



Official Report
Aithisg Oifigeil

DRAFT

Meeting of the Parliament Coinneamh na Pàrlamaid

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Session 7



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 8 September 2026

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

General Question Time

Business Rates (Hospitality Businesses)

1. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Test of what happens when text is entered before a question.

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that waiting times for High Court trials are set to triple by 2028. (S7O-00227)

The Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing (Tom Arthur): The Scottish Government always seeks to protect the public purse and recover overpayments wherever it is cost effective and reasonable to do so. Those particular cases are no different.

Those debts arose from payments made by the Department for Work and Pensions prior to the transfer of cases to Social Security Scotland. We are now working with the DWP to transfer the necessary case data, and we will assume responsibility for that debt recovery when that work is complete.

As the agency agreement underpinning debt recovery ended on 31 March and the necessary data has not yet been transferred from the DWP, it is not possible to recover debt at this point.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

2. **Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the report by the Auditor General for Scotland, Criminal courts backlog follow-up. (S7O-00224)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government has taken the opportunity to discuss the proportion of social homes allocated to homeless households and the use of section 5 referrals in regular engagement with local authorities and registered social landlords. As we do so, we recognise that it will vary from registered social landlord to registered social landlord and, indeed, from one local authority to another.

Affordable Housing

3. **Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Ind):** Test to see what happens when there's text before a question.

To ask the Scottish Government, in light of a recent Police Scotland Freedom of Information response indicating that there have been 342

referrals involving South-East Asian children since 2020, including 31 cases of sexual exploitation, what action it is taking to ensure that Vietnamese children at risk of trafficking are identified at an early stage, protected from exploitation and provided with appropriate support. (S7O-00220)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We recognise that good-quality, affordable housing is essential in helping to attract and retain people in Scotland's island communities. The Scottish Government is committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes across Scotland by 2032, of which 10 per cent will be in rural and island areas.

Current delivery is exceeding that commitment, with more than 20 per cent of all affordable homes being delivered in rural areas. Of the 13,000 affordable homes delivered in rural communities between April 2016 and March 2025, 1,448 have been in island communities. The national islands plan, which was published in February 2026, contains tangible actions to support the delivery of housing in island communities.

Face Coverings

4. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Another test to see what happens when there's text before a question.

To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether existing police powers and criminal offences relating to the wearing of face coverings are sufficient. (S7O-00228)

High Court Waiting Times

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Another test to see what happens when there's no question number.

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that waiting times for High Court trials are expected to almost triple by 2028. (S7O-00226)

George Adam: Thank you, and good morning. The most straightforward way of introducing our budget proposal for 2026-27 is to say that it is about delivering our mission, which is to provide.

Assurances on billions of pounds of spending.

and to help to improve public services.

The proposal aims to support that mission by ac.

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achieving a balance between investing in and shaping the future of public audit; ensuring

that our organisation has the structure, skills, resources and workforce for the future; supporting and funding and backing and sustaining the on-going delivery of high-quality, independent

audit of Scotland's public spending and services;

and being efficient and prudent in our use and stewardship of the public money that we receive, at the standard that you would expect from the nation's public spending watchdog.

I look forward to the commission'

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Official Report
Room T2.20
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: official.report@parliament.scot
Telephone: 0131 348 5447

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