



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Thursday 24 June 2021

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Thursday 24 June 2021

CONTENTS

	Col.
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	1
Scottish Qualifications Authority	1
Covid-19 (Government Communication)	6
Amazon	11
Post Office Branch Closures	12
Woodland Birds (Decline)	13
National Health Service (Support)	14
Covid-19 Vaccinations	16
Domestic Abuse (Custodial Sentences)	17
Sexual Abuse (Redress for Survivors)	18
Brexit (Impact on Trade)	18
Organised Crime (Attacks)	19
BBC Pacific Quay Studios (Transfer of Ownership)	20
Glasgow McVitie's Factory (Closure)	21
Covid-19 (Safe Travel to Islands and Rural Areas)	22
BUSINESS MOTION	23
<i>Motion moved—[Gillian Mackay]— and agreed to.</i>	
CERVICAL SCREENING	24
<i>Statement—[Maree Todd].</i>	
The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd)	24
CORONAVIRUS (EXTENSION AND EXPIRY) (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 3	38
CORONAVIRUS (EXTENSION AND EXPIRY) (SCOTLAND) BILL	68
<i>Motion moved—[John Swinney].</i>	
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney)	68
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	71
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	74
Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green)	76
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD)	77
Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)	79
Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con)	81
Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab)	82
Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green)	84
Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)	86
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)	87
John Swinney	89
POINTS OF ORDER	92
SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CORPORATE BODY MOTION	94
<i>Motion moved—[Maggie Chapman].</i>	
Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)	94
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	95
<i>Motion moved—[George Adam].</i>	
DECISION TIME	96

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 24 June 2021

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 12:00]

First Minister's Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good afternoon. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask members to take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber, and to please only use the aisles and walkways to access your seat and when moving around the chamber.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): As schools across Scotland prepare to break up for the summer, I take this opportunity to thank them for all that they have done to support young people in extremely challenging circumstances over the past year, often with little or no help from the Government.

Three weeks ago, the First Minister told the Parliament that she had full confidence in the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is now being scrapped. What happened in that time to change her mind?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, as I did on Tuesday in the chamber, I straightforwardly reiterate, with no equivocation or snark attached to it, a big thank you to teachers and all support staff in our schools, and to parents and young people. This has been the most difficult year that any of them will ever remember, both professionally for those who work in our education system, and for those who are learning in our education system. I can never find the words to thank them enough, but I hope that everyone knows how deeply appreciative everyone is in the Scottish Government—and across Scotland, I am sure—for everything that they have done.

I will be candid. The longer I am in politics, the more frustrated I get at the inability of our political discourse, for which we are all responsible, to engage in nuanced arguments that are not just binary black or white. It is perfectly consistent to say that, with regard to what the SQA is doing—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: We will hear the First Minister.

The First Minister: I also get frustrated at the inability to take serious issues seriously in our parliamentary chamber.

I have confidence in the work that the SQA does around the certification of national qualifications. It is important for me to say that, not only for my assurance as First Minister, but for the benefit of young people and their parents across this country. I say it again today.

It is also the case that it is time for reform. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills made a statement here earlier this week on the subject. We have accepted the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in that respect, and have therefore given a commitment that we will carefully consider the nature and the detail of the issue, and that we will replace the SQA and remove the inspection function from Education Scotland.

All of that, taken in the round, is how people—whether they agree or disagree with every decision that the Government makes—would expect a grown-up, responsible Government to behave, and that is how this Government will always conduct itself.

Douglas Ross: There is absolutely nothing grown-up or responsible in the Government claiming that it has changed its mind on the quality of the SQA because of an OECD report that it has had, not just for the past three weeks, but for months. The Government had the report before the election that we have just been through.

That damning OECD report criticised the confusing and unhelpful communication that was given to schools. Is it really any wonder? Nicola Sturgeon says that she has full confidence in the SQA, so she scrapped it. It is just another example of a Government that has lost its way in education, and that says one thing and does another with no vision of where it is going or how it gets there.

Today is the final chance in the Parliament, before courses start next term, for the First Minister to give young people and teachers, who have faced so much uncertainty over the past year, a clear answer. Will there be traditional exams next year?

The First Minister: I am sorry if the complexities of the arguments in the chamber are sometimes a bit challenging for Douglas Ross. However, most people who are listening will understand the argument that a First Minister can say, as I have done, and I will repeat it today, that I have confidence in the SQA's work around the certification of qualifications this year—which is an important message for every young person who has been waiting for their grades over the course of this week and into tomorrow—and that I can also say that it is time for reform more generally. We have reflected on the arguments that have been made across the chamber, and on the OECD report, and we have come to the decision

that it is right to move ahead to replace the SQA, but to do so carefully and with proper consideration of the detail of the replacement.

On the question of what will happen with exams next year, if I stood here while we are still in the grip of Covid, with rising case numbers—albeit it with increasing vaccination, which we hope will keep the cases under control—and in a knee-jerk, ill-considered way decided what will happen with exams next year, people across the country would rightly criticise me for doing so. That would not be the responsible, considered thing to do. Instead, and as the education secretary set out in Parliament, we will consider the issue as the Covid situation develops over the summer, and we will set out the position in August, so that, when they return, schools will know what the situation will be. That is the responsible way to proceed.

The OECD report is an important publication, and I know that every member of the Parliament has paid, and will continue to pay, close attention to it. However, I will provide some balance and context, which, if we listened only to Mr Ross, would be completely and utterly lacking. The following are quotes from the OECD report:

“Curriculum for Excellence continues to be a bold and widely supported initiative”,

and it is

“an inspiring example equated with good curriculum practice”.

The report says that

“Scotland has ranked among higher-than-average country performers on international assessments ... usually scoring at or above OECD average in mathematics, reading and science”,

and that

“Education is ... a source of pride in Scotland”.

There are challenges to be addressed, and reforms are needed, and this Government will take them forward. However, for the benefit of young people across our country, Opposition leaders should occasionally recognise the strengths in the Scottish education system.

Douglas Ross: The OECD report—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Can we please hear Mr Ross?

Douglas Ross: The OECD report is so important and crucial that Nicola Sturgeon kept it in her drawer over the election period to make sure that there could be no challenge to her Government’s shambolic record on education. In all the quotes that she read out, she did not say that the OECD report said that “Confusing and unhelpful” communication has been given to

schools. That one slipped the briefing from the First Minister.

The First Minister also says that she cannot stand up and give a definitive answer to young people about whether they will face exams next year and that it would be irresponsible for her to do so. However, the First Minister stood up in the chamber earlier this week to give the country a route map out of restrictions. Therefore, on the one hand, we know how we will get out of the Covid-19 restrictions, but on the other, young people are left in limbo with no answers as to whether they will sit traditional exams next year.

Let us look at what Scotland’s experts on education are saying about it. Keir Bloomer, who helped to write the curriculum for excellence, said that if the Government goes

“too far ... we will see a fall in standards.”

The University of Edinburgh professor Lindsay Paterson said—*[Interruption.]* I am really sorry that the Deputy First Minister of Scotland and a Scottish Government minister are criticising an independent expert in education before I have even read the quote. John Swinney has the gall to nod his head. Perhaps if he had listened to Lindsay Paterson, he would not have been sacked as education secretary.

Lindsay Paterson said that it is unlikely that a system that relied wholly on coursework would ever command public confidence.

The Scottish Conservatives firmly believe that traditional exams are the best and fairest way for young people to show what they know and what they can do. Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: I agree that we have to get all of this right. We absolutely have to consider very carefully the place of traditional exams in the future of qualifications. No decisions have been taken around that, and one of the reasons for that is that we are awaiting a further report from the OECD in August, which will help to inform those decisions. I do not know whether Douglas Ross was just unaware of that, but there we go.

I will quickly run through all the many questions that Douglas Ross asked. I am not shying away from the tough messages in the OECD report—we have accepted all its recommendations, which is evidence of that.

On the timing of the report, I know that Douglas Ross was not a member of this Parliament before the election, but that was canvassed fairly extensively at that time. The timing of the publication of the OECD report was entirely a matter for the independent OECD. Before the election, some of the correspondence was put into the Scottish Parliament information centre, so that members could see what the OECD was saying

about that. Had we, against the wishes—actually, I will put it more strongly than that. Had we, against the instruction of the OECD, published the report anyway, I am sure that the Conservatives would be among the first to get to their feet to criticise us for going against an independent organisation.

The decision on exams next year is really important. What I set out on Tuesday was a contingent route map. I very much hope that we can meet those deadlines and get the country back to normal, but decisions around things such as exams next year will be dependent on whether we can meet those milestones. It is right—and essential—that we take these decisions in proper order. Many young people have had to self-isolate over the past few weeks. We want to reduce that as we go into the new academic term, but we have to take account of the wider Covid situation and take these decisions properly, and that is what we will continue to do. Whether people agree or disagree with the ultimate decisions, that is the way in which they would want us to approach the matter.

I do not ignore the comments of Lindsay Paterson or Keir Bloomer. We take account of those views and comments, as we do a range of views and comments. Let me offer some others. The parents group Connect said:

“We are pleased that the OECD team could see that ‘education is a source of pride in Scotland’ ... There is huge commitment ... to improving children’s lives through education.”

The NASUWT said:

“We look forward to working with the Government to build on the many strengths which the OECD has rightly identified”.

The Scottish Youth Parliament said that the report “offers Scottish education an opportunity ... going forward”.

There is a variety of views.

The OECD had many good things to say about the strength of Scottish education. It is actually possible to recognise that while also saying that there are real challenges to address and overcome, and this Government is going to do both. It is that prospectus that we put before the Scottish people just a few weeks ago, and we were roundly re-elected to deliver on it.

Douglas Ross: On the specific question of the teaching of exams in Scotland, the First Minister said—I wrote this down, to make sure that I quote her correctly—that she will “consider their place” in education, going forward. Given that the First Minister has been in Government for 14 years and First Minister for seven, and given that she pledged that education would be her number 1 priority, I think that people across Scotland will expect her to be able to quite clearly say whether

she is for or against exams, but she absolutely did not do that in that answer.

The First Minister’s Government no longer seems to value traditions that have served us well—traditions that helped the First Minister and I get from great local schools to this Parliament. Our education system has always been distinct. It is uniquely our own; a cornerstone of what makes us Scottish. If the Scottish National Party removes the focus on fundamentals, stops valuing core knowledge and ditching exams, will the First Minister’s Government not be abandoning the very things that made Scotland’s schools great?

The First Minister: I am glad that we finally got an admission from Douglas Ross that Scotland’s schools are great. At least we are making some progress.

I will try to say this in the most straightforward way. I think that exams are important. With my colleagues, I have been in Government for 14 years, but the only reason why I am still in Government, standing here as First Minister, is that a matter of weeks ago, the Scottish people re-elected me in a landslide election victory. They have taken account of all this and decided that they trust this Government to take Scotland forward on all these matters.

On exams, the most important principle is that we, like any country, have a robust and respected system for awarding qualifications to young people. However, whether I like it or not, right now there is a debate in Scotland about what the correct balance is between traditional exams and continuous assessment in ensuring that we have that robust system. We have asked the OECD to do further work; it will report to us in August and we will take account of all that. At that point, the Parliament will have the opportunity to debate the issue.

The core principle here, though, is the quality of the system that gives young people qualifications. That is the outcome that we should all be focused on, and we should not fear a real debate about the best way of achieving it. That is what we will take forward, and we look forward to views from across the Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: Before we move to question 2, I ask members, wherever possible, to ask succinct questions and to provide shorter responses. That will enable us to include more members in proceedings.

Covid-19 (Government Communication)

2. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** The Government has previously communicated well during the pandemic, but that has started to slip, risking public trust and confidence. In recent weeks, we have allowed 3,000 football fans to

attend a fan zone, but parents cannot attend an outdoor sports day. Trampoline centres can open, but soft play centres cannot. Hospitality venues can open late for penalties but the Government says that it is not safe for them to do so on other days. We have had an avoidable public argument between the Scottish Government and the mayor of greater Manchester.

If we are to navigate the coming months, communications have to be clear and decisions consistent. The Government's own polling said that one in five people did not know what was expected of them, and that was before those recent decisions were announced. Now the hospitality sector, the aviation sector, the wedding industry, retailers, children's play centres and more are speaking out to express their frustration. Will the First Minister change her approach, engage and listen to them and adopt a can-do approach to this new stage of our pandemic response?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): What I will do is avoid easy slogans such as "can-do approach". It is really important that we continue to move forward cautiously. We all want to get back to normal. We have a greater degree of normality than we have had at almost any time in the past 15 months, but there is a further distance to travel. However, we have to do that carefully. Reported case numbers for yesterday, which will be published this afternoon, show another rise of just short of 3,000 cases, and there is a positivity rate of, I believe, 7.7 per cent. Case numbers are rising and we have to be cautious.

Communication is very important. As we come out of restrictions, things—we hope—will get easier in many ways, but they will also get more complicated, so communication will be more challenging. Nobody knows that better than I do. I will continue to do my level best to communicate clearly with people the reasons why certain decisions have been taken and why some things can happen and other things cannot, even though that appears to be inconsistent. As I make use of the media briefings over the summer recess—I think they have stood the country in good stead over the past 15 months—I hope that I will not hear any further criticism for that from Anas Sarwar's deputy, as I have at many points over the past few months. I agree that communication to the public is important.

Many of the decisions that Anas Sarwar has talked about were reached for pragmatic reasons. The change regarding opening times during football matches that might go to penalties is meant to prevent people from crowding out of pubs at the same time while they are still wanting to watch football. It is about trying to avert a risk in a pragmatic way. Similarly, the fan zone decision

is about trying to ensure that there is a relatively safe environment for fans, given the regulations, because we recognise that, no matter what I say, people want to watch the football. I understand that those things can be difficult for people to accept. This is possibly one of the most difficult phases of the pandemic, as we try to navigate our way from here back to normality, while knowing that there are still a lot of risks that we have to avoid or get around.

Lastly, although the decisions are the Government's and I take responsibility for them, every single decision that is taken is informed by clinical advice, so that we get those decisions right as far as we possibly can.

Anas Sarwar: The First Minister misses the point—the can-do approach is not about a slogan. She should speak to individual businesses. Every single member who has walked down the Royal Mile to come into the Parliament will have seen how frustrated the businesses there are. They are what I mean by "a can-do approach". Behind every business, there are people trying their best to get by.

They are people such as Cammy Hudson, who has built a successful wedding photography business. Last year he was meant to have 49 weddings; instead, he had just six. He says that the Government does not understand his industry, that it follows one-size-fits-all approach and that it refuses to listen, and he is not alone. This year's bookings are all but gone, and, because of the uncertainty, people are choosing to book as far ahead as 2023. Cammy cannot afford to turn down a job, which is why, two weeks ago, he found himself driving from Brighton to Inverness overnight to accommodate two bookings. That meant being awake for 39 hours straight, working two 10-hour shifts and being forced to drive 600 miles through the night. Having to risk his health to put food on the table and pay the bills is an unacceptable situation for anyone. Does the First Minister think that that is an acceptable situation?

The First Minister: If the member is asking me whether I think that any of this is acceptable, the answer is no, I do not. I do not think that it is acceptable that any of us have to live through a global pandemic. Every single impact of this is horrendously difficult for the people who are having to bear it, so I will not stand here and try to defend the horrible situations that people find themselves in.

However, I will say that nobody is doing that to people deliberately or for any reason other than to try to keep the country as safe as possible in a really difficult situation, and we listen as we go. We have a much greater degree of normality now—for example, shops on the Royal Mile were completely closed a matter of weeks ago and are

now open. Of course, trading is not completely normal, because, apart from anything else, people still have a degree of nervousness. We have to encourage the whole country back to normality and give them a sense of safety as that happens.

It is important to talk about the economics of the wedding sector, but, for many couples who have had to postpone and repostpone weddings, that has been one of the most difficult impacts. We listen—for example, a request was made yesterday by the representative body of the wedding sector, which asked that, if we can go to level 0 on 19 July, we bring that forward to 16 July so that the weddings that are booked for that weekend can go ahead. We are actively considering such requests, and we are trying to be flexible. On the other hand, we know that some outbreaks have originated, understandably, in life event-type settings, when families have come together and were hugging and those kinds of things. That is the painful thing about Covid—it is those kinds of things that pose the greatest risk.

Like everybody else does, I hate every aspect of this. I hate every decision that we have to make that restricts people's ability to live their lives, and no part of me wants to do that for a second longer than is necessary. I know that these decisions are not easy, and I do not pretend that we get every single one of them right. I know that we do not, because of the nature of what we are trying to do. However, we try to get them right, we listen and we rectify things when we are clear that we have got something wrong. That is what we will continue to do, and, if we all continue to pull together, the day when we can lift all restrictions will be within sight. But getting from here to there still involves us being cautious and careful. I know how difficult that is, but I also know how necessary it is.

Anas Sarwar: I accept that we have to be cautious and careful. I am not saying that the Scottish Government needs to defend the decisions, and I am not saying that the decisions are deliberate. The First Minister can say that she is listening, but businesses do not believe that she is listening; they think that she is telling them what to do rather than engaging with them. She gave the example of the Scottish Wedding Industry Alliance, which today said that the decisions do not go far enough and that the Government is still not communicating effectively with it.

The issue is about more than financial support. These businesses and individuals have spent 15 months working out how to operate safely. It would be different if it was just one sector, but it is more than just one sector—sector after sector is speaking out publicly about the Government's poor communication and inconsistent decision making. The Government's current approach is

not working for this stage of the pandemic and it needs to change.

We all started this session saying that we would focus on recovery, and that work has to start now. The vaccine is working and we have spent the past two years building up our testing and tracing capacity, so will the Government change its approach, have a can-do attitude that is demanded by people across the country, stop the inconsistency, get round the table and engage with those businesses and individuals and start the important work of rebuilding our country?

The First Minister: John Swinney was at the table with those stakeholders this morning. We do that regularly and we will continue to do that—we listen. I readily concede that there will be many things that business asks us to do that we consider but cannot do. The reason for that is not that we are not listening; it is down to the one thing that, no matter how much I wish I could, I cannot do, which is magic away the virus. If I could do that, I would do it in an instant. We have to continue to take careful decisions.

Anas Sarwar says that the vaccines are working—all of the evidence says that the vaccines are working—and we are vaccinating as fast as supplies allow. However, although the number is reducing every day, a significant proportion of the population is not yet fully vaccinated. That is why cases are going up again. As I have just said, 2,999 cases from yesterday will be reported today. We hope that, because of the vaccine, that will not translate into hospital admissions as that kind of number would have done earlier in the year.

Reporting to the Parliament earlier this week, I said that 10 per cent of cases were translating into hospital admissions earlier this year; it is now down to 5 per cent. That is really positive news, but 5 per cent of a daily case rate of 3,000 is still a massive number heading into our hospitals. That is loss for people. That is pain and suffering, as well as pressure on the national health service.

This phase is the most difficult phase, because we are on the route back to normality—we can see, hopefully, the finishing line in August—but getting from here to there demands care and caution. What will be determined by how we behave in the short term is not whether we get to that finishing line—I am confident that the vaccines are going to get us there—but how many more lives are lost between now and then, how much pressure we put on our NHS and how many more families have to suffer the pain that too many have suffered already.

My heart breaks for every business, every individual and every sector of our society that is still suffering because of Covid, but I do not do my

job properly by rushing decisions that will make the situation worse; I do my job properly, no matter how difficult these decisions are, by trying to get us safely to that end point. That is what I am going to dedicate every day to doing until we are at that end point.

Amazon

3. Lorna Slater (Lothian) (Green): This week, ITN revealed that the Amazon warehouse in Dunfermline is destroying millions of new, unsold items, including televisions, laptops and face coverings. That level of waste is obscene. In 2020 alone, Amazon's net profits were more than \$20 billion. It is a company that has refused to pay the living wage, that uses zero-hour contracts and that keeps its workers in such a state of desperation that some of them are reduced to sleeping in tents. It is a company that has resisted trade unions and that avoids paying corporation tax.

The Scottish Greens have previously challenged the giving of millions of pounds of public money to Amazon through Scottish Enterprise. In the most recent financial year, the Scottish Government gave the company £4.7 million for web services. Can the First Minister tell us when her Government will stop giving Amazon money?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As Lorna Slater knows, and as many members across the chamber have rightly called for, we increasingly attach fair work conditions to all the grant support that Scottish Enterprise, or any other enterprise agency, gives. I do not have the figures in front of me, but I am happy to look into the details of the particular support that Lorna Slater has referenced to see exactly what it was for and what conditions were attached to it. We will continue to make sure that any taxpayer money that is going to businesses is about creating not just jobs but fair jobs and that companies are being challenged as well as supported.

On the broader point, clearly I am not responsible for the practices of Amazon, but we had a report just yesterday from Zero Waste Scotland about consumption and the need to become much more sustainable as a country and a society. We all have a duty to do that, but companies certainly do, and there are real questions about the acceptability of destroying things as has been reported this week.

Lorna Slater: Only yesterday, the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work told me that he wants to see public money going to companies that treat their employees well. Public money should be going to small companies and those that need it to recover from the pandemic. At the heart of that obscene level of waste is an economy that puts a disposable, throwaway culture ahead of the needs of people and planet. It

is shocking that a company of that size would rather destroy new items than give them away to people in need. That shocking revelation underlines the fact that Governments must do more, through regulation and fines, to force companies to reduce waste when they fail to act. Will the First Minister commit to enshrining the circular economy in robust laws that will prevent such needless volumes of waste in the future?

The First Minister: Our commitment to a circular economy—and to legislating for it—is known, and I look forward to taking that forward with co-operation across the Parliament.

I agree with the comments on what has been reported about Amazon. Governments have to do more to persuade everybody. We must lead by example in order to persuade individuals and companies, more generally, to cut down on waste and become much more environmentally responsible. However, I do not think that a company of the size and scale of Amazon should need a Government to tell it that it should not be destroying large amounts of things that—as Lorna Slater rightly said—could be given to people who are in need. I hope that Amazon will reflect carefully on that. That is a big challenge for all Governments across the world, and I hope that Scotland will lead by example.

Similarly, on the subject of fair work, I am not sure of the detail of the financial support—whether it is a grant or procurement for services—so I will look into that, but it is really important that we attach fair work conditions to any support that the Government gives to companies.

Post Office Branch Closures

4. Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the United Kingdom Government, the Post Office and CJ Lang regarding the proposed closure of 31 post office branches across Scotland. (S6F-00143)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That unfortunate decision to roll out a programme of post office closures until February next year is a commercial one that was made by CJ Lang & Son. As postal services are a reserved matter, the Scottish Government was not involved in that decision-making process, but the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth recently met Post Office Ltd to seek assurances about continuity of services to any community that is affected by closure. He also met representatives from CJ Lang & Son to seek assurances about the remaining post office branches in the company's Spar stores and to confirm that no job losses will be suffered as a result of those closures.

Neil Gray: Yesterday, I wrote to the Post Office on behalf of a cross-party group of MSPs and MPs, to ask it to do all that it can to engage quickly with CJ Lang to see whether any of the 31 Spar-based branches can be saved. That is especially important for communities such as Allanton in my constituency, where the Spar store is the only realistic option for a post office branch. Will the First Minister agree to continue doing what she can to quickly bring both players and the UK Government—which has responsibility—to the table, in order to look at all options to save those crucial post offices across Scotland?

The First Minister: I am happy to agree to do that. I certainly agree that the proposed closures will have a big impact on the local communities and I urge all parties that are involved, including the UK Government, to look at the matter again. As I mentioned in my previous answer, there has already been ministerial contact with senior representatives from CJ Lang and the Post Office, but we will make sure that those contacts continue and bring people together to explore what is possible. Scottish Government officials also continue to have regular dialogue with officials in the UK Government and Post Office Ltd around that issue more generally, and I have asked to be kept updated on that.

Woodland Birds (Decline)

5. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to curb the decline of iconic woodland bird species in Scotland. (S6F-00164)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Addressing the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change is a central priority for the Government. Although the index of abundance for Scottish terrestrial breeding birds shows that the long-term trend is for numbers of woodland birds in Scotland to increase, and it is likely that that will continue as we deliver our targets to expand forest cover and create new native woodland, population numbers for some woodland bird species continue to be a concern. We have been taking action to address that, for example by providing specific support for capercaillie from the forestry grant scheme between 2016 and 2025, as well as funding through the previous rural priority scheme's capercaillie package.

Rachael Hamilton: Nature is under threat—not just the capercaillie but our waders, plovers and curlews—and this Government has failed to meet 11 of the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets. Farmers have told me that they can be part of the solution to the climate change crisis, and the Government has sat on its hands for too long. There is a climate emergency, and the custodians of our land

are keen to protect and meet those biodiversity targets. Today, will the First Minister commit to give clarity on agricultural policy and ensure that biodiversity targets are improved, by extending the agri-environment climate scheme beyond 2024 to protect those iconic bird species?

The First Minister: This is an important issue. I recognise that, for some species, there is cause for concern. It is the case that we are seeing an increase in some species, with increases of more than 400 per cent. However, where there are declines, it is important that we address them, and the biggest long-term decrease is that of more than 50 per cent in capercaillie.

On the specifics, we consider short-term and long-term funding to ensure that we are supporting the objectives. Right now, we face a climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis. Those are obviously closely linked. The Government is very serious about addressing them both, doing what we need to do here in Scotland, and in so doing, setting an example for the rest of the world.

I welcome the tone of the question. I hope that the question is a signal that, when it comes to the detail of what is needed to meet those objectives, there will be more support from the Scottish Conservatives than there has been in the past. Recently, we have seen scaremongering about the talks with the Greens and what that might mean, rather than all of us recognising—*[Interruption.]* I know that the Conservatives do not like it when we talk about the details of some of this stuff. However, instead of just willing the ends, we must be prepared to do the means. That is harder and often controversial. I hope that the question and its tone, which I welcome, signal a change of heart from the Scottish Conservatives.

National Health Service (Support)

6. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is supporting the national health service, in light of reports of wards being full and an increase in patients with serious and complex conditions. (S6F-00144)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Remobilising and supporting the NHS is one of the top priorities for the Scottish Government and the other Governments across the UK—as I am sure that supporting their health services is for Governments across the world. We will shortly publish our NHS recovery plan, which will set out how we will continue to support patients to receive the highest quality of care and to expand NHS capacity.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to operate normally for the past 15 months. That has consequences. I thank

our NHS staff for the work that they continue to do to ensure that people who are in need of urgent care get it. They are working flat out to get care and treatment to people who saw that being delayed due to Covid.

To help staff, a range of wellbeing and mental health resources have been put in place locally. Staff tell us that they value that. Those services are supplemented by national resources, such as the national wellbeing hub, which has more than 100,000 users. We will continue to put in place the support that staff require.

Jackie Baillie: I welcome the NHS recovery plan being on its way, but the problems are happening now. Consultants in accident and emergency are seeing more people with more chronic and undiagnosed conditions presenting as emergencies. They warn that medical beds are at 120 to 130 per cent capacity, which has an impact on elective surgery. The number of people waiting over a year for operations has almost doubled. Activity is below pre-pandemic levels, which is understandable, but in some areas there are simply not enough hospital beds to cope with even those admissions. What is the First Minister's response to staff who are worried that they do not have the capacity to treat all the patients coming through the door?

The First Minister: Generally, the NHS is getting much closer to pre-pandemic capacity, and many parts of the NHS are beyond that—Jackie Baillie cited the example of A and E, where attendances have gone above and beyond what they were going into the pandemic. Urgent suspicion of cancer referrals, for example, are now at 120 per cent compared to April 2020.

We are supporting the NHS. It is a difficult task—particularly for those on the front line—to ensure that the balance between Covid and non-Covid treatment is where needs to be.

The one thing that I would say—it relates to my exchange with Anas Sarwar earlier—is that one of the big challenges that we have right now is to ensure that we continue to manage Covid in a way that does not distract from the efforts of the NHS to deal with the backlog and get back to normal. Last year, when we talked about not overwhelming our NHS, at that point we had pretty much set aside the whole capacity of the NHS. Right now, the situation is different—the NHS is getting back to normal, so the margins around that are much tighter. That is why, in answer to Anas Sarwar's question about why we cannot get back to normal in more areas, more quickly, I said that we have to take great care not to allow cases to rise in a way that generates more hospital admissions for Covid, which would set back the recovery plan.

That is all important stuff, but it is also really complex. Right now, that is a very sensitive balance. That is one of the main reasons why, difficult though it is for many sectors, we must continue to be cautious as we navigate our way through the next few weeks.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): What action is the Scottish Government taking in response to high numbers of people not attending their appointments at Covid-19 vaccination clinics? Is the Government exploring innovative ways, such as text messaging, for vaccination team staff to contact people about vaccination, which could help to ensure attendance?

I remind members that I am a member of NHS Dumfries and Galloway's vaccination team.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank everybody in our vaccination teams across the country. I have taken the opportunity to thank people generally, but I also say that because Emma Harper is a member of a vaccination team. As well as carrying out her responsibilities in Parliament, she has been vaccinating people, so I thank her and the many others who have been doing that across the country.

Emma Harper has raised a key priority relating to the vaccination programme, given the stage at which it is. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I were at a meeting earlier this morning about that very issue. Uptake rates are exceptionally high, which is really positive, but they get slightly lower the further down the age spectrum we go, although they are still much higher than they have been for previous vaccination programmes.

We are at an advanced stage of the programme, so we are looking at different ways in which we can get people who have not, for whatever reason, attended their appointment, to attend another one. We are considering providing more drop-in facilities and greater use of texting and other technology. Young people who register on the portal already get their appointment by text, but we need to go back and do a sweep to try to get to people who have not attended. I reassure Emma Harper and other members that over the next few weeks a lot of work will go into getting as many people vaccinated as possible.

One of the factors that Scotland is dealing with right now—we can see this in the Office for National Statistics survey that is published weekly—is that because we have generally had lower infection rates over the past 15 months, we also have lower population immunity, so more of our population is still susceptible. What does that mean? It means that it is even more important for

us to get as many people as possible vaccinated. All of us in the Scottish Government are absolutely focused on that key priority.

Domestic Abuse (Custodial Sentences)

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Figures that were released this week tell a horrendous story of domestic abuse in Scotland. The number of domestic abuse cases has risen for the fourth year in a row, with 63,000 incidents having been reported last year. Second to our drug crisis in Scotland, that is our national shame.

Education and prevention are, of course, important, but so is punishment. How many perpetrators who, historically, would have received a custodial sentence did not receive one under the Government's presumption against short sentences? If the answer is more than one person, we have to ask ourselves what message that sends to the tens of thousands of victims of abuse—who are mostly women—about whose side justice is on.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I think that everyone will agree that one case of domestic abuse is one too many. We should have, and the Scottish Government does take, a zero-tolerance approach.

It is important that we all understand a point of context. The figures for 2019-20, which were reported last month, show that half the rise in the number of convictions was accounted for by the new offences under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. The numbers are going up because we have legislated to make more domestic abuse behaviours criminal offences. No one should ever celebrate a rise in the number of domestic abuse cases, but what underlies the statistics is a sign that, as a country and as a Parliament, we have taken the issue even more seriously. Marsha Scott, from Scottish Women's Aid, has said:

"Although it is very early data, our new domestic abuse law shows signs of living up to its global 'gold standard' label."

On punishments, as Jamie Greene knows, we have had debates in other contexts over the past few months about whether the provisions on separation of powers between Parliament and the judiciary and criminal justice system are as robust as they should be. I think that they are. Every member should know that I do not decide what punishment a person gets when they are convicted of an offence, although we set the statutory framework for that. As Jamie Greene said in the question that he posed to me, there is a presumption against short sentences. The decision on whether a perpetrator goes to jail is not for me or for any member of the Government;

it is a decision for the judge who presides over the case. That is how it should always be.

Sexual Abuse (Redress for Survivors)

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): What is the First Minister's reaction to the outcome of the case that was taken to the Court of Session by survivors of abuse at the hands of the Sailors Society? The case failed because the court determined that a defence could not be mounted because those who had allegedly perpetrated the abuse have since died. The decision seems to set a new and, frankly, impossible threshold for many survivors of child abuse.

What impact will that have on the Government's considerations as it sets up redress Scotland, given that it might increase the number of people who will have to seek compensation through the scheme? Does the First Minister agree that organisations should understand that the moral threshold might be considerably lower than the legal threshold in order for them to meet survivors and to agree compensation for those who suffered abuse by the organisations, which should have cared for them?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I hope that my answer will be helpful. For reasons that Daniel Johnson will understand, I will not rush to give too detailed an answer, because the Government wants to take time to properly consider the court judgement and its implications.

I have two responses to his question. The first is not to try to second-guess decisions that have been made by courts, which would be wrong. However, Daniel Johnson used the phrase "moral threshold"; I agree with the sentiments that lie behind his question. The instances of systemic child abuse that the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is currently looking at should shame us, as a country. The redress that we owe to people is, not only in a financial sense but in a wider sense, a serious obligation. The phrase "moral threshold" stands beside any legal or financial threshold and is important for us to recognise.

The second point is that the threshold for the redress scheme is already low, so we will have to consider whether the judgement has any implications for that. I am happy to ask the Deputy First Minister to write to Daniel Johnson once we have had the opportunity to look at the point in detail.

Brexit (Impact on Trade)

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): We understand that United Kingdom food and drink exports to the European Union were down by 47 per cent in the first quarter of this year, and that Scotland's gross domestic product could fall by £9

billion by 2030. After Covid, should the people of Scotland have a choice between a disastrous Tory Brexit and friendly relations with all European nations?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course they should. That is the case not only because it is what I think, but because it is what the people of Scotland voted for in an election a few weeks ago. Not only do I think that they should have that choice, I am determined that they will. That is an important choice for people in Scotland to make.

The impact of Brexit is only now starting to hit home. John Mason cited evidence of the fall in exports, which is serious and damaging to businesses across much of our country.

There are, however, many other impacts. Yesterday, I visited EU nationals who are having to go through the indignity of applying to stay in their own country. I spoke to one young woman whose case, for me, sums up the deep injustice of Brexit. That young woman came to this country from Germany at three years old and has spent periods of her life in the care system here. Listening to her, one would not think that she was anything but Scottish. She is Scottish—as Scottish as I am—but because she came from Germany at three years old she is having to go through the process of applying to stay in her own country. I cannot find the words to describe how offended and angry that makes me on behalf of every EU national who lives in our country. I do not think that that is who we are, as a country.

After we are through the Covid crisis, we should have the opportunity to decide whether we want to be governed by Brexit Tories, or by Governments that we elect for ourselves based on the values that most of us in Scotland hold dear.

Organised Crime (Attacks)

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): The family home of Councillor Graeme Campbell has been targeted on three occasions. The most recent attack came last weekend, when his cars and home were torched. Graeme and his wife count themselves lucky to have survived. He believes that those cowardly attacks are linked to organised crime and he tells me that he now has no option but to quit politics. Will the First Minister condemn mob rule by organised crime in Scotland and will she tell Parliament what the Scottish Government is doing about this attack on democracy?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I do not just unreservedly condemn organised crime; I unreservedly and unequivocally condemn the attacks on Councillor Campbell and his wife. I cannot imagine what they have been through in

facing those attacks. I am sure that the thoughts of everybody across not just the chamber but the country are with them. I want to send Councillor Campbell and his wife a message of solidarity from me and from my party today.

Those matters have to be treated with the utmost seriousness. Nobody should feel, for whatever reason, that they have no choice but to leave politics or abandon any part of their life because of threats or attacks from organised crime or anywhere else. Of course, it is not for me or the Government but for the police to investigate and—I hope—bring to justice those who perpetrated the attacks. I offer my full support to the police in the actions that they will take to do that. However, for the purposes of today, I reiterate that message of solidarity to Councillor Campbell and his family.

BBC Pacific Quay Studios (Transfer of Ownership)

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Next month, the BBC will make a final decision on the proposal to transfer ownership of its Glasgow Pacific Quay studios to a subsidiary company. Staff have been warned that that could result in dozens of redundancies and no Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations transfer. There are wider concerns across the Scottish production sector that the transfer will restrict access to the studios, as decisions on access will be made from London. What representation has the Scottish Government made to the BBC about the proposal? Will a Government minister meet the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union to discuss how the jobs can be saved?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We regularly make representations to the BBC on such matters, which of course have nothing to do with the BBC's editorial decisions. For example, personally, I have made representations in the past about the need to build up production capacity in Scotland and for the BBC to spend more of the licence money that Scottish viewers pay in Scotland to support the economy and production opportunities here. I therefore share the concerns that Ross Greer has raised, and I hope that the move does not go ahead. I cannot see—and have not seen—anything that suggests that it would be in the interests of Scotland as a whole or of the production sector in particular.

The Government would of course be happy to meet a BECTU representative. If that has not already been arranged, I am sure that it quickly can be.

Glasgow McVitie's Factory (Closure)

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I declare an interest as a member of GMB Scotland.

The First Minister will be aware that, sadly, Pladis, the owner of the McVitie's factory in Glasgow, has issued redundancy notices to 500 workers. Some of them were here today with their union—the GMB—to present a petition to the First Minister by 75,000 petitioners. I hope that the First Minister will be happy to take the petition from me on their behalf.

I put on the record and commend the work of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, Kate Forbes, and the working group, along with the trade unions GMB and Unite. I know that the First Minister is fully behind that. Will the First Minister use her international recognition and her skills to eyeball directly the owners of McVitie's and put everything possible on the table to make sure that they are presented with an offer that they cannot refuse? I believe that the First Minister needs to lead this charge and that we will all be behind her in doing that. The McVitie's factory in Glasgow cannot be allowed to close.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As Pauline McNeill is aware, the finance secretary, with the leader of Glasgow City Council, co-chairs an action group to try to save the McVitie's plant in the east end, which I am 100 per cent behind. Just this week, the finance secretary is communicating with Pladis senior management to make very clear our disappointment at the lack of constructive engagement on the options, with Scottish Government support, for saving that site.

We will not give up, and we will do everything that we possibly can. I will certainly do everything that I can to make sure that any options to save the plant, the site and those jobs are taken forward by the Government. We cannot force a company to accept offers of help that we give, but we will do everything that we can to make sure that those offers are credible and are accepted. That is what we have done in the past with other industrial plants. We are often criticised for that later on when opportunistic reasons arise to allow that to happen. However, that will not prevent us from doing everything that we can to save the McVitie's plant or others that end up in a similar position.

On the petition, the workers do not have to petition me and the Scottish Government. We are on their side, and we will do everything that we can to save their jobs. I will not be able to accept the petition in person because, after First Minister's question time, I will travel to Arbroath to attend the funeral of one of our former members—Andrew Welsh. I want to take the opportunity to say, in response to the passing of someone who was widely respected across the political

spectrum, how much my thoughts are with his family. However, I will arrange for another member of the Government to accept the petition on my behalf.

Covid-19 (Safe Travel to Islands and Rural Areas)

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): With many people choosing to staycation this summer, the First Minister will be aware of reports that rural and island communities will have a significant number of domestic visitors. Many in the isles will be worried about the rising number of Covid infections across the country, including in Orkney and Shetland, and are concerned that testing is not being undertaken by those who are travelling. What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that domestic travel to all our islands and rural areas is safe and sustainable?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Beatrice Wishart raises a really important point. Our islands, in common with the rest of the country, want to get back to normal. Tourism is a big part of normality for Scotland. We want that for our islands, but it is really important that it is safe. That is why we have given very strong advice—which we reiterate regularly; I do so again now—to anybody who plans to travel to our islands to test before they go. Lateral flow tests are available to allow them to do that.

Beatrice Wishart is right to point this out—in today's figures, cases have been reported in Orkney and Shetland. Although the numbers are very small, that is a reminder that the virus has not gone away. If people intend to travel to our islands or any other part of our beautiful country over the summer, I ask them to please do so safely, to test themselves and to respect all the advice that is in place in any particular area to help to keep themselves and the local population safe.

12:56

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Business Motion

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon, colleagues. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask that members take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber, and to please only use the aisles and walkways to access their seats and when moving around the chamber.

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-00503, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to today's business. Any member who wishes to speak against the motion should press their request-to-speak button now.

I call Gillian Mackay to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 24 June 2021—

After

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill

insert

followed by Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Motion: Membership of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit—[*Gillian Mackay*]

Motion agreed to.

Cervical Screening

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Maree Todd on cervical screening. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:01

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): I regret that I am here to inform Parliament of a serious adverse event in the Scottish cervical screening programme. In December 2020, a national health service board conducted its annual invasive cervical cancers audit and discovered that a very small number of women had developed cervical cancer after being wrongly excluded from the screening programme following a hysterectomy that was carried out more than 20 years ago. I am extremely sorry to say that one of those women has died.

I offer my sincere condolences and whole-hearted sympathies to the women and their families; I also offer them the absolute reassurance that the Government is treating the issue with the utmost seriousness. The board has contacted those affected to apologise and to offer further discussions with clinicians. I know that this event will be enormously distressing to them, and that they, along with many members, will question how it happened. That is why I am now updating Parliament on what we know about the errors and on how we are responding.

To prevent causing undue anxiety and distress to the women involved, I have waited until the NHS has completed the first part of a national review before making this statement. These matters are complex, Presiding Officer, and I ask you and members to have patience while I explain the background and nuances.

The Scottish cervical screening programme began in 1988 and routinely invites everyone with a cervix, between the ages of 25 and 65, for regular tests. People might be invited up to the age of 70, to follow up a test that requires further investigation or treatment.

Anyone who has had a total hysterectomy that involves the complete removal of the uterus and cervix can be excluded from screening as there is no risk of cervical cancer, but those who have had a subtotal hysterectomy, in which part or all of the cervix remains, should continue to be screened. This is true no matter how small the remaining part of the cervix is.

Although this will be of little comfort to the women and families affected, the incorrect

exclusions were uncovered as part of our quality assurance processes, which require health boards in Scotland to conduct regular audits to review the cervical screening history of all patients who are diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Once the exclusions were discovered, NHS National Services Scotland assembled an adverse event management team of senior gynaecologists, pathologists and public health experts, among others, to address the problem. At their direction, all NHS boards conducted an urgent review to assess the risk of other people having been incorrectly excluded. Unfortunately, that review confirmed instances in which exclusions have been wrongly applied across Scotland. It also revealed that the issue is extremely complex, spans a number of decades and involves a variety of potential errors.

The first hysterectomy-related exclusion dates back to 1959—almost 30 years before the screening programme began. Therefore, there is more to do to uncover the full extent of the issue. However, I will provide an update on what we know and what has been done so far.

First, immediate remedial work to address the failure has been completed. NHS Scotland has strengthened procedures to ensure that full details of hysterectomies, including whether the cervix was completely removed, are clearly recorded and communicated to the cervical screening programme. Secondly, to date, no other routine audits in NHS boards have found any further instances in which someone has developed cervical cancer after having been incorrectly excluded from the programme.

Thirdly, the adverse event management group identified as an immediate priority a review of individuals who had been excluded from the cervical screening programme but whose records indicate that they had a subtotal hysterectomy. There are around 1,500 individuals in that group. Of those individuals, around 500 had hysterectomies before 1997—that information is recorded in an older part of the medical records system. Their records are being fully reviewed, but it is a time-intensive process, and it is not yet complete. Therefore, today, I will focus on the audit of more recent records, but I assure members that work is proceeding urgently to review the records of those who had subtotal hysterectomies before 1997.

I know how concerning the situation will be. I do not want to minimise the seriousness of the incident, but I do want to provide reassurance that the risks of cervical cancer are low. In the United Kingdom, among women and people with a cervix, fewer than one in 100—less than 1 per cent—will develop cervical cancer in their lifetime.

I hope that the actions that I will outline now will demonstrate that we are doing everything possible to provide effective support for anyone who has been incorrectly excluded.

At the direction of the adverse event management group, a multidisciplinary team was assembled in each NHS board to check the hospital records, laboratory records, general practitioner records and screening records of everyone who had been excluded from screening since 1997 despite having a subtotal hysterectomy recorded. That work is now complete. Of that group, more than one third have been correctly excluded and no further action is needed. However, 220 individuals in the eligible age range for screening were excluded in error. The NHS has written to them individually to apologise, explain the situation and offer personalised advice. GP practices have been asked to prioritise each of those individuals for a timely screening appointment, and I expect those appointments to take place within a few weeks.

There are also 149 individuals whose records are unclear about what type of hysterectomy was performed. Their health boards have written to them to explain and apologise, and to offer a gynaecological appointment and, if appropriate, a screening test. Similar letters have been issued to 65 individuals who were incorrectly removed from the programme and who are now over the age range for screening. Where necessary, the Scottish Government has provided funding to health boards to run additional clinics, so that those who require gynaecology appointments can be seen within the next four weeks without impacting other services.

A very small number of individuals have left Scotland. We are working with our United Kingdom counterparts to contact those people and advise on next steps.

Finally, 152 individuals in the group are now deceased. A full audit of those records is under way.

I know that anyone who receives a letter about the issue might be extremely anxious. I am sorry for that. The Scottish Government has provided additional funding to Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust so that anyone who is concerned can contact the organisation and receive free and comprehensive support. Jo's Trust can be contacted by calling 0808 802 8000 or by emailing helpline@jostrust.org.uk. More information about cervical screening is available on the NHS Inform website.

Work is also under way to consider the appropriateness of around 200,000 exclusions that are thought to have been based on total hysterectomies. I must stress that the vast majority

of hysterectomies carried out in Scotland are total, so we can be confident that the majority of those exclusions are correct. However, based on our current findings and the range of errors involved, I hope that members will agree that it is prudent to look more closely at them. Once that work is complete, NHS health boards will write to anyone who requires further investigation.

Although I know that people who have had hysterectomies may be concerned, I urge them to wait for that work to finish and not to contact health services in the meantime, unless they are worried that they have any symptoms of cervical cancer.

Because we must learn from this incident and prevent future occurrences, we have alerted the other UK nations. We will work closely with them as investigations proceed.

Before I conclude, I will say a few words about the screening programme. Although today's announcement will be worrying for those who have been directly affected and for others who have had a hysterectomy, screening continues to be the most effective way of preventing cervical cancer. Cervical screening is not a diagnostic test. It aims to detect cell changes before they become cancerous. It saves 5,000 lives in the UK every year, and prevents eight out of 10 cervical cancers from starting.

This incident does not detract from that, nor does it take away from the quality of screening tests or their findings. In fact, it is because the screening programme is so effective that we are doing all that we can to ensure that no one is excluded from it when they should not be. If you are due to make or attend a cervical screening appointment, I urge you to do so, and if you have not attended a screening before or you have missed your most recent test, please contact your GP surgery to arrange one.

In the meantime, I urge everyone, whether affected by this issue or not, to be alert for symptoms of cervical cancer. Anyone who is experiencing unusual discharge or bleeding after sex, between periods or after the menopause should contact their GP practice immediately and not wait for their cervical screening appointment. Those symptoms are not usually caused by cervical cancer, but it is important to have them checked. Further information on symptoms is available on NHS Inform.

This incident will be profoundly worrying to many people. For the women and families whom I referred to at the beginning of my statement, it has had devastating consequences, and nothing that I say can undo that. However, I make the commitment today that everything that we do surrounding this incident will be guided by three

principles. Our focus will be on identifying and providing the appropriate support and care for anyone who has been wrongly excluded; we will be open, transparent and welcoming of the scrutiny that this investigation rightly deserves; and we will learn from the incident so that it cannot happen again.

On that basis, I reiterate that our immediate priority is to ensure that screening or gynaecological appointments are offered to everyone who has already been identified as having been incorrectly excluded.

The audit of anyone who was excluded from the programme who had a subtotal hysterectomy before 1997 will continue, and I expect that anyone who was excluded in error will be contacted in August. Investigations into other hysterectomy-based exclusions will continue.

Wherever there is concern, we will act, and wherever further changes can make our processes more robust, we will implement them. I have offered meetings to Opposition spokespeople, but if any MSP would like to meet to discuss the issue, I am more than happy to do so over the recess period. I will, of course, update Parliament again shortly after recess.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will have to move on to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask a question pressed their request-to-speak buttons now.

I call Annie Wells, who is joining us remotely.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for her statement. She has shared deeply distressing news with the Parliament. My heart goes out to the family of the woman who has tragically lost her life, and to all the women affected. As the minister said, many women will be concerned after today's revelations, and I echo her statement that anyone concerned should contact Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust.

The minister mentioned 500 women who had hysterectomies before 1997, and that those are recorded in an older part of the medical record system. How long will it take for a full review into the records, and has any of that already been completed?

Maree Todd: The same adverse event management team that oversaw the review of the post-1997 group will continue to oversee the review into those who had their subtotal hysterectomies before 1997. That expert group includes very senior and experienced clinicians, pathologists and public health experts.

The work of auditing the records will be carried out by individual health boards, as was the case for the participants who had subtotal hysterectomies after 1997. That work has already begun. I hope that it will be concluded by the end of July, and that those who are identified as wrongly excluded will be contacted very shortly after the work is completed.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): This is an extremely serious situation, and our thoughts are with the women who have been affected. The truth is that we do not yet know the full scale of the error; it could impact on many more women than the 220 excluded from the screening programme since 1997. It is critical that women are contacted urgently and offered information and support.

Why was the issue not picked up by audits of the screening programme in the past? When will all the women affected be not only identified but seen by a clinician? Will there be additional specialist clinics in every health board area?

The minister will be aware of the concerns about capacity and a significant backlog in screening, with something like 180,000 tests delayed because of the pandemic and delays of six months or more for those who have been screened and need treatment. Therefore, what additional resources will be provided—urgently—to cope with the serious situation that we are discussing as well as to catch up with the backlog?

Maree Todd: As I said in my statement, around 500 people—I think that it is 434—have been contacted this week. However, because of the range of errors involved, we think that it is prudent to go back and examine the records of all women who have had hysterectomies to ensure that no errors have occurred. That means that the number of women who might be involved could be larger.

I said in my statement that the number is about 170,000 women; however, bearing in mind that the vast majority of women who have hysterectomies in Scotland have total hysterectomies, we expect that the vast majority of those women will have been correctly excluded. I know that it is uncomfortable to have to wait to be contacted, but we are working as fast as we can to resolve the issue.

In relation to additional resources, around 200 women have been asked to attend their general practitioners for a screening. I do not expect that to produce an undue burden on general practices; very few will have more than one woman involved. In relation to the two groups of women who have been called, had their letters and been given an appointment at the hospital, we have provided extra resources to several health boards who wanted to put on additional clinics to ensure that

that did not impact on the services that are currently being provided.

On invasive cancer audits, the new national methodology was introduced in 2014. Health boards were doing audits before that. I can say only that no cases were found through that national audit system until 2020.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Jackie Baillie raised some points that I also want to mention; I will dig a little bit deeper. The situation is clearly worrying for the women affected and their families. I understand from the minister's statement that women have now been contacted to take forward the next steps of their care.

In case any women are concerned that they may have been affected but have not heard anything, can the minister outline what support is in place for them to raise those concerns? The minister mentioned Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, but might contact with it lead to referrals? Given that there are general concerns that GPs are not doing many face-to-face appointments, can she give reassurance that affected women are not only being contacted but being given urgent and one-to-one in-person appointments?

Maree Todd: The women who have been wrongly excluded have been contacted by letter. Those letters went out on Tuesday this week and so should have arrived yesterday or today. The letters highlight to the women that, if they are required to make a GP appointment, they are to telephone and highlight that they have been contacted by letter and wrongly excluded. We also sent letters to the women's GPs and we have briefed a variety of professional groups, including medical directors, directors of public health, NHS boards, NHS executive directors of nursing, GPs, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Nursing and cervical screening programme leads in all four nations and Ireland. The reason for that briefing is to make sure that everybody is aware of how high a priority the women are. We have also added a digital tag to their records so that, at every stage of the system, as those women progress through the process of checking their situation, they are prioritised and fast tracked.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I declare an interest as a practising doctor.

My thoughts and prayers go out to the women and their families who have been affected by this terrible error. It is simply awful. It might shake women's faith in the cervical screening programme and, as a GP, I must be clear that attending cervical screening is vital. I promise that the swabs that I and other GPs take perform early warning detection of potential cancer, so please

attend appointments, and do not be put off. If people experience any symptoms, they should please contact their GP.

Is this a failure of coding by the operating surgeon, a system-wide issue or an information technology issue?

Maree Todd: As might be expected, we have looked closely at the points where the errors appear to have occurred, and there are potentially four such points. For some women, there has been a mismatch between the operation that was proposed and the operation that was done. That usually happens for technical reasons that occur during the surgery and, as a consequence, a proposed total hysterectomy becomes a subtotal hysterectomy. That fact might not be noted in the discharge summary and instead the discharge summary letter will be based on the theatre list—that is, based on the planned operation. The GP will see that and request removal from the call-recall system.

A second error that might have occurred is that of subtotal procedures being incorrectly coded in theatre, reflecting a mismatch between the proposed and actual operation or simply a misunderstanding of what a subtotal procedure is. There has also been some incorrect coding in labs; subtotal specimens might contain some cervical tissue and have been incorrectly coded as total hysterectomies when those patients were being considered for continuation on call-recall. Finally, the patient may have been removed from call-recall despite accurate information being conveyed to primary care following surgery where the cervix is retained.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): There are many reasons why women might be reluctant to attend their screening test. Those range from difficulties in attending or being examined due to physical disability to cultural and language barriers, lack of awareness and uneasiness. What action is the Scottish Government taking to break down those barriers and help more women attend their appointment when called?

Maree Todd: Those are complex issues. I am mindful that there is not a single solution, but I agree that those are important matters to tackle. I will outline some of the work that is already happening. In initial sample-taking training, NHS Education for Scotland provides information for sample takers to help them address the potential issues in assisting disabled people at their cervical screening appointment, along with many other groups that might experience barriers to screening.

Further, our advice for sample takers is set out in national guidance. If someone is unable to leave their home for a cervical screening appointment,

their NHS board can use a multidisciplinary team member to provide support that will allow them to have their sample taken. That is done on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of the individual.

The Scottish Government has made funding available through its screening inequalities fund to allow health boards to tackle inequalities in access to screening. In addition to the £5 million that we have made available over the past five years, we will be exploring how best to use an additional £2 million over the next two years to drive long-lasting sustainable change in cancer screening programmes. That will align with the work of the national screening oversight board, which also has a key focus on tackling inequalities across all our screening programmes and is developing a strategy to do so.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): This incident is obviously a serious failure that must not be allowed to happen again. I ask my question on behalf of women who had subtotal hysterectomies before 1997. To reassure those women, I would like to press for a date on which the audit of those cases will be completed. How long will it take for individuals affected to be contacted? In cases involving individuals who have passed on due to complications relating to cervical cancer, will their families be contacted?

Maree Todd: I can assure the member that we are working as fast as we can through those records to identify women who have been wrongly excluded pre-1997. I am afraid that I cannot give her an exact date, but we aim to have that work completed by the end of July and to inform those women as soon as we can after that, which I would expect to be early August.

On the second point, we are conducting an audit of all women who have died of cervical cancer, and we will examine whether they are involved in this incident. If they are, the NHS will get in contact proactively with those families to explain the situation.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Human papillomavirus is known to cause 99 per cent of all cervical cancers, as well as cases of head, neck and anogenital cancers, so an HPV vaccination programme was introduced for secondary 1 girls in 2008 and for boys in 2019. Can the minister provide an update on how lockdown has affected implementation of the HPV vaccination programme over the past 16 months and say how that will be taken forward?

Maree Todd: I am afraid that I do not have that data in front of me. I am willing to write to the member to update him on that issue as soon as I can get my hands on those figures.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): I, too, extend my sympathies to all of those who have been affected and their families.

The minister states that the risk of cervical cancer is low and that cervical screening is the best protection against cervical cancer, but many women's confidence in the programme will have been undermined by today's announcement, particularly when we are hearing more about how women's health problems are being missed, ignored or misdiagnosed. What urgent action will the minister take to restore confidence in the cervical screening programme and encourage women to continue to attend their appointments?

Maree Todd: Undoubtedly, we have to ensure that women have confidence in the system. As members have said, it is an extremely effective way of preventing cancer—around 5,000 lives are saved through it every year. We recently had cervical cancer week, for which Scottish Government buildings here in Edinburgh were lit up. Regular campaigning is conducted by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust and, later this year, the Scottish Government will be conducting a campaign to alert women to the practicalities of the screening programme and highlight just how important it is to have their cervical screening.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I note from the minister's statement that some of the women are now beyond the eligibility age for screening, which I think is 64. Given that life expectancy for women in Scotland is over 80, is there any scope for extending automatic screening eligibility to at least age 70, for not just those but for other women?

Maree Todd: At present, screening can extend up to age 70 for those who have had a non-routine result that requires follow-up or treatment, so those high-risk women are screened up until the age of 70. The UK national screening committee keeps the eligible age ranges for screening under review, using the best available evidence, and Scottish ministers would work to implement any change that the committee recommended.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): I extend my condolences and thoughts to the women and their families who have been affected and I recognise that, for many people, the situation will be a source of significant anxiety. The minister mentioned possible funding. Is she able to say how much funding the Scottish Government has allocated to health boards for extra appointments and how much it has set aside? Given the obvious anxiety that the statement will cause to patients, will the minister consider additional funding for health board level helplines, so that patients can inquire about their records and, therefore, avoid GP surgeries being possibly but understandably

overwhelmed by calls from worried women and their families?

Maree Todd: Four health boards have requested funding to provide additional clinics: Lanarkshire, £28,000; Lothian, £8,098; Greater Glasgow and Clyde, £5,000; and Fife, £2,700. No other boards have requested funding, but we are happy to keep the situation under review and will provide further funding if needed.

We have also provided extra funding to Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust. I fully appreciate how worrying the situation will be for people who have been affected. Everyone who is affected will receive a personalised letter from their health board to apologise for the situation and provide information about the incident in the cervical screening programme. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has made its helpline available nationally for women to call. I advise against women contacting their GP to find out whether they have been affected. I assure them that anyone who has been identified as incorrectly excluded from the programme, because they have a subtotal hysterectomy, will receive a letter directly from their health board. Those who are within the age range for the screening programme will be asked to contact their GP to make a screening appointment.

The one exception that I make to that is that our advice remains that people should contact their GP straightaway if they experience symptoms of cervical cancer, which are unusual discharge, or bleeding after sex, between periods or after the menopause. Those symptoms are generally caused by something else, but it is vitally important that women who experience those symptoms attend their GP and have them checked out.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The news that we have heard will be deeply alarming to many women, and it is a tragic reminder of the importance of robust screening programmes. If, as the minister says, there are regular audits, how was that issue missed for so long? If it was first detected in December 2020, why are women hearing about it only now? Are all the 1,500 women aware that their records are currently under review?

Maree Todd: As I explained, with regard to the invasive cancer audits, new national methodology was introduced in 2014, and health boards were doing audits prior to that. In 2020, that new methodology of auditing invasive cervical cancer identified the problem. The Scottish Government has known about the incident only since March.

The adverse event management team, which the NHS established to deal with the issue, met for the first time on 9 March and set to work

immediately to determine the scope of the incident and how best to support those who were affected. As I have said, that expert group brings together senior gynaecologists, pathologists, public health experts and senior system leaders in screening. It established that the immediate priority was to find out how many of those who were excluded from the cervical screening programme had had a subtotal hysterectomy.

Multidisciplinary teams were established in every NHS board in Scotland, and they looked in detail at the medical records of those who had been excluded from the cervical screening programme despite their records indicating that they had undergone a subtotal hysterectomy. That painstaking process involved cross-checking a range of electronic and older paper records, including operation notes, pathology reports, hospital discharge letters and GP records. That took several weeks to complete.

As well as establishing who had been affected, the group determined the correct care pathways and ensured that arrangements are in place so that everybody receives the same information and treatment, wherever they are in Scotland. As I mentioned before, that included making an IT update to flag the records of anyone affected, so that any further investigation of whether treatment is required as a result of the incident will be prioritised. That took several weeks to arrange.

It was absolutely vital that the NHS took the time to accurately understand each person's circumstances and to make sure that arrangements were in place before we wrote to anyone to make them aware that they might have been excluded in error. To do otherwise, I believe, would have compounded people's anxiety with long delays or uncertainty about how their cases would be managed.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I, too, extend my sympathies to all the women affected. Worrying research conducted by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has shown that only half of the women who have HPV on their cervical screening results know what it is. With last week being cervical screening awareness week, will the minister outline what action can be taken to tackle the stigma and confusion surrounding HPV and to increase awareness for women who have been diagnosed and across the wider population?

Maree Todd: I agree with the member that it is vitally important to raise awareness of what HPV is and what it means to have HPV. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has told us that HPV is the topic that it hears most about through its support helpline. Callers are often confused, anxious or upset about what it means to have it, so we know that more work is needed to help people to understand those issues. NHS Inform already has information

available to help and support people, and Public Health Scotland regularly does work to raise awareness on issues around cervical screening. This month, for example, during cervical awareness week, it shared information and posted on social media.

The Scottish Government has also funded Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust to carry out work to raise awareness of HPV and its implications for screening, and I expect that work to pick up pace throughout the year. Finally, as I mentioned, later in the year we hope to launch a campaign to raise awareness of cervical screening. We will work to accompany that with wider messaging around HPV.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): It is, indeed, a deeply concerning statement. I will ask about two points. When were the Scottish ministers first made aware of this serious adverse event? Given that this is not the first time, sadly, that we have heard of errors in the cervical screening programme—last year, NHS National Services Scotland had to apologise for a two-month delay to screening invitation letters for around 1,500 patients due to what it referred to as a technical fault—and given the pressures that the NHS is currently under, how are ministers working to reassure women that the screening programme is fit for purpose? Will the minister look at undertaking a review of the programme?

Maree Todd: We have worked really hard. As I said in a previous answer, we were first made aware of this on 9 March 2021. Officials were made aware and ministers were also informed on the same day. Everyone involved has worked extremely hard to identify the women involved. They first ensured that the systems were corrected so that the error could not be made again and, secondly, ensured that we could correctly identify the women and contact them with high-quality information, providing access to tests and screening at their GP or gynaecological appointments, if that was the more appropriate route. At the moment, our highest priority is to ensure that we are completely aware of who is involved and to contact them as quickly as we can and ensure that they have an appropriate pathway forward.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): The situation is, indeed, deeply concerning. Our thoughts are with all the women affected. I appreciate what the minister has said about funding for the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust helpline to support anyone who is concerned, but will she confirm that the funding will last for as long as it is needed and that all sufficient resources will be given to the trust to ensure comprehensive individual support? Further to that support, will the minister advise what is being provided to GPs and

other health professionals, who may be the first point of contact for women but who are in the midst of remobilisation from Covid?

Maree Todd: I thank Paul O’Kane for that question, which enables me to put on record that I am extremely grateful to Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust for running its helpline. It has enormous expertise in supporting people who have questions and concerns about screening or the risk of cervical cancer. We have given extra funding to ensure that the trust can cope with the extra calls that we anticipate, and I would be more than happy to have discussions with the trust, should more funding be required.

As I said, the letters to the women who have been wrongly excluded from the programme went out on Tuesday. At the same time, letters went directly to their GPs. The letters to the women include not only details that are personal to them but an information leaflet with general information and frequently asked questions from women. A similar format was used for the GPs, who were sent information that included a set of questions and answers.

As I said in a previous answer, we have contacted many people in health boards and the royal colleges of various professions to ensure that, as far as possible, everyone who might ask questions about their situation will be well armed with information, in order to reassure women and give them confidence that their care is in safe hands.

Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

14:42

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask that members take care to observe the measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use only the aisles and walkways to access your seats and when moving around the chamber.

The next item of business is stage 3 of the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill. In dealing with amendments, members should have the bill as amended at stage 2—“SP Bill 1A”—the marshalled list and the groupings of amendments.

The division bell will sound and proceedings will be suspended for five minutes for the first division of stage 3. The period of voting for each division will be up to one minute. Members who wish to speak in the debate on a group of amendments should press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible after I call the group.

Members should now refer to the marshalled list of amendments.

Section 2—Expiry of provisions

The Presiding Officer: Group 1 is on public admittance to licensing board meetings. Amendment 1, in the name of Graham Simpson, is the only amendment in the group.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank you, Presiding Officer, for accepting my amendment, which is the same amendment that I spoke to yesterday, when it was in a group with another amendment. It is not my practice to bring back amendments that have already been debated, but we ended up in a pretty strange situation yesterday. My amendment yesterday was on licensing boards. The other amendment, which was in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, dealt with councils. In essence, they both sought to do the same thing, which was to expire the provision that allows those bodies to bar members of the public from their meetings.

My argument was then, and is now, that licensing boards and councils should by September be allowing members of the public into their meetings. There is no justification for their continuing not to do that.

14:45

We ended up in a situation in which the amendment that dealt with councils was accepted but the amendment in my name, which dealt with licensing boards, was not. That seemed to me to be completely illogical. I went home rather perplexed by that, but I thought that the Deputy First Minister would realise the inconsistency of the situation and think that it would probably be worth relodging the amendment. I thought that he would realise that we are in a pretty daft situation and would reflect on that. I hope that he has: he is normally a reasonable man. I look forward to hearing his comments.

I move amendment 1.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To return the favour that Graham Simpson did me yesterday, I support amendment 1 for the same reason that I moved my amendment 13 yesterday. It was on public scrutiny, which matters, particularly as the change will come just months before local authority elections. People want to know how decisions, particularly about things that are important to them, are made. I am happy to support Graham Simpson's amendment 1.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): I find myself in an absolutely terrible position this afternoon: I fear that Graham Simpson can interpret my mind. [*Laughter.*] That is a truly awful situation to find myself in.

I did go home and reflect on the comments that Mr Simpson made in his closing remarks in yesterday's debate. I believed, not for the first time, I have to say—although I do not do so on all occasions—that Mr Simpson had advanced a reasonable point in his closing remarks. I hope that the people on the Conservative Party selection panel note that I have destroyed his career chances with that commendation. Mr Simpson has made a fair and reasonable point, so the Government will support amendment 1, which he has lodged today.

I need to put on the record one issue about the composition of amendment 1. It raises a bit of trickiness, if I am allowed to put that word into the parliamentary record. There is a distinction in licensing legislation between a meeting of a licensing board and a hearing of such a board. The amendment would require meetings of licensing boards to be held in public. Further analysis suggests that acceptance of the amendment would still leave licensing boards some discretion to determine that a hearing cannot be held in person because of reasons relating to coronavirus. In such cases, the board must offer alternative means to allow participants

to be heard remotely. That would mean that boards could continue to conduct hearings via remote means, rather than in person, if there was a justifiable reason for doing so.

A licensing board would not do that lightly, nor should it, but if a hearing, which is the forum in which decisions under licensing legislation are made, needs to be conducted in that manner and separately from the licensing board meeting due to coronavirus, those arrangements will take their course. Amendment 1 would ensure that meetings of licensing boards would be held in public.

Having listened carefully to Mr Simpson's points, and in light of the analysis that I have placed on record, the Scottish Government is content to support amendment 1.

Graham Simpson: I will press amendment 1 and I assure the Deputy First Minister that my career chances were over some time ago. [*Laughter.*] My colleagues will, no doubt, testify to that. I am not a mind reader, but I was trying to delve into the Deputy First Minister's mind from afar and I seem to have got that right. I welcome his comments.

Amendment 1 agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Group 2 is on care homes. Amendment 2, in the name of the cabinet secretary, is grouped with amendment 3.

John Swinney: Yesterday, Jackie Baillie withdrew an amendment that would have extended temporarily for a period beyond 30 September 2021 the reporting provisions for care homes. I listened to members' views and made a commitment to reflect on how best to reassure Parliament about that important matter. Gillian Mackay also raised the issue during the debate.

I suggest that we have made a proposal that members across the chamber can support. Together, amendments 2 and 3 will remove the provision in the bill that seeks to expire part 9 of schedule 1 to the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020, and will provide a deliverable solution that will suspend on 30 September the temporary reporting duties that have been placed on care homes and the Care Inspectorate.

In accepting amendments 2 and 3, we can safeguard the Care Inspectorate's ability to discharge its statutory duties without hindering or diverting resources from wider scrutiny activity, including by giving support to care home services that fall short of the expected quality of care, and by easing care home staff's burden of weekly reporting.

By suspending but not expiring the provisions, we can also provide reassurance that if, in the future, there is a significant rise in the number of Covid-19 cases and a subsequent adverse impact

on care homes, under section 8 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020 ministers will retain the power to introduce regulations to revive the original provisions in part 9 of schedule 1, if there is clear evidence that that is necessary.

The Care Inspectorate has been consulted on the amendments and has assured me that they are practicable. I hope, therefore, that members are reassured that a flexible and deliverable process can be put in place that supports the business of the Care Inspectorate and eases the burden on care homes, as well as assuring the public and Parliament that there is a mechanism to revive fortnightly reports on inspections and on weekly deaths in care homes, if they are needed at any stage during the pandemic, and for the lifetime of the legislation that Parliament will, I hope, endorse this afternoon.

Having made those comments, I hope that Parliament is assured that we have tried to construct a proposition that addresses the issues that Gillian Mackay and Jackie Baillie raised yesterday.

I move amendment 2.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am content to support a suspension of the duty on the Care Inspectorate and am reassured that the cabinet secretary will, if there is another wave of coronavirus, move quickly to reinstate monitoring of care homes. On that basis, I will support amendments 2 and 3.

John Swinney: I am grateful to Jackie Baillie for her support for amendments 2 and 3. We have successfully managed to put in place an approach that will allow the Care Inspectorate to focus on its essential work of assuring the quality of the care home environment, while retaining our ability to exercise a power of oversight, should that be required later in the pandemic. I am grateful to Jackie Baillie for her support for the amendments; I invite Parliament to support them.

Amendment 2 agreed to.

After section 2

Amendment 3 moved—[John Swinney]—and agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: We move on to group 3: notice to Parliament. Amendment 4, in the name of Jackie Baillie, is the only amendment in the group.

Jackie Baillie: After yesterday's stage 2 debate, I had discussions with the Scottish Government. They went on late into the night and the early hours of the morning, but I should point out that we were not just discussing amendment 4, which was agreed quite quickly. I am pleased to say that the amendment is agreed by both parties.

I want to ensure that Parliament has the best possible opportunity for scrutiny. The Government benefits from that scrutiny and challenge, and we as parliamentarians have a duty to the people whom we represent to understand their concerns and reflect their views in the chamber. Amendment 4 will help to ensure that that happens in future. Bringing a statement to Parliament at least 24 hours before making changes to Covid-19 measures will give the Government the right amount of flexibility and speed to respond to emerging situations, and will allow Parliament to scrutinise them. My original amendment contained a timescale of 14 days, which I acknowledged yesterday would have been far too long in an emergency.

On the basis that we have an agreement, I am pleased to have worked with the Government on this, and I urge members to support the amendment.

I move amendment 4.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My contribution will be brief. Yesterday, I was happy to support Jackie Baillie's amendments that sought 14 days' advance notice, on the principle that as much parliamentary scrutiny as possible should be encouraged. I recognise that she did not progress those amendments and has come back with a much more modest period of 24 hours. I hope that she has not sold herself short in her negotiations with the Deputy First Minister and was not able to secure a longer period.

However, what is proposed is an improvement on what is in the bill and, on that basis, we will support amendment 4.

John Swinney: I am very pleased that we have reached agreement on this important provision. The point of principle that Jackie Baillie has advanced concerns the importance of notice to Parliament. The Government does not in any way dispute the importance of that; the question is one of practicality. I am delighted that I was able to negotiate Jackie Baillie down from 14 days to 24 hours. I think that that is a triumph of my persistence over Jackie Baillie's unreasonableness, but we have reached a happy outcome at the conclusion of the process.

The Government is happy to support Jackie Baillie's amendment 4.

The Presiding Officer: I invite Jackie Baillie to wind up and to press or withdraw amendment 4.

Jackie Baillie: I had not intended to make any closing remarks, but I cannot resist the temptation. For the record, I think that the chamber should know that I never once spoke to the Deputy First Minister last night—other people spoke to me for him.

Amendment 4 agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: We move on to group 4, which is on reporting to Parliament. Amendment 5, in the name of the cabinet secretary, is grouped with amendments 5A, 5B, 6, 7 and 11 to 14.

John Swinney: This group of amendments deals with the issue of reporting, which we discussed at some length yesterday. At the outset, I want to make it clear that the Government recognises that, when Parliament grants extraordinary measures of the type that are contained in the Scottish Covid acts, it is essential that there is transparency and openness about how those measures are used and whether they remain necessary and appropriate.

The first Scottish Covid acts put in place a robust reporting regime to deliver transparency and continual review. The Government recently published its seventh bimonthly report. Those bimonthly reports will continue to be published for as long as the measures in the Scottish Covid acts are in use. I assure Parliament that we will aim to make those reports as helpful to Parliament and other observers as we can.

In considering the amendments on reporting that were lodged yesterday at stage 2, my principal concern has always been about how they would fit around the existing reporting structure, which has worked well until now. My aim is to provide the enhanced transparency that the Parliament seeks, while avoiding unnecessary duplication and ensuring that reporting requirements are proportionate and workable.

The result of that consideration is the amendments that the Government has lodged. I am keen that a very clear reporting structure is agreed today, and that we do not end up with a series of requirements that duplicate or conflict with one another, which I believe would be the case if a number of the amendments in this group were agreed to. I believe that the Government's amendments can deliver on the creation of a clear reporting structure, and that they will avoid any confusion in the reporting structure for Parliament, Government, stakeholders and the public.

My amendment 5 deals with the amendments that we dealt with yesterday that sought one-off reports on specific topics. I have consolidated the intentions of stage 2 amendments 25 to 30 into a single omnibus amendment. Amendment 5 covers the information that Parliament sought on wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, support to help business, social security support for carers, support for people who are self-isolating, social care services and the use of fiscal fines.

I know that there are some specific issues that members would like these amendments to address. Paul Sweeney has expressed an interest

in reports covering conditions for trade union recognition in large firms, and Pauline McNeill has a particular interest in live music at weddings. I am minded to accept her amendment 5A, which would add live music and live music venues to amendment 5, on the basis that that would fit with the general reporting structure that we aim to create.

15:00

However, I am not minded to accept her amendment 5B, which I believe is already covered by amendment 5A, and which would introduce a level of detail that is not proportionate or consistent with the general reporting structure that has been proposed.

Having said that I accept Pauline McNeill's amendment 5A, I urge her not to move amendment 7, which I do not consider necessary. For the same reason, I am not minded to accept Paul Sweeney's amendment 11 and Pam Duncan-Glancy's amendments 12 to 14. Those amendments would take the reporting structure to a level of detail that I consider would go beyond the structure and design of the legislation that we have in place. On amendment 12, I understand that Pam Duncan-Glancy is concerned that amendment 5 does not pick up the reporting requirement in relation to the Scottish child payment. That is because it is not relevant to the expiry of the social security provisions in the Scottish Covid acts. I share the member's ambitions on addressing poverty for low-income families, and she will know that our six priority family groups include those with a disabled adult or child. We have reached more than 70,000 families with the Scottish child payment, and we intend to reach many more when it is rolled out to under-16s by the end of next year. In the meantime, we are introducing bridging payments to reach all families that are in receipt of free school meals. We are making tackling child poverty a national mission, as has been set out in this Parliament and was reiterated by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government just yesterday.

With my amendment 5, I have tried to create a general reporting structure that is flexible and works within the scope of the bill. I believe that that is the best approach to take, but I am happy to undertake to consider how the points that members have raised might be addressed in the report that the Government will produce, and I would be happy to discuss that further with members if they would find it helpful.

My amendment 6 addresses the additional information that Parliament sought on evictions from dwelling houses. The reporting requirement will be embedded in the existing bimonthly

reporting requirement that the Government discharges. I also highlight Pauline McNeill's amendment 4 from stage 2. I undertook that the Government would write to Pauline McNeill to provide her with the information that she sought on the welfare of prisoners, and I can confirm that that letter is being prepared.

I hope that the amendments on reporting that the Government has lodged will address the principal concerns of Parliament, which we discussed yesterday at stage 2. I urge other members not to press their amendments.

I move amendment 5.

The Presiding Officer: I call Pauline McNeill to move amendment 5A and speak to all the amendments in the group.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I will speak to amendments 5A, 5B and 7 in my name. Amendment 5A would insert

"live music and live music venues",

as the cabinet secretary mentioned, and amendment 5B covers

"the permissibility of live music in ... indoor and outdoor venues and the impact of limitations on indoor household gatherings".

Amendment 7 would insert a

"Duty to report on effect of Act on live music".

I have lodged the three amendments in order to approach the issue in different ways, so that the Government can consider what it might be prepared to accept. I welcome what John Swinney has said, but I would like to say a few more things. I really cannot give up on the battle for clarity on behalf of huge numbers of people. I could have said that I lodged these amendments totally for John Swinney's amusement, although I was not referring to anyone in particular yesterday when we discussed the question of "cringey dancing" at weddings; I was quoting my constituent Brian O'Riordan; I wish him well for his wedding on 31 July.

I could be wrong, but when the First Minister addressed today the question of talking to the wedding sector, I thought that there might be some more scope. If not, I would plead with the Government: in all honesty, I think that there should be more relaxation of dancing restrictions, for the reasons that I outlined yesterday. Nonetheless, I sincerely thank the cabinet secretary for our exchange yesterday to clarify the easing of restrictions as it affects live music outwith weddings, because every part of the discussion helps people understand the decisions that their Government is making.

Alex Hutchinson, who runs Kubix Festival in Sunderland and who had an event cancelled, said:

"I think people forget there are millions of people behind these closed industries, either directly or in the supply chain."

TRNSMT festival, which hopefully will run this September, and many other promoters such as Regular Music have highlighted the Government's research that shows that even minimal restrictions will have a damaging effect on the live music sector. The Government is only too aware of that.

There are literally thousands of young bands and musicians who not only make a living from music but suffer because they cannot perform. It is what they love and, unfortunately, in many cases, not performing brings mental health issues with it.

We did not run a pilot or test event, which we could have done. Some cities have done so, as did the Download Festival, which ran as a pilot from 18-20 June. I hope that the cabinet secretary appreciates that tens of thousands of musicians, performers, publicans and music venues—the whole sector—would be delighted if the Government continued to acknowledge that we require clarity on the easing of restrictions and the mitigations that were talked about yesterday.

John Swinney: I assure Pauline McNeill that the Government will actively engage with the sector, particularly between now and early August, so that we can work with it on the various elements of guidance that require to be put in place. As I mentioned yesterday, there will still be some requirements around ventilation, hygiene and other questions, and it would be better if the Government clearly understands the practical issues for venues and the live music environment, so that we can formulate a position that is helpful to the sector. It might not be everything that the sector would like, but at least we will be engaged in a practical discussion about those provisions.

Pauline McNeill: I know that many people who I speak for will welcome John Swinney's intervention, because they would not like to think that the discussions will simply end because the parliamentary term ends today. As the cabinet secretary outlined, the discussions will be ongoing. The sector has a lot of ideas to offer the Government and it fully understands that there will still be issues with mitigation. Everyone understands that we have to do this in a safe way, so that is appreciated.

Yesterday, I said that Scotland made no mention of the night-time economy, which has live music at its centre, whereas Northern Ireland, England and Wales did. I hope that the night-time economy will not be missed out of the reporting process.

I would have liked a bit more, but in the interest of working with the Government and

compromising, I am happy not to move amendments 5B and 7.

I acknowledge what the cabinet secretary said on amendment 4, which I moved yesterday. The cabinet secretary said that a letter on prisoners' welfare will be sent to me, which I welcome.

I move amendment 5A.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I rise to speak to amendment 11. Following amendment 26, which I spoke to yesterday, I am disappointed in what the Government has presented at stage 3. I took the Government's commitments in good faith, so it is not good enough that trade unions and bus operator reform are not even mentioned in the bill.

The way in which the proposed legislation has been brought forward in the past week, before summer recess, has been extremely rushed. That has made scrutiny and the chance of effecting meaningful change near impossible.

We have opportunities to harness the allocation of vast state support for the private sector as a means of achieving better social and economic outcomes, yet, shamefully, it seems as though the Government is willing to miss out on those opportunities. Private bus companies in Scotland receive an average of £314 million every year in public subsidy, which is 45 per cent of their annual revenues, and the Scottish Government has given private bus companies an additional £200 million of grants in the past year alone. That is an obscene amount of cash from the public sector in return for a disproportionately priced and inadequate service.

Amendment 11 meets with the established mission of the Parliament.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I have to defend my constituency's Borders Buses, which has done its utmost to deliver a service in these difficult times and has given free transport to people working in the care and health services. Public sector good, but private sector not all bad—please take that into account.

Paul Sweeney: If only that was always the case—it is not the experience in Glasgow. We would certainly be able to level up—to quote a phrase—if we had proper franchising measures in place.

It is fair to say that amendment 11 matches this Parliament's established mission in relation to both Government policy and legislation that is already on the statute book. There is no ground for ministers to reject it on that basis. In 2018, the then transport minister, Humza Yousaf, said:

"This Government will not stand by as bus passenger numbers decline."

In that case, why has the number of bus journeys in Scotland decreased by 12 per cent over the past five years and why did bus passengers experience a 9 per cent increase in fares over and above inflation between 2015 and 2019?

Greater Manchester's new approach means that fares, timetables and routes will be set by the regional transport authority instead of by private companies, but private operators may still be able to continue running services under a franchising system.

I recognise that it is important not to make the perfect the enemy of the good and to benchmark against best-practice regions such as Greater Manchester. In the spirit of maximising the chance for us to move forward in this area, I have therefore adjusted my amendment from yesterday to simply require ministers to consult private bus companies and local authorities on the potential of regional franchising as a condition of future financial support from the state.

Scotland has the powers to follow that example. We secured amendments to the Transport (Scotland) Bill in 2019 in order to allow that. However, on 2 June this year, a Scottish Government answer to a freedom of information request clarified that no discussion or communication had taken place between Transport Scotland and local authorities in relation to funding for franchising. The minister was reported as saying:

"I can confirm no discussion or communication has taken place between Transport Scotland and local authorities in relation to funding for franchising, public ownership or BSIPs"

—that is, bus service improvement partnerships.

Instead of giving no-strings grant-based funds to private bus providers and facilitating a bus service that is ever more overpriced and fragmented, the Government has an opportunity through my amendment to use the massive allocations of public subsidies to drive forward what the Parliament agreed and legislated for in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2009, and deliver a franchising system in every region of Scotland that will underpin a public bus service that is fit for purpose.

Amendment 11 would allow us to take that basic step forward. Surely there is no reasonable basis on which to reject the initiating of consultation with local authorities, bus companies and regional transport authorities in order to prepare the ground on this important issue, especially with such vast sums of public money being pumped into private bus companies. We cannot continue to socialise losses and privatise profits.

On the point that has been raised about trade unions, I note that the First Minister said in her

speech to the Scottish Trades Union Congress in 2019:

“The Scottish Government recognises the value of everything the trade union movement does for Scotland. You are fundamental to the fairer Scotland that we all want to see ... Increasing collective bargaining in Scotland is not just a trade union objective. It is a national objective.”

If the Scottish Government holds workers’ rights and the role of trade unions in such high regard, it is surely a commonsense step for it to support my amendment, which would require it to consult businesses that receive support from the state on increasing trade union recognition. The Labour Government in Wales is already taking that step and it is not unreasonable to ask the Scottish Government to do it, too. Even the Pope has said that efforts to rebuild economies after Covid-19 must aim at a future with

“decent and dignified working conditions”

by giving workers the right to organise in trade unions. On pain of excommunication, perhaps, members might consider supporting the proposal in the chamber today.

In summation, my point is that, instead of allocating funds on an ad hoc basis, we should consider how we can condition the support to achieve better social and economic outcomes, not just over the next six months under the pandemic but in the long term. We have taken that approach before in the face of national crises, when we have used it as an opportunity to underpin major reform.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I have listened carefully to the discussions on the issue both yesterday and today. I know that the member feels strongly about trade unions, but is he seriously suggesting that the Government should not support businesses or individuals who are not affiliated to trade unions? That is an utterly bonkers suggestion.

Paul Sweeney: I am not, although it is reasonable to expect any large business with more than 250 employees to permit trade union organisation if the workers desire that. I would not necessarily make support conditional at this point. In my revised amendment, I do not propose conditionality; I merely propose that the Government be required to consult businesses that receive support in order to encourage discussion about trade union organisation. That would be a reasonable step forward. I feel that that adjustment from yesterday might perhaps meet with greater support in the chamber today.

We all too often hear empty words from the Government on the advancement of public transport and trade union rights. When it comes to the crunch, however, it does not come up with the goods, so I would like the Government to support amendment 11 and I invite support from across

the chamber. For once, I hope that the Government puts those empty sentiments into action.

15:15

The Presiding Officer: I call Pam Duncan-Glancy to speak to amendment 12 and other amendments in the group.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Yesterday, we were clear that, had the scope of the bill been wider, we would have sought to do much more with it to ensure that protections that were given to people during the pandemic were available for a while longer. We would also have sought to add provisions that would be needed to meet the challenges ahead.

In my short time in the Parliament, I have been asked to input to two bills that have been limited in scope and have limited our ability to amend them. Although I understand the reasons for relative speed, I put on record that I find this way of working not as supportive of collegiate law making or of harnessing the potential of all of Scotland’s people as I would hope. I am sure that the Government and others will share the hope that this approach will not be the way forward when we return.

Scottish Labour was clear yesterday that, although we have been able to amend the bill in the way we wished, we had intended to move a number of amendments at stage 2 that would have placed duties on the Government to report to Parliament on the effect of expiry or otherwise of various current provisions within a month of the bill receiving royal assent, particularly as they relate to some of the people the pandemic has most impacted, such as disabled people, people on low incomes and carers.

My amendments focus on the provisions that are in place to protect those groups and on the need to assess whether further measures are required, including those that we set out in the chamber yesterday on adding a supplement to the Scottish child payment, making further double payments of the carers allowance, and creating a self-isolation support grant.

The chamber will be aware that I did not move my amendments yesterday, because of the commitment that the cabinet secretary offered that the Government would introduce a wide-scale reporting requirement that would bind it to report to Parliament on the impact of the extension or expiry of provisions. I do not expect that the cabinet secretary will be too surprised to hear me say that I was slightly disappointed when I saw the Government’s amendments earlier today, with their limited provisions on reporting requirements.

I feel strongly that the Government's amendment 5 is not strong enough. It requires reporting on "information" and "plans" but not on effect or impact. For that reason, I do not feel that amendment 5 offers even the limited protections that we sought yesterday in our original amendments for reporting requirements. By specifically asking the Government to consider the effect of continuing or expiring such provisions, we sought to encourage not only an assessment of where we are now or where we are going, and thus of what future measures we need, but some reflection on where we have been.

I understand concerns about the detail that those provisions ask for, which the cabinet secretary has just outlined. However, it is in the detail that we need to get this right. I am sure that organisations and people across Scotland will be pleased to help the cabinet secretary out in that regard.

In respect of my amendment 12, I welcome the inclusion in amendment 5 to require a report on the social security support that is available to carers to cope with the additional pressures of the pandemic and on what further support the Government will consider. However, I feel strongly that the amendment does not capture the depth of the report that yesterday's amendments suggested, in the way that I just described. It is important to consider what support is available and what plans there are for the future and to understand the effect of the measures in place to allow for consideration of what we should do.

Amendment 5 also misses the crucial ask to report on support for families with a disabled person in them, and specifically on whether a £5 supplement to the Scottish child payment is required for that support, and whether that amount is sufficient. The omission of that group of people from the report requirements is disappointing, given the levels of child poverty that the chamber heard about yesterday, and the impact that the pandemic has had on that group. I can see that that provision could be, as the cabinet secretary has said, outwith the reporting mechanisms of the bill, but that is largely because of the limited scope of the bill in the first place.

All that I was trying to do with amendment 12 was to ask the Government to consider whether it will make provision for such a supplement in the context of Covid, so I will press that amendment. I do not doubt that, had there been more time to engage with the Government on this issue, we could have resolved much of it through constructive engagement, in which I am sure the Government would partake, without bringing back the amendments. Unfortunately, time not being on our side, although we will back amendment 5, we

will press amendment 12 to try to ensure that a depth of consideration is given.

In the same vein, with regard to the provisions in amendment 13, amendment 5 falls short. I will therefore press amendment 13 today.

Members will also recognise amendment 14, because I lodged the same amendment yesterday, although I did not move it. Unfortunately, I do not feel that amendment 5 goes far enough in setting out what we want to assess. Amendment 14 is clear about where we feel that monitoring assessment must take place. Throughout this week, I have set out the importance of reports that consider the impact of reducing eligibility for social care packages. In my contributions today, I have set out the importance of looking back as well as forward. For that reason, amendment 5, in the name of the cabinet secretary, has also fallen short of where we would like it to be.

Presiding Officer, please be assured that I have brought my amendments back today not to keep us here longer than necessary but to draw attention to the serious issues, apply as much scrutiny as we can in the time that we have and encourage meaningful and impactful discussion with, and action from, members in the chamber.

Murdo Fraser: I welcome amendments 5 and 6, in the name of the cabinet secretary, which show that reasonable progress has been made in relation to the points that were raised in the chamber yesterday. Yesterday, we were happy to support the various amendments on improving reporting, and amendments 5 and 6 go some to way towards recognising some of the concerns.

However, I share the concern that some members have expressed that the amendments might not go far enough. I turn to Pauline McNeill's amendments, on which she has made fair points about support for live music venues—an issue that she has pursued assiduously in the chamber over many years. If she moves her amendments, we will support them.

Our view is that the amendments in the name of Pam Duncan-Glancy are reasonable in asking for reporting on issues such as social security support for carers and social care. If she moves her amendments, we intend to support them.

We cannot support amendment 11, in the name of Paul Sweeney. Our concern is that the amendment involves significant policy issues and, in our view, it is not appropriate to introduce such issues into an emergency bill. There has been no opportunity to debate or carry out external consultation on the matters that he has raised, however worthy they might be. An emergency bill that we are rushing through Parliament in three days is not the vehicle to discuss such matters in any detail. For that reason, we will not support

amendment 11, although we will support the other amendments in the group.

Paul Sweeney: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: I have just finished, but I will give way if I am allowed to do so.

Paul Sweeney: I want to appeal to Murdo Fraser's better nature and point out that those matters were settled during the passage of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. Therefore, we would merely be giving effect to provisions that Parliament has already debated in great detail.

Murdo Fraser: I just do not believe that an emergency bill is the correct vehicle to discuss matters on which many members have not had the opportunity to engage in any detail.

I believe that my colleague Graham Simpson might have more to say on the matter in a moment.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I will touch on amendment 11, in the name of Paul Sweeney, which, if agreed to, would have unintended consequences.

I refer to 300 people in my constituency who are still in work, and to the "must consult" part of amendment 11 and Paul Sweeney's suggestion about support achieving better social and economic outcomes, although he said that he was not proposing conditionality.

Three hundred employees are now working at Diodes in my constituency thanks to cross-party efforts and the efforts of the local authority and a task force to save jobs. In 2018, Texas Instruments, a profitable business, was to close. The Scottish Government, Inverclyde Council and other public sector organisations worked tremendously hard to get a solution and, in February 2019, the jobs were saved.

I am not averse to Mr Sweeney's suggestion regarding trade union representation, but I fear that, if amendment 11 were to be agreed to, the "must consult" requirement would mean that, in any similar situation—whether in my constituency or anywhere else in Scotland—jobs would be lost. Therefore, I urge colleagues to reject amendment 11.

Graham Simpson: I had better say something, seeing as Murdo Fraser has teed me up. *[Interruption.]* It is too late for that.

I want to comment on amendment 11, in the name of Paul Sweeney. Mr Sweeney has got it completely wrong. The bill is classed as emergency legislation—we do not see it as that, but that is the way that we are dealing with it. Mr Sweeney seemed to want to introduce a wider transport debate, and of course he rightly points to

the provisions in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, some of which have not yet been enacted. Parliament can have that debate when those provisions come into force—now is not the time.

I welcome the colossal sums that have been put into the bus industry and rail services to keep public transport moving. That has been vital. What we cannot do, as we move on, is make it a "condition of support"—those are the words in Mr Sweeney's amendment—that private bus companies, which Mr Sweeney appears to hate, and local authorities can receive support only if they move down a regional franchising route. I should point out to Mr Sweeney that we are talking about emergency support.

I think that Mr Sweeney has got this completely wrong, and we will oppose amendment 11.

Christine Grahame: I did not intend to speak—people often say that and then take part in a debate. As I understand the policy memorandum, the bill's purpose is to

"update a range of existing legislative measures which support various aspects of the ongoing response to the public health emergency"

caused by the Covid pandemic. It amends two acts—it is a bill that amends existing legislation. Its purpose is not to introduce new provisions.

There is a good debate to be had, but I cannot see how amendment 11 fits into the bill in any shape or form. To me, it is a process matter.

Paul Sweeney: Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: I think that I am intervening—what am I doing? Oh yes, Mr Sweeney can intervene. I forgot why I was here. I thought that I was intervening, but I am not.

Paul Sweeney: Surely the member recognises that I was not afforded the opportunity to shape those prior legislative instruments. It is an important cornerstone of our constitution that the Parliament cannot be bound by decisions made in the previous session. If we are looking to deliver positive social outcomes that this Parliament has already agreed are favourable, surely we should be looking at measures to drive that forward. Indeed, if we are looking at those future opportunities and we are not going to endorse them now, surely that is a tacit agreement that the current damaging status quo is acceptable.

Christine Grahame: Mr Sweeney should really listen to me. I said that this is a bill to amend existing legislation, not introduce something new. That is the end of the debate.

The Presiding Officer: It is not quite the end of the debate. *[Laughter.]* I call the cabinet secretary to wind up on amendment 5.

John Swinney: Let me become the voice of calm in the debate. *[Laughter.]* It has been a fascinating debate, with interesting contributions that I will reflect on.

Members have rightly and properly commended Pauline McNeill for the assiduous way in which she has pursued the interests and perspectives of the live music sector, and she raises important issues in her contribution. In the course of the passage of this legislation, she and I have had the opportunity to have exchanges, which are on the record and which I hope provide reassurance to those to whom I know she listens carefully and on whose behalf she speaks. I will make sure that we follow through on the dialogue that I have committed to in the discussions today.

What I have tried to do—this is where I draw on the distinguished contribution and legislative assessment of one of our long-serving members, Christine Grahame—is formulate proposals that are consistent with the framework of the bill. I know that not everybody agrees with the judgments that I have made in that regard. I know that the Labour Party would like me to go further and that the Conservative Party believes that I have gone too far already—although that did not seem to stop Mr Simpson from wanting me to go further in the debate earlier on. I simply say that I am trying to reach some forms of agreement in this debate.

15:30

We have tried to focus on legislation that Parliament has already passed and update it for the current circumstances that we face on Covid. Although members of Parliament clearly would have liked us to, we have not tried to use the bill to stretch much further. There were plenty of opportunities to stretch much further in terms of Covid recovery, the policy response to tackle fundamental inequalities, and the steps that we need to take to support business. That will all be part of the Covid recovery agenda that the Government brings forward and that Parliament considers.

However, this is a tight bill updating existing legislation that Parliament has already passed. For that reason, I have tried to extend the reporting requirements as broadly as I think is reasonable within the confines of the legislation. That is what makes it impossible for me to support the amendments lodged by Pam Duncan-Glancy, because I believe that they go much further than the scope of the bill and—particularly as drafted—run the risk of putting confusion into statute. From the discussions during and tenor of today's debate, I assume that amendment 5 will be agreed to, which will provide scope for reporting.

Additional provisions will then broaden that scope, which I think creates the sources of confusion.

Pauline McNeill: I will not rehash all the arguments about how narrow the bill is. However, on the question of broadening the scope, I am sorry to return to the issue of dancing. Did I hear the First Minister correctly when she said that she is engaged with the sector? A lot of people in the wedding sector are saying that, for the sake of nine days, in all seriousness, if those restrictions were relaxed now, all those couples from 31 July onwards could get the advantage of that.

My question is: will the cabinet secretary ask Jason Leitch or Gregor Smith what the clinical reason for people not being able to have dancing at their weddings is, because I cannot see it?

John Swinney: As luck would have it, this morning, I was involved in a conversation with the two gentlemen whom Pauline McNeill referred to, at which I raised those very issues. They are being considered as part of—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me, cabinet secretary. Can we have quiet at the rear of the chamber? Thank you.

John Swinney: It sounds almost as if there is some dancing going on at the back of the chamber. Who am I to interrupt the fun of my colleagues at the back?

The issues that Pauline McNeill raised are being explored. The First Minister said that at First Minister's question time today. We are trying to be as helpful as we possibly can, if there is any way in which we can exercise some degree of pragmatic action. Jackie Baillie talked yesterday about the relaxation of requirements around some of the arrangements when people are in pubs for some of the football games that might go to penalties. We have taken pragmatic action on that to avoid situations that could be disruptive. We are able to take such action, and those issues are being actively explored.

I come now to the controversial—if I might call it that—part of the debate, which is Mr Sweeney's contribution. He raised absolutely legitimate issues of debate; they are completely legitimate issues and I do not in any way whatsoever dismiss them. However, the amendments should not be agreed to for a number of reasons.

The first is that a number of the issues that Mr Sweeney raised are already provided for in existing statute. To go back to my argument about not causing confusion in statute, if there is already provision in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, I do not see the necessity for us to expand that provision in a bill of this character, which has a narrow scope.

Secondly, I want to counter the view that funds have been allocated to transportation companies on an “ad hoc” basis—Mr Sweeney used that phrase. Funds have been allocated to try to sustain public transport services in Scotland. If the Government had not expended the money in the way that it has, we would not have public transport services available to us in the post-pandemic situation. It is as simple as that. Those were emergency distributions of funds to try to sustain a sector that, through the impact of the pandemic, was unable to take in any fares.

Paul Sweeney: The cabinet secretary makes a fair point, which I accept. It is essential to maintain those services, because they are critical to our communities across Scotland. My point about the allocation of funds being ad hoc is that the Government is not thinking strategically; it is a reactionary measure to maintain existing services as they are, however inadequate they might be. Other parts of the UK such as Greater Manchester have evolved that position to see how we can develop franchising as the best-practice model across public transport in the UK. That is merely a means of evolving our position in Scotland to use that extensive state support more efficiently in the interest of the public good.

John Swinney: I am not close to all the details about the Greater Manchester transport system, but I would hazard a guess that a lot of that work was done pre-Covid. Mr Sweeney raises a legitimate point, which is addressed in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which is that those options can be pursued. The funding that was available during the pandemic was literally survivability funding. If we had not disbursed that funding, we would not have public transport services that are able to be used today. Those are issues that Parliament can come back to and consider, and they form part of the Government’s policy agenda.

The Government is entirely committed to the fair work agenda. I was involved in an extensive discussion this morning with representatives of a broad cross-section of opinion in Scottish society, including business people, third sector representatives and public sector representatives, and at the heart of that there was a discussion about how we can use the fair work agenda to structure our recovery from Covid. I assure Parliament of the Government’s intention to be absolutely focused on using every instrument at our disposal to advance some of those arguments.

On the basis of those points, I urge Parliament to support my amendment 5 and Pauline McNeill’s amendment 5A, and encourage Parliament to resist all other amendments in the group.

The Presiding Officer: I call Pauline McNeill to press or withdraw amendment 5A.

Pauline McNeill: On the basis that the Government supports it, I press amendment 5A.

Amendment 5A agreed to.

Amendment 5B not moved.

Amendment 5, as amended, agreed to.

Amendment 6 moved—[John Swinney]—and agreed to.

Amendment 7 not moved.

Section 3—Minor and consequential provisions

The Presiding Officer: We move to group 5. Amendment 8, in the name of John Swinney, is grouped with amendments 9, 10 and 15 to 17.

John Swinney: The final group relates to minor and consequential amendments resulting from yesterday’s stage 2 proceedings. As I indicated yesterday when I spoke in support of Jackie Baillie’s amendment 15, today’s amendments 8, 10, 15 and 17 are technical consequential amendments to tidy up the statute book.

Currently, the Scottish ministers are required by the Scottish coronavirus acts to lay statements in Parliament alongside any regulations under those acts being progressed under the made affirmative procedure. However, the ability to progress regulations under the made affirmative procedure rather than the draft affirmative procedure is being expired on 30 September 2021. Therefore, amendments 8, 10, 15 and 17 ensure that the requirement to lay accompanying statements is repealed at the same time.

Similarly, amendments 9 and 16 are technical amendments to tidy up the statute book as a consequence of Alex Cole-Hamilton’s amendment 13 being agreed by Parliament yesterday at stage 2. They ensure that all provision in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 relating to local authorities being able to physically exclude the public from local authority meetings is repealed on 30 September 2021, when that measure is expired.

I move amendment 8 and ask members to support amendments 8 to 10 and 15 to 17.

Amendment 8 agreed to.

Amendments 9 and 10 moved—[John Swinney]—and agreed to.

After section 5

Amendment 11 moved—[Paul Sweeney].

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 11 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. As this is the first division of this stage, Parliament is suspended for a few minutes.

15:41

Meeting suspended.

15:48

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the vote on amendment 11.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 30, Against 90, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 11 disagreed to.

Amendment 12 moved—[Pam Duncan-Glancy].

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 12 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 59, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 12 disagreed to.

Amendment 13 moved—[Pam Duncan-Glancy].

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 13 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 59, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 13 disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I call Pam Duncan-Glancy to move or not move amendment 14.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I am nothing if not a trier. I move amendment 14.

Amendment 14 moved—[Pam Duncan-Glancy].

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 14 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My voting app froze; I would have voted no.

16:00

The Presiding Officer: Thank you Ms Somerville, we have recorded that.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer, I may have made a mistake. I was sure that I had voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your comment is on the record Mr Kidd, but I regret that we cannot correct the vote at this point.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (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)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 60, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 14 agreed to.

Section 6—Commencement

Amendments 15 to 17 moved—[John Swinney]—and agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: That ends the consideration of amendments.

As members will be aware, at this stage in proceedings, I am required under standing orders to decide whether in my view any provision of the bill relates to a protected subject matter—that is, whether it modifies the electoral system and franchise for Scottish parliamentary elections. In my view, no provision of the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill relates to a protected subject matter. Therefore, the bill does not require a supermajority to be passed at stage 3.

There will be a brief pause before we move on to the stage 3 debate.

Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and around the Holyrood campus. I ask that you take care and observe the measures, including when exiting and entering the chamber. Please use the aisles and walkways only to access your seat and when moving around the chamber.

I advise that, as we are running quite a bit ahead of schedule, I intend closing the debate an hour after we start, as opposed to the scheduled time. I am sure that that will meet with widespread approval—except from the Deputy First Minister, by the looks of things.

I call the Deputy First Minister to speak to and move the motion. You have around seven minutes, Deputy First Minister.

16:05

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): For the purposes of rule 9.11 of the standing orders, I advise Parliament that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill, has consented to place her prerogative and interests, in so far as they are affected by the bill, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the bill.

I am pleased to present the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill to Parliament for debate at stage 3 and I invite members to agree to pass the bill.

As we have been conducting our proceedings this afternoon, and during the course of the past 40 minutes, the funeral has been taking place in Arbroath of my dear friend and colleague Andrew Welsh, who was the member of the Scottish Parliament for Angus and my neighbouring member of Parliament for the Angus East constituency when I was a member of the House of Commons. Andrew and I shared a political journey over the past 40 years during which I have had the privilege to know him and experience his support, loyalty and commitment. It is a matter of enormous personal regret to me that I am not able to be at his funeral this afternoon, although the First Minister is addressing the funeral on our behalf.

Andrew Welsh is, in my view, one of the finest individuals I have ever had the privilege to know in my life: a man of deep integrity, loyalty, faithfulness and commitment who served the people whom we both represented in the county of

Angus with devotion for many years. He was rightly accorded an honour that he cherished enormously, which was to be made a freeman of Angus in recognition of the devoted service that he gave to the people of his beloved county. I am grateful to have the opportunity to place on the record my own tribute to one of the finest individuals I have ever met and to extend my love and sympathy to Sheena and Jane at this heartbreaking time for them and their family. [Applause.]

It is against the backdrop of on-going uncertainty and continued necessary restrictions and changes to ways of working and living that we can see why this bill is vital to our continuing response to Covid-19.

I am grateful to the many members from across the chamber who approached the bill in a constructive way to ensure that necessary adjustments can remain in place beyond 30 September. The debate during the past couple of days has been characterised by an entirely reasonable argument by the Conservatives that the debate was taking place in an accelerated timescale and the argument by the Labour Party that the bill should have been more extensive and expansive. I have tried to set out to Parliament a genuine, practical observation: that I wanted to make sure that public authorities, businesses and others were clear about what would be expected of them on 30 September when the current legislative framework is due to elapse and allow them to plan for the circumstances that will arise.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I have a question about the impact of the legislation and the reporting framework on theatres and cultural venues. The impact of the restrictions is a critical issue for them as they are planning ahead for Christmas performances. They also have issues about how the restrictions will operate over the next few weeks. Can further clarity be given on the limits on the numbers of people who are able to access our theatres and cultural venues during the summer and after the end of September?

John Swinney: I would certainly have hoped that the First Minister's announcements on Tuesday—especially what she said about physical distancing, which is one of the principal factors that affect the capacity of arts venues—provided the necessary clarity for the theatre and cultural sector. We are optimistic that the control of the pandemic will enable us to sustain the commitments that the First Minister made on Tuesday. Obviously, the culture ministers, Angus Robertson and Jenny Gilruth, will engage with the sector to make sure that it has sufficient clarity, and I am happy to ensure that that remains the case.

Sarah Boyack rose—

John Swinney: I give way to Sarah Boyack.

Sarah Boyack: I apologise for not clarifying that the issue that I was getting at is whether there will be a cap on the number of people in venues, in addition to the requirement for 1m distancing. I thank Mr Swinney for allowing me to make that clarification.

John Swinney: Any detail about caps on particular venues is specified in the strategic framework and what it says about level 2, which some parts of the country continue to be in, level 1 and level 0. Beyond level 0, there will be no caps, because there will be no physical distancing. I hope that that provides the clarity that Sarah Boyack sought.

The provisions of the bill that I hope that Parliament will pass shortly will ensure that there is no gap between the Scottish coronavirus acts expiring and the new provisions taking effect, which would only add to the confusion that has been caused by coronavirus.

I am grateful to members for their amendments to the bill. I think that it has been a constructive process. The Government has engaged substantively on the issues in an effort to ensure that we responded positively to the suggestions that were made.

I want to make it clear at the outset that the Government recognises that, when Parliament grants extraordinary measures of the type that are contained in the Scottish coronavirus acts, it is essential that there is transparency about how those measures are used, and whether they remain necessary and appropriate. I welcome members' contributions to strengthen further the extensive system of reporting that is already in place.

The first Scottish coronavirus acts put in place a robust reporting regime to deliver that transparency and continual review. The Government recently published the seventh bimonthly report, and it will publish the next report in August. Bimonthly reports, which will now cover reporting on measures in respect of tenants' rights, will continue to be published for as long as the measures in the Scottish coronavirus acts are in use. I assure Parliament that we will aim to make the reports as helpful to Parliament and other observers as we can.

The amendments that have been agreed to today will ensure that there will be a single omnibus, one-off report that will cover the information that Parliament sought on wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, support to help business, fiscal fines, live music, social security, support for carers and social care services.

I recognise that members would have liked to have gone further in introducing new measures beyond the limited scope of the bill, but the limited scope was entirely necessary to assist with parliamentary scrutiny in the time available.

Having the bill agreed to by Parliament today will allow appropriate time for it to receive royal assent early in August. My officials will use that time to make sure that all necessary guidance is updated and made available to stakeholders and the public more widely, so that it is clear to all which provisions Parliament has decided should remain available beyond the end of September and which ones will expire at that time, and what that will mean for those who will be impacted.

I believe that the bill makes an important contribution to our national response to the pandemic, and I am very grateful for Parliament's swift action in addressing the matter.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Deputy First Minister. I echo your comments in relation to Andrew Welsh, who was the convener of the first parliamentary committee that I sat on. He certainly commanded respect across the chamber, for good reason.

16:14

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I associate myself with the Presiding Officer's comments, and those of the Deputy First Minister, about Andrew Welsh. Andrew Welsh and I served together on a number of committees in the Parliament. Although we were political opponents, he was always a very decent and courteous man with a strong Christian faith, and he will be sadly missed by all in the chamber and everyone who knew him.

The bill process has been very short. I thank members of the Parliament's legislation team for their assistance with preparing the amendments that my colleagues and I lodged. The very tight timescales put a great deal of pressure on the team; they had to work late into the night, and we certainly appreciate the extra lengths that they went to.

In the stage 1 debate on Tuesday, we set out our concerns about the pace at which the legislation has been introduced. I do not intend to rehearse all those arguments today, as they are on the record, but I think that the manner in which we dealt with amendments yesterday tells its own story. We were trying to deal with significant issues in a very short space of time, and there was limited opportunity for any detailed parliamentary

scrutiny, or indeed any external input from stakeholders. We nevertheless did our best to engage with the bill and lodged a number of amendments for discussion.

At the time, I noted Jackie Baillie's attempt to widen the scope of the bill. Although I understand her reasons for doing so, I do not believe that that would have been a helpful move when we were already trying to rush through too many measures without sufficient time for scrutiny.

At the heart of the bill process lies an essential contradiction. On the one hand, on Tuesday, the First Minister told members in the chamber that things were getting better, that restrictions were on track to be eased and that by mid-August we should, all being well, be back to some degree of normality. In contrast, the Deputy First Minister has said that the extraordinary and unprecedented powers for ministers must be extended for at least another—

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): In fairness to the First Minister, I think that the member would agree that her statements were heavily caveated with reference to the progress of the vaccine programme and whether we see further mutations of the virus. None of us can ignore that.

Murdo Fraser: I accept that her statements were caveated—I have already conceded that point—but the powers that we are being asked to agree to today will extend for at least another six months after the end of September, and potentially for another six months after that, so we are looking at having the measures in place for some eight months after the point at which the First Minister is telling us that we should be getting back to normal. In the worst-case scenario, they could be in place for a year and two months, which is quite extraordinary.

That confusion and lack of consistency cut right across the Government's approach to Covid. I know from my communications with constituents how concerned they are about it. People simply cannot understand why they are unable to attend graduation ceremonies for children who are leaving nursery or stand in a field, socially distanced, to watch their children's sports day when the Scottish Government has sanctioned 3,000 fans gathering together in the fan zone in Glasgow, where—if our TV screens are to be believed—very little social distancing has been enforced. Similarly, people cannot understand why a travel ban has been introduced for Manchester, when there has been a very similar case rate in Dundee but no steps have been taken to restrict travel in and out of that city.

Some weeks ago, when large numbers of Rangers fans gathered in George Square to

celebrate their club's historic 55th league victory—again, with very little sign of social distancing—there was strident condemnation from the First Minister and the justice secretary. They were right to condemn those breaches of the rules and yet, when perhaps as many as 30,000 Scotland fans travelled to London last week—again, with little sign of social distancing—we did not hear a peep from either of those individuals in condemnation.

This week, we have seen a spike in the number of Covid cases in Scotland among younger males in particular, which may well be attributable to people gathering to watch the football. I have certainly been told of at least one busload of Scotland supporters travelling back at the weekend, of which every single person on the bus subsequently tested positive for Covid. People struggle to understand why there should be one rule for some and another rule for others. That lack of consistency and clear messaging is undermining confidence in the public health communications.

We even saw confusion during the passage of the bill, as we discussed earlier. Yesterday, my colleague Graham Simpson lodged an amendment seeking to remove the restriction on the public attending meetings of licensing boards after 30 September. A parallel amendment was lodged by Alex Cole-Hamilton to do the same for local council meetings. Yesterday, the Deputy First Minister accepted Mr Cole-Hamilton's amendment but rejected Mr Simpson's. That was utterly illogical—there was no basis for taking a different view on licensing board meetings from that on local council meetings. Again, there was a lack of consistency and confusion.

Although the matter was cleared up this afternoon and rectified when the Government agreed to support Mr Simpson's amendment, which he brought back to the chamber, that small episode illustrates my point about the rushed nature of the bill process, which has left little time for consultation and not enough time for scrutiny or detailed consideration.

I set out on Tuesday why we cannot support the bill as it stands, and our position has not changed. Although there are some measures that we support, there are others about which we have serious concerns. Overall, the measures should not have been railroaded through Parliament in the course of three days without detailed scrutiny and consultation. There would have been ample time to have the matter considered in September, when we will be much clearer about the Covid situation in the autumn.

For all those reasons, we maintain our opposition to the bill.

16:20

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I associate the Scottish Labour Party with the remarks that the Deputy First Minister made about the sad death of Andrew Welsh. I offer condolences to his family. I recall Andrew as a gentlemanly person, who was always very kind but nevertheless determined. As he was a former chief whip for the Scottish National Party, I suspect that, as we speak, he would have been in pursuit of Bill Kidd to mark his card.

We have reached the stage 3 debate at breakneck speed, having started stage 1 only two days ago, on Tuesday. I thank the Parliament and in particular its legislation team for the drafting of amendments at incredibly short notice. I thank the cabinet secretary, who was occasionally there, as well as his civil servants and in particular his special adviser, with whom I was negotiating last night and this morning. I also thank the Scottish Labour team, which has worked hard to improve the bill.

For many colleagues, this has been the first legislation that they have engaged with in this Parliament and boy, oh boy, did they make an impression! I hope that, like me, they think that the effort has been worth it overall.

Pauline McNeill pursued changes to reporting on live music, pubs and weddings, and Pam Duncan-Glancy, with a little help from Bill Kidd, pursued changes to reporting on the extension of the act with regard to social care and on the need to restore care packages and respite to pre-pandemic levels. Changes to monitoring and reporting, and changes to providing information to the Parliament in advance of decisions being made were also pursued, all of which will help to improve the legislation.

Aside from the specifics of the bill, we genuinely cannot return to the Parliament debating and voting on issues weeks after they have been decided on. If the United Kingdom Government and Parliament can ensure that there is scrutiny and that members can vote on changes within days, there is no reason why this Parliament cannot do likewise. That will help with consistency, which was raised by Murdo Fraser. There is concern that, if there is no logic to the decisions that are made and no consistency, compliance will diminish as a consequence.

I remain to be convinced that we need emergency legislation in place beyond April 2022. There appears to be more hope about containing the virus in the future, due to the roll-out of the vaccination programme. I understand that case numbers are going up but, unsurprisingly, that is among younger men. Some have noted that that

causal effect might be because of the association with football and the Euros.

Further, Parliament is sitting, its committees are constituted and, as we have demonstrated this week, we can deal with emergency legislation quickly. Therefore, I caution the Government on extending emergency legislation for any longer than necessary. The cabinet secretary knows that I believe that the bill has been too tightly drafted, thereby preventing members from adding in areas of policy in which they feel there is a gap. Nevertheless, we have found creative ways to at least have the debate and to place reporting requirements on ministers so that such policy areas are still in the spotlight.

Nowhere is that clearer than in the debate about continuing the ban on evictions under all levels of Covid restrictions. Let me be clear again that the only area of concern is with housing arrears that have arisen for tenants due to Covid. If a tenant is responsible for antisocial behaviour or criminality, that should not be included in a ban on evictions. Our concern stems from the fact that the economic impact of the pandemic has still not been fully experienced. Some people lost their jobs at the very start, others are back at work but are underemployed and others are still on furlough and might not have a job to go to when the scheme finishes, so there are considerable financial uncertainties ahead. We know that eviction orders are currently appearing in sheriff courts across Scotland; people are in danger of losing the roof over their head. If that is for Covid-related reasons, we should not allow it to happen.

I therefore welcome the new tenant hardship grant fund. The cabinet secretary has acknowledged that the previous loan fund simply did not work. Scottish Labour had been raising that for some time and I am very glad that he listened. However, I also asked him about loans being converted into grants and about payments being deferred in order to avoid people getting into more debt. I am not sure that I got a response, so I will try again. I would welcome any response that he can offer, together with information on when the fund will be open, who is eligible, how they can apply and when the funding will be dispensed, because there is not a moment to lose.

As I said at the start of stage 1, we have lived through an extraordinary 15 months. No one could have anticipated the length or depth of the pandemic or the tragic loss of life for far too many people. Emergency legislation was required to cope with the scale of the response that we needed, but the key message for the Scottish Government is that, in exercising those powers, it must understand that it should co-operate with the required scrutiny by this Parliament.

Scottish Labour will support the bill at stage 3 at decision time.

16:25

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I associate the Scottish Green Party with the Deputy First Minister's comments on Andrew Welsh. He sounds like someone I would like to have met and worked with.

I put on the record my thanks and those of my party colleagues to the wonderful team of clerks and the wider Parliament staff who have worked hard to make the progress of the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill as smooth as possible, particularly as it has had such a short timeframe. For us newbies, this emergency legislation has been a frantic and fascinating learning opportunity.

It is unfortunate that the bill is necessary. The pandemic is not over and new cases continue to rise. As we have heard, some may wish simply to see how Covid develops over the summer, but if the past 18 months have taught us anything, it is that that approach is simply short-sighted. There can be no doubt that the vaccination programme is our best route out of the pandemic, but we would be failing the people of Scotland if we chose not to prepare.

We should hope for the best and plan for the worst, which means maintaining both the public health measures and the social protections that people need. At stage 1, my colleague Lorna Slater set out our disappointment that the bill does not provide greater protections for tenants, many of whom are still facing the threat of looming redundancy as the furlough scheme ends. We also regret that it was not possible to extend the eviction ban to all until such time as the coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

I welcome the provision that we have agreed to insert into the bill that will require reporting on the status of eviction provisions. That will provide the Parliament with valuable data on the extent of the problem. However, Scotland lags behind much of Europe in how we protect those who rent their homes and I hope that Parliament will get an opportunity to tackle properly the deep-set problems that they face.

The Scottish Greens are pleased that amendment 3 was agreed to as we believe that it balances the need for transparency and accountability with the need for the Care Inspectorate to directly support care providers. It recognises that, although it is not currently necessary for the Care Inspectorate to report to Parliament, circumstances may change and, if a new and more dangerous strain was to enter the country, it may be required once more. I am glad

that the concerns that Scottish Care expressed were listened to, and I am grateful to Jackie Baillie and the Deputy First Minister for taking on board my colleague Gillian Mackay's suggestion.

Next, and perhaps more important, is the need to look forward. The Government has indicated that some aspects of the changes that came in as a response to Covid will have longer-term value and will be made permanent. It has said that there will be a permanence bill to achieve that, but that that will be a long-term piece of work. Some aspects might be uncontroversial, such as measures to make online and remote working more routine, but others will be contested, such as measures to protect tenants' rights or protect people from exploitative working conditions and precarious incomes. There will be questions about economic justice on which parties have different views.

We should not shy away from that debate, which should be seen as an historic opportunity to reshape the economy in fair, ethical and sustainable ways. We must take care not to pursue a shallow understanding of recovery and not to race back to business as usual with a sole focus on anything that increases gross domestic product, regardless of the social and environmental consequences.

Nobody likes the fact that emergency legislation has been needed, and nobody should pretend that the process is ideal—we have already heard from my colleagues that it is, in fact, far from ideal—but it is necessary to ensure that we put the right protections in place for the people of Scotland in the coming months. The Scottish Green Party will support the bill.

16:30

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I start by offering the condolences of the Liberal Democrats to everyone who knew Andrew Welsh, who was a fine man.

I thank the legislation and clerking teams for the work that they have put into the bill, which has been no small feat.

I rise on behalf of the Liberal Democrats to explain why, after careful consideration, we will not support the bill at decision time tonight. That is not because we think that we do not need some kind of legislation—we do—but we want to see a better, more considered bill that does not extend power to such an extent or for such a length of time.

As liberals, we have been instinctively uncomfortable with the coronavirus acts, despite the security that they have offered some groups in our society and the protections that they have

sought to give the most vulnerable. The bill offers the Government powers for far longer than we believe it will require. It also gives the Government unprecedented rights to introduce legislation without the level of scrutiny that we should expect in any healthy democracy—and, thanks to the vaccines, this nation is far healthier than it was when those acts were passed.

As I said yesterday, the fundamental principle of the bill is that it creates emergency powers that should exist in the context of an emergency. We in my party are not persuaded that the emergency in which we find ourselves will last for the length of time for which the legislation might empower ministers. Simply put, the Liberal Democrats do not believe that it was necessary to introduce in such short order a bill whose provisions last so long.

The Government's answer to concerns voiced by my party, the Conservatives and others about the duration of the extension of the powers in the bill is the threat of new variants. That threat, however, might never expire; the threat that the variants might evade the vaccine is just as real for the next decade as it is for next week. Throughout the pandemic, ministers have shown that they are willing and able to legislate quickly. If the Government can find time to push through a bill as important as this one in just three days, it can introduce legislation that we can pass just as quickly should the vaccines fail us.

The Government has stretched and at times broken with the tolerance and good faith of members when it comes to making announcements to Parliament. Therefore, I am grateful for the agreement that Jackie Baillie and the Deputy First Minister's office reached on the future conduct of such announcements.

The decision not to support the bill was difficult for the Liberal Democrats. We do not have a cavalier attitude to the virus or our route out of the pandemic, but we value the importance of scrutiny in parliamentary democracy. The bill as it stands is an overreach of ministerial power that we just could not countenance. It is not a considered piece of legislation; we have had barely more than two hours to look at amendments to a bill that has so much potential to give the Government so much power for so long.

We do not suggest that there should be nothing, and that the powers and protections of the original acts should just fall away. Instead, we appeal to the Government to use the summer to introduce a better bill to Parliament after our return—one that is informed by the landscape of the pandemic in late summer, safeguards the supremacy of the chamber and shortens to the bare minimum the amount of time that ministers have to exercise those powers.

We need something. The Liberal Democrats support the protections from eviction and the other rights that the bill affords tenants. We want to continue those protections, which should form the central precept of any future bill. A new bill would also need to disapply the extension to time limits on criminal proceedings, which, as I have said before, delay criminal justice and lead to an increase in the remand population.

The legislation is important, but it is because of its importance that we ask the Government to think again.

16:34

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): With your leave, Presiding Officer, I add my comments about colleague and 99er Andrew Welsh, who was a serious and gentle politician with a fun side. Members might not know that he could play the whole Buddy Holly playlist faultlessly on his guitar. Now that is a tribute.

As is set out in the policy memorandum of the bill, the bill will

“update a range of existing legislative measures which support various aspects of”

coronavirus regulation. I understand that the measures were to fall at the end of September, so we now have something to take their place. The purpose of the bill is not to introduce new measures, but to allow those that we no longer need to fall, and to allow those that need to be extended to be extended. The bill is not about introducing anything new, so I will come to Mr Sweeney’s amendment 11 in a minute. I will also come to Pam Duncan-Glancy, whom I commend for her persistence.

In broad terms, the question is whether the legislation is proportionate to the challenge, and whether the regulations that are to continue will last only as long as is necessary. I believe so.

I, too, sat through yesterday’s stage 2 amendments. I commend Graham Simpson—who is a lovely man—for persisting, which was the right thing to do. Licensing boards should be sitting in public if councils are doing so. It is good when members on the Government party front bench see that something is amiss and immediately remedy it. That should be the subject of applause rather than condemnation.

I always think that Jackie Baillie is formidable. She remained so in relation to care homes, and got the right result.

On reporting to Parliament, I was interested to see a list relating to the omnibus report. I have the list here—although I know that the Presiding

Officer is not happy with props. I think that the omnibus report is the right way to go.

I commend Pauline McNeill for persisting on the issue of live music. I have great sympathy for the sector. We all have events in our constituency, so reporting on progress in relation to allowing music events, whether pipe bands, silver bands or discos, is a good move. Pauline McNeill was good at pursuing the matter—I like her style.

I think that Mr Sweeney and I will tangle again on occasion, and I am looking forward to it. His amendment 11 was a strange amendment, but he gave me a wonderful opportunity to give my local bus service a pat on the back, and I will do so again. It does not mean that I will get free transport; I have a concessionary bus pass, anyway.

Borders Buses has done a lot. It is important to know that it is not a big commercial company, but a family business that is currently run by the third generation. What a difference the company has made. First Scotland East, which ran the service before it, was rubbish. I see that Rachael Hamilton is agreeing with me. Borders Buses has brought in a new fleet and a new app to help people, and it has provided free travel for care and health workers. I will not have a word said against Borders Buses, because the company does not deserve it.

It was third time lucky for Pam Duncan-Glancy in relation to her amendments.

Poor Bill. What can one say? Thank goodness he has recess coming up. I noticed that our chief whip is back. Believe me—people do not tangle with George Adam lightly, so Bill’s card is marked heavily. Poor Bill. He will be listening. I will help him out; I am used to taking on the whips. *[Laughter.]*

Emergencies will continue. I am a bit of a pessimist, because every time we seem to be getting through things, there is another variant. Therefore, I do not have concerns about extending the measures for six months to March. Any legislation can be repealed if we get through the pandemic, and if our vaccines run ahead of any variants and we are able to live with the virus. I do not want short-term legislation that we need to extend. The news that we are hearing so far regarding variants is not brilliant, which is why the bill is necessary.

I thank members for their support, which I hope the bill will get.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Grahame. I will not reprimand you for referring to Bill Kidd by his first name, because it was clearly an attempt to protect his anonymity. *[Laughter.]*

16:39

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): It has been a far more interesting afternoon than I expected it to be. I thank the legislation team for all their help, and my parliamentary team for slogging it for the past couple of days.

I do not want to rerun all the arguments of the debate, because, as Murdo Fraser put it, they are all already on the record. It is fair to say, however, that over the past few days concerns have been raised about not just the nature of the emergency powers that we are extending but the entire process through which they are being extended. Those concerns came not just from Conservative members but from members across the chamber.

Labour rightly probed the Government on a number of issues, including wedding restrictions and live music, which we heard a lot about today, and more sombre issues, including the effect that the emergency powers that the Government wishes to extend is having on disabled people, for example. Labour was right to probe it on those issues.

The Liberal Democrats sought to allow the public to participate more fully in local council meetings again, and Graham Simpson tried to do the same with alcohol licensing boards. The Government conceded on one yesterday but, curiously, not on the other. Of course, it is always good to see Mr Swinney seeing sense. I know that he always does in the end and today we saw that—rightly so. I thank Mr Swinney.

The Greens participated in the debate by expressing concern about the Care Inspectorate's ability to carry out its functions and provide care services, which have been addressed at stage 3.

I tried in earnest to raise awareness of some live issues that have been raised by stakeholders who have had a very limited opportunity to engage with us, as lawmakers. I tried to remove provisions that will allow ministers to grant prisoners early release and to write off community orders, both of which I believe are completely unnecessary in the current climate.

The only apparent success yesterday was the amendment on hearsay evidence, which the whole chamber felt strongly about. There was a sensible outcome on that issue.

In my view, that was not the only issue that merited success. The blunt instrument that was available to us in the bill was simply to revoke powers or let them expire. I understand why that was unpalatable to many members. I do not blame them for that, because the whole process has been far from ideal.

We wanted to meaningfully add to the bill. We could have added sunset clauses and additional

checks and balances. We could have made the extension subject to further enhanced legislative scrutiny by Parliament or our committees—scrutiny is the whole point of committees. All those would have helped to curb what is, in our eyes, unnecessary and overlong extension of what were, initially, emergency powers that were granted in a time of emergency.

Those are complex policy issues and we have debated them in just a few short hours, without proper scrutiny or external consultation. The stage 2 debates yesterday threw open a Pandora's box of those complex issues. I am afraid that I do not buy the argument that the bill could not have achieved royal assent in time if we had had stage 3 in September, after robust consultation throughout the summer.

I know that it is not the most contentious bill in the world, nor are the powers that the Government is seeking the most contentious, but that is not the point. The next bill might be contentious; that is what worries me. We are setting a precedent by rushing the bill through Parliament. Just because there might be a simple political majority in the Parliamentary Bureau or in the chamber, that does not make it right. There must be checks and balances.

The issue raises a conundrum for us all, and it is a process conundrum, not a political one. Who decides what constitutes an emergency, and how is that decided? What is Parliament's last defence to stop us making errors of judgment? Our legislation must be watertight and it must be subjected to the very highest levels of scrutiny wherever possible. In my view, that should never be compromised, because we all have a duty to respect and protect the robustness of our lawmaking. That is why so many of us are irked this week.

Rushed law is never good law; I am afraid to say that history vindicates that view. Regretfully, I, too, will oppose the bill at decision time.

16:44

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): This has certainly been a brief but intense apprenticeship in the ways of legislating in the Scottish Parliament, but it has been interesting and enlightening. Although the Labour Party will support the bill, because it is essential to the functioning of the country, there are important considerations that we can take away from today's proceedings.

Placing such an intense burden on parliamentarians has not been an effective way to legislate. Given the amount of time that we had available to us over this month, we could have spent much more time deliberating this and, indeed, expanding the scope of what I am sure will

become the act to allow for greater scope for delivering better policy outcomes for Scotland, which I think we all share a common objective on.

Given the constraints, it is great that we have in large part been able to work together effectively to achieve meaningful changes, although not in the case of my amendment. However, it has been a worthwhile exercise. Jackie Baillie's efforts to improve scrutiny and Government reporting to the Parliament in order to show it the respect that it deserves were worth while, as were Pauline McNeill's efforts to improve how we support sectors that have been overlooked, particularly hospitality and entertainment venues. Pam Duncan-Glancy's rather unexpected breakthrough on social care reporting was also a worthwhile exercise. Perhaps the Government will learn that accepting Opposition amendments is not such a bad thing and is perhaps a worthwhile thing to have achieved in the bill.

I know that there has been certain controversy around my proposals. I was wanting to test that effort, because it is not something that is going to go away. It is something that we are going to have to get to grips with sooner or later, which has pointed to a number of policies that we need to rise to the challenge on. Whenever this country has been confronted with a crisis, it has been used as a great opportunity to reform and to massively improve public policy. We need to rise to a similar challenge going into the autumn. I hope that the cabinet secretary will take cognisance of that point and speak to it in his closing remarks.

The evictions time bomb is just one example of something that is not going to go away. The arrears that people are facing and the pressures that housing associations and other landlords are facing are not going to go away, and we will have to have a point of correction as a country. I would like to see us move to a more socialised system of tenure, with an extension of state support for those facing arrears. We expressed those desires in the amendments that we lodged, and the Government should give the space for that to be considered in more detail, with more patience.

Similarly, we can achieve other public policy improvements. As I made clear, the Parliament has already agreed that we need greater co-ordination, integration and regulation of public transportation in this country if we are to meet our climate emergency objectives and, indeed, improve our society. That is what I was trying to probe in the amendment, which, sadly, was unsuccessful.

I feel that there are non sequiturs floating around the chamber around, for example, hammering family-owned bus companies. I have no quarrel with the bus company that was mentioned. I have a quarrel with, primarily, First

Glasgow, which I put on record is an atrocious operator that is failing the people of Glasgow, and has done so for years. I do not want to see the spectacle of ministers going to that company and begging it to keep routes going when there are sufficient provisions in legislation to effect the change that we want. That is not what we send MSPs to this Parliament to do and it is not what we elect the Government to do. We elect them to govern, not to beg private companies for mercy and to deliver basic public services. We need to rise to the challenge on that front and, similarly, on the fair work agenda.

Although I am not sure that I followed the logic of it, Mr McMillan made an interesting point about Texas Instruments being an example of a company that might somehow have been stymied by trade union organisation in the efforts to save that plant from closure. If anything, as we just heard about at First Minister's question time, and in previous campaigns such as at the Caley rail works in Springburn, trade unions are essential to ensuring that the effort is at least put into saving facilities, plants, jobs, and skills—the life-blood of the Scottish economy.

Trade unions are not an enemy of enterprise. The state should be more entrepreneurial, and we need to work together in a spirit of collaboration to achieve better public policy outcomes for Scotland. Although the bill might not be giving the scope that it needs to, that issue is not going to go away, and we need to create the space in the autumn to discuss it in more detail.

16:48

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in today's debate. Scotland currently has the highest rate of infections among all the UK nations. Yesterday, we recorded the highest daily number of cases since the start of mass testing. Despite the incredible success of the vaccination programme and the very welcome lifting of restrictions, it is clear that the pandemic is not over and that, unfortunately, emergency legislation is still very much needed.

According to the latest data, only a quarter of those aged 30 to 39, and less than a fifth of those aged 18 to 29, have received both doses of the vaccine. Our young people are still vulnerable and there is significant evidence that people in those age groups are now driving infection.

The delta variant is moderately resistant to vaccines, particularly in people who have received a single dose, and people infected with delta are around twice as likely to end up in hospital as those infected with the alpha strain. We need to continue to support people to isolate when they

are infected and encourage them to engage in regular testing. We are not out of the woods yet.

I am pleased that Jackie Baillie's amendment was agreed to and I hope that it addresses the concerns of those in the care home sector. As we all know, the pandemic has been an extremely difficult time for care services and it is vital that they have the support that they need to recover from Covid-19. Given that the Care Inspectorate has responsibilities for regulation and inspection of care services, it will play a vital role in supporting care homes to deliver the best standard of care possible.

Like others in the chamber, I regret that the scope of the bill could not be widened so that we could assist those who will undoubtedly be affected by the on-going pandemic but who are not protected by the provisions that are currently contained in the coronavirus legislation. I agree whole-heartedly with Pam Duncan-Glancy's comments yesterday that a provision that instructs local authorities to recommence care packages and respite care would have been a welcome inclusion in the bill.

In addition, the Scottish Greens have long called for self-isolation payments to be made universal so that everyone is supported to isolate and no one is forced to choose between isolating and paying their bills. Yesterday, Pam Duncan-Glancy mentioned her desire to include that provision in the bill, and I am pleased that Labour supports it. I look forward to continuing to engage with parliamentary colleagues and the Scottish Government on those issues after the bill has passed.

There are some provisions in the coronavirus acts that I would like to see continue after the pandemic has ended—for example, those provisions that relate to student residential tenancies and the restrictions on giving grants to businesses that are connected to tax havens. Students now have the same rights as other tenants and that should continue after the legislation expires. Likewise, ensuring that there were no coronavirus bail-outs for firms that use tax havens was a welcome step during the pandemic, but I believe that we should push further on that issue and end legal tax avoidance permanently.

I will conclude before I completely lose my voice. Although I know that everyone in the chamber would prefer that emergency legislation was not necessary, the state of the pandemic in Scotland necessitates that the bill is passed. I am grateful to those members who have engaged with the Scottish Greens during the process and I look forward to continuing to work to ensure that the people of Scotland are protected from the effects of this terrible virus.

16:52

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of interests as an owner of a rental property in North Lanarkshire.

For those of us who have been involved in the various stages of this legislation, it has been a fairly hectic week that has highlighted why emergency legislation procedures should be used sparingly. Being in the midst of a global pandemic is obviously a solid reason for using the process, but it has not been without difficulty. There was no formal Government or committee consultation and scrutiny and we had little more than 12 hours after stages 1 and 2 to consider, discuss and lodge amendments, which stifled the opportunity for meaningful discussion between back-bench MSPs and ministers.

Drafting the bill in such a narrow way has limited how members could amend it to best reflect how we feel we should respond to the pandemic. To my mind, that was no clearer than when we were talking about protecting tenancies. I am starting to feel a bit like a broken record, having said basically the same thing in the chamber for three days in a row, but it bears repeating: the ability to isolate at home is the most important response that we have to breaking the transmission of Covid-19. Vaccines are a huge part of that, too, but the evidence on their impact on transmissibility is not yet clear. The most effective way to avoid passing the disease to another person is by isolating at home; to do that, you need to have a home.

On the same basis that the Government argued that furlough and the £20 uplift in universal credit should be extended, which I support, I argue that the ban on evictions should have been extended to areas in levels 1 and 2, and the fact that there is no ability to amend the bill to reflect that is a failing. The Government has made the case to the UK Government on furlough and universal credit because we are still living with restrictions and entire sections of the economy are still severely impacted or are not functioning at all.

Surely the Scottish ministers must accept that the same arguments apply to the extension of the eviction ban. Many households have been affected by unemployment, reduced employment, reduced earnings or surviving on furlough. Lots of people have, through no fault of their own, accumulated debts and rent arrears because of the global pandemic. The response from Government to that should be a combined effort to halt evictions, and to deal with the source of the problem: arrears that have been built up as a result of the pandemic.

The Government has announced a new grant fund to tackle arrears, which is very welcome, but we desperately need to see the qualifying criteria, a stronger commitment to convert any loans from the current scheme to grants, and an assessment of whether the £10 million mentioned will be sufficient to halt the tidal wave of eviction notices predicted by organisations in the housing sector.

Labour will support the bill at decision time, but we are looking for concrete commitments from Government about the issue of entitlement to and adequacy of the grant fund, and that the volume of eviction proceedings will be closely monitored and urgent action will be taken to protect tenants, if required.

16:56

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I start by thanking the Parliament's legislation team for the power of work that it has put in over the course of this week. As Mark Griffin stated, this is not how the Scottish Parliament should function. Members of the Scottish Parliament should have a full opportunity to consult and properly consider and amend bills; indeed, Mr Sweeney should have had the same right as Mr Swinney to influence the legislation. This week has just gone to demonstrate the key point that the Scottish Conservatives have made throughout the stages of the bill, which is that rushed legislation can often be bad legislation.

The bill leaves Scotland in a landing pattern. Its unprecedented powers will remain in SNP ministers' hands for at least another three months, until the end of September, and potentially for a further six months beyond that, into 2022. It is critical that the Scottish Government and the Parliament focus 100 per cent on the economic recovery from the pandemic. Small businesses across the country are crying out for help. Yesterday, we saw employees from the travel and tourism sector demonstrate outside Parliament, and soft play businesses and their staff were also forced to protest outside Parliament recently.

The bill will continue to give ministers powers to further restrict and keep those businesses closed and, potentially, to shut them again at any point in future. The soft play sector in Scotland feels totally abandoned by SNP ministers. These popular local businesses have been legally unable to open for more than 470 days—some 15 months—while soft play centres across the rest of the United Kingdom have operated safely between lockdowns with no negative impact on public health. The soft play sector—with the same public demographic and material environment as trampoline parks, play cafes, playgroups and other children's indoor activities, which have been open for months—cannot understand why it has been selected by

the Scottish Government for such severe closure restrictions and a total lack of financial support.

As Pauline McNeill stated, many businesses have asked for but have never been provided with the evidence that SNP ministers state informs their decision making. One soft play operator said to me that

"There is no data to support the Scottish government action against soft play, no data to warrant"—

Christine Grahame: Will the member take an intervention?

Miles Briggs: I will if I can get the time back.

Christine Grahame: I am not sure whether Mr Briggs attended the briefing from Jason Leitch for all MSPs where he dealt with soft play areas. Was he at that meeting?

Miles Briggs: I am not sure which meeting the member is talking about. For the past—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Briggs, please carry on.

Miles Briggs: Throughout the pandemic, I have been engaging with the soft play sector, and the quotes that I am reading out are specifically from that sector. Soft play operators have said that they need to see support from the Government. They need access to the data, too. They are desperately seeking that action from ministers, as they have throughout the pandemic. Before the protest outside Parliament, one soft play operator wrote to me saying:

"Unfortunately, our numbers have considerably diminished from our first time of protesting in September 2020, this is mainly due to the number of our peers whose businesses have been destroyed by the Scottish Government's experiment on our industry, and others whose mental health has had such a battering that they freely admit to having been crushed and left with no fight or strength to face the Scottish Government."

The Scottish Government is a minority Government but, by railroading the bill through Parliament, ministers have acted this week as though they have a majority.

The economic pain from the pandemic is still to be truly realised, and it is increasingly concerning that the decisions of the First Minister and SNP ministers could lead to further economic pain and job losses in Scotland. Perhaps after the summer recess, we will see an SNP-Green coalition announced, although, from what I read in today's newspaper, I am not sure whether the Deputy First Minister is part of the SNP's right wing that the Green members seem so concerned about working with.

Scottish Conservatives have tried to engage constructively with ministers throughout the

process to see whether the Scottish Government and Deputy First Minister would see the errors of their ways. Perhaps after this afternoon, the Deputy First Minister might wish that he had listened. As he said earlier this week,

“you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.”—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2021; c 14.]

Scottish Conservatives will oppose the bill at decision time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call the Deputy First Minister to wind up the debate.

17:00

John Swinney: I express my warmest thanks to the Parliament’s legislation team, whose members have had to work extremely hard in difficult circumstances this week; to the bill team, which has supported me splendidly in putting the legislation together; and to the special adviser who supported me throughout the process. That adviser’s contact book has appalled me during the whole process, but, thankfully, it has been of great assistance.

The only comment that Jamie Greene made this afternoon that I agreed with was that this afternoon has been more entertaining than expected. I really wish that Pauline McNeill was here for this moment, because she introduced the concept of cringey dancing to the debate yesterday. This afternoon, Christine Grahame tried—as only Christine Grahame could—to crowbar the concept of discos into the discussion about live music venues. Even I feel sufficiently close enough to real life that I am not altogether sure that we call them discos nowadays, Christine. [*Laughter.*] Excuse me, Presiding Officer, I should have said “Ms Grahame”—that was a momentary lapse. We will get some up-to-date advice on that word from Pauline McNeill.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

John Swinney: If the intervention is on Mr Kerr’s contribution to cringey dancing, then yes—I will give way.

Stephen Kerr: I am afraid that I cannot deliver on that particular comment, Presiding Officer.

I associate myself with everything that the Deputy First Minister said about Andrew Welsh, who was my MP and a very good MP, even though we disagreed politically. His words of tribute were wholly appropriate.

With regard to Christine Grahame’s contribution, which I, too, thoroughly enjoyed, does the Deputy First Minister agree with her that, at some point in the lifetime of the act—which it will become—when

the powers are no longer appropriate, it should be repealed as soon as possible?

John Swinney: No, I do not. I would not have introduced the bill if I thought that. However, obviously, if the powers are not utilised, the Government will not enact an extension after the initial six-month period if we judge it not to be required. We will carry out that evaluation.

Murdo Fraser had the brass neck to attack the consistency of arguments within the Government. There was a lack of consistency on the Conservative benches, because Mr Simpson was entirely gracious about my support for his licensing amendment today but I did not get a word of thanks from Murdo Fraser in the process. I encourage the Conservatives to get consistent on that.

Murdo Fraser: Injured pride!

John Swinney: It is injured pride. In that respect, Mr Fraser is absolutely correct.

Let me turn to the substance of the debate. Ariane Burgess made a number of comments about the limited scope of the bill and the fact that there is a debate to be had about the nature and character of our recovery from Covid. Indeed, in his latter contribution to the debate, Mr Sweeney made the point that out of most moments of crisis comes a substantial reform of public policy. I agree with that. There has to be a substantial reform of public policy to ensure that we address many of the legitimate issues that he raised. He might not have been using the right vehicle to advance his arguments today—vehicles have been very much a subject of today’s debate—but he will be able to get on a Borders bus with a clear conscience after his gallant response to Christine Grahame.

The point of substance is that, as a Parliament, we must engage on the route to recovery. I look forward to doing that in the COVID-19 Recovery Committee, which is convened by Siobhian Brown and will bring together representation from across the Parliament. We must have substantive debate about how we recover from Covid. That goes beyond the operational provisions of the bill, which do not chart new ground but simply extend the provisions on which the Parliament has already legislated. Although that has attracted some criticism, it was the right judgment for the Government to make.

Mark Griffin and Jackie Baillie raised issues about the tenant hardship fund. Yesterday, I indicated that the fund will be launched later in the year. We will consult extensively with stakeholders to establish the details and the criteria, and on the question of the conversion of any loans.

I want to put on record the good work that has been done by a range of stakeholders, including registered social landlords, local authorities and the housing association movement, in collaboration with the Government, in trying to avoid evictions in the first place. It is right for us to focus on the tenant hardship fund, but it is also right for me to put on record the really good work that many stakeholders have undertaken to ensure that we support tenants through difficult times, given the fact that the coronavirus is disrupting the economy and livelihoods and, as a consequence, might disrupt tenancies. We must try to avoid that disruption for individuals, because they deserve our support.

I thank members for their forbearance over the past three days. I want to scotch the rumour that the bill was an early exercise in continuing professional development for new members of Parliament—a crash course in legislation over a three-day period. That was not my intention. I thank members for the way in which they have engaged in the process to enhance the legislation, to advance issues of importance to them and to ensure that we have the correct statutory framework in place to deal with the continuing threat that we face from the coronavirus.

We hope that we are moving into more optimistic times in relation to the management of the virus due to the success of the vaccination programme. However, the data that we are receiving this week demonstrates that the problem has not deserted us in any shape or form.

I assure the Conservatives that the legislation will not be maintained for a moment longer than we think it is required. We will faithfully engage in the reporting and accountability arrangements, which Parliament has strengthened today. We have followed all those since the legislation was introduced, last spring, and we will continue to do that as well as cover new ground as a consequence of the amendments that have been passed today. I look forward to the midnight oil being burned in producing the reports to satisfy the requirements of statute.

I encourage Parliament to support the bill at decision time.

Points of Order

17:08

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Today—on the final day of Parliament before recess—the Scottish Government was forced, through a freedom of information request, to release the draft farming and food production future policy group recommendations. We have been waiting for two and half years for the document and it is still only in draft form. The cabinet secretary promised the document in August 2020 after pressure from my colleagues, but of course it has still not been published.

The Scottish National Party has failed to offer policy clarity in a timely manner to the agriculture industry. By withholding the promised document for so long, the Scottish Government is disrespecting the Parliament and the sector.

I seek your guidance, Presiding Officer, as to whether the Scottish Government should uphold its commitment to publish a document when it says that it will publish it. Given that we are heading into recess in a few minutes, what parliamentary procedures are in place to ensure that we have time to scrutinise such publications?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank Rachael Hamilton for advance notice of her point of order, but that is not a matter for me to rule on. As she knows, there are several avenues through which members can hold the Scottish Government to account, including during periods in which Parliament is in recess. If she feels that a Government minister has failed in their duties somehow, she might wish to make a complaint under the relevant article of the ministerial code.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I know that I am at risk of prolonging the agony—we are all keen for the recess to start—but we are making the point that this is about not just that policy document.

Another Government-initiated question was answered today, on Dame Elish Angiolini's well-respected report into policing. These are important matters for the Parliament to consider.

The problem is the timing. The response to the GIQ was issued at 2 pm this afternoon, which was an hour after the end of First Minister's question time. There is no opportunity for me or any other member to submit urgent or topical questions on the matter. Indeed, there is no opportunity for us to question the relevant cabinet secretary.

The Presiding Officer has made overt requests that the Government make such announcements in a timely fashion in order to allow scrutiny from members from across the political spectrum, but the question is whether we will be afforded that respect by being given the opportunity to grill the Government on such matters. That is the point that we are trying to make.

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Greene for his point of order. Again, that is not a matter for me to rule on. However, his comments have been noted.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I realise that it is not possible to amend previous votes, but I would like to put it on the record that my intention was to support, not oppose, amendment 11.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Villalba. Your comments have been noted.

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Motion

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body motion S6M-00505, on appointments to the Scottish Commission for Public Audit. I ask Maggie Chapman, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, to speak to and move the motion.

17:12

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I am aware that people are keen to get out of this place, so I will just move the motion.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's proposal to appoint Daniel Johnson, Colin Beattie, Sharon Dowey and Mark Ruskell to be members of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit.

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:12

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-00492, on the designation of a lead committee. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[*George Adam*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

I am minded to accept a motion without notice under rule 11.2.4 of standing orders that decision time be brought forward to now. I invite a member of the Parliamentary Bureau to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be brought forward to 5.13 pm.—[*George Adam*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:13

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S6M-00479, in the name of John Swinney, on the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

We will have a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:13

Meeting suspended.

17:18

On resuming—

We will move to the division in a moment. We are having a slight issue with sound for members using BlueJeans.

17:19

Meeting suspended.

17:22

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the division on motion S6M-00479, in the name of John Swinney, on the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill. Members should cast their votes now.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. — [*Inaudible.*]—was not working, but I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. We will record that, Mr Lumsden.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)

Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 32, Abstentions 0.

Therefore, the motion is agreed to and the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill is passed.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S6M-00505, in the name of Maggie Chapman, on appointments to the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's proposal to appoint Daniel Johnson, Colin Beattie, Sharon Dowey and Mark Ruskell to be members of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-00492, in the name of George Adam, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. I hope that colleagues have the opportunity to have a short break during recess, and I hope that all Parliament staff have such an opportunity, too. Have a safe recess.

Meeting closed at 17:26.

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

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

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba