

At The Scottish Parliament – tributes paid in response to motion of condolence

The First Minister lodged a Motion of Condolence at The Scottish Parliament in response to the death of Her Majesty The Queen during last week.

This allowed the leaders of all the political parties to gather at Holyrood ,where business is suspended as a mark of respect to her late Majesty, and offer their own tributes. You may watch the proceedings which was delivered in the presence of His Majesty the King and the Queen Consort below.

The First Minister tabled a formal Motion of Condolence on behalf of the people of Scotland. She said: “Your Majesties, Presiding Officer, members of Parliament and honoured guests, it is my solemn duty, and my honour, to move the motion of condolence on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. For people across our country, this is a time of profound sorrow. While the nation’s grief is for our Queen, the royal family’s is for their beloved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Today, on behalf of the Parliament and people of Scotland, I offer my heartfelt condolences to Your Majesties, and to the Duke of Rothesay, the Princess Royal, the Earls of Inverness and Forfar, and to all members of Her Majesty’s wider family.

“When Queen Victoria died in 1901, Arthur Balfour led tributes in the House of Commons. He commented that the grief of the

country was in part because they were marking the end of an epoch, "the beginning of which stretches beyond the memory ... of any individual whom I am now addressing".

"Those words are just as true for us today. Most of us do not remember life without the Queen. When, as Princess Elizabeth, she gave a radio broadcast from South Africa on her 21st birthday, she was addressing an empire that still included India. When she became monarch, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister. In an ever-changing and often turbulent world, Her Majesty has been our constant. She has been the anchor of our nation.

"Our personal recollections are often intertwined with memories of her reign. I was nine years old when I first saw the Queen. She visited Irvine, my home town, in July 1979 to open the Magnum leisure centre. With my mum, I was one of hundreds lining the streets. By luck, we ended up close to her car as it passed by. Nine-year-old me was absolutely convinced that I had caught her eye. That nine-year-old could not have imagined, more than 35 years later, being in the front passenger seat of another car, this time with the Queen at the wheel, driving through the Balmoral estate.

"In recent days, other leaders have shared stories from Balmoral, of barbecues cooked by Prince Philip as the Queen laid the table. These are memories that I treasure, too—special times in what was clearly their happy place. I did, however, experience one rather tense moment at Balmoral. My husband and I were with the Queen before dinner when the drawing room light started to flicker. To my great alarm—he was, after all, in the presence of Her Majesty—my husband suddenly leaped up and darted across the floor. Peter had spotted the cause of the flickering light: one of the Queen's young corgis, a beautiful pup called Sandy, was eating through a lamp switch. Thankfully, tragedy was averted and Sandy emerged unscathed, though not before a stern ticking off from his mistress.

Just like all my predecessors as First Minister and all Prime Ministers, I deeply valued the time that I spent alone with the Queen. Her words of wisdom, counsel and humour will stay in my heart for the rest of my life.

“However, the memory that I cherish most is not from Balmoral or from audiences at Holyrood. It is from 2015, when the Queen opened the Borders railway. I spent the journey from Edinburgh to Tweedbank with just her and Prince Philip, enjoying their recollections of times spent in Scotland. That would have been special on any day; that it was also the day when the Queen became our longest-reigning monarch, allowing me to observe closely how quietly reflective she was about that historic milestone, made it much more so. It was one of the great privileges of my life.

“What was obvious then—and on every occasion when she graced us with her presence—was the Queen’s genuine love of Scotland. Indeed, her first official visit was here in Scotland when she opened the Aberdeen sailors home in October 1944. In the decades since, the Queen has been intrinsic to the story of modern Scotland. From the opening of the Forties oil pipeline to the Forth bridge and, later, the Queensferry crossing, the Borders railway and the hosting of three Commonwealth games, she was present at so many of our iconic moments.

“She was also a true and steadfast friend of this Parliament. On the day when we reconvened in 1999, she allowed the title “Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Scots” to be used. She also presented us with our treasured mace. Its words—wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity—describe values that were personified by the Queen throughout her entire life. Even as her health declined, Her Majesty inspired us with an unfaltering dedication to public service.

In his address on Friday, the King recalled his mother’s words on her 21st birthday:

“my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service”.

“For 75 years, Queen Elizabeth more than fulfilled that vow. She performed her duties with dedication, wisdom and a profound sense of service. She set an exceptional example to all of us.

“Our nation is in mourning today for a Queen whose loss we have not yet begun to come to terms with. We are deeply honoured by the presence today of His Majesty King Charles III and the Queen Consort. Your Majesty, we stand ready to support you as you continue your own life of service and as you build on the extraordinary legacy of your beloved mother, our Queen. Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Scots. We are grateful for her life. May she now rest in peace.

“I move,

“That the Parliament expresses its deepest regret and grief at the death of Her Majesty The Queen; conveys its sincere condolences to His Majesty The King and other members of the Royal Family in their bereavement; affirms the great affection and esteem in which Her Majesty was held, and expresses gratitude for her life of exceptional public service and her long and close association with Scotland and the Scottish people.”

His Majesty The King and The Queen Consort received the Motion at The Scottish Parliament on Monday evening.

The reception is one of a number of events in Edinburgh today following the arrival of Their Majesties from London.

The wording of the motion is: “That the Parliament expresses its deepest regret and grief at the death of Her Majesty The Queen; conveys its sincere condolences to His Majesty The King and other members of the Royal Family in their bereavement; affirms the great affection and esteem in which Her Majesty

was held, and expresses gratitude for her life of exceptional public service and her long and close association with Scotland and the Scottish people.”

Scottish Conservative Leader Douglas Ross said:

“Presiding Officer,

The news from Balmoral on Thursday evening rocked us to the core.

Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second was a constant presence in our national life throughout her 70-year reign.

For so many of us, it is difficult to imagine the country without her.

The Queen seemed as permanent as the stones of Edinburgh Castle.

A constant while her country has changed around her.

When Queen Elizabeth the Second became Monarch, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister – and she was served in that role by 15 political leaders.

Offering them a wealth of wise counsel from her long experience.

From the Queen who lived through the Great Depression and the Great Recession.

The Second World War and the Second Gulf War.

The length of the Queen’s reign meant that she was an anchor to our history,

ensuring that whatever the changes to our country and how we lived our lives –

we retained an enduring link to the generations that had come

before.

She was a living reminder of their sacrifices to build the country and the world that we live in today.

What other world leader could have reassured their nation in the darkest days of the Covid pandemic by drawing on her memories of children being separated from their families during the Blitz?

Time and time again Her Majesty gave us certainty, stability, joy and happiness when we needed it most.

That's why the scenes we saw on her final journey from Balmoral to Holyrood Palace yesterday surprised no one.

From the heart of Aberdeenshire to the capital city, young and old came together to pay their respects.

Scotland's unique tributes saw tractors and horses intersperse with members of the public who came out in their tens of thousands to line the route.

Because, while Monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, we know the late Queen held Scotland close to her heart – and we held her to ours.

We feel the pain of her loss so strongly with our new King and the entire Royal Family today.

As they grieve on a personal level, we join them in mourning as a nation.

At the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Her late Majesty spoke with fondness of the Scottish qualities of grit, determination, humour, forthrightness and a strong sense of identity.

She continued by saying:

“These qualities reflect a Scotland which – if I may make a

personal point – occupy such a special place in my own and my family's affections."

And we know the bonds and ties to Scotland, developed and strengthened by the last Monarch will be continued by King Charles the Third.

You Sir, became the first sovereign to accede to the Throne while on Scottish soil in over 400 years.

You have already served Scotland with great dedication as Duke of Rothesay, Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland.

And I know that people across the country will show you the same support and devotion as they did your late mother.

Because today we don't just commemorate the reign of our Queen but also celebrate the life of a woman who many in Scotland knew and loved.

Who dedicated her life to her country, to duty and to serving others.

On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I am proud to support the motion of condolence today,

to thank Queen Elizabeth the Second for her long, loyal and dignified service

and to offer our full support and loyalty to our new King.

May Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second rest in glorious and eternal peace

And, from all of us Sir,

God save the King."

Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Alex Cole-Hamilton

contributed to the debate. His comments were as follows:

“Presiding Officer, Your Majesties,

“We do not choose the life into which we are born.

“And seldom do we shape events that define our times.

“We can only hope to move through life with humility and close regard for those around us, to conduct ourselves in the time that we are given with compassion, with kindness and with grace.

“The life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a towering example of all of those qualities manifest in a single human being.

“She always kept a special place for Scotland in her heart, as she in turn found ample room in ours.

“Her passing leaves a profound absence across our family of nations and these islands are united in our grief.

“Her Majesty came of age in the crucible of war, a period of gravest danger for our country.

“It fostered in her a deep commitment to reconciliation, to peace and a common understanding among nations, so evident in her commitment to the Commonwealth.

“It’s why she told the listening world from Cape Town on the occasion of that 21st birthday broadcast that while she was 6,000 miles from the country of her birth, she was never far from home.

“And hence the grief that we feel today is shared across the world.

“From the Blitz to the pandemic, through times of tempest and times of calm, sustained as always by the Duke of Edinburgh, her beloved strength and stay, she was the embodiment of

constancy and forbearance in the face of remarkable change.

"She sat with presidents and hospital patients, key workers and veterans.

"She leapt from helicopters and dined with bears.

"She earned the widespread affection that has been so visible in these days of mourning.

"In one Christmas Broadcast, Her Majesty said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love."

"Presiding Officer, Your Majesties, the measure of her example inspired so many of us to fulfil the promise of those words.

"On behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, I express our deepest condolences to His Majesty the King, to the Royal Family, and affirm our allegiance to both.

"God save the King."

Anas Sarwar leader of Scottish Labour said: "Your Majesty, I offer my sincerest condolences on the passing of your beloved mother, and my thoughts remain with you, the Queen Consort, your sons, your grandchildren and all the royal family at this time of deep sadness.

"First and foremost, the Queen was a mother, and I cannot imagine the intense feeling of personal loss that you are experiencing while fulfilling your devotion to public service as our King. I hope that it gives you and your family much comfort that we are all grieving the passing of someone who was so special, cherished and loved by us all.

"Her Majesty was a constant in our lives. Many saw her as family, and many saw their family in her. She reminded me of my grandmother—her walk, her demeanour and even the way that she held her handbag.

“Her Majesty touched generations. Last Thursday night, I returned home to a crying six-year-old, who said that he was sad because he will never get to meet the Queen.

“Queen Elizabeth II was a constant reminder of the need for kindness and compassion in our society. So often in our politics, both today and throughout history, we focus on what divides us. However, from the blitz to the pandemic, the Queen brought our nation together. She was the great unifier of our country. She brought joy at times of national pride, she brought comfort at times of national tragedy, and she brought light at our nation’s darkest moments.

“We will never forget how Her Majesty the Queen found the words during the pandemic to remind us all that we would meet our loved ones again. Those words were more poignant than ever following the passing of her husband, Prince Philip, your father, who now rests at peace with his beloved Lilibet.

“We know how much she loved Scotland, and we loved her back. She reminded this Parliament that, despite our political disagreements and arguments, all of us here are in the service of the Scottish people.

“Her Majesty the Queen’s influence was felt far beyond these shores, with the people of the Commonwealth and other nations united in grief at this time.

“Our world changed beyond recognition during her reign, but her dedication to duty, integrity, warmth and service to others never wavered. Politicians here and round the world will look on enviously—in 70 years of service as our head of state, she always seemed to say and do the right thing at the right time.

I am confident that, as we enter a new era, we will cherish Your Majesty’s leadership, as well as your wisdom, compassion, integrity and justice—timeless values that were passed down to you by your mother but also gifted to us on our Parliament’s

mace.

"We wish you a long and happy reign. God save the King."

Patrick Harvie, Co-Leader of the Scottish Green Party said:
"The experience of loss is universal. It comes into all our lives. It is a reminder that the reality of human life is rooted not in status or in title, but in the connections that we make—bonds of love and friendship, of family and of service to one another. People of all views can respect that, whatever else we may disagree about, so, in this moment, as we mark the death of the Queen, I offer my party's sincere condolences to her son, all his family and all those whose lives she touched.

"For many people, a monarch stands as a symbol of the country. If that is true, this moment is more than one of personal loss for those whom we stand with in their grief; it is also a time to reflect on the change that the Queen witnessed during such a long reign.

"When Princess Elizabeth of York became Queen Elizabeth II, the UK was still early in its recovery from a brutal world war, and it had begun laying the foundations of something extraordinary: a welfare state and a national health service to tackle the giant evils of the age. Nearly three decades of declining inequality followed.

"At the previous coronation, the oath still referred to other countries as the possessions of an empire, and, here at home, human rights and equality were distant ideas, with racist discrimination remaining legal and people treated as criminals and outcasts because of their sexuality. Now, we can look back and celebrate extraordinary progressive change, even as we must continue to defend what has been achieved.

"There are those for whom the long reign of Elizabeth II and, indeed, the institution of monarchy represent continuity, stability and permanence, but, in truth, the tide of progress cannot be halted. It feels slow as we live it day by day, but,

in time, it is dramatic.

“As Charles III begins his reign, let us hope and, indeed, redouble our determination that he will have the opportunity to witness change just as transformational—and more. It is still needed.”

His Majesty King Charles III replied by saying: “Presiding Officer, First Minister, party leaders and members of the Scottish Parliament, I know that the Scottish Parliament and the people of Scotland share with me a profound sense of grief at the death of my beloved mother.

“Through all the years of her reign, the Queen, like so many generations of our family before her, found in the hills of this land and in the hearts of its people a haven and a home.

“My mother felt, as I do, the greatest admiration for the Scottish people, for their magnificent achievements and their indomitable spirit, and it was the greatest comfort for her to know, in turn, the true affection in which she was held. The knowledge of that deep and abiding bond must be, to us, a solace as we mourn the end of a life of incomparable service.

I”f I might paraphrase the words of the great Robert Burns, my dear mother was

“The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like”

hers,

“with virtue warm’d,
Few heads with knowledge so inform’d”.

“While still very young, the Queen pledged herself to serve her country and her people and to maintain the principles of constitutional government. As we now mark with gratitude a promise most faithfully fulfilled, I am determined—with God’s

help and with yours—to follow that inspiring example.

“The title of Duke of Rothesay and the other Scottish titles that I have had the honour to carry for so long I now pass to my elder son, William, who I know will be as proud as I have been to bear the symbols of this ancient kingdom.

“I take up my new duties with thankfulness for all that Scotland has given me, with resolve to seek always the welfare of our country and its people, and with whole-hearted trust in your good will and good counsel as we take forward that task together.”