rather disappointing answer.

I can tell the cabinet secretary that 3,766 Scottish restaurants had signed up to the scheme when it went live on 3 August. Does he agree that that fantastic UK-wide initiative is having a major impact in Scotland?

Fergus Ewing: We recognise that the scheme is making a contribution, but I caution Graham Simpson to be a bit cautious on whether that will be a "major" contribution. This morning, I spoke to three leading hoteliers in Scotland. They say that, unless the furlough scheme is extended beyond October or an alternative job support package is put in place, the resultant number of people who will face redundancy around Britain will be devastating.

I am never churlish, and I welcome any support. However, to say that the scheme is a "major" scheme, as Graham Simpson did, is to fly in the face of what industry is saying and what employees fear.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Claire Baker has a short supplementary question.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It is estimated that music tourism generates around £300 million for the Scottish economy each year. Some music venues have diversified to provide seated restaurants during this period. Although they are being supported by the UK Government scheme, the new hospitality guidance bans the playing of background—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you get to your question, please, Ms Baker?

Claire Baker: The new guidance bans the playing of background music. Will the Scottish Government respond to concerns that that approach is too restrictive and that consideration should be given to—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Baker, that is enough. I asked for short supplementaries.

Claire Baker: Presiding Officer, it is an important issue, and it is a struggle to get it raised

in the chamber. I have five words left to say, if that is possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please be very quick.

Claire Baker: Could a background music noise level be specified that would not require people to raise their voices?

Fergus Ewing: Of course I sympathise with the point that Claire Baker makes. As it happens, I studied that issue this morning.

I am acutely aware that artists who make their living from performance in particular have really suffered. That is why I am delighted that Fiona Hyslop is providing assistance to the arts sector in Scotland that will really help a number of people who have made their livelihood from that source.

As far as background music is concerned, we have to be very careful. If there is music and noise in a pub, people talk more loudly, and I am afraid that, as they talk more loudly, the propensity to spread the virus increases. In short, that is the problem that we have. I think that there is recognition across the chamber that the cautious approach that the Scottish Government has taken is sensible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you wind up, please?

Fergus Ewing: Although I sympathise absolutely with the points that Claire Baker makes, “caution” should be our watchword for the time being.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am trying to be very fair and to allow everybody to get in with an opportunity to ask their question, but members are choosing to disadvantage their colleagues. I ask them to think on that.

North Coast 500

3. **David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has received regarding future development of the NC500. (S5O-04478)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): Through its agencies, the Scottish Government continues to support businesses and communities along the route. That includes engagement with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and a number of community organisations around the north coast 500 area. Areas along the route have already benefited from the rural tourism infrastructure fund—for example, through new parking and viewpoints at Lochcarron and motorhome facilities at Lochinver.

David Stewart: Does the cabinet secretary share my view that the NC500 is the goose that lays the golden eggs for the Highland tourism economy? Does he accept the positive call from north businesses to set up a growth fund to help a bounce back from the Covid-19 pandemic?

Fergus Ewing: Yes, the NC500 has been a great success, but there are pressures that we need to deal with, and the rural tourism infrastructure fund is the right vehicle for that. However, I am very happy to discuss with Mr Stewart, who I know has been an advocate and long-standing supporter of the route, how we can further develop it and increase the benefits to businesses and communities along its length.

Tourism (Showpeople and Funfairs)

4. **David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what importance it places on the role and contribution of showpeople and funfair operators to tourism. (S5O-04479)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): We recognise the significant and long-standing heritage of Scotland’s showpeople and funfair operators. They form an important and valued part of our tourism sector as well as bringing fun and enjoyment to communities across the country. I know that the pandemic has hit our funfairs extremely hard, and I am pleased that we now have an indicative date for funfairs and showpeople to resume business, provided, of course, that it is safe to do so. We should not prejudge those matters.

David Torrance: The cabinet secretary will be aware that a number of Scottish Showmen’s Guild members have been ineligible for financial support during the crisis. Can he provide reassurance that the Government is committed to working with the sector to ensure the safe reopening of funfairs as quickly as possible and that it will look at financial support for showmen and their families who so far have been left with no income?

Fergus Ewing: Of course we will. As with all sectors, we do not want restrictions to remain in place any longer than is absolutely necessary to protect public health and to continue to make progress in suppressing the virus. I can absolutely assure David Torrance that we are seeking to ensure the safe reopening of funfairs as quickly as it is safe to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 was not lodged.

Rural Economy (Tourism)

6. **Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure that the post-lockdown economy in rural

communities benefits from, but does not become overly dependent on, tourism. (S50-04481)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): We acknowledge that tourism plays a key part in rural economies. In addition to our £2.3 billion package of measures to support businesses, we are working with local authority partners and the United Kingdom Government to support a wide range of economic development projects that will harness local and regional strengths to create jobs and attract investment.

Dr Allan: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the future of islands depends on there being a mixed economy, of which tourism is a vital part. Does he agree that we need to grow our tourism economy as part of a wider package of measures that ensures the development of the housing and infrastructure on which tourism and other businesses depend?

Fergus Ewing: I agree with Dr Allan, who has been a champion of, for example, the crofting grants scheme that has, during the lifetime of this party's period in Government, enabled us to provide 1,000 families with new homes. That is a really significant creation and, thanks to Dr Allan's representations, it is continuing.

We also recognise through our national islands plan the necessity of having a thriving business environment that enables individuals in Dr Allan's constituency to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities.

Wedding Industry (Support)

7. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to tourism businesses involved in the organising, planning and hosting of weddings in Dumfries and Galloway and other rural economies that are reliant on the wedding industry. (S50-04482)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): We know how challenging the position on weddings and events has been for couples who planned to get married this spring and summer, and for hospitality businesses that are largely dependent on weddings.

Our package of support for business overall totals £2.3 billion. Many events-related businesses, including some that have been affected by the inability to host wedding receptions, for example, will have been able to access some of those funds.

Our aim is, of course, to try to get the sector reopened as soon as it is safe to do so, and I emphasise the necessity of all hospitality premises

continuing to observe the Covid rules and not letting their guard down.

Emma Harper: I have written to the First Minister and the cabinet secretary following contact from several constituency businesses in Galloway. Can the cabinet secretary provide assurances that he will continue to engage with key stakeholders so that those experts can input their best practice ideas in order to safely prepare their businesses for the future?

Fergus Ewing: I am happy to do so, and I confirm that I have been in contact quite regularly with individual businesses that have been most affected, particularly in the Gretna area, which is substantially reliant on hosting weddings, wedding receptions and everything else relating thereto. One of the individuals in business who is most prominent in that area also serves on our tourism task force and is therefore directly able to input his recommendations in that regard.

Above all, we have to keep the restrictions in place until it is safe to remove them. Everyone knows that. However, at the same time, we all want to see an indicative date for the resumption of weddings, which are—obviously—planned on a long-term basis. The sooner that can be provided, in accordance with the safety protocols, the better for those businesses.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a few requests to ask supplementary questions, so I ask members to keep them short.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The weddings sector is hugely important to the Dumfries and Galloway economy, not least in Gretna Green, which the cabinet secretary mentioned. Does he accept that what the sector is asking for is no different from what he did for the tourism sector, which was to set an indicative advance date for reopening? Whether we are talking about a couple looking to tie the knot or a business that will make their day special, advance planning time is absolutely crucial.

Fergus Ewing: I absolutely understand the sector's wishes, and that is precisely because, as I indicated in my response to Emma Harper, I have engaged directly with the businesses concerned. In one case, I think that there was a 45-minute discussion. I know well that they want to reopen.

Members will be aware that the difference between a group of strangers in a restaurant and a group at a wedding is that everyone in a wedding party knows one other. That is a different social gathering—it is a different context. Like it or not, we cannot ignore that, and we cannot ignore the concomitant additional risks that it brings.

That is why we had to come to the decision not to group the wedding receptions category with the

categories that have had the restrictions lifted. We have taken that approach consistently here. Down south, they decided to take a different approach, but then changed their minds. Nonetheless, we all wish to see the sector resume as soon as it is safe to do so. I make no bones about repeating that position—every member knows that it is true.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I imagine that it was my constituents who have been on the phone to the cabinet secretary. Maybe if he had listened to their expert advice, he would not have been on the phone for 45 minutes. If those venues feel that they can deliver weddings safely, why are we not trusting people and respecting industry experts?

Fergus Ewing: I am afraid that I do not accept the premise of the member's question. We have shown that we trust people. Since 15 July, I have attended many businesses in the accommodation and visitor attraction sector, and the vast majority of them are taking the situation absolutely and scrupulously seriously. We are trusting them and we are asking them to maintain high standards.

Of course I trust the individuals. I do not want to mention the names of the individuals that Mr Mundell is talking about, who have significant businesses. That is not the issue; the issue is that wedding gatherings are different from gatherings of strangers. It gives me no pleasure to say that, but we have to be honest with people. That is what the First Minister has said all along. We cannot retreat into partisan political viewpoints just because it makes us feel good to utter them. That makes no difference to the facts, which we have to look straight at and act on.

Rural Economy and Tourism Workers (Availability)

8. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what the impact of Covid-19 has been on the availability of workers in the rural economy and tourism sectors. (S5O-04483)

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): Covid-19 has had serious impacts on our rural and island economies, and particularly on tourism. We continue to monitor the impacts on agriculture, forestry, tourism and other industries, which are predominant in those areas and are particularly reliant on workers from the European Union. That situation continues to develop as communities are still affected by restrictions, so it is too early to fully assess the impact that it will have had. However, the Scottish tourism recovery task force, which has a focus on business recovery and protecting the workforce through retaining and upskilling staff, will examine issues such as the availability of workers.

Alex Rowley: I assume that the Scottish Government believes that the rural economy has a major contribution to make in Scotland's economic recovery, which we need to build on. If that is the case, does the minister or the Government intend to produce a strategic plan for prioritising strategic investment into the rural economy? For example, thousands of jobs can be achieved in forestry if we invest in the levels of tree planting that we need to have in order to hit our climate goals.

Mairi Gougeon: The member talked about forestry in particular. The cabinet secretary has been leading on that area and has been doing a tremendous amount of work on it, because there is huge potential for growth in such areas. The rural economy is vital and it is important that we invest in those areas.

In my previous answer, I mentioned the tourism recovery task force and a few streams of work that will be considered as we look to rebuild and also develop and grow that industry. A number of plans are under way, because the rural economy is vital and we want it to be in as strong a position as possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the rural economy and tourism. I am sorry that I was unable to allow supplementary questions to Mr Rowley's question.

Motion of No Confidence

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-22392, in the name of Iain Gray, on a motion of no confidence.

15:20

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): The vote of no confidence in the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills—the Deputy First Minister—this afternoon is not about personalities, and it is not about retribution for what happened last week with the Scottish Qualifications Authority shambles. It is about the principles of democracy, and of the accountability of the Scottish Government to the Scottish Parliament. It is about this being a time of reckoning for a long line of failures, but more important is that it is about the future—the future of our schools, pupils and Scottish education.

The basis of a minister's mandate is clear; the ministerial code sets it out. It says that

“The First Minister is responsible for the overall organisation of the Government ... and appointments”

and that

“Ministerial appointments are subject to approval by Her Majesty.”

It also says that

“Before seeking approval, the First Minister must first secure the agreement of the Parliament.”

It is the agreement of the Parliament that we wish to withdraw.

The responsibility of individual ministers for their own conduct and that of their departments lies at the very heart of an accountable and democratic Parliamentary Government. We do not accept, under clause 1.6 of the ministerial code, that the cabinet secretary for education conducted himself in line with that code. He has failed in justifying, to this Parliament and to the Scottish people, his actions with respect to the SQA results fiasco. As a result, Mr Swinney no longer commands the confidence of the chamber.

At the end of last week, we reviewed the SQA results fiasco, following thousands of calls, e-mails and messages from anxious and increasingly angry young people, and from their parents and teachers. Having reviewed it, we decided that we had no choice but to lodge the motion of no confidence. That was not a decision that we took lightly: motions of no confidence have been lodged only sparingly in the history of this Parliament.

Of course, the restoration of pupils' achievements based on the assessment of teachers who know them and—more important—

who know their standard of work inside out, is a victory for fairness and common sense and is, above all, a victory for all those young people who refused to take that injustice lying down.

It is not a victory for the education secretary, who jumped to action only when his own job was on the line. Some members of the Scottish Parliament might think that that means that the cabinet secretary is fit to continue in office. However, many others believe that it is all the more reason why he must go.

Only yesterday, the head of the SQA, Fiona Robertson, told the Education and Skills Committee that although she regrets the experience that some pupils have had, the SQA had received a

“commission from the Scottish Government”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 12 August 2020; c 30.]

that it had done its

“very best to deliver”.—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 12 August 2020; c 12.]

Therefore, the SQA clearly believes that responsibility for the results fiasco falls on Mr Swinney.

However, that begs so many questions about how it came to this. Perhaps the education secretary can explain why he did not listen in April, May, June and July to warnings saying that exactly what did happen was what was going to happen, and why he did not act immediately when it happened. The pupils and people of Scotland deserve to be told what went wrong. A minister tried to explain, the First Minister apologised and the cabinet secretary was forced to take remedial action.

However, the SQA exam fiasco is just the latest catastrophe in Mr Swinney's tenure in education, in which we have seen a catalogue of catastrophes: failure to meet the promised expansion of childcare; failure, still, to get resources to councils for the reopening of schools; and the U-turn on getting schools back full time. His time in education has included a series of other poor decisions: narrowing of subject choices, refusal to scrap primary 1 testing, ditching of his education bill, and failing of kids with additional support needs.

Education is not just a Government brief, and schooling is not just a process that young people must go through in advance of going out into the world of work. At its core, education is a liberating process that empowers our young people to strike out and forge the lives that they want to lead. At its best, our education system allows the aspirations of pupils to be realised, and it acts as a dynamo for social mobility, so I am pleased that 75,000

young people who had their results downgraded will now receive the marks that were recommended by their teachers.

However, we cannot simply turn the page. We cannot ignore the damage that has been done to those young people, the hurt that is felt following months of turmoil and anxiety, the distress from dreams disappearing, and the mental anguish that has been felt by them and their families.

John Swinney showed us that he had no confidence in Scotland's schools, students or teachers. It is this Parliament's duty to those schools, students and teachers to say that we have no confidence in him to sort out this mess, which he has created.

For those reasons, I move the motion of no confidence in the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and I ask him to go.

I move,

That the Parliament has no confidence in the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, in light of his mismanagement of schools' education and, in particular, of this year's awarding of grades to school pupils and the unfairness of the system applied by the SQA.

15:27

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I oppose the motion and express my confidence in one of the most decent and dedicated people in Scottish politics. John Swinney is someone who works hard to fulfil his responsibilities each and every single day. When he gets something wrong, he has the humility to say so and to put it right. In my book, that is a strength.

The past few days have been more difficult than they should ever have been for many young people in Scotland. I know that, and I am sorry—and so is John Swinney. The situation created by Covid is unprecedented in the history of Scottish examinations. In a unique set of circumstances, we took decisions that we considered, on balance, to be the right ones. Those decisions were, as has been commented on by others, broadly the same decisions that have been reached by different Governments of different party colours in England and in Wales. I am not going to dwell on that point today, but it speaks volumes about the motivations and priorities of the Opposition in this chamber.

In Scotland, 25 per cent of grades were downgraded. The Scottish Government acknowledged the unfairness of that, we apologised and we put it right and yet the Opposition demands a resignation. In England, closer to 40 per cent of grades have been downgraded and, as yet, no comprehensive solution has been offered. However, from the Conservatives, we have weasel words and Labour, which lodged this motion before even

waiting to listen to the solution, is today calling for the same solution at United Kingdom level as has been put forward in Scotland, rather than for a ministerial resignation. Will Mr Gray tell us why that is the case?

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Will the First Minister acknowledge that the Government in Wales moved to correct the exam results before they were issued to the young people? Does she not wish that Mr Swinney had done that too?

The First Minister: I think that I am correct in saying that more than 40 per cent of grades were downgraded in Wales, but my question was why is Scottish Labour calling for something in Scotland that its UK counterparts are not. That proves that, for Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservatives, this is not about principle—it is simply about politics. We own our mistakes, and so should they. I readily acknowledge that we focused too much on the system and not enough on individuals. A desire to avoid something that would look like grade inflation meant that students lost out on grades that their teachers believed they deserved. The statistical model that was used meant that more students were downgraded in poorer areas than in other parts of Scotland. That was wrong, which is why the Deputy First Minister set out a solution on Tuesday and restored the grades of young people across the country—*[Interruption.]* I will not take an intervention just now.

To those who say—and who will quote us in support of this view—that the awards are now too generous, I say that, over the past week, I have reflected hard on that point and come to this conclusion, and I regret that I did not come to it more quickly. Given the enormous Covid disadvantage that young people have suffered in this unique—I hope—year, levelling the playing field a bit in their favour cannot be, and is not, a bad thing.

Neither John Swinney nor I have any desire to hide from the fact that we initially got it wrong. We acted from good intentions, but we got it wrong. In putting it right, we have listened and we have learned. We have listened to parents and teachers—and indeed, we have listened to parties in this Parliament more than they have been prepared to listen to anyone else—but most of all we have listened to young people. They have been impressive, passionate and persuasive advocates for changing course.

The curriculum for excellence aims to ensure that all our young people have four core capacities. It asks that they become confident individuals, responsible citizens, successful learners and effective contributors. Last week, we were reminded again of how many of our young people have all those capacities in abundance.

Their response has shown that teachers across the country, and our education system as a whole, are doing a huge amount right. They are creating very many very impressive young people.

We—all of us—should think about what lesson we want to take from all of this. The Government made the wrong judgment, but we listened to those who raised their concerns, and we acted. We took responsibility, we owned it and we fixed it. We have not hidden, we have not tried to blame anyone else and we have not objected to the criticisms that have been made of us.

I accept that the vote in the chamber today will probably go along party lines—

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

The First Minister: I will take a final intervention, if I have time, to hear whether anyone in the Scottish Conservatives can explain the dissonance between their position here in Scotland and their position in respect of the rest of the UK.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: The First Minister and the Deputy First Minister have both apologised to pupils, parents and teachers, but has the Deputy First Minister apologised to the First Minister and offered her his resignation?

The First Minister: The Deputy First Minister is probably the most honourable individual I have ever known in my life, which is perhaps something that the member finds difficult to understand.

I will conclude. For those who are watching outside the chamber, one of the questions that today's motion throws up is this: what exactly do we want our politics to look like? Fundamentally, my view is that making mistakes in unique circumstances, acknowledging those mistakes and fixing them is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of a system that works and a minister who, when a mistake is made, takes the right approach.

In the midst of a global pandemic, neither our education system nor our politics will be made better by a resignation over a mistake that has been corrected. I hope that it is the fact that, in their hearts, they know that to be true, rather than sheer hypocrisy, that explains why none of the Opposition parties is calling for the resignations of their own colleagues in other parts of the UK that are facing even bigger problems.

For all those reasons, I whole-heartedly oppose today's opportunistic motion.

15:34

Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): John Swinney has been an excellent servant to his

party and a huge contributor to this Parliament. There is no reading of post-devolution politics in which he is not a significant figure. For my own part, I studied many of the ways in which he professionalised the Scottish National Party as leader. Although the 2003 election did not reap dividends for him, his management set up his party to win in 2007. When Nicola Sturgeon went into her first Scottish election as leader claiming that education would be the “defining mission” of her Government, it was natural that she turned to her diligent and capable deputy to deliver.

It should give nobody who cares about either the future of your young people or the importance of this Parliament any pleasure to speak in today's debate, but that displeasure does not negate the fact that the education secretary's failings are so great, and the damage to his authority so fatal, that he simply has to go.

This is about more than just results day itself, as important as it was. This is about the repeated warnings from Opposition members that went unheeded for months; it is about the recommendations from the Education and Skills Committee back in May about the transparency of methodology that was roundly rejected; it is about the fact that John Swinney issued the parameters to the SQA, and the SQA simply fulfilled the brief that it was given; it is about the fact that the education secretary had the results for five days before they were published and could see the car crash that was coming, but did not act.

When faced with thousands of students whose dreams were dashed, he dug in and defended the system over the pupils—a system that entrenched educational inequality, meaning that, for some, there was literally nothing that they could do to succeed. When presented with clear analysis showing that children from the most deprived areas were hit more than twice as hard as their more affluent counterparts, he went on the nightly television news to deny it, saying that the data

“does not bear this out”,

even though that is exactly what the data did.

It was only after Opposition parties raised the issue of a vote of no confidence that the Government's position radically changed. Suddenly, instead of digging in, there was an apology and a total U-turn—a course of action that was described just days before as having “a real credibility issue” was now the way to fix an inadvertent mistake. As high as the regard in which people across the chamber hold John Swinney may be, the timeline of a threat of no confidence and the total U-turn that transpired open the education secretary to accusations that he cared more about his own job than he did about our children's futures.

Today's motion is ostensibly about the education secretary, but it is actually as much about the First Minister as it is about John Swinney. The scale of this failure is of such a degree that it prompts the question: if this is not a resignation matter for one of her ministers, what is?

There was a Nicola Sturgeon elected to the Parliament in 1999 who would have understood that ministerial accountability does not just mean fronting up a U-turn; it means taking ultimate responsibility for failings in your brief. If those failings include signing off a major operation of work that proves so utterly unfit for purpose that it has to be dismantled after thousands of schoolchildren have been left frightened for their future, that means falling on your sword.

Of course, not all transgressions require resignation, and all politicians call far too readily for the heads of their opponents, but for parliamentary responsibility—or even natural justice—to work, the sanction must fit the scale of the failure. Nicola Sturgeon understood that in 2000, when she called for Sam Galbraith's job after a much smaller SQA exam issue, just as she understood in 2010 that she needed to make a full apology to Parliament for lobbying a court in defence of a fraudster, even when senior members of her own party were urging her to tough it out. There was enough of that Nicola Sturgeon left in 2018, when she withdrew Gillian Martin's name from ministerial confirmation after historic blog posts came to light. The question is this: where is that Nicola Sturgeon now? How is it that she cannot see what is obvious, which is that this failure is so great that it demands a resignation.

That John Swinney will survive is not in doubt, due to a pact with the Greens, but that parliamentary responsibility is forever damaged by his clinging on is not in doubt either. There was once a Nicola Sturgeon who would have recognised that.

I support the motion.

15:39

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I am sure that we could all have foreseen the broad points that were made by Richard Leonard and Ruth Davidson in their opening speeches, and I have prepared some remarks in response to that line of argument.

Before we get to that, I should say that I am not planning on any big build-up to a point that everyone is well aware of. The Greens will, of course, oppose the motion. Before I get to the partisan manoeuvres defining the debate, I want to explain why that is.

I spent four months warning that a system was being designed that not only would treat young people like data points rather than as individual learners, but would be fundamentally unjust to working-class people and those in the most deprived communities in particular. I challenged the education secretary and the SQA in Parliament, as did Patrick Harvie; I lodged freedom of information requests; I wrote to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, once the commissioner's office became involved; and my team and I published our own analysis of the schools that were most likely to be disadvantaged by the system.

We were certainly not the only ones to raise those concerns—Iain Gray did an excellent job raising them, too. However, in Parliament, the Greens have consistently led on the issue, just as we have led on the issue of the assessment system in Scotland and the organisational culture of the SQA being fundamentally broken.

When the results arrived last week, we took no pleasure in being vindicated. I am sure that I was not the only one who spent Monday evening dearly wishing that I would be proved dramatically wrong the next morning, but none of us was. For days, my inbox was flooded with stories from pupils, from parents and particularly from teachers who were heartbroken and outraged about what had happened.

I hope that we were all inspired to witness the revolt of thousands of young people and their supporters, who took to the streets, launched petitions, spoke to the media and lobbied all of us to have the results undone. Without their resistance, I do not think that the reversal would have been announced on Tuesday.

In one letter that I received, which was also sent to the education secretary, a parent told me about how their child had been presented with an award for maths by none other than John Swinney himself. The pupil had achieved more than 90 per cent in their national 5 and higher and was clearly on track to getting an A at advanced higher, but was devastated to be given a D by the SQA.

The moderation system was fundamentally designed to maintain the apparent credibility of grades at an aggregate national level. It was not designed, regardless of the intentions of its designers, to award individual young people the grades that they deserved. For that reason alone, it should have never been put into operation, but it was, and last week we saw the results. The question was what the Parliament was going to do about them.

Labour's initial response was visceral but ultimately vague condemnation, leading the *Daily Record's* political editor to suggest that the

Greens, rather than the Labour Party, were leading the Opposition. What power Paul Hutcheon turns out to have over the Labour Party—as an almost immediate response to his comments, Labour dropped the nuclear option of the motion of no confidence.

From that moment, every Opposition party had the same choice: negotiate a solution with the Government, or simply gun for the education secretary. Any one party could have secured a fix for 75,000 young people in exchange for their support. Of course, only the Greens were interested in fixing the problem; others simply saw a political opportunity—one that, given today's events elsewhere in the UK, takes on a particularly hypocritical tone.

Our MSPs agreed that we would support a motion of no confidence, unless the Government agreed to implement our proposed solutions immediately. The solutions were: the restoration of all 124,000 downgraded results to the level estimated by teachers; the preservation of 9,000 upgraded results, given that it would be a bit perverse to penalise those young people a week later; an independent review into how the situation happened, despite months of warnings, which will consider issues raised around transparency and scrutiny; and a second longer-term review of the exams and assessment system. As everyone is now aware, the Government chose to deliver on those demands.

The Greens' only priority was restoring the grades of 75,000 young people who had been treated so unjustly. That has been achieved.

I find it entertaining that the Tories in particular are squealing in outrage once again at a terrible error made by the Scottish Government and thus, as always, ducking the issue of their own party doing the same thing on an immeasurably worse scale in this country's other Government. For the Tories to be calling for John Swinney's resignation but apparently having full confidence in the disgraced former defence secretary, Gavin Williamson, really takes some brass neck.

The stories from England, Wales and Northern Ireland are just as heartbreaking as those that we heard here.

Ruth Davidson: Will the member take an intervention?

Ross Greer: I am winding up, but I will take the intervention, if there is time in hand, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Yes.

Ruth Davidson: There is a difference. Under the reasonable person test that the SNP likes to use, any reasonable person would understand that there is a difference between trying to mitigate and

put things right before examination scripts are issued and spending a week digging in after it has happened and all the rest of it. *[Interruption.]*

In addendum to that, I think that the member has misunderstood what the leader of the Scottish Conservatives has said. *[Interruption.]* He has come out strongly to say, just as he said last week, irrespective of whether it is south or north of the border, pupils should be put above the system. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please. Let us hear the member.

Ruth Davidson: Do not misrepresent his words—our leader has been very strong.

Ross Greer: I hope that I will get the time back for that, Presiding Officer.

Ruth Davidson is trying to give the impression that Gavin Williamson saw the problem that was coming and acted to fix it, but he did not. Gavin Williamson was making statements to the press saying that any attempt to fix the issue would somehow give young people grades that they did not actually deserve. What has come about in England today is demonstrably worse than what happened here. It is the same error in principle but it is measurably, proportionately and quantifiably worse than what happened in Scotland.

No Government in the United Kingdom is free from blame in this entirely foreseeable and avoidable debacle. The difference so far in Scotland is that not only did the Greens use our position to ensure that the problem was fixed, but the First Minister and the education secretary have both held up their hands and apologised. That does not undo the damage—they have a long way to go before that is the case—but if there is one thing that I cannot stand in politics, it is hypocrisy. Looking around at the two-faced positions of other parties in the Parliament today, I see more of that hypocrisy than a sincere interest in the best interests of our young people, and the Greens will have nothing to do with it.

15:45

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I like and respect John Swinney. He has been a good public servant over decades, for his party and for the Government. He is respectful of us and often polite and engaging in debate. However, I am afraid to say that he is losing the confidence of thousands of teachers, lecturers, pupils, students, staff and parents.

The debate is not just about us; it is about the organisation that John Swinney leads. It is right to have a Government that listens and responds and is agile rather than stubborn and intransigent. However, when the policy direction is constantly

changing in an erratic and uncontrolled fashion, that has a debilitating effect on that organisation. The organisation does not know what to expect next and loses confidence in the leadership.

That has been happening to John Swinney for years now. The issue is not just about the exams. The proposed education bill was meant to be a signature piece of legislation and was deemed essential, but it was later abandoned. The curriculum for excellence, an initiative that had political buy-in from beyond the Government, was so poorly implemented that it has been diminished. We have pulled out of international tables and abandoned surveys in favour of individual testing that is more akin to the kind of thing that Margaret Thatcher would have brought in. That was a dramatically different direction from when John Swinney led his party in opposition. The decision to ditch blended learning as the preferred option just before the summer recess left teachers and staff flummoxed and angry that they had wasted so much time readying schools.

Then we had the exams, which were the trigger for today's debate. Other members have rightly pointed to the repeated warnings and the alternative options that have been offered and that were rejected by the education secretary. Members have also rightly pointed to the distress and anxiety that students and their families and teachers have suffered. However, for me, two factors are even more significant. First, John Swinney told the Parliament this week that he was first aware of the impending issue only a week before the results were published. In this exceptional year, when exams were cancelled and the system was turned on its head, he made himself aware only one week before the results came out. That he does not see that as a problem is a major error of judgment in itself. He should have asked about the issue before he was presented with the results and the point of no return had passed.

The second factor is even more recent. When the results were published, he held them to be a success and rubbished any other process as not credible, yet he has now embraced an alternative that he has previously condemned. How can he be responsible for that alternative and for an education system that he undermined so recklessly just the previous week?

However, it is the overall performance of our education system that most affects John Swinney's leadership position. Scotland's education system was among the best. International measures judge it now as average. His friends and colleagues will stand with him, but John Swinney knows in his quieter moments that he should go. I urge him to go today.

The Presiding Officer: We turn to the open debate. I call Johann Lamont, to be followed by Angela Constance.

15:50

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, and I thank members for the warm welcome.

My time is brief, but it is important to note some basic truths at the outset. First, it is the right and duty of the Parliament to hold ministers to account—full stop. Secondly, we know—and it is silly to pretend otherwise—that it was only when the cabinet secretary had to contemplate his own future, rather than that of young people across Scotland, that he took action. We know that the cabinet secretary has been guilty of a monumental failure of judgment.

I note that the Scottish Government has deployed its usual, well-tested tactic when it is under pressure: get the Greens onside and denigrate the motives of everyone else. That usual approach might give comfort to Government party back benchers, although I trust that it gives some of the Greens pause for thought, but such an approach to dealing with the huge issues that we face is unedifying and not worthy of good government. We deserve better than people impugning our motives when we raise concerns about what the Government is doing.

However, I turn to the issue. It is worth noting that the Government and the SQA do not really accept that there has been a problem with the system. Fiona Robertson said yesterday that she was sorry if young people felt that they were discriminated against. Young people did not feel that they were discriminated against; they were discriminated against, systematically and deliberately. The cabinet secretary continues to assert that young people from deprived backgrounds were not disadvantaged. However, for all the weaselly stat-mining that the cabinet secretary calls in his aid, it is true that they were discriminated against, and he cannot change that.

This is not a one-off. The cabinet secretary has form for attacking critics as gloom-mongers and wanting to talk teachers and students down, whether the issue is multilevel teaching, standardised testing, increased limits on subject choices, limits on the number of courses taken or access to support for those with additional support needs—all issues that disproportionately affect poor children. All too often, he has chosen belligerence rather than trying that listening thing and paying attention. In truth, this SQA fiasco is not first base; it is the final straw.

Faced with these unprecedented times, with young people facing unprecedented challenges,

what did the cabinet secretary do? He signed off on a process that presumed that young people in poor areas had their grades artificially inflated and that those in the least-deprived areas did not. He signed off on a process that could not even conceive of the notion that young people could perform way beyond the past experience of their schools. We therefore saw a system where young people, despite their circumstances and the many challenges of learning in a school where many of their peers might be dealing with serious problems, were doing exceptionally well, only to discover that the existence of the challenges that they had overcome was cited as a cause to pull them back down. There was nothing that they could do about that—absolutely nothing.

John Swinney and the SQA had months to test the consequences of their system, and utterly failed. He saw in cold print what that meant and he went ahead anyway. What on earth was he thinking? That is why I have no confidence in the cabinet secretary. The job of the education secretary must, above all else, be focused on understanding the power of education and its capacity to liberate potential, and that Government choices can entrench inequality or can be harnessed to eradicate it. In these times, more than ever, we need an education secretary who understands inequality and challenges assumptions about what constitutes talent, ability and fairness, rather than reinforcing those assumptions in action. I believe that, over a number of years, John Swinney has shown himself to be incapable of understanding the fundamental task of education to eradicate inequality. This scandal confirms it, and he should go.

15:54

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): No one in politics is infallible, and high office, like elected office, is a privilege, not a right. I will put on record why I believe that John Swinney should continue as education secretary and finish the work that he has started.

I have had the privilege of having had six posts in government. For about three years, I served as a junior minister to John Swinney and to Michael Russell when he was education secretary, and I succeeded Mr Russell into that post, so I know that the job that John Swinney does on behalf of the nation is one of the hardest jobs in government. Because it has been mentioned recently, I read the transcript of the motion of no confidence debate that took place regarding the then Labour education secretary almost 20 years ago. I was not here at the time, but I concede that it is not comfortable reading. However, it exemplifies exactly why the then SNP

parliamentary group was sitting in opposition. Our approach then did not work for the same reason that Labour's approach is not working now.

Despite the distress of young people and the anguish of their parents, in my experience, overwhelmingly what they have sought is not revenge but a resolution. They wanted the education secretary to take responsibility and sort it out, and that is exactly what he has done—and in short order.

What he did not do was to point the finger or scapegoat others because, whether in good times or bad, fair weather or foul, John Swinney is a man of integrity. Right now, I can assure members that the biggest critic of John Swinney is not sitting on the Labour benches or the Conservative benches—it is the man himself.

The personal testimony and courage of affected young people resulted in the cabinet secretary changing his mind. That is not a badge of shame; it is strength of character. He is a man with backbone. Politicians may scream “U-turn!” but, in the real world, doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, business people and even young people understand that, even with the best of intentions, mistakes are made.

What matters most is for politicians to really listen and, when they say sorry, to mean it and—most importantly—to back up their words with deeds. That is what people have seen and heard from Mr Swinney this week: a man who can put himself into the shoes of others and who conscientiously engages and wrestles with the difficult decisions.

I support his conclusion that our overriding consideration is that we cannot and must not risk our young people—particularly those from working class backgrounds like mine—losing their faith in our education system and being left behind, believing that no matter how hard they work, the system is against them.

Although exam outcomes in other parts of the UK might be informative and might be of interest to some, they have never for me been the barometer of performance for what I expect of this Government—nor indeed are they a defence for the Scottish Government. If Douglas Ross and the Tories had even a tenth of the integrity of our Deputy First Minister, my word, they would be in a different place today.

This year has been truly unprecedented, but some of the decisions that have had to be taken in education and across Government could lead to more lasting and radical change. In my view, Mr Swinney—a man of unwavering integrity and intelligence—should finish what he has started.

15:59

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Over the many years for which I have known John Swinney, and especially when I was privileged to be shadowing in the education portfolio, he has consistently said that he wants to be judged by the evidence: evidence about the outcomes for young people and evidence presented by teachers who, he rightly argued, are the people best placed to know their pupils. It is to that evidence that I now turn.

On 21 April, John Swinney told BBC Radio Scotland that it was not a case of saying that

“how a school did in the past determines how it does today”,

yet the very next day that statement was countermanded by the SQA.

On 1 May, Fiona Robertson of the SQA said:

“An estimated grade is not just the result of one prelim, exam or project”

but is one that is

“based on all activities across the year.” —[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 1 May 2020; c 3.]

That meant, to most teachers, that they could use internal standardised assessments to assist them in making estimates for individual pupils, but they were also told by the SQA that it would take no responsibility for looking at those standardised assessments. That created confusion, something that teachers raised when they spoke to the Education and Skills Committee.

Thirdly, the SQA said:

“we can enter into a professional dialogue with a school if the shape, distribution or volume of attainment at that school looks very different this year ... from how it has looked historically.” —[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 1 May 2020; c 16.]

However, the committee has no idea whether that happened or how many schools were asked about any anomalies.

There are bigger issues here too. This fiasco has uncovered several weaknesses in the system over which John Swinney has presided since he took on the education brief in 2016.

On 23 November 2016, in her annual session with the Education and Skills Committee, Dr Janet Brown, the previous chief executive of the SQA, admitted that there had been some errors in SQA marking. Those errors were picked up relatively quickly, but brought some transparency issues into the open. She was asked to produce the minutes of meetings relating to how grade boundaries had been decided. Those minutes never appeared, only reports into each subject area. In other words, it was never clear who was taking decisions, or on what basis.

At the same time, teachers raised other concerns about being kept in the dark about marking standards. As I said on Tuesday, the SQA does not permit the return of exam scripts to pupils and teachers, unlike in every other UK jurisdiction or in many other nations.

As the SQA can also use exemptions from freedom of information requests and data protection legislation, it is hard in some cases to gain an insight into how grades are determined. The return of scripts would not only be helpful to teachers’ professional judgment, but prevent inappropriate appeals and lead to better quality assurance. Dr Brown talked to the committee about that again on 13 September 2017, but it has never happened.

If transparency is key to raising standards, so too is the independence of the SQA. John Swinney said on Tuesday that politicians must stand back. He knows only too well that the current structures have left the SQA far too close to Government and to the other education agencies. That has been a serious issue for several years but, again, nothing has happened.

There is, of course, the additional problem that the data set for Scottish schools is weak. That has been flagged up by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and by almost every education expert across the country, irrespective of their political persuasion. Mr Swinney is rightly keen on benchmarking, but you can only have a benchmark if there is good data.

John Swinney tells us that his monumental U-turn on Tuesday was because he listened to young people, their parents and their teachers. The trouble is that he has not been listening to—and, more importantly, not acting upon—the concerns of the education sector for four long years. That is why he got the primary school testing issue wrong. It is why subject choice is a mess and why the curriculum for excellence has not delivered as well as it should have done. It is why we had to endure several years of named person chaos and why he had to U-turn on blended learning and on the SQA exams. That is exactly why John Swinney has lost the trust of the public.

The motion before the Parliament is about that loss of confidence and we will support it.

16:04

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): It appears that I must open my brief remarks by restating the obvious, as some members seem to have lost sight of the scale and impact of the global coronavirus pandemic. The World Health Organization reported just a few days ago that the number of Covid-19 cases worldwide was

approaching the 20 million mark, with reported deaths due to the virus sadly exceeding 700,000. It is therefore evident that we are all living in unprecedented and exceptional times.

No decisions are easy for the Scottish Government or, indeed, any Government across the globe to make, because they require a difficult balancing of what can often be the competing interests and issues at stake. That is the case with regard to the exam process in Scotland this year.

The closure of schools on 20 March meant that for the first time in more than 100 years we were faced with the cancellation of the exam diet in Scotland. Evidently, a different approach was required, while seeking, to the extent that that was possible, to ensure the integrity of the system.

The cabinet secretary came to the Parliament on Tuesday this week, at the first available opportunity. He admitted that he did not get right the particular approach that was adopted, and he apologised for that. He came before us on Tuesday, with young people, their parents and their teachers right across Scotland listening in very closely, and he brought forward a solution. John Swinney listened, he acted and he fixed the problem.

Incidentally, as I was driving to the Parliament today, I heard reports on BBC radio that there are calls in England for the Secretary of State for Education to have the humility to do the same thing, further to the downgrading in nearly 40 per cent of the A level results that were published today.

I find it very puzzling that the Labour Party is proceeding with its motion today. That suggests that Labour members continue to prefer to engage in their usual dismal, miserabilist, negative politicking. It does not inspire any confidence whatsoever that they wish to put the interests of our young people at the heart of their endeavours; rather, it perhaps demonstrates why there is an increasingly widespread view that the Labour Party is well past its sell-by date in Scotland.

I have 100 per cent confidence in John Swinney as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, I have 100 per cent confidence in John Swinney as the Deputy First Minister of Scotland and I have 100 per cent confidence in John Swinney the man—a man whom I have worked closely alongside over many decades, who is of unquestionable integrity and who is second to none in his commitment to public service.

The Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I call Jamie Greene, who is joining us remotely from his region.

16:07

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Such debates seldom occur because they are seldom required. They are the last tool in the box for Parliament to express its ultimate discontent with the actions of a minister—in our case, one who is also our Deputy First Minister. They seldom occur because, in all honesty, they leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth. They are unpleasant because they are usually the end product of a sequence of events—not one mistake or failure but years of them.

A lot has been said today in both attack and defence of Mr Swinney. Perhaps valid points have been made on both sides. However, Parliament must make its decision based on the evidence alone, and the evidence is undeniable.

The education secretary has presided over a flagship manifesto education bill that never got off the ground—another bill that was challenged by the courts. He was dragged reluctantly to the Parliament over the review of the curriculum, which had its remit expanded and augmented as more and more fault lines appeared in our system. He is now trying to bury that report until after next year's election.

He promised Scotland's parents funded childcare and was repeatedly warned, long before coronavirus, that that policy could not, and would not, be achieved, and he was defeated by Parliament on that. He pulled the rug from right under the feet of working families.

He promised blending learning, under which plans emerged for just one day a week of schooling in some parts of the country. How could that be acceptable to him or to any of us?

He oversaw falls in literacy and numeracy standards in well-established international league tables year after year. He made painful progress in closing the attainment gap in Scotland and was forced into a U-turn over an exam system that, under his direction, marked down those in our most deprived communities the most.

Neither the First Minister nor the education secretary have apologised for any of that today. The defence "What about in England?" simply does not wash in the real world, because the job of this Parliament is to hold this Government to account. Every U-turn has been the result of pressure—not leadership, but pressure—from parents, teachers and young people themselves.

I understand the First Minister's loyalty to Mr Swinney. I have never questioned his personal commitment to his job, because I do not think that doing that serves any of us honourably, but there surely comes a day when loyalty, even to a friend,

is strained and tested for the greater good. Today must be that day.

If the debate was only about exams, I would cut Mr Swinney some well-meaning slack, but there comes a point when you have to say, "Enough is enough." Patience is a virtue, but it is limited in supply—more so when it comes the future of Scotland's young people.

Twenty years ago, members on the Conservative benches supported the no confidence motion against the Government after it presided over a similar exams fiasco. That was just one event, but it was enough for the SNP to call for heads to roll. Those who led that charge—Mr Swinney, Ms Sturgeon and Mr Russell—now find themselves on the other side of that charge. Does it not feel awkward?

I will say this directly to Green Party members, who may have been appeased by the events of this week and who will save the day for the Government: you, too, must surely accept that this is the last chance saloon for Mr Swinney, because actions speak louder than words. Where do your loyalties lie—with the minister, or with the young people who you claim to defend and support so vocally?

I take no great pleasure in supporting the motion, but support it we must, because trust and confidence are what lies at the heart of education. If the education secretary can provide neither, somebody else must.

16:11

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): As Jamie Greene has just said, motions of no confidence are mercifully very rare parliamentary occasions. They should not be the occasion for random smears, political posturing and paying off old scores, which regrettably has been the norm in this debate. Instead, they should be a careful and clinical examination by means of a tightly drawn and clear set of objectives about a central issue, if and when a minister deserves to lose the confidence of his parliamentary colleagues and to be removed from office.

I made exactly the same point 20 years ago when I moved the first motion of no confidence in this chamber—the Presiding Officer was there. I apologise to those who were there, because they are going to hear the same arguments again.

To arrive at those tests, we need to look at parliamentary experience elsewhere. Although the parties in this chamber are not willing to think about what is happening at Westminster today, I am.

Despite belief that doing the honourable thing is a long tradition, in fact there were no such ministerial resignations at all at Westminster between 1917 and 1954. It was in 1954 that the famous Crichton Down case established for the modern age—*[Interruption.]* If the members listen, they will learn something. The case established some of the circumstances in which a minister should take the ultimate responsibility and either resign or be removed.

In December 2000, in the very first debate on a motion of no confidence, I suggested three tests that needed to be applied. First, did the minister fail to act at key times? I called that the Carrington test, because that was the reason why Lord Carrington resigned as Foreign Secretary at the start of the Falklands campaign in 1982.

Secondly, was the policy that the minister was pursuing flawed because of the minister? I called that—*[Interruption.]* Wait and get the answers; do not guess the results. I called that the Howard test, after the former Tory leader Michael Howard, who failed to resign despite a debacle over prison escapes.

Thirdly, if the minister was culpable, is he or she already out of the way and not liable to cause any more harm? Think of that as the Mandelson test. I am sure that Labour members remember that their Minister Mandelson resigned twice in eight months.

Today, we can add a fourth test. When a minister discovers that there is a serious problem, does he or she act swiftly to resolve that problem, taking full responsibility as a minister should, ensuring that they apologise and institute the necessary action at the earliest opportunity? I am calling that the Swinney test, because he did just that.

John Swinney does not fail the Carrington test because he acted as soon as he could. He does not fail the Howard test because the methodology that the SQA used and the way that it were agreed was not defective.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Will Michael Russell give way on that point?

Michael Russell: No. No indeed.

He does not fail the Mandelson test because he is there and working. He does not fail his own test: the Swinney test. He did the thing that I would always have expected from a man of integrity: he took responsibility and then he took action to make a difference to those affected. On any objective measurement, and applying any objective tests, John Swinney has no case to answer.

We could, however, apply some other tests, particularly to those members who have been baying for his blood this afternoon. We could try

the Lamont-Gray test. Is the proposer of the motion blinded by bitterness at their own political failures?

Iain Gray: Oh dear, dear.

Michael Russell: I am talking about two ex-Labour leaders; there are a lot of them about.

What about the Davidson-Greene test? Is their political ambition so great that they do not care about the damage that they are doing to either the system or the individuals? Then there is the Rennie test. Is the position adopted just an attempt to get noticed? Anyone who votes for the motion tonight is failing those tests.

John Swinney has shown himself to be much bigger than his accusers. The pupils and the families who were affected—the really important people—have already shown their appreciation of what he has done. I hope that members are listening to those people and not to his discreditable and discredited accusers.

Members should apply one final test. I will call it the Glover test, after the Perthshire Church of Scotland minister who tweeted it on Tuesday night. These are his words:

“I want @JohnSwinney to stay.
Otherwise it's a culture where
If you lie and deny, you can stay
If you admit and address you must go”.

I ask members to rise above the noise and unpleasantness of this afternoon. Let us do what I think Scotland wants and apply the Glover test. Let us not accept that Scotland is a country that prefers lying and denying to admitting and addressing. Let us aspire to something better than bitterness and bile. This week, John Swinney, for the sake of 75,000 young people, admitted and addressed. That is precisely what we should want from our leaders, and that is what this leader did. That is what this Parliament should ringingly endorse today.

The Presiding Officer: I call Iain Gray to conclude the debate.

16:17

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Presiding Officer,

“action has already been taken to restore confidence in the Scottish education system ... However, there is something else in which confidence must be restored—the notion that politicians, when found wanting in their obligations, should take responsibility, and that the buck stops with those who are ultimately responsible ... that may be an old-fashioned notion, but it is one that the Scottish people hold dear. It is faith in that basic principle of democratic accountability that will be restored in the chamber today if the motion is agreed to.”—[*Official Report*, 13 December 2000; c 852.]

That was what Nicola Sturgeon said 20 years ago in support of the very motion that Mr Russell mentioned. It was a motion of no confidence in an education secretary who had fixed an exam results fiasco and had been moved from that post. What is the difference between then and now?

The First Minister: We are in a pandemic.

Iain Gray: I will come to the pandemic.

The first difference is that, then, 9,000 pupils were affected; this time, the figure is 75,000. The other difference is that, in 2000, the SQA made a huge mistake. This time, the SQA did exactly what ministers instructed it to do. That is what the chief executive told us yesterday, it is what the First Minister told us and, to his credit, it is what the Deputy First Minister himself has said. The mistake was all Mr Swinney's. That is Mr Russell's first test failed.

Of course, the biggest difference, as the First Minister said from a sedentary position, is the pandemic and the cancellation of the exams. As he signalled his U-turn at the weekend, John Swinney said:

“These are unprecedented times and ... we will not get everything right first time.”

The trouble is, he did not get it wrong just the first time. He got it wrong in March, when he instructed the SQA to protect the system above all else. He got it wrong in April, in May, in June and in July, when he ignored warnings about what would happen. He got it wrong on 30 July, when he was shown the results in advance but did nothing. He got it wrong on 4 August, when those results ripped like a hurricane through the hopes, dreams and aspirations of a generation. He got it wrong for five more days while he justified what he had done, without contrition.

Mr Swinney did not get this right the first time, the second, third or fourth time, or even the 10th, 11th or 12th time. That is Mr Russell's second test failed. Those young people paid the price with their anguish. Surely the minister who made that happen should pay the price with his job.

I admit that the education secretary's eventual climbdown was complete and abject—but, then, he has had a lot of practice. As other members have mentioned, there was the climbdown over national testing data, and others on subject choice and the need for a curriculum review. There was the flagship education bill that he had to bring to Parliament to put out of its misery. On the named person legislation, he managed to lose both in the courts and in Parliament. It is only weeks since Mr Swinney came here to suddenly overturn weeks of preparation in schools for blended learning and social distancing, and announce to teachers and school staff that they had days to get ready to go

back full time. It is no wonder that the strongest argument that opponents of today's motion have been able to marshal in Mr Swinney's defence is that he is not as bad as Gavin Williamson.

Presiding Officer, we cannot have our education system run on climbdowns and U-turns. We cannot have an education secretary who is good at apology but bad at policy; who speaks the language of teacher empowerment but then orders the SQA to trash teacher judgment; who says that he will close the attainment gap but then signs off an awards system that is explicitly designed to entrench that inequality; and who stands by for a week while pupils who face the worst jobs crisis in living memory coming their way see their futures crumble.

I return to the pandemic. Some might argue that, with a pandemic going on, when our schools are going back and there is much anxiety among parents, pupils and staff, now is not the time to change our education secretary. However, I ask members to think of this. We used to have a full-time education secretary and a full-time schools minister. Now, we have a Deputy First Minister with serious pandemic response responsibilities—and rightly so, because he is one of the most experienced ministers in the Government. However, he is also trying to run our schools, which, as Angela Constance said, is one of the hardest jobs in the Government. It is no wonder that he has failed—and he has failed, but he is still in post. He therefore fails Mr Russell's third test, because he is still there.

This will not be Mr Swinney's last mistake. I say to the Greens that it is good that they were part of the process of getting towards a solution for the young people concerned. However, the next time Mr Swinney fails, they will own that failure with him.

This is no time for us to have a damaged, part-time education secretary in whom we can have no confidence. If the First Minister will not listen to me, I urge her to listen to the Nicola Sturgeon who spoke in 2000, who once believed in the principle of democratic accountability. She should accept the motion, remove Mr Swinney from the education brief and let our schools go forward.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

16:25

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-22424, on committee membership.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Murdo Fraser be appointed to replace Donald Cameron as a member of the Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

16:25

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are two questions to be put. The first question is, that motion S5M-22392, in the name of Iain Gray, which is a motion of no confidence, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

This is only the second time that Parliament has had the opportunity to use the new digital voting system. I am sure that members will understand if I suspend proceedings for a short technical break to ensure that all members—not just those in the chamber, but those joining us from their constituencies—are familiar with the system and are able to exercise their vote.

16:25

Meeting suspended.

16:41

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: Parliamentary business is resumed. I apologise for the wait, and thank you for your patience. Members will understand that as we get more familiar with the system, these breaks will become shorter.

I remind members that the question is, that motion S5M-22392, in the name of Iain Gray, which is a motion of no confidence, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now. This will be a two-minute division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)

Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 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)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Motion disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-22424, in the name of Graeme Dey, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Murdo Fraser be appointed to replace Donald Cameron as a member of the Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 16:45.

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