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Thursday 15 December 2016

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 15 December 2016

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

Basic Payment Scheme

1. **Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government how many eligible farmers and crofters have received a letter explaining their entitlements under the 2015 basic payment scheme. (S5O-00479)

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): Sixteen thousand, one hundred and sixty-two confirmation of entitlement letters have been issued to eligible farmers and crofters explaining their entitlements under the 2015 basic payment scheme. Officials are continuing to work hard to resolve outstanding issues, and there is a clear need to focus on providing farmers and crofters with the information that they require.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Would you mind pausing for a second, minister? I think that the speakers are turned off, even though the microphones are on.

Humza Yousaf: That is good, because it was the wrong answer.

The Presiding Officer: Please continue, minister.

Humza Yousaf: It was a great answer the first time, but I will try again.

Fourteen thousand, one hundred and sixty-two confirmation of entitlement letters have been issued to eligible farmers and crofters explaining their entitlements under the 2015 basic payment scheme. Officials are continuing to work hard to resolve some of the outstanding issues that we know about, and there is a clear focus on providing farmers and crofters with the appropriate information that they need to understand what payments they have received.

We have rightly prioritised getting money into people's accounts and maximising the funds that we can access from Europe before the 15 October deadline.

Tavish Scott: I thought that the first answer was much better than the second one.

I commiserate with the minister, whose portfolio seems to expand in front of our eyes every day. It is absolutely not his fault that the Government cannot yet confirm that the information technology

computer system for farmers and crofters across Scotland, on which £180 million has been spent, will work in 2017 but, in that light, can he tell Parliament when the entitlement letters that have just gone out for the previous year will go out during 2017? Can he confirm that the appeal mechanism, which is very important for crofters and farmers who may disagree with what they have been allocated, is still open to crofters and farmers, and that that will remain the case during 2017?

Humza Yousaf: I will try to give Tavish Scott some of the assurances that he requires. I thank him for his kind commiserations.

The serious point that we must make is that the Government has learned lessons. Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, has been working hard with officials and those on the IT side of things to ensure that we learn lessons from 2015. For example, we are putting ourselves on to a better footing by hiring more staff for our rural payments and inspections division offices. I know that, this morning, the cabinet secretary had a discussion with those who are in charge of the IT system to seek their assurances for 2016. We have learned lessons from the first year of the new common agricultural policy regime that will help our 2016 processes.

We have received IT assurances, and I give Mr Scott the assurance that final processing of applications for payments will be undertaken. We expect and anticipate that 2016 payments will be made and substantially completed between then and the end of the payment period. The cabinet secretary has offered to update Parliament on progress in January.

As far as the appeals process is concerned, I give Mr Scott the assurance that no farmer or crofter should be disadvantaged by the outstanding entitlement letters that they are due to receive and that the appeal and review mechanism is still in place.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): We all know about the shambolic way in which the Government has handled the delivery of CAP payments, which has been a complete disaster for rural communities. Just this morning, a constituent contacted me to tell me that he has yet to be given a full breakdown of his payments. Does the minister understand the huge frustration and the difficulties that those problems are causing to farmers, producers and crofters?

Humza Yousaf: If he is being fair, the member will understand that the cabinet secretary, Fergus Ewing, knows—as all of us in the Government know—that of course things could and should have been done better. We regret the mistakes

that were made and we apologise to any farmer or crofter who has been disadvantaged by them.

What we are doing—what the cabinet secretary has been tirelessly doing—is to ensure that farmers are not disadvantaged when the new payments come in. The early loan scheme in November was hugely well received and I have given assurances about the IT system. I suggest to Mr Chapman that, instead of carping from the sidelines, he can be part of the solution, if he wants. Rightly, he can question ministers and the Government about what can be done, but I think that farmers and crofters, even in the area that Mr Chapman represents, would want him to work with the Government to try to find solutions so that farmers and crofters are not disadvantaged. As I said, the cabinet secretary will provide regular updates and has promised to update Parliament early in the new year.

The Presiding Officer: Question 2 has not been lodged.

Refugees

3. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding Scotland's role in supporting refugees entering the UK. (S5O-00481)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Scottish Government officials are in regular dialogue with Home Office officials about support for refugees who settle in Scotland. Ministers have also discussed the issue and I discussed the resettlement of refugees and unaccompanied children, among other issues, when I met the immigration minister in October. I am very proud that Scotland has now welcomed around 1,250 Syrian refugees under the Syrian resettlement programme since October 2015.

Rona Mackay: I welcome the fact that East Dunbartonshire Council has at long last agreed to take refugees: four families and four unaccompanied children. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in addition to providing the refugees with housing and education, it is essential that a welcoming committee from the communities involved helps to integrate the families socially by helping with language and local knowledge?

Angela Constance: Like the member, I welcome East Dunbartonshire Council's decision to participate in the resettlement programme. I am pleased to say that, by 2017, all local authorities in Scotland will be involved in supporting refugees to settle in Scotland. It has to be acknowledged that considerable preparatory work needs to be done by local authorities before refugees arrive in their

communities to ensure, for example, that the right accommodation, services and supports are in place.

I know that there is a wealth of expertise in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, other local authorities and third sector organisations that East Dunbartonshire Council is drawing on as it prepares to welcome refugees. Many councils have engaged closely with their local communities through volunteering programmes or other means to make best use of the enormous good will that is out there to provide befriending and other support, whether it is English language practice or other ways to welcome refugees into our communities. I am pleased to acknowledge that Ms Mackay is working closely with the Twechar healthy living and enterprise centre to arrange a community team to help with that integration from day 1 and to give a very warm welcome to refugees when they arrive in East Dunbartonshire.

Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Systems

4. Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assurances it can give to customers who signed solar energy green deal agreements with Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Systems Ltd, which ceased trading in April 2016, in light of reports that some have found their energy bills increasing by up to three times and the value of their homes being adversely affected. (S5O-00482)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): I am very sorry to hear that customers who signed up to the United Kingdom Government's green deal scheme in good faith are facing difficulties from a scheme that was meant to help households to reduce their energy bills. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that we have heard of customers facing difficulties under the scheme, and we have raised our concerns about it directly with the UK Government. We have also worked with the relevant regulatory bodies to ensure that redress routes through both the green deal and the financial ombudsman are available to anyone in the circumstances described. I urge anyone who thinks that they have been affected by the scheme or is struggling to pay their energy bills to contact Home Energy Scotland, which can provide support on the matter.

Clare Haughey: Dozens of my constituents in Blantyre have approached me to complain that they have been misold solar panels by Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Systems Ltd under the UK Government's green deal programme. That is having a huge impact on them financially and personally as they deal with the distress that it is causing them. I believe that the

issue is not confined to my constituency of Rutherglen. Can the cabinet secretary give my constituents reassurance that the Scottish Government will press the UK Government for a resolution to the misselling of solar panel deals in Scotland, which is causing people to have huge debt for years to come and properties that they are unable to sell?

Angela Constance: I know that Ms Haughey has been working hard on the issue in her constituency, both representing her specific constituents and raising the matter over the piece. I reassure her that the Scottish Government has made a number of requests over the past few years for the UK Government to strengthen its consumer protection processes. The previous housing minister wrote to the then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Amber Rudd, at the end of last year, emphasising the need to ensure that the UK Government's schemes offer protection to Scottish customers, and we will continue to press the UK Government to take action wherever possible.

Given the significant issues that have been raised in connection with HELMS, Scottish Government officials convened, with ministerial approval, a UK-wide enforcement group in December 2015. That group was comprised of, among others, representatives from the green deal, the financial ombudsman, the Energy Saving Trust, Citizens Advice Scotland, trading standards and the UK Government. The meeting was used to highlight issues that Scottish consumers were facing. I am pleased to say that, through that process, we have facilitated and agreed redress routes through the ombudsman for customers who feel that they have been misled under the scheme.

I also highlight that the Scottish Government funds home energy Scotland, which is an advice service that is on hand to support and guide consumers on the matter. I will ask my officials to liaise directly with Ms Haughey to help her constituents to access that support if they have not already done so.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): I draw the cabinet secretary's attention to the fact that HELMS was also involved in insulating homes in Glasgow Provan under the green deal. My constituents have been left without building warrants and with work of an unknown quality, which means that many cannot get insurance or claim the cash back. They are thousands of pounds out of pocket and their homes need remedial work. Given that my constituents went ahead confident that the company appeared on a list of approved installers authorised by the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change, what can the Scottish Government do to support them

and get the UK Government to take some responsibility?

Angela Constance: We are aware that around five customers received external wall insulation from the company, which was partly funded through the early phases of the Scottish Government's cashback scheme, and that they have been left with work that is not up to standard and for which they have no building warrant. I understand that Mr McKee's office has been in correspondence with the Energy Saving Trust about his constituents.

We have instructed the Energy Saving Trust to support those customers and to liaise with the manufacturers of the external wall insulation system to establish what remedial works can be carried out under the guarantee and what is required in order for the customers to get a building warrant from their council. We anticipate that we will shortly have paid out all outstanding claims from householders through that scheme, and I confirm that we will do what we can to help those householders to resolve the situation. If Mr McKee is aware of any more constituents who are in the same situation, I ask that his office continue to pass those details to the Energy Saving Trust.

Care Homes (Rural Areas)

5. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure the continued viability of rural care homes. (S50-00483)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): It is for health and social care partnerships to determine the need for care home places in their localities and to work with others, including providers, to meet that need.

The Scottish Government will continue to work with national health service boards, local authorities and other stakeholders to drive up quality in the community and ensure that appropriate social care provision is available. The formula that is used in the distribution of the Scottish Government's funding to local authorities takes into account a number of needs-based factors including rurality and the additional cost of providing services to island communities. We provided a further £250 million in the 2016-17 budget to support partnerships to protect and grow social care services.

Maurice Corry: For a care home to be financially viable under the national care home contract, it needs to have at least 60 beds. However, in many rural areas it is not possible to make the care homes that size, and they are coming under threat of closure. I know of a few care homes in my area that are in that position. Does the minister agree that, with the rising age of

the nation, keeping open rural care homes is vital to ensuring that the elderly who need that support are able to stay as close as possible to their homes and local communities?

Shona Robison: I am aware of the concerns about particular care homes—Auchinlee and Craigard—and their potential closures. Argyll and Bute's health and social care partnership is working closely with the Care Inspectorate, providers, residents and relatives to ensure that, where closure is unavoidable, the disruption to residents is minimised and the closure is implemented with minimal impact.

Specifically regarding Auchinlee, I am aware that Mike Russell has been meeting the care home owners, and I think that another meeting has been arranged for 19 December with representatives of the relatives action group and a staff representative. It is really important that, where solutions can be found, we support that.

Maurice Corry makes an important point, but he should also recognise that many more people are now being cared for at home, avoiding the need for them to go into a care home. That is different from 10, 15 or 20 years ago. However, if he would find it helpful, I would be happy to write to him with more details on those local issues.

Water Meters

6. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to ensure that water meters are placed in accessible locations. (S5O-00484)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): It is important that water meters are placed in locations that ensure that the volume of water consumed by the customer is recorded accurately. Although the accessibility of the location is important, it needs to reflect other constraints such as the layout of the existing pipework and the connections to other properties. In general, meters are located externally at the boundary of a premises. Scottish Water's meter code of practice, which was published in 2013, provides guidance on the preferred location of meters.

Emma Harper: Recently, a farmer in Dumfriesshire told me that meters had been put in inaccessible places, making it difficult to take a reading. Is it possible to relay to Scottish Water the importance of meters being positioned in accessible locations, or repositioned if necessary?

Roseanna Cunningham: Meters can indeed be relocated with the agreement of Scottish Water. I mentioned in my first answer some of the other constraints in connection with that work.

I understand that Business Stream has arranged a meeting with NFU Scotland on 22 December to discuss this and other issues and that both Scottish Water and Business Stream have contacted the member's office to discuss the matter.

As I explained, any alterations will be constrained by the configuration of the existing pipework and connections, but I hope that the member will take up the offer of meetings.

Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders

7. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that pupils with disorders on the autism spectrum have equal opportunities in school. (S5O-00485)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): We want all children and young people to get the support that they need to reach their full learning potential. Local authorities have duties under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended, to identify, provide for and review personalised support for children and young people who face barriers to learning, including those arising from autism.

Dean Lockhart: Recent statistics from Enable Scotland highlight that more than half of children with learning difficulties and/or autism believe that they are not fulfilling their potential at school. Just this week, statistics have shown that the number of special school teachers has dropped by 9 per cent since 2007. Does the Government agree that that represents a concerning position for those children and that more must be done to provide more funding and support for pupils with additional support needs?

John Swinney: I had the very good fortune to meet Enable Scotland when it was in Parliament highlighting many of those issues just last week, and it was a helpful and informative discussion. The central point of the proposals that Enable Scotland has put forward is that we must use every opportunity to ensure that the statutory guidance and the statutory framework that are in place are used to meet the needs of young people within the school situation.

On the comparison with 2007, I note that we have seen since then a growing sense that young people should be educated within a mainstream environment. That follows from the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. We need to ensure that our education system is fulfilling young people's needs. In some circumstances that will be within a mainstream setting and in other cases it will be in a special educational setting. We must

make those judgments according to the needs of young people themselves.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Given the loss of more than 400 additional support needs teachers since 2009, how many more teachers does the Government expect local authorities will be forced to cut as a result of today's budget announcements?

John Swinney: I point out to Mr Greer that teacher numbers were shown to have increased on Tuesday, and that is because the Government made an absolute commitment to ensure that that happened. I welcome the fact that teacher numbers increased.

In a couple of hours, Mr Mackay will set out the Government's budget and I look forward to hearing the measures that he sets out this afternoon and the positive impact that they will have on Scottish education and other public services.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. **Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S5F-00636)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Ruth Davidson: We are used to seeing budget U-turns after budgets have been announced, but it is quite something to see a budget falling apart before it has even been published. The Scottish National Party Government has been telling us for months that it will press ahead with its flagship plan to raid council budgets to pay for an attainment fund. Now, a few hours before the most important budget in the Parliament's history, we read that that policy has been dumped. Is that not a shambles, First Minister?

The First Minister: I concede that the Tories know quite a lot about shambles. The Parliament does not have too long to wait until Derek Mackay outlines the Scottish Government's budget. It is a budget that will deliver in full on the commitments that we have made to extra investment in our schools to tackle the attainment gap and raise standards. It is also a budget that will deliver fairness for local government services.

Overall, it is a budget that will invest in our economy, protect public services and ensure fair treatment for householders. No matter how much they might like to moan about the budget, members across the chamber will have to welcome it when they hear it this afternoon.

Ruth Davidson: It is a bit late to tell us to wait until 2.30 when the information is on the front pages of today's papers. I do not know whether the First Minister has taken the time to speak to anyone in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities who was at the meeting on Tuesday. I am in no doubt whatsoever that, if she had, they would have confirmed that the story in today's press is 100 per cent true.

If the SNP is going to dump the plan, that is good. Local communities were absolutely right to say no to a national Government wanting to snatch local funding.

Here is what many people will be asking today. Back in September, all the Opposition parties in the Parliament sent a crystal-clear message to the Government that it should ditch the proposal. We might think that, if something put us and the Greens on the same side, that would be a warning

shot that there was a problem, yet the Government ignored Parliament and councils. It has climbed down now, at the last minute, only because it has been told that the proposal will not work. Everybody else saw that coming, so why did the Government not see it?

The First Minister: I thought that the comedy turn at First Minister's questions was reserved for Willie Rennie. It seems that there is a new incumbent in that post.

Let me check that I have got Ruth Davidson's position right. I think that I heard her say to the Scottish Government, "How dare you dump a plan that we absolutely demanded that you dump?" That appears to be her position.

When the budget is presented in a couple of hours, Derek Mackay will outline the Government's absolute determination to do what we promised we would do by investing more money in schools to raise standards, help teachers and close the attainment gap. The chamber will also hear a budget that delivers fairness for local government services. When the chamber hears the budget, some of the claims and accusations that we have heard in recent days from people across the chamber will sound rather silly.

Ruth Davidson: When the First Minister talks about claims and accusations that link local government funding to the attainment fund, does she mean those that were given by her deputy? He said:

"We secured a mandate at the recent election to raise an additional £100 million per year, through our council tax reforms, specifically for raising educational attainment."—*[Official Report, 28 September 2016; c 12.]*

That sounds pretty specific to me.

All this chaff aside, the real answer is that the Government thought that it could make councils pay for a Scottish Government policy, and councils told it to take a running jump. We now have to assume that, despite the Government's complaints and long list of grievances, Mr Mackay is able to find a spare £100 million down the back of his sofa to pay for the attainment fund, unless the plan is to lop an extra £100 million from the councils' central Government grant. Who will pay for the fund—will it be the councils or the Government?

The First Minister: I am confused at Ruth Davidson's line of questioning. I cannot work out whether she wants us to do something or does not want us to do something. We do not have long to wait to hear the budget being outlined. When we hear it being outlined, Ruth Davidson will look back on her line of questioning—particularly that last question—and conclude that it probably was not the most sensible line to have pursued.

The budget will deliver on the promise that we made to get extra investment into schools. It will also deliver fairness for local government and respect local democracy and accountability. I would have thought that people across the chamber could welcome each and every one of those aspects of the budget and I certainly hope that that will be the case. The budget that Derek Mackay will outline in just over two hours' time is one that I am extremely proud to have outlined for the Government, and I hope that the entire chamber will get behind it.

Ruth Davidson: It sounds an awful lot as if, instead of taking the money out of the councils' front pocket, the First Minister is going to take it out of their hip pocket instead.

This morning's headlines make it pretty clear that, at the very moment when we need a Scottish Government that is in control, we have instead one that is distracted and utterly adrift. It is one that has allowed us to fall behind the rest of the United Kingdom in 25 out of 30 key economic indicators. It is one that is deterring investment because of its threat of a second independence referendum. It is one that tries to spin its way out of a rise in unemployment by pretending that that rise is not happening.

The spin and the drift need to end, because what we need now more than ever is a Government that has a real focus on the economy and which uses the powers that the Parliament now has to create new jobs and not to deter skilled workers by setting the highest taxes anywhere in the UK. The First Minister is right about one thing: in two and a half hours' time, it will be decision time. The Government is either for keeping Scotland competitive, so that we can grow the economy, or for taxing people more and putting a block on growth. The First Minister cannot have it both ways, so which one is it to be?

The First Minister: Nobody who is watching this will have any idea what on earth Ruth Davidson is asking me, and I do not think that she knows, either. That was totally confused and shambolic. We always know when Ruth Davidson is drowning at First Minister's questions because she gets on to an independence referendum. That is the straw that she keeps clutching at.

I have to say that it is a bit ironic that she talks about economic uncertainty on the very day that we see a story in the media—she is fond of citing stories in the media—that the UK Government is being advised, by its own European Union ambassador, that it will take 10 years to put in place a new deal with the EU. That is the economic uncertainty that is being created for businesses across the country, and it is entirely on the Tories' watch.

Let us get back to the budget. When Ruth Davidson hears Derek Mackay's budget later, she will look back to the start of the long, winding and confused question that she asked me and realise how misinformed and ill informed it was. The budget is not about taking money from local services but about investing in them, and that will be the hallmark of the budget this afternoon.

I take us back to the core issue, which is raising attainment in our schools. I have made absolutely clear the priority that I attach to that, that the Deputy First Minister attaches to that and that the entire Government attaches to that. This afternoon, the chamber and Scotland will see a budget that matches the investment to the ambition that we have to ensure that we raise standards in our schools and create a world-class education system.

Engagements

2. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the week. (S5F-00643)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Kezia Dugdale: Today is budget day. It is the day when the Scottish National Party will prove, beyond doubt, that it would rather pass on Tory cuts than use the powers of this Parliament to do things differently. Nowhere is that clearer than in our education system. The past two weeks have exposed a decade of failure under the SNP. Even SNP councillors are now speaking out. In Dundee, they have said that the real problem in education is not who runs the school budgets; it is the fact that the budgets are being cut. Does the First Minister agree with her SNP colleagues in Dundee?

The First Minister: I agree that we need increased investment in our schools. That is what the SNP pledged to deliver when we won the election in May, and that is exactly what Derek Mackay's budget will deliver this afternoon.

Kezia Dugdale: I hope that the First Minister has read the paper from her SNP colleagues in Dundee to the Scottish Government. It is pages and pages of a plea to stop the cuts to education. The truth is that there really is nothing progressive about the SNP. We saw that yesterday, when it once again voted with the Tories against a 50p top rate of tax for the richest 1 per cent. We see it in the state of our schools: 10 years of the SNP have led to falling standards, a shameful gap between the richest and poorest children and more than 4,000 fewer teachers. Whatever spin she puts on the budget this afternoon, does the First Minister

really think that it will reverse a decade of damaging cuts?

The First Minister: This week, we saw an increase in teacher numbers. Part of that increase was delivered as a direct result of the attainment fund that the Government set up. Today, we also see evidence of a narrowing of the attainment gap in terms of access to universities. We have said that we are determined to go further in our universities and schools. We had the data published this week so that we can ensure that we focus absolutely on raising standards and closing the gap, and on holding Government to account for that.

On our tax policies more generally, I seem to recall that, yesterday at decision time, Labour voted with the Tories against the Government's position. We put our tax policies to the people of Scotland in the election. I know that Kezia Dugdale does not like being reminded of the election in May because she led her party to the humiliation of coming third in it. In that election, we put forward fair, balanced tax proposals and the people of Scotland endorsed them. We will deliver on them in our budget this afternoon.

Kezia Dugdale: I know that the SNP Government has a problem with its numeracy standards but surely even the First Minister can see that an increase of 250 teachers in one year does not take away a loss of 4,000 over the past 10 years. Teachers, janitors and care workers are uniting outside the chamber today against SNP cuts that are damaging valued public services and which Nicola Sturgeon has spent her whole life saying that she could stop if only she had the powers. Well, now she has the powers and she is refusing to use them, so local services will face more cuts—cuts that will hit everybody but hurt the most vulnerable. Labour will not vote for a budget that will inflict such pain on Scotland. The question is: why would the SNP?

The First Minister: We will not do that, because the budget that we will outline this afternoon invests in public services. I absolutely believe that, when we hear the budget, not only the questions that we heard from Ruth Davidson but some of those that we heard from Kezia Dugdale will turn out to be completely unfounded. We will outline a budget that supports our economy, protects public services and ensures that we do not further punish hard-pressed workers throughout the country. When we hear the budget this afternoon, the question will not be why the Government would vote for it—we are proud of it—but why anybody else in the chamber would not vote for it. It is a fair budget and a good budget and I hope that the entire chamber will get behind it.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We have a couple of constituency supplementaries.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Is the First Minister aware of the level of concern about the proposals to remove in-patient beds from the centre for integrative care? The Scottish health council has deemed the change not to be major, much to the anger of patients and campaigners throughout Scotland. Will the First Minister explain what happened to the pledge made by the health secretary during the election campaign that she would consider giving the CIC national funding? Will the First Minister and the health secretary agree to meet campaigners before next week's meeting of Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board?

The First Minister: The health secretary is always happy to meet campaigners and patients and does so regularly.

The decision about whether the service change is deemed a major one has been informed by the Scottish health council. We ask it to look at proposed service changes and give us advice on whether they are major or not. The advice on the centre for integrative care proposal is that it is not a major service change proposal. All the other proposals from Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board have, of course, been deemed to be major service change proposals.

That is the right way to make those decisions, and that should be recognised across the chamber. The health secretary will, of course, continue to engage with patients on this issue and on a range of other issues.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): On Sunday, more than 500 people took to the beach at Nairn to complain about the transfer of oil between ships on the open seas of the Moray Firth. The plan will create no jobs, but will put at risk the marine environment, coastal communities and the Highlands and Islands tourism industry, which is the region's most important industry. In 2007, the Scottish Government vigorously opposed such a plan for the Firth of Forth. Will the First Minister personally review the Scottish Government's position on the matter and join the growing opposition to that significant potential threat?

The First Minister: I absolutely understand the concerns that people are expressing but, as John Finnie will be aware, the matter is reserved to the United Kingdom Government. The Scottish Government has repeatedly requested devolution of that function since 2014, but we currently have no formal role in the process, despite our having devolved responsibility to protect the environment. The Secretary of State for Transport in the UK Government must take account of the advice that was previously given by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

I understand the concerns, and we will continue to make those views known to the UK Government. I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform would be happy to meet John Finnie to discuss the matter further.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The First Minister may be aware of my constituent Angela MacDonald, who faced having to go to England or Northern Ireland due to a shortage of appropriate neonatal cots in the national health service in Scotland. She bypassed the Vale of Leven maternity unit, there were no neonatal cots at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley, and she ended up in the Victoria hospital in Fife without family or friends. She was then told that she might need to go to Newcastle or Belfast because of pressure on neonatal cots. That is simply unacceptable.

Why were there no suitable neonatal cots in all of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde? Why does there appear to be a shortage of cots across Scotland? Why do the resources to buy equipment appear not to exist? If the First Minister agrees that what happened is unacceptable, what will she do now to stop women travelling hundreds of miles to have their babies?

The First Minister: I am not going to comment on the individual case. I have read the media report on it, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport would be very happy to correspond with Jackie Baillie about the particular constituency case that she raises. I simply say that I hope that her constituent and her constituent's baby are doing well. I wish them all the best.

On the more general issue that Jackie Baillie raised, maternity and neonatal services are vital services in our country. That is why we commissioned the review of maternity and neonatal services, the outcome of which is due out early next year. The review will look across a range of issues to ensure that we have the right services, and the right configuration of services, in place across our country so that mothers get the best possible care.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S5F-00651)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Cabinet will next meet on Tuesday.

Patrick Harvie: It is not a new habit of politicians, but it is a bad habit to criticise an opponent for a policy that we do not like and to criticise them again when that policy is reversed. Therefore, I warmly welcome the change of direction that appears to be happening on the

decision to raid local tax revenues to fund a national policy. The Greens have been consistent in arguing that local taxation should be for local priorities and local decision making.

If there is going to be a change of direction, it will be a positive one, but if the reason for the change is an inability to get agreement between central and local government, surely there will be two consequences. One consequence is for national Government—the Scottish Government. The ability to make Scotland-wide decisions on policy on investment in services has to be funded by national taxation powers. That is exactly what those tax powers are for. Secondly, those in local government need the flexibility, unhampered by central control, to make decisions about tax levels and tax rates at the local level to meet local priorities, because they work hard in every community to deliver the services that we all depend on every day of our lives.

The First Minister: I am not going to comment in detail on the budget, because Derek Mackay will outline it shortly, but I will say a number of things, which I have said in response to other questions. I hope that when members hear the budget statement this afternoon, there will be a recognition that what I am about to say is at the heart of our budget.

We have put together a budget that will protect nationally funded public services, that will absolutely deliver on our commitment to get extra investment into schools to help us to raise standards and to close the attainment gap, and that will seek to protect local services, while respecting local democracy and accountability. Those are three important principles; we will put forward a budget that delivers on each and every one of them.

Patrick Harvie: The First Minister saying that she was not going to comment on the detail of the budget was a phrase that we all expected to hear, and we understand that we will hear the detail later. I was asking about the broad direction of travel. If the First Minister is describing it correctly as a budget that will protect national services and protect local services from cuts, I will look at it with an open mind.

Yesterday, no party gained a majority in the chamber on the taxation debate. No party, including the Government, was able to convince a majority of the Parliament on its tax position. Some have described that as a stalemate. It is in all our interests to avoid a stalemate when the budget comes to be voted on or when the rate resolution—the tax rates—comes to be voted on.

It is significant that Scottish National Party, Green, Labour and Lib Dem MSPs were united yesterday in rejecting the Tory ideological demand

that taxes should be no higher in Scotland. If we want to avoid that stalemate, all we need to decide is who is going to pay more taxes. On the Green benches, we believe that that should be people on the wealthier end of the income scale, not those who are low earners. Will the First Minister confirm that people like ourselves—MSPs and ministers in the Scottish Government on high incomes—will be paying more in tax next year than we did this year?

The First Minister: I will let Derek Mackay set out the details of the budget. We put our tax policies—national and local—to the electorate, and we emerged by some considerable distance as the largest party in this chamber.

More broadly, I welcome the fact that Patrick Harvie says that he will listen to the budget with an open mind. I think that he will find and hear plenty in the budget that he can agree with. I say to him that it is important that we seek to build progressive alliances in this chamber, and I am very happy and willing to do that. This afternoon, we will find that there are acres of common ground in the budget that we can all build on.

I look forward to working with those across the chamber—or at least in certain parts of the chamber—to try to build that progressive alliance that supports our economy and public services and makes sure that we deliver fairness to people across the country who are already starting to pay the price of the higher inflation imposed on us by the Tory Brexit obsession. Those are the principles at the heart of our budget; I hope that everyone in the chamber will be able to support them.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Will the First Minister join me in condemning Halfords, which wants to charge one of my constituents in Speyside an astonishing £50 for delivering a pair of car towels costing £5.99? To make matters worse, the company implied that the high charge is to put off customers in the north of Scotland from ordering—so much for the season of goodwill.

Does the First Minister agree that, as more rural residents buy online in the run-up to Christmas, they should not be treated with contempt, fleeced by greedy companies or discriminated against for living in the north of Scotland? Will the First Minister and her colleagues in Government put as much pressure as possible on the United Kingdom Government to sort out this matter once and for all?

The First Minister: Richard Lochhead raises an important issue. Yes, we will continue to apply pressure to the UK Government to take action.

The level of charge that Richard Lochhead has outlined is shocking. Based on what he has said, it

seems vastly out of proportion. I am in full agreement that excessive charging for parcel deliveries is unacceptable, particularly when we know that more and more customers are taking advantage of the benefits of shopping online.

We played an active role in developing a statement of principles for delivery charging, which reputable companies should adhere to. However, as Richard Lochhead has alluded to, the UK Government has the power, and indeed the obligation, to prevent that kind of situation from arising, and we will continue to press it to do much better by our rural citizens than it does right now.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

Since February of this year, the Scottish Prison Service, on behalf of the Scottish ministers, has had the power to release prisoners up to two days early so that they can access services in the community, a move that was supported by parties across the chamber. The Scottish Government's policy memorandum at the time stated that some 4,000 prisoners a year are released on a Friday and that release on the days preceding weekends is

"consistently raised as a key barrier"

to accessing services. I have found out that, in the 10 months since the provision was made available, it has been used for only one prisoner. What is the First Minister's assessment of the use of the power?

The First Minister: It certainly sounds as if we should look into that issue further, and I am happy to do so. I do not have the detail in front of me, but the reason for the policy that the member has outlined is to help prisoners, on their release, to reintegrate and access services in the community, which is an important part of trying to reduce reoffending. I give an undertaking to the member to look into the issue and to have the Cabinet Secretary for Justice write to him with the detail that he has requested.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Presiding Officer, humanity is dying before our eyes and the world looks on, helpless. Looking at the scenes from Aleppo, I feel angry, broken, helpless and lost—angry that this can happen in our world; broken, because I can only imagine if it was my children staying awake at night because of the sound of gunfire and explosions, or if my boys' only hope in life was to stay alive; helpless, because I do not know what I or anybody else in the chamber can do to make a meaningful difference; and lost, because every option that I think of can mean only more bloodshed and violence. We need to do something, but I honestly do not know what that something is. I know that warm words will not save a single life in Aleppo, but I hope that all of us in this chamber can

encourage people across Scotland to take part in the humanitarian response in Syria and to send a strong message of solidarity, humanity and peace to every man, woman and child struggling in Aleppo.

The First Minister: I thoroughly endorse Anas Sarwar's comments and I share the sentiments that he has expressed. Each and every one of us finds the scenes from Aleppo that we are witnessing on our television screens nightly to be heartbreaking and deeply distressing. In the circumstances, it is very difficult for any of us to say exactly what can and should be done to resolve the situation, but we know that, on this occasion, the world cannot, as it has done so often in the past, continue to stand back while the scenes of slaughter and destruction happen before our eyes.

There are things that we should be supporting, such as more humanitarian intervention. For example, the suggestion of humanitarian air drops should be further discussed. We should support evacuation of the wounded. For example, Red Cross evacuation is happening as we speak, and we should support more of that. There should absolutely be a determination to hold to account for their behaviour anyone who is guilty of what would be war crimes. The international community must unite behind that. I endorse Anas Sarwar's plea that all of us should bear in mind the humanitarian crisis and seek to do what we can as individuals to help with the humanitarian effort.

More widely—this does not in any way take away from the horror that we are witnessing in Aleppo—this time last week, after First Minister's questions, I visited a group of Syrian refugees who arrived in Edinburgh round about this time last year. I saw a number of people still suffering trauma and real anxiety and concern about relatives in other countries and in some cases still in Syria, but I also witnessed what can happen when, as a society, we come together and are determined to act in a humanitarian way, giving refuge and a home to people who need it. Let us hope today—as we hope on all days, but particularly as we get so close to Christmas—that we can see a future where the love based on that humanitarian instinct can overcome the horror that we witness all too often.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I am sure that we can all welcome the announcement this week about the 253 full-time-equivalent teachers, many of whom will be directly funded by the Scottish Government. As Parliament will learn of the budget later today, does that not reinforce the message that all politicians—in Parliament and local government—should get fully behind the attainment Scotland fund?

The First Minister: Yes. I hope that the entire Parliament will get behind the attainment Scotland fund and the attainment challenge, which is focused on raising attainment in our schools. As First Minister, I have been very clear about the level of priority that I attach to the work that the fund supports.

The teacher numbers that were published earlier this week show an increase, but it is important to note that part of that increase—I think 160 out of the 253 extra teachers—is teachers who are funded directly through the attainment fund. It is a relatively small number, because the fund is still in its early stages, but it is a demonstration of the power of that kind of directed and targeted resource. The budget this afternoon will set out our plans to ensure that that kind of approach continues.

Oil and Gas Industry

4. Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the oil and gas industry in the light of recovering oil prices. (S5F-00664)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government has worked closely with the oil and gas industry, through the work of the energy jobs task force, to overcome the challenges that it has faced as a result of the downturn. Although oil prices have recently risen slightly, we are under no illusion about the challenges that the sector continues to face. Of course, the United Kingdom Government holds the main levers to support the sector, so we were disappointed that it provided nothing new by way of support in the autumn statement.

We remain committed to supporting the sector. With up to 20 billion barrels of oil still to be recovered from the North Sea, it is clear that with the right investment and the right interventions now, the industry can and will have a bright future.

Mairi Evans: Yesterday I received an update from BP—as did, I am sure, other north-east MSPs—in which BP’s chief executive officer, Bob Dudley, is quoted as saying:

“The myth that the North Sea is finished is absolutely that ... There’s a demonstration of new activity and new big fields coming on stream ... there’s real economic activity that will support thousands of jobs. And there is an active exploration programme that could create something really new and exciting.”

Given that the Westminster Government has completely failed to support the oil and gas sector and north-east Scotland’s economy, can the First Minister outline what work the Scottish Government is doing to maximise investment in that vital sector and to encourage exploration?

The First Minister: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in advance of the autumn statement, outlining further action that the Treasury could take to support the oil sector at this time, including vital measures to stimulate exploration. It is disappointing that the chancellor chose not to act, so I hope that there will be further action from the UK Government over the months to come on exploration, and around the operation of tax relief on decommissioning, which is very important for the stage that the North Sea industry is at right now.

The Scottish Government will continue to do all that we can to support the industry. The task force that I mentioned remains focused on supporting the people who have been affected. At the same time, it is looking to the future and laying the foundations for a vibrant industry for decades to come. The £12 million transition training fund that has been established by the Scottish Government has been very successful and has so far supported more than 1,200 people who were made redundant to retrain and upskill. Those are real and tangible efforts to support workers in the industry at this time.

Through the city deal with the UK Government—although the Scottish Government is investing more in infrastructure—we are supporting Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to ensure that they have the infrastructure that they need in order to compete in the future.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will quote directly to the First Minister what Oil & Gas UK said in response to the autumn statement. Deirdre Michie, the chief executive, said:

“We are pleased to hear the Chancellor re-commit to HM Treasury’s Driving Investment plan today. This sends a strong signal to investors that the government recognises that the UK oil and gas tax regime needs to be predictable and internationally competitive.”

When the industry is so positive about the UK Government action, why cannot the First Minister be?

The First Minister: Oil & Gas UK will, of course, speak for itself, but the industry has been calling for more. I attended, a few months back, a meeting in Aberdeen with Oil & Gas UK, at which we discussed some of the particular issues that I have been talking about today, including more support for exploration and, in particular, how tax relief on decommissioning will be dealt with to ensure that it can support new entrants into the sector. Those are important practical measures. I recognise some of the earlier steps that the UK Government took around investment, for example, but all of us should say that more needs to be done. We should unite to ask the UK Government

to do more. That would be a perfectly reasonable approach.

In the meantime I, as First Minister, should ensure that the Scottish Government fulfils its obligations to support retraining and upskilling, and to support efforts to ensure that when the industry recovers—as it will—we still have the skills in the north-east of Scotland to ensure that it can flourish. If we work together—which I think would be a good thing to do on this and other matters—we can ensure that a vital Scottish industry has the support that it needs and can have a very bright future.

Basic Payment Scheme

5. Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister, in the light of recently reported issues, what action the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that farmers can have confidence in the national basic payment support scheme. (S5F-00640)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): It is clear that it is important to learn lessons from all recently reported issues in order to give farmers the confidence that they need in the common agricultural policy payment scheme. We have already accepted all of Audit Scotland's recommendations, and a range of internal actions are being undertaken by officials to implement internal checking processes.

It is crucial that the issue does not risk delivery to farmers and crofters. I hope that all members would agree that the thing that we can do that will give farmers most confidence in the 2016 scheme is to deliver it by the end of June, which is the timescale that the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity set out. He, I and the entire Government are focused on achieving that.

Peter Chapman: Last week, Scotland's rural communities saw our Government overpay loans to 166 farmers, to a total of £746,000. We also saw a foul-up with the beef efficiency scheme's data protection, which led to a breach that accidentally released thousands of email addresses. That is all on top of a dismal record on getting CAP payments to farmers and crofters. Will the First Minister commit to delivering the balance of this year's CAP payments as soon as possible and, at the very latest, by June next year?

The First Minister: Yes. I just said that we are absolutely focused on doing that.

Data protection is a serious matter. The breach was a human error in the Government. Appropriate action will, of course, be taken to ensure that such errors do not happen in the future.

The overpayments were identified on the day that the loans were issued. Affected businesses were contacted the next day, an apology was issued and discussions have taken place about how the money will be repaid. Prompt action was taken to alert customers about the overpayment and to agree repayment.

On the more general issue—which farmers and crofters are, of course, concerned about—more than 12,500 farmers and crofters have received a nationally funded loan. The total loans amount to £256 million, which is getting money into farmers' pockets, where it needs to be. Fergus Ewing has been very clear that we are absolutely determined that the scheme will be delivered in full by the deadline of June next year, and I hope that Peter Chapman will get behind him and the Government as we seek to ensure that that is the case.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Almost a third of farm businesses are so confident about the Scottish Government's loan scheme, which closed yesterday, that they are not taking it up. That means that more than £200 million that was due to be spent in the rural economy this month—it is December every year—is sitting in the Scottish Government's bank account. The First Minister is laughing at that. Does she not understand that the continued failure to deliver farm entitlements—that is what they are—on time is damaging our whole rural economy?

The First Minister: We are absolutely focused on supporting the rural economy.

We made a loan scheme available, which was the right thing to do and was widely supported not just across the chamber but by the industry. With the greatest of respect to Mike Rumbles, I say that I cannot force farmers to agree to take a loan. The offer was made and many farmers have taken it up: as I said, 12,500 farmers and crofters have received a nationally funded loan. If some farmers and crofters opt not to take a loan, that is their decision and the Government must respect it.

In terms of payment of the overall scheme, 99 per cent of payments in last year's scheme have been made, and we are absolutely focused on ensuring that we learn the lessons from what happened so that payments for this year's scheme are made by the June deadline that we have been speaking about.

I have apologised to farmers and the rural economy repeatedly on previous occasions, and have no hesitation in doing so again, for the mistakes that were made and the delays that were encountered in the 2015 scheme. We are determined to learn lessons and to put things right, and to ensure that we meet the deadline next year. That is what we will do.

Childcare

6. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to figures released by the Care Inspectorate that show that 70 per cent of four-year-olds were recorded as receiving funded childcare. (S5F-00648)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): It is very important to note, as I hope Mr Johnson will, that the 70 per cent that he has derived from the Care Inspectorate's figure is based on a trial statistic for numbers of funded four-year-olds. The Care Inspectorate itself has said that those are trial statistics and may well be incomplete. In fact, its own report clearly indicates that the data has been collected for the first time, and states:

"there are some uncertainties regarding the data quality."

I, and the Care Inspectorate, therefore urge caution in drawing conclusions from those trial statistics.

Daniel Johnson may wish to note that the latest statistics that the Scottish Government published this week, which are validated and quality assured, showed that uptake for four-year-olds remains at near-universal levels.

Daniel Johnson: I thank the First Minister for that answer, but the fair funding for our kids group has been telling the Government for two years that the way in which it measures childcare is wrong and that children are missing out. Indeed, it is ludicrous to rely on statistics that show rates of well over 100 per cent in some areas. The Care Inspectorate's figures confirm how misleading the Government's figures are. If we cannot have confidence in the Government's figures on the uptake of 600 hours, how can we be confident that we are on track to deliver double that number of hours, especially when the Government's blueprint on childcare has already been delayed?

The First Minister: I am happy to ask the Minister for Childcare and Early Years to write to the member to set out some of the detail of the matter, because it is important that people understand it. The figure of 98 per cent for four-year-olds comes from the Scottish Government's figures, which are quality assured and validated. We have recognised, partly as a consequence of our discussions with the fair funding for our kids group, that there will be some duplication in that figure. However, taking account of that duplication, we are confident that more than 95 per cent of four-year-olds are registered for their childcare entitlement. That is getting very close to universal levels.

Equally, I have conceded in the chamber many times in the past that we must do more to improve the flexibility of the provision that we are offering,

and work is well under way with councils to do exactly that. We are now focused—as our budget this afternoon will reflect—on doubling the provision over the lifetime of this session of Parliament, because it is the doubling of provision that will deal with some of the inflexibility that parents understandably find difficult. This policy is vital for the good of our young people and to help parents to get into work, and I will, on behalf of the Government, be very proud to see it implemented in this session of Parliament.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Can the First Minister outline how much money the Scottish Government has invested in early learning and childcare, and how much local authorities have spent? Does she agree that it is the height of hypocrisy for Labour politicians to come to the chamber and bemoan ELC when Labour councils such as Fife Council have taken Scottish Government funding and run?

The First Minister: We know from the financial review that was carried out that the expansion of childcare to 600 hours has been fully funded. Since 2014, local authorities have been provided with £500 million for that, and we are committed to further funding to support the doubling of provision that I have spoken about—the draft budget will touch on that later today.

The financial review also highlighted the estimated significant underspend in the funding that was given to local authorities to support the expansion to 600 hours. I expect local authorities to spend the funding that we make available to them to provide the hours, flexibility and choice that parents and children have a right to expect. I also expect to see clear progress from authorities that have low levels of registration but which have failed to make full use of their funding. Those issues are important. It is vital that the Scottish Government funds its commitments, but it is also vital that local authorities use the funding to deliver those commitments.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's questions.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Section 3 of our code of conduct covers declarations of interests. It covers written declarations of interest, but it also makes clear that spoken declarations of interest in the chamber are required on certain occasions. It states:

"A member must declare an interest when speaking or intervening in a debate where that interest relates to the subject being debated."

It later says:

"If the member wishes to take part in the meeting in any way, other than simply attending or voting, they must make an oral declaration."

I ask for your guidance, Presiding Officer. Does that section cover farm payments? Will you look at the *Official Report* of today's First Minister's question time and consider whether the code has been complied with?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I will look into the matter that Mr Harvie raises.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. While you are investigating that matter, could you also seek clarification about whether parliamentary liaison officers who ask questions should also declare an interest? I think that that has happened on this occasion. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order, it is not lunch time yet.

I can tell Mr McArthur that the First Minister's PLOs need to declare themselves but that PLOs who have a link with a cabinet secretary do not, even if the subject of their question relates to that cabinet secretary's portfolio. That is the arrangement that we have come to.

Edinburgh World Heritage Site

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-02445, in the name of Gordon Lindhurst, on the future of Edinburgh's world heritage site. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the significance of the contrast between Edinburgh's medieval Old Town and its Georgian New Town and its designation as a World Heritage Site in 1995 by UNESCO, recognising both its historical and architectural importance and efforts to conserve it since 1970; notes that the site is one of five across Scotland; understands that, according to Invest Edinburgh, the city attracts around four million visitors per year, many of whom visit the historic attractions within the World Heritage Site, such as Edinburgh Castle, St Giles Cathedral and the Real Mary King's Close; further understands that the site is a major factor behind the £1.32 billion that is generated through tourism for the local economy each year; recognises that a World Heritage Site is selected based on it having cultural, historical, scientific or other significance and its future preservation is seen to be in the collective interests of humanity; notes the prevailing development plans within Edinburgh's World Heritage Site, such as the decision over the old Royal High School at Calton Hill, and the need to develop Scotland's capital city for the future in order to enhance the performance of its economy; recognises that Edinburgh City Council, Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland are involved in reviewing the Management Plan for the World Heritage Site (2017-2022), which aims to co-ordinate action to protect and enhance the outstanding universal values of the site and to promote its harmonious adaptation to the needs of contemporary life; further recognises that members of the public were recently consulted on the review through a survey, the results of which were published on 1 November 2016; understands that the results show that, while awareness of the World Heritage Site was rated highly, there was a lack of understanding regarding what it meant and its associated benefits; notes the calls for action at all levels to raise awareness and custodianship of the site and the protection of the historic built environment for current and future generations, and further notes the calls on all those with influence over Edinburgh's current and future planning developments to fully recognise the importance of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site.

12:47

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): We have in Edinburgh a unique and special treasure,

"an old city dominated by a medieval fortress and a new neoclassic city"

with a

"harmonious juxtaposition of these two highly contrasting historic areas, each containing many buildings of great significance".

I quote, of course, from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage listing, which was awarded in 1995 to the old and new towns of Edinburgh.

One of my early memories is of standing on the castle ramparts at the age of six or so, together with my younger brother. Everywhere was covered in mist and little could be seen. Seemingly in an instant, the mist cleared and I could see down into Princes Street gardens and beyond. It was, for me, a magical and lasting moment; a picture in time from a day trip to this great city.

Like so many visitors to Edinburgh before and since, I was captured by its incredible beauty and contrasts. That is what draws 4 million tourists to our capital city every year—a record unmatched in the United Kingdom outwith London. Visitors flock to Edinburgh castle, St Giles' cathedral and the real Mary King's Close, to name but a few attractions. They bring a wealth of interest and spend over £1 billion, creating thousands of jobs. A recent first-time visitor to the city, who is in his 70s—someone who, like me, has travelled the world and the seven seas—told me that Edinburgh was an amazing place and like nowhere that he had ever seen before on earth.

However, sometimes we cease to appreciate what we should enjoy. Familiarity can even breed contempt. Many buildings change hands and change use. I think of the former building in which Charlotte Baptist Chapel met in Rose Street and of its new meeting place in Shandwick Place—the former St George's West—which has been given a new lease of life as a place of worship. One building's fate may indeed be another's fortune.

It is against this background of Edinburgh's outstanding built heritage that I have brought today's debate to our national Parliament in the hope that it will help to assist in the preservation of the irreplaceable for generations to come.

The debate comes at a significant time for this world heritage site and the city of Edinburgh. The city is not simply a museum but a living place that continues to develop in our modern day. As convener of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, I understand the need for that. I was delighted to learn that Edinburgh topped the FDI Intelligence global cities for the future awards this week, recognising the work that has been done to attract 25 new foreign investors last year alone.

The continued success of the city as an attractive place to live, work and do business in depends on its roots. Protection of the world heritage site is not a bar to that; it complements it. Businesses benefit from the world-renowned setting, even as our city benefits from the investment that is generated. Edinburgh World Heritage does fantastic work to ensure that the world heritage site is a positive force for good to benefit everyone. This is on the basis that UNESCO status should not prevent but rather result in properly managed change in the context

of 75 per cent of buildings within this world heritage site being listed.

Given that background, what are a few steps that can be taken for Edinburgh? The management plan for the world heritage site needs to be integrated better into the city plan that oversees how Edinburgh develops. Having a management plan that is simply latched on to the side of the city plan tends to lead to complications.

All levels of government need to sharply focus on overseeing development in tandem with maintaining Edinburgh's heritage. There are voices at a local council level supporting this ambition, such as that of Councillor Joanna Mowat, who is in the public gallery, and of course there is Adam Wilkinson of Edinburgh World Heritage, who is also in the public gallery.

The upkeep of building fabric in the city centre is also crucial. A recent survey reported that 72 per cent of 202 properties surveyed needed some sort of repair. The upkeep of private property is as essential to Edinburgh's world heritage site status as the need to have managed change. This represents an aspect of community buy-in to Edinburgh's heritage that should be strongly emphasised and supported. That community buy-in is only likely to happen, however, if there is a greater understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a world heritage site.

Recent survey results that were gathered to inform the management plan for 2017 to 2022 are both encouraging and concerning. Awareness of the city centre's world heritage site was high, but most respondents were unaware of what it meant and what the benefits were.

By promoting the world heritage site and talking up its benefits, we can foster the maintenance that is required. That alone may not be enough. Following the scrapping of the former statutory notice repair system by the City of Edinburgh Council, city residents find themselves left in somewhat of a vacuum. Thought must be given as to how maintenance work can be managed and encouraged, possibly through legislation or other incentives.

My goal in bringing today's debate before the Parliament has been to raise awareness of the importance of Edinburgh's UNESCO world heritage site status during a period of change in Scotland's capital city.

Not only Edinburgh but many parts of our country enjoy a rich built heritage that needs to be protected for the future. Let us maintain and manage it for the good of all as we move into that future.

12:54

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I commend Gordon Lindhurst for bringing this important debate to the Parliament. I ask colleagues to excuse me because, as I have already communicated to the Presiding Officer, I have a commitment—I must attend a meeting of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing, which starts at 1 o'clock—that means that I will have to leave after my speech.

I wanted to speak in the debate because I am incredibly passionate about Edinburgh's world heritage site status and the need to sustain and preserve this wonderful city. As someone who grew up here, I have been in love with the city of Edinburgh as far back as I can remember, because of the views from our seven hills and from North Bridge, and the feeling of inspiration that I get from walking around the new town, where, as a hub of enlightenment thinking, James Clerk Maxwell or Adam Smith might have sat down or walked along a street. Numerous ideas, innovations and inspirations have come out of the city, including, in modern times, those of J K Rowling and others.

I have a deep appreciation for the city's urban environment and its soul. The points that Gordon Lindhurst made in his motion and in his speech could not be overemphasised. We need to think about how we preserve the city in the context of mistakes that have been made in the past. In previous decades, there were plans to build an inner ring road through Edinburgh. Thankfully, that idea was put to one side. Those of us who are lucky enough to represent the city will know that there are streets in all our constituencies in which the destruction that was caused in previous decades would not happen today. We must learn from those mistakes.

As Gordon Lindhurst wisely said, we need to treasure the city. That is key to the urban environment of those of us who live and work here, but it is also key to our economic prosperity; it is what makes Edinburgh special in the world. Those of us who have travelled and come back to Edinburgh and have felt a sense of being home and a sense of inspiration as we have come into the city centre have an insight into what it must be like for a first-time visitor to the city. It is the beauty of Edinburgh's landscape that is so inspirational and so economically important. As the motion states, 4 million visitors a year come here and £1.32 billion is generated through tourism.

As well as touching on some of the points that Gordon Lindhurst rightly made, there is another issue that I would like to raise. Those of us who represent Edinburgh have a responsibility and, I hope, a determination to work together on the call to action that Gordon Lindhurst articulated in his

motion. We need to raise awareness of and promote a sense of custodianship. There are two main factors that we can focus on in doing that. The first relates to tenement buildings and the issues with the statutory notice system that were exposed, which Gordon Lindhurst rightly mentioned. We must think about how we can move towards a new system in order to sustain the tenement urban infrastructure of the city, and I will be delighted to work with colleagues in Edinburgh to do that.

The proposed planning bill will give us an opportunity to think about how we can balance the desire for more homes and the need to develop our economy with the need to value and preserve heritage, which we must do in a spirit of putting an emphasis on quality, design and vision.

I commend Gordon Lindhurst for bringing his important motion to the Parliament, and I share his determination to gain collective responsibility for the custodianship of this wonderful city.

12:59

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate my colleague Gordon Lindhurst on securing the debate, and I welcome to the gallery representatives from Edinburgh World Heritage and Councillor Joanna Mowat, who represents the City Centre ward on the City of Edinburgh Council, who I know has been working on the issue in the city chambers.

In thinking about today's debate, I could not help but think about another world heritage site and one that is perhaps most in our thoughts today—the ancient city of Aleppo. The human suffering that has been caused by the situation there is already extreme; that the fighting has destroyed cultural heritage that bears witness to the country's millenary history, which is valued and admired the world over, makes it even more tragic.

I agree with Gordon Lindhurst on the importance of Edinburgh's world heritage site. The unique combination—contrasting yet complementary—of the history and character of the old town and the neoclassical grandeur of the Georgian new town rightly makes our capital city one of the top tourist destinations worldwide and plays a vital role in attracting over 4 million tourists to the city each year, as has been mentioned. Our iconic cityscape is intangibly linked to Scotland's history, heritage and culture and is a key part of Edinburgh's image as the Athens of the north.

It is easy to take our surroundings for granted, but we should recognise that many cities across Europe and the world look on Edinburgh with great envy. Tourism income is critically important to Edinburgh and the Lothian region, and the economic value of the world heritage site must be

recognised. It literally helps to underpin the jobs of thousands of Lothian residents, including my constituents, and injects huge sums into both the local and the national economy. As was demonstrated clearly by Edinburgh World Heritage's survey, there is significant public support for Edinburgh's world heritage status and all sections of the community recognise it as a beneficial designation. However, more needs to be done to raise awareness of what it means.

Gordon Lindhurst spoke about the importance of maintaining properties in the world heritage site in a good state of repair, and I agree with his sentiments on that. We should pay tribute today to the many private owners whose upkeep of buildings in the site benefits us all. I believe that we should examine how we can support those owners through grant schemes and other incentives. As Edinburgh World Heritage has suggested, a lack of building maintenance is as big a threat to the world heritage site as inappropriate new developments.

On that subject, the challenge for all involved in planning and development in our city is how to preserve and maintain our world heritage site in tandem with expanding our economy in a fast-growing city where more and more people want to come to visit, live and invest. Those things are not mutually exclusive and we must aim for a sustainable and successful co-existence between them. Rightly, the world heritage site management plan is about not just preservation but facilitating positive change to help ensure that Edinburgh continues to be the dynamic and evolving city that we all love. We should consider Edinburgh's world heritage site not as an impediment or obstacle to modern development but as a creative challenge to which planners and developers should be able to rise, as they have in the past to the development of the new town itself and the Victorian and later additions to the old and new towns.

Again, I very much welcome today's debate and believe that it is timely and appropriate that our Parliament is debating Edinburgh's world heritage site, which is not just an issue of local interest, but an issue of national and, indeed, international significance. I look to the Scottish Government to work with all local stakeholders in the city and with Edinburgh World Heritage to support the maintenance and enhancement of our city's heritage and sympathetic and imaginative future development that further enhances the unique built environment of Scotland's capital for, as Gordon Lindhurst said, the generations to come.

13:03

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I welcome this debate and thank Gordon Lindhurst for

lodging his motion. I have long taken an interest in world heritage sites since I was a student at the University of Aberdeen and was part of the campaign for the designation—I think that the technical term is “inscription”—of the Cairngorms as a world heritage site. However, that has not happened.

I am privileged to live in such a fine city as Edinburgh, although I do not live in the world heritage site. I want to touch on three areas that I think are germane to how the Scottish Parliament could tackle some of the issues facing Edinburgh's world heritage site: planning, housing and governance.

First, I am sure that it will not be lost on Mr Lindhurst that our planning system received something of a boost in the development of the new town when the 37 acres was acquired by the city council's common good fund back in the 18th century. The council attempted to impose the very strict conditions that were laid down in the Craig plan on the developers of the new town by the law of contract. The developers were required to come to the town council and sign that they would follow the plan. The first developers, many of whom had properties on Princes Street because it was the most attractive street, proceeded with that requirement and did, indeed, agree with the plan. However, when they sold those buildings on, the law of contract did not bind their successors, which led to the revitalisation of the feudal system. Those who want to read a bit more about that can do so in a very fine book of mine. I should also mention a more important book that talks about the issue in great detail: “The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century”, by Richard Rodger.

One of the unique features of the world heritage site in Edinburgh is that it is a lived environment. People live here—it is their home. People also come here for holidays and to work, but it is people's home. Nevertheless, I know from constituents' inquiries that there is increasing concern about the number of properties, particularly in the old town, that are no longer used as primary residences. In fact, one constituent I met last week is the only resident in their tenement stair in the Grassmarket—the rest of the flats are used for parties, Airbnb rentals, holiday lets and so on. In the planning bill, we will have an opportunity to introduce new use class orders, under residential permissions, to ensure that, for example, the council has some democratic control over how property is used and can limit or expand—as it chooses—the uses to which properties are put. I am talking not just about primary residences and holiday residences but about student accommodation, retirement accommodation and so on. That would mean far greater control over and scrutiny of the use of

properties in places such as the old town of Edinburgh.

That links to housing. Gordon Lindhurst is right to cite the recent survey of the world heritage site, which showed the poor state of repair that it is in. I was at the city council recently and talked about the matter with councillors. One of them took me down a dark passage, through a dark door and into a very dark room. We eventually found the light, and in that room was a bank of card drawers. We pulled them out and in each drawer were index cards of properties in Edinburgh—not just the new and old towns but the whole of Edinburgh—and inspection records for properties detailing inspections that had been undertaken over the decades, typically every two or three years, by the council. We have an opportunity to treat the housing in the city that has been around for 200 years or so as part of our public infrastructure, not simply as private infrastructure.

On governance, we face challenges because much of the world heritage site is owned in common—it was acquired by the common good fund and remains part of the common good. We need to reform that law.

On the business improvement district, I think that there are many questions about the governance of St Andrew Square. I would like us to review how we award BID contracts in the future, to ensure that the city centre—particularly the world heritage site—remains a fine place in which to live and work.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Alexander Anderson to be followed by Alison Johnstone. *[Interruption.]* Please excuse me—I mean Alexander Stewart.

13:07

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): That is quite all right, Presiding Officer. I answer to many things.

I am delighted to be able to participate in the debate and pay tribute to my colleague Gordon Lindhurst for securing it and bringing the issue to a national platform. However, I am disappointed that we do not have any Liberal or Labour MSPs in the chamber with us. I would have thought that they would support the motion as well.

UNESCO's general criterion for a world heritage site is that it must be

"A natural or man-made site, area, or structure recognized as being of outstanding international importance".

Edinburgh could not fit that definition better—it really is incredible. The two cities—the old and the new—ensure that Edinburgh's character is like nothing anywhere else. The neoclassical city and the 15th century city are completely different but

complement each other very well. We have buildings and architectural styles across the city that are recognised by the individuals who live here and those who come here to work or visit.

It is very encouraging to see that the research conducted by Edinburgh World Heritage has shown that there is nearly unanimous public support for the city's status. It is interesting to see that, according to the same research, many residents who are supportive of Edinburgh's status do not entirely understand, or are not quite sure, what that status means or what benefits will come from it. Although the status does not confer any particular controls over developments in the city, it gives the opportunity to require conditions to be met. UNESCO requires those responsible for the site to take part. The management plan will summarise the importance of the site and the policies to protect, develop and enhance all that is happening round about Edinburgh itself.

The four conservation areas that the world heritage site covers—the old town, the new town, the Dean village and the west end—help to protect buildings, trees, parks, paving and general character. About 75 per cent of the buildings in those areas are listed. It is crucial that we all know what we are trying to achieve here and, as I said, I am delighted that there is so much support across the area.

New developments can always be controversial. It is important that we continue to consider how we manage new developments in Edinburgh and ensure that they are complementary to the historic architecture in both the old town and the new town.

UNESCO world heritage site status puts Edinburgh—rightly—in an exclusive group of important sites around the world, including the great barrier reef, Yellowstone national park and the Galapagos Islands, to name but a few. It is absolutely clear—and encouraging—that there is widespread public support for the status. Now, as we draw up a new management plan for the next five years, it is important that we continue to raise awareness of the world heritage site, as we are doing in this debate, and do all that we can to move it forward.

We must balance the city's need for development to ensure that it is fit for the 21st century with the vital importance of conservation and restoration in protecting the city's history and heritage for generations to come. I very much support the efforts of my colleague Gordon Lindhurst to ensure that we do that.

13:11

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I thank Gordon Lindhurst for giving us the opportunity to

have the debate, because it is really important that we discuss the future of Edinburgh's world heritage site. A world heritage site is not designated lightly, and the city has had the designation for only a fairly short period in its long history. Our world heritage site attracts many visitors and we must protect it, so I welcome the fact that the motion

"calls on all those with influence over Edinburgh's current and future planning developments to fully recognise the importance of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site."

In February this year, UNESCO expressed deeply worrying concerns that the quality of new developments is affecting the city's world heritage status.

I am heartened to see Alexander Stewart in the chamber, because he represents Mid Scotland and Fife. There is an appreciation that the issue should concern not only politicians who represent Edinburgh and the Lothians but each and every member of the Parliament. We have to take it seriously. Edinburgh is the first port of call for many visitors to Scotland, and it has so many attractions that many visitors never leave. It is essential that we do not damage the unique selling points that bring visitors here in the first place.

My colleague Andy Wightman spoke about the competing pressures. This is such an attractive city that many people want to—shall we say—make the most of it. I, too, have had concerns raised by constituents who find themselves the only long-term resident in their stair. The Parliament should look at that issue in the years ahead, because a lack of those who have a long-term interest in a neighbourhood affects that neighbourhood.

In the old town, the community council felt challenged by what happened over the Caltongate development with regard to planning, but another issue is that, when there are few long-term residents in a neighbourhood, there are fewer people to form a community council and fewer people who have day-to-day experience of what living in the area is like.

It is really important that we do not forget who Edinburgh is for. We warmly welcome all those who want to come and visit us. That has huge benefits socially, culturally and economically, but let us ensure that it remains the fabulous compact city that it is, with its many wonders. As someone who is Edinburgh born and bred, I never take those many wonders for granted.

We will soon be celebrating hogmanay, for which Edinburgh has become a global focal point for many. Some members in the chamber are possibly old enough, like me, to remember when we celebrated new year at the Tron. That was a non-commercial event. We just got on the bus and

came into town with pals and the High Street was thronged. I realise that that has changed, but I would like us to think about the importance of retaining some of that intimacy and scale, and to consider that bigger, bolder and sometimes brasher is not always better.

Let us celebrate and enhance the historic built environment, but let us also remember the challenges. Gordon Lindhurst mentioned the fact that, last month, Edinburgh World Heritage surveyed 202 buildings in the city centre and found that 72 per cent of them need some sort of repair. Most of them are privately owned historic tenements, but my colleague Andy Wightman was right to say that they are also a public asset. We are custodians of the city.

The Scottish traditional building forum has been working in this area for quite a long time. It has concluded that almost 70 per cent of pre-1919 buildings in Scotland are not wind and watertight. Let us continue to focus on insulating our homes, but let us also make sure that those traditional buildings are wind and watertight. Miles Briggs made the point that that issue is just as important as inappropriate development. *[Interruption.]* I am going to finish, Presiding Officer; I realise that I have gone over my time.

When it comes to inappropriate development, we have to be careful. We have in the city a precious asset that is of cultural significance. One of the criteria for world heritage status is

"to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history".

We have such an asset. Let us continue to work together to protect, enhance and maintain it.

13:16

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): In closing the debate, I thank Gordon Lindhurst for introducing the motion and his considered speech. I also thank all who have contributed. The debate has again demonstrated the importance that we all attach to our historic environment, not just for its own sake but for the economic, social, educational and cultural enrichment that it provides.

Just as each of Scotland's six world heritage sites tells an important story about part of Scotland's past, the sites remain central to the lives of our communities today. Gordon Lindhurst's motion refers to only five world heritage sites and I am sure that that was an oversight and not a slight on the Forth bridge, which is our sixth world heritage site. From the 6,000-year-old monuments at the heart of neolithic Orkney, which bring tourism and educational benefits, to the Forth bridge, which is relatively youthful at only 126

years old and is still fulfilling its original function as a key part of Scotland's transport infrastructure, each of our six world heritage sites is a treasure that is to be celebrated and cherished.

Miles Briggs is right to express concern about world heritage sites in Syria. The human cost is, of course, the key priority, but Daesh is not content with just killing people; it wants to kill the soul of humanity, as we have seen with the destruction of the heritage in Palmyra. That was discussed at the culture summit here in Edinburgh in August.

Our focus has of course been on the old and new towns of Edinburgh. The city is a year-round destination and is a festival city of breathtaking beauty, world-class attractions, quality shopping and fabulous food and drink. Like Ben Macpherson, I recall the moment when, as a 14-year-old, I fell in love with the city of Edinburgh. It is little wonder that Edinburgh has been voted the top UK city by *The Guardian* travel awards for 13 consecutive years and the best UK destination outside London by TripAdvisor reviewers.

Figures published recently by the Edinburgh tourism action group show that the world heritage status of the old and new towns ranks among the top 10 reasons for visitors to come to the city. To realise the full benefits of that heritage, careful stewardship is needed.

Under the world heritage convention, a state party agrees to identify, protect, preserve, promote and transmit the outstanding universal value of its world heritage sites for the benefit of current and future generations. The Government looks to the management partners at each of our world heritage sites to achieve that and to implement best practice that stems from UNESCO guidance and recommendations.

I was pleased to see strong public engagement in the recent research that the site management partners in Edinburgh undertook to inform the drafting of the 2017 to 2022 management plan. There will be a formal public consultation on the draft management plan in spring 2017 and, like Alexander Stewart, I encourage all who have an interest to embrace the opportunity to help to shape the plan.

Edinburgh is a vibrant, living and breathing city. The world heritage site is home to 23,000 residents and more than 100,000 people work in it. In Edinburgh, as in any historic city, there is a balance to be struck between a number of priorities, including the needs of residents, business, visitors and economic development, as well as the conservation of the site's outstanding universal value. As planning authority and lead management partner for the world heritage site, the City of Edinburgh Council has particular responsibilities to ensure that the balance is

appropriate in the management of the site and in the regulation of development in it.

National planning framework 3 acknowledges that Edinburgh's world-renowned built heritage is a key asset. Scottish planning policy states that, when a development proposal has the potential to affect a world heritage site or its setting, the planning authority must protect and preserve the site's outstanding universal value. Scottish planning policy also requires that approach, where relevant, to be implemented at the local level.

Statutory controls are in place to protect elements such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas. The local development plan for Edinburgh also sets out other strong policies, including a skyline policy.

For the majority of planning applications that are submitted for places in the world heritage site, decisions are—rightly—made at the local level. However, when genuine national issues are at stake, Scottish ministers have the statutory power to call in planning applications and listed building consent applications for determination at the national level.

In May this year, a review of the Scottish planning system was published. The review was led by an independent panel and received written submissions and oral evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, including Historic Environment Scotland and the Built Environment Forum Scotland. Detailed proposals will shortly be published for consultation; a number of Andy Wightman's suggestions about the character of Edinburgh and especially its residential character relate to that. We want to ensure that Scotland has a world-class planning system that supports economic growth, the delivery of quality development and community empowerment.

The sites that are on the world heritage list represent the most significant, unique or best examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage. World heritage sites have an importance that transcends national boundaries; they belong to all the people of the world, irrespective of the countries in which they are located.

In the old and new towns of Edinburgh world heritage site, we have the core of a thriving city, committed management partners and a responsibility for ensuring that the site's outstanding universal value is understood, celebrated and preserved. Some development proposals will always divide opinion, but our planning system includes a number of safeguards that, together, ensure that major decisions are taken through a transparent and rigorous process and with due regard for our heritage.

It is important that people who live and work in Edinburgh, and the many visitors to the capital,

continue to enjoy the riches of the old and new towns of Edinburgh world heritage site in years to come. Many members have used the word “custodianship”; I used the word “stewardship”. Collective responsibility—not just in the city but nationally and, as I stressed, internationally—is at the heart of the debate.

I commend the important work that has been done, particularly by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust. I also look forward to celebrating Edinburgh’s world heritage site in 2017 as we take part in Scotland’s year of history, heritage and archaeology.

13:23

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Point of Order

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):
On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

At First Minister’s question time this afternoon, Nicola Sturgeon said in response to a question from Kezia Dugdale that there is

“evidence of a narrowing of the attainment gap in terms of access to universities.”

In fact, today’s figures, which are independently verified by the Scottish Parliament information centre, show that the gap between applicants from the most deprived and the least deprived backgrounds has increased over the past two years.

It is clear that the First Minister’s comment was inaccurate. Will you allow time for Nicola Sturgeon to correct the record on this important measure of her Government, especially given that tackling the rising attainment gap is apparently her Government’s top priority?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):
Thank you for the advance notice of a point of order. That was not a point of order. However, the First Minister will have heard your comments, and if she chooses to correct the record or correct your understanding of what she said, it is up to her to do so.

Draft Budget 2017-18

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to the statement by Derek Mackay on the draft budget. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interruptions.

14:31

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): It is a great privilege to set out to the Parliament my first draft budget, which is the first budget in which the Scottish Government will make use of powers that have been devolved through the Scotland Act 2016, including income tax powers. It is an historic budget, delivered in challenging economic and political circumstances.

The tax and spending proposals that I will set out today will improve our public services, support our economy and provide the foundations for future sustainable growth and prosperity. Over the coming weeks, I will work with all parties and stakeholders to build support for the proposals.

The Scottish economy has grown over the past year, despite weak global growth and the impact of a low oil price on our oil and gas sector. Unemployment, although it varies from month to month, is down over the past year, and employment is higher than it was before the 2008 financial crisis.

The United Kingdom Government's plans for a hard Brexit represent a key risk to Scotland's economy. The fall in the pound is pushing up inflation. That puts pressure on household budgets, and companies are re-evaluating their plans.

Those risks are compounded by the UK Government's continued austerity programme. In the coming years, we will face cuts to our funding for public services and to social security. Between 2010-11 and 2019-20, Tory austerity will see our fiscal departmental expenditure limit budget, which funds discretionary spending and capital investment, fall by more than 9 per cent, or £2.9 billion in real terms, with a share of a further £3.5 billion of cuts by 2019-20 still to come.

As a result of those pressures, the economic forecasts that I am publishing today, which underpin our tax projections, assume that Scottish gross domestic product will grow by around 1 per cent in 2016-17 and by 1.3 per cent in 2017-18. To put that in context, Scotland's GDP has historically grown by around 2 per cent a year. The lower forecasts reflect the impact of the Brexit vote.

The economic uncertainty makes it all the more important that this budget provides support for the

economy, jobs and household incomes through a fair and balanced set of tax and spending proposals. This Government will not follow the same damaging approach as is being taken at Westminster.

The new devolved powers mean that more of the money that we spend will be funded from taxes that are set by this Parliament. In addition to the currently devolved taxes, we will introduce a bill to devolve air passenger duty to Scotland. The new tax will be known as air departure tax and will be operational from 2018. We will reduce the tax burden by 50 per cent by the end of this parliamentary session, thereby improving international connectivity and boosting tourism.

In all our tax proposals for 2017-18, I am grateful to the Scottish Fiscal Commission for scrutinising and endorsing the forecasts of receipts. This Government is committed to a principles-based approach to taxation and, in particular, to the principle that tax should be proportionate to the ability to pay.

Our land and buildings transaction tax has already lifted 15,000 households out of tax in comparison with those who pay stamp duty in the rest of the UK—we are supporting people into home ownership. Following the successful introduction of LBTT, I propose to keep residential and non-residential rates and bands for 2017-18 the same as this year—a tax freeze that maintains our progressive approach. I also propose that the Scottish landfill tax, which contributes to our environmental objectives, will rise only in line with retail prices index inflation.

In using the Scotland Act 2016 income tax powers for the very first time, we must take a balanced approach. Let me be clear. I will not pass on the costs of UK austerity to the household budgets of taxpayers on the lowest incomes. I can confirm that we will protect taxpayers on low and middle incomes at a time of rising inflation by freezing the basic rate of income tax. However, we cannot accept, at this time of austerity, top earners benefiting from an inflation-busting tax cut. Therefore, I will limit the increase in the higher rate threshold to inflation and I will not give a substantial real-terms tax cut to the top 10 per cent of income earners. The higher rate threshold will therefore be set at £43,430.

Although I sympathise with those who have argued for an increase in the additional rate, I have had to balance that with the risk to our economy, and I am maintaining the current rate.

This Government's approach—endorsed by the electorate—is the right thing to do for our economy, for jobs and for public services. For the first time, there is now a direct link between

Scotland's economic performance and public spending.

This Government has consistently delivered a competitive environment for business and we have used our tax powers to support growth. Not only have we ensured that smaller businesses pay zero or lower rates of non-residential LBTT, but large businesses enjoy a lower rate than in the rest of the UK.

The introduction of the small business bonus scheme has saved businesses more than £1 billion since its introduction in 2008. I am pleased to set out measures that confirm a highly competitive business rates regime for Scotland in 2017-18, particularly for the thousands of small businesses in Scotland.

First, I will reduce the business rates poundage by 3.7 per cent to 46.6p. Secondly, we will expand the small business bonus scheme by raising the eligibility threshold for 100 per cent relief to a rateable value of £15,000, which will lift 100,000 properties out of rates altogether. Thirdly, although I have listened carefully to business, just as I cannot cut tax for the wealthiest individuals, I cannot cut the rate of the large business supplement. However, I will restrict the supplement to the very largest businesses by increasing the threshold to £51,000, which will reduce the tax burden on 8,000 businesses.

In addition, I will match the chancellor's recently announced rates reliefs for rural areas, and I intend to match reliefs for fibre infrastructure, subject to confirmation of the detail.

Finally, I come to the question of transitional relief following revaluation. The introduction of such relief would place a significant burden on many of our smaller businesses. That is not the right way forward. Given that all businesses will benefit from the lower poundage that I have announced today, I do not propose to run a transitional relief scheme.

The poundage cut, the small business bonus extension, and the large business supplement—which is focused only on the very biggest businesses—all represent a good deal for Scottish business and a great deal for Scottish jobs. However, we will not stop there. To help small businesses grow, we will launch the £500 million Scottish growth scheme in 2017, offering financial support for business investment. That three-year scheme, which has now been approved by the Treasury, will provide investment guarantees, and some loans, to small and medium-sized firms that would otherwise struggle to grow because of a lack of finance.

Building on the success of the Dublin hub, we will increase support for our new innovation and investment hubs in Brussels, London and Berlin,

and we will double the number of people who work for Scottish Development International in Europe to promote our exports. We will support our rural economy through the provision of increased support for the food and drink industry and more than £100 million of investment in digital connectivity to drive access to superfast broadband towards 100 per cent by 2021.

Today's budget reaffirms this Government's commitment to infrastructure investment. Over the next year, we will complete the combined M8/M74/M73 improvements—the M8 bundle—the iconic Queensferry crossing and the Aberdeen western peripheral route, and we will make progress on the A9 and the A96, among many other projects. We will also complete the electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail line and will introduce longer, faster and greener electric trains as part of our £5 billion investment plans for Scotland's rail network by 2019.

Following recent performance issues, some in the chamber have called for a rail fares freeze, which they have claimed would cost around £2 million. However, the real cumulative cost of a one-year freeze to the first break point in the franchise would be £58 million. That would compromise the investment programme that is so vital to improving the performance of our rail network.

However, we recognise that investment can mean disruption for passengers, as we upgrade lines and introduce new stations, so I can announce that, in the coming financial year, we will invest not £2 million but £3 million in a package of targeted fare reductions to ease costs for passengers and thank them for their patience. The Minister for Transport and the Islands will set out more detail tomorrow.

Investment in our transport network is complemented by funding for city deals for Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. We will continue to support city deals for Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth and Stirling, and we are considering the scope that exists for an Ayrshire growth deal. I can also announce that today I have signed, with Dundee City Council, the financial agreement to allow the Dundee central waterfront growth accelerator to go ahead, which will support economic growth in the area and 500 jobs. I will be inviting proposals from councils for two further tax increment financing projects in the coming year, which will leverage private investment in infrastructure.

This budget invests heavily in housing. We delivered our target of building 30,000 affordable homes in the previous session of Parliament. Looking forward, we will deliver at least 50,000 new affordable homes, including 35,000 for social rent, over the current session. Today's budget

confirms the provision of around £470 million of capital funding for housing in 2017-18, which, coupled with other funding mechanisms, will help to deliver that commitment.

This budget secures infrastructure investment of around £4 billion. That investment will underpin productivity growth and support an estimated 30,000 jobs. Investment in housing also helps to tackle climate change by improving the efficiency of our housing stock. Today's budget will help us to meet our climate change targets. I have protected resources for zero waste and sustainable and active travel, and have increased funding for woodland creation, peatland restoration and the sustainable action fund. I can confirm that funding of more than £140 million will be provided in 2017-18 to support energy efficiency programmes as part of our commitment to invest at least £500 million over the course of the parliamentary session.

Delivering long-term economic growth requires investment in people as well as business. Closing the attainment gap, reducing child poverty and ensuring equality of access to higher education will generate long-term benefits for our economy and public finances. That is why we are prioritising education, and the budget provides the resources to match.

We will invest in skills and training, building on the success of our opportunities for all initiative and extensive consultation on the apprenticeship levy. Revenues from the levy mean that Scotland will receive £221 million in 2017-18. Let me be clear: it has been suggested that this is a new fund of £221 million, but it is not. The UK Government has given with one hand and taken away with the other. For the most part, the levy replaces existing funding for apprenticeships and related activity. However, I can confirm today that £221 million will be committed to interventions that support skills, training and employment in Scotland. In 2017-18, we will see the next stage in our expansion to 30,000 modern apprenticeship new starts a year, and we will also respond to the needs of employers by establishing a flexible workforce development fund. Details of funding have been published today, and the Minister for Employability and Training will set out further information tomorrow.

This budget also funds the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1,140 hours by the end of the parliamentary session by providing an initial £60 million to support the first phase of workforce and infrastructure development. Future years will see significant additional investment as we deliver on our commitment to transform childcare in our country. The Government's defining mission is to raise educational attainment in our schools. At the election, we pledged £750 million over the course

of this session to the attainment fund and, in a radical departure, we said that £100 million per year from that fund would be spent at the discretion of Scotland's schools to help close the attainment gap. The revenue that we identified to fund that new stream of direct support was the increase in the council tax that will be paid by those in higher-band homes.

I know that many MSPs did not agree with that proposal. Parliament debated it and voted on it, and I have listened to Parliament's views. However, I will not sacrifice the educational chances of Scotland's poorest pupils and will not abandon our radical plan to give schools direct control over significant new resources. Instead, I can announce today that I will not simply make good on our pledge but will go further: next year, instead of £100 million going directly to schools, £120 million will be spent at the discretion of headteachers. That £120 million will fund a new pupil equity scheme. Schools across the country will be allocated around £1,200 for each pupil in primary 1 to secondary 3 who is eligible for free school meals. What is more, I will not fund that from the council tax; instead, I will use the Scottish Government's own resources. Councils will keep the full value of the revenue from the council tax rebanding: every penny that is raised locally will be spent locally, as councils see fit. We will deliver our pledge to help schools close the attainment gap from central funds. We have listened, we have acted and we will deliver for Scotland's poorest pupils.

However, we will not stop there. At a national level, we will also provide central funding of £50 million for closing the attainment gap; maintain the pupil teacher ratio following this week's increase in teacher numbers; provide £60 million for our flagship early learning and childcare commitment; and invest over £1.6 billion in higher and further education, ensuring that access for eligible students remains free and maintaining 116,000 college places. The commitments that I am announcing today mean that, overall, national investment in education and skills will increase by £170 million this coming year. Let no one be in any doubt: from birth and the earliest years, through school and beyond, education is the Government's number 1 priority.

Our mission to raise educational attainment will contribute to our efforts to address poverty and build a more equal society. As part of our social contract with the people of Scotland, we will provide £47 million to continue to mitigate the bedroom tax, and we will abolish it at the earliest opportunity. We will continue our support for the independent living fund and, as part of our new powers, we will begin to build a social security system that is based on dignity and respect.

I have published a public sector pay policy for 2017-18 that guarantees the Scottish living wage, offers those earning less than £22,000 a basic pay award of more than 1 per cent and caps other basic awards at 1 per cent while continuing our no compulsory redundancy policy.

Today's budget also delivers on our commitment to protect the resource budget for policing in real terms, supporting front-line policing as we seek to maintain record low levels of recorded crime.

We have also made a clear commitment to increase the NHS revenue budget by £500 million above inflation by the end of this parliamentary session, going beyond anything offered by any other party in the chamber. That will see the shares of the front-line NHS budget invested in primary care, community care, social care and mental health all rise. We will invest £72 million next year in an improvement fund for primary care and general practitioner services and over £150 million in mental health over five years. Overall, next year we will invest an additional £300 million in NHS resource budgets—£120 million more than inflation—which is a massive step towards what we have promised to Scotland's health service.

As I have set out, local government will receive £120 million from central Government to fund our shared ambition to close the attainment gap. In addition, we will maintain councils' share of capital spending with an increase of £150 million compared to 2016-17. If we stopped there, Scottish Government funding for local government services would be set to fall by £47.4 million next year. However, I want to do more to protect vital local services, so I have decided to go further. Last year, we transferred £250 million from the NHS to support health and social care partnerships. I can announce today that, on top of that transfer, we will provide additional funding of £107 million from the NHS next year. That additional funding will deliver the living wage for social care workers and will protect overall investment in those crucial services. That will secure a total of £8 billion for health and social care services, ensuring that people have access to the right care at the right time and in the right place.

That additional investment in social care means that, in the coming year, there will be no overall reduction in the funding that is provided by the Scottish Government to support local government services. That funding will increase by £59.6 million. Of course, Government funding will not be councils' only source of additional revenue next year. As I have said, the £111 million that will be raised through council tax rebanding will be retained locally and local authorities will be free to increase the council tax generally by up to 3 per

cent next year, generating—if they so choose—a further £70 million.

The measures that I have announced today mean that the total support from the Scottish Government and through local taxation provides an increase in spending power on local government services not of £59.6 million but of £240.6 million, or 2.3 per cent. That is a settlement that invests in education, social care and local services.

This is a budget for growth and public services; for our environment and our communities. It delivers increased investment in education and record investment in the NHS, and it protects low-income households from tax hikes and supports more and better jobs. Overall, it delivers £700 million of additional spending on our economy and public services. It is a budget for Scotland and I commend it to Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions. There will be around 40 minutes for questions.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing an advance copy of his statement.

This is an historic budget. For the first time, this Parliament has control over an extensive range of taxes in Scotland. He might not think so right at the moment, but the finance secretary is a lucky man because he has more choices than his predecessor ever had thanks to a Conservative Government at Westminster delivering financial devolution. He had the choice to use the new powers to support economic growth and to tackle our underperforming economy. It is much to be regretted that he has chosen instead to hike taxes on families and businesses in Scotland, risking choking off economic recovery and depriving Scottish public services of vital tax revenue. That will make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the United Kingdom. As it stands, this is not a budget that we can support.

Despite his complaint about Westminster cuts, the finance secretary has received an additional £140 million in real terms from the Treasury compared with the current year. The package included an extra £800 million for capital, and we have said that we want to see that spent in four priority areas—housing, energy efficiency, digital infrastructure and rail projects. I look forward to hearing more detail about the Government's capital plans.

As Ruth Davidson made clear earlier today, we welcome the dramatic climbdown on using council tax funding for the national policy on an education attainment fund. That proposal was an affront to the principle of local accountability and an assault on local government. The rethink proves the

power of the strong Opposition that the Scottish Conservatives provide.

The First Minister said earlier that the budget will protect local services, but the supporting documents tell us that local councils face a £130 million cut in their revenue grants, even if they are allowed to keep all of the council tax increases. How does such a cut protect local services? The finance secretary accuses the UK Government of giving with one hand and taking away with the other. Has he not just played exactly the same trick on local authorities?

We welcome the signal on cutting air passenger duty to help to grow the economy, but why not apply the same logic to other taxes? Scottish businesses have been crying out for relief on business rates, but the budget retains the punitive level of the large business supplement—at double the UK rate—and puts Scottish businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

By not matching the UK increase in the threshold for the 40 per cent rate of income tax, the finance secretary is making Scotland the most expensive part of the UK in which to live, work and do business. The First Minister's hand-picked chair of her growth commission and the SNP's former economy spokesman in this Parliament, Andrew Wilson, gets it when he says that the way to grow tax revenue is to grow the number of high-earning taxpayers. If the finance secretary will not listen to us, will he at least listen to the First Minister's adviser and think again on tax?

Yesterday, the finance secretary said that he would deliver a budget that was pro-enterprise, pro-entrepreneur and pro-growth. By hitting the Scottish economy with higher taxes, has he not failed on all three counts?

Derek Mackay: I think that Murdo Fraser has forgotten a number of things, not least that, since entering office, the Tory Government has reduced Scottish financial support by around 9 per cent—there has been a 9 per cent real-terms reduction in Scotland's budget since the Tories took office. To put that into a value context, there has been a reduction of about £2.9 billion in Scotland's budget over a decade.

In the tax debate yesterday, we discovered not only that the Tories want a different position on tax just to undercut, but that they are actually anti-devolution now—they are against devolution and us making different choices on the things that we value, such as the NHS, free prescriptions, free education and concessionary travel. Ruth Davidson, the leader of the Opposition, is shaking her head, but clearly she has not seen the press releases that Murdo Fraser writes for the Conservative Party.

Our budget outlines a range of measures that are very pro-enterprise and pro-business and that will grow the economy. The Tories want to have it both ways: they want to reduce tax, but only for the very richest in our society; while, in this Parliament, the nicer, softer Scottish Tories want to increase expenditure in many areas. They cannot have it both ways: they cannot cut tax, as they propose, and spend more on public services—and they have not even suggested how to do so in this budget.

The budget represents a very strong package for business rates and it will continue to grow our economy, in particular by supporting small businesses with a range of measures. I would have thought that Murdo Fraser could at least have welcomed that.

He also asked about the capital investment plan on which much detail has been provided. He demanded more investment in housing, energy efficiency and digital, and there is substantially more investment in all those areas, but I suspect that the Tories will vote against the budget nonetheless.

The key issue here is that we are giving more resources to our vital public services, and that is being opposed by the Conservatives. While we build a pro-Scottish economic message, it is clear that the Tories want to talk Scotland down. I will keep listening, as I have done, to our local authorities and to parties in the Parliament. That is why we will fund the attainment fund through our central resources. We will support local government but deliver on our commitment to educational attainment.

In all those areas, the Government's record is strong and our proposals will deliver our programme for Government.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): The Scottish National Party's finance secretary has unveiled a budget that will see the heart ripped out of public services. School results and teacher numbers are in decline. Our valued NHS workers are overstretched. However the finance secretary tries to spin it, today's budget means a real-terms cut of £327 million from the SNP Government to local services—it is there in black and white on page 91 of the budget document and SNP members would do well to read it.

The SNP Government is making up the difference by holding councils to ransom and forcing them to use their tax powers while it refuses to use its own. It could have asked the richest 1 per cent to pay a little more, with a 50p top rate of tax, but, again, it refused to do the right thing.

The budget passes on Tory cuts to the people of Scotland and makes Derek Mackay no better than

a Tory chancellor. We have the powers to do things differently; let us use them. Let us stop the cuts and ask those who have the broadest shoulders to pay a bit more. Let us protect local services. Let us grow the economy and create well-paid jobs. Labour cannot support a budget that has more than £300 million of cuts to local services at its heart.

Is it not the truth that Scotland needs a plan for investment, for jobs and for our economy—a plan to protect our public services from SNP cuts?

Derek Mackay: I cannot help but reflect on where Jeremy Corbyn, who sits in the UK Parliament, sits on tax. Does Kezia Dugdale think that Jeremy Corbyn is no better than a Tory chancellor, as he said that he would continue with the Tory tax proposals?

On overall public spending, Kezia Dugdale said that there was no real new spending on public services, and that is just not true. There is £700 million extra for public services in Scotland coming from the Scottish Government in the detail in the budget document. When we look at all the detail of the settlement for local authorities, their ability to raise council tax and the wider package for local government services, we see that this is a good deal and a fair deal.

No wonder the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has not rejected the package that I offered; it knows that the Scottish Government has made a good and fair proposal and that we have listened to points of difference while delivering in the key priority areas.

On that point, I would have thought that the Labour Party would have welcomed more money for education. I remember Alex Rowley saying that if we wanted to do something on attainment, we should fund it centrally, and we have done that. We have not just delivered on our commitment, we have surpassed our commitment to £120 million for the attainment fund. The Labour Party should reflect on the positives of the budget, reconsider its position and welcome the substantial increase going to Scotland's public services.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I am, of course, delighted that the UK Government has followed the Scottish Government's lead on the Stirling/Clackmannanshire city region deal. Now detailed discussion and the potential transformation can begin in earnest.

However, on the bigger picture, will the cabinet secretary confirm that the good news of a £300 million uplift in NHS resource funding in Scotland is an above-inflation increase, matches the Barnett consequential from spending in England, and is certainly greater than anything promised by any other party in this chamber?

Derek Mackay: Yes, I can confirm all of that and, of course, I welcome the partnership working around the city deals. That way of working is very productive for unlocking local economic potential. On the specific question around the NHS, yes, today marks an important step in delivering that commitment. We have passed on resource consequential in full, and the increase in the health resource budget of over £300 million in 2017-18 represents an above-inflation increase in excess of £120 million.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Investment in our NHS is much needed, particularly in primary care, but it is important to note the distinction between primary care and general practice in particular. Between 2010 and 2016, increased investment in general practice, specifically, has lagged far behind that in health boards. For years, this Government has failed those general practitioners who work at the front line of the NHS. Today, will the cabinet secretary specify how much of the £72 million stated to be an improvement fund for primary care and GP services will go directly in support of Scotland's struggling GPs?

Derek Mackay: I say to Donald Cameron that we have a far better relationship with staff in the NHS than the UK Government has with its professionals south of the border and, of course, we will engage and have further transfer to local services.

Donald Cameron has just made my point for me: front-bench Conservative members want tax cuts; and back benchers want more public expenditure. They cannot have it both ways.

It is clear that only this party and this Government are delivering more for the NHS overall and for GPs specifically in Scotland.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Despite all the gloss, the budget document shows that there have been £327 million of cuts in the SNP Government's grants to local government. Why has the SNP reversed its position in the 2015 election on a top tax rate of 50p, meaning that local communities will be hammered while the richest 10 per cent of taxpayers do not pay any more?

Derek Mackay: I point out to James Kelly that it is customary when elected to government to deliver the manifesto on which you were elected. The election was in May 2016 and in this budget we are absolutely delivering on our manifesto commitments.

We have said that we will keep the additional rate under review. However, there is a risk that if we increase it, we could lose revenue and receipts, and that would impact on public services. That is not a gamble that this Government is

willing to make. There are extra resources: I say once again that if we look at the totality of the resources going to local government services, there is an increase—not a reduction—in the settlement.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The cabinet secretary says that he wants to listen to Parliament. I welcome that, but I regret that he does not seem to be listening to anyone when it comes to income tax policy.

We know that the poorest third of our society will see their incomes go down next year, while high earners will get a tax cut. Those may be UK Government decisions, but the Scottish Government now has the power to reverse those effects and has chosen not to. The result is a 1 per cent cap on most public sector pay increases, while members of the Scottish Parliament will enjoy a 1.8 per cent increase in our salaries. At the same time, there is a brewing dispute with local government and a tax break for the most polluting form of transport in the country.

Is it not clear that if the cabinet secretary wants to persuade public sector unions, local government and Parliament, he will have to do a lot more listening over the coming month and make meaningful changes to his budget plans?

Derek Mackay: Of course I will listen to all voices in Parliament. I have shown that I was willing to do that in relation to how we fund and support the attainment fund and our support for local government.

I say again, however, that the most important people we should listen to are the people of Scotland. I remind Patrick Harvie that, at the election, we secured a mandate to deliver our tax proposition and to put that to Parliament.

I will continue to engage with all parties in the Parliament to see where we can find some agreement, but we will certainly not follow the Conservatives in passing on a tax cut for the richest in society.

On a number of occasions, Patrick Harvie has pointed to our tax position. I gently remind the chamber that Scottish Government ministers have taken a pay freeze since 2008, which is the right thing to do. Perhaps some other members should reflect on that.

The key issue is not to pass on austerity to the taxpayers of Scotland, which is what we would do if we followed the Labour approach of increasing the basic rate. That is not a choice that we are willing to make. I will of course continue to engage on all matters in relation to the budget as we take it through the Parliament.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I thank the finance secretary for an advance copy of his statement.

I welcome the decision to abandon the plan to strip council tax funds from councils, but will the cabinet secretary clarify why it appears that the Highlands and Islands Enterprise budget has been cut, as has the budget for universities? With our international standing in education slipping and our economy faltering, there is an urgent need to use our brand-new powers to raise £500 million to get education back up to the best. That is the best way to boost the economy. I cannot see the required scale of spending in his budget. We need a transformational budget, and this budget falls well short of that.

The First Minister said today that there were acres of common ground between the parties, but I tell the finance secretary that he has miles to travel before we can reach an agreement. He will know that the Liberal Democrats are pragmatic and reasonable people but is he prepared to make the changes to his budget that are necessary to meet the urgent needs in education and our economy?

Derek Mackay: If Willie Rennie is a pragmatic and reasonable man, I am sure that, if he engages in talks with me in a positive and constructive spirit, he will see the positivity of the budget.

On the wider question whether I am willing to engage to consider what we can do differently and areas on which we can go further, the answer is yes, I am willing to engage in such a discussion. [*Interruption.*] I can hear the Conservatives complaining to the left of me—physically speaking, of course. It will be easier to engage with other parties in the chamber than it would be to engage on ideas with the Tory party, which just wants tax cuts for the rich and undermines Scotland's economic message, to be frank.

Willie Rennie mentioned Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The totality of support for the Highlands and Islands is a strong package. Our enterprise agencies provide assistance and I will give one example of the Government stepping in, which is the deal that was able to be done in Lochaber, where Government intervention helped to secure hundreds of jobs and has, potentially, brought hundreds of new jobs to the area. That is the kind of intervention that the Government has made throughout Scotland whether on steel, shipyards or the facility at Lochaber. That is the kind of direct intervention that we can make while supporting the region's economy through our support for food and drink, exports and skills.

Incidentally, the university budget is increasing as a consequence of this budget.

The Highlands and Islands can also enjoy the business rates reduction that I have outlined, further interventions, and support from the Scottish growth scheme. When Willie Rennie looks at the totality of support for Scotland's businesses and regions, he will see that, overall, it is a strong package for growth that also supports some of our more vulnerable communities.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Throughout the previous parliamentary session, local authorities and Opposition politicians continually called for the council tax freeze to be lifted and for bills to increase. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, given the increase in spending powers for councils that could come from the new powers, it would be ridiculous for local authorities to refuse to use the powers in order to make political points against the Government?

Derek Mackay: Clare Haughey will know the Scottish Government's position that it will be up to local authorities to determine the council tax increase. We want it to be limited to a 3 per cent increase, but it will be up to local authorities to determine the increase that is appropriate to them.

The settlement is very strong and fair to local authorities. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Labour Party complaining to the right of me—perhaps it is to the right of me. I have heard the Labour Party say for years that the council tax freeze is unsustainable. When we lift the council freeze, it says that our policy is unsustainable. I wonder exactly what the Labour Party's position is on the council tax. I suppose that we will find out when Labour authorities make their determinations.

The settlement is very fair to local authorities, and they will be able to take a balanced approach when they consider the council tax. I remind taxpayers that our balanced approach has been more progressive. The general increase will be a matter for local authorities, but our position is to limit the increase at 3 per cent.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The relative decline of the Scottish economy in the past decade and Scotland's increasing underperformance compared with that of the rest of the UK have become the hallmarks of the Government. Improving the economy is now the single most important issue that we must address if we are to improve vital public services in this country.

The budget will deliver nothing that will promote the economy in Scotland or boost our international trade. Indeed, it will do the opposite. It cuts the enterprise budget by 22 per cent at a time when Scotland desperately needs to grow the economy and our international trade. Does Mr Mackay not

understand the seriousness of the decline in the Scottish economy?

Derek Mackay: Dean Lockhart, of course, is from the party that gave us the consequences of Brexit chaos, total mismanagement, poor handling, spending money on things such as palaces and nuclear weapons, and tax cuts for the rich. It has absolutely no ideas about productivity or innovation.

It is clear that Dean Lockhart wrote his question before he heard my speech, because there were clear lines in my speech about growth areas, the Scottish growth scheme, increasing exports and supporting food and drink, and industrial interventions, and there was a clear focus on innovation, trade missions and, crucially, of course, a business rates poundage reduction for every business in the country. That is a very sound package to support our economy.

I will make another plea to the Conservatives. Do they really think that it helps the Scottish economy to continually talk it down? It is about time that they started to talk it up. *[Interruption.]* We can see that I have hit a raw nerve. While we promote Scotland and our economic message and give people reasons to live, work and invest in Scotland, the Tories just want to see Scotland do less well. What a proposition from a party that is clearly London dominated and which has undermined our economy with its mismanagement of Brexit.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I warmly welcome the cabinet secretary's statement and note the crocodile tears of the Tories about the amount that is to be invested in public services.

The budget is the first to be conducted under the fiscal framework that the Government and the chancellor agreed. Can the cabinet secretary advise members what the impact on the budget would have been if the UK Government's original plans to use the framework to cut Scotland's budget had gone ahead? Those plans drew not a peep of opposition from Tory MSPs, who are incapable of putting Scotland's interests first.

Derek Mackay: Kenny Gibson has a point. *[Interruption.]* I can hear Ruth Davidson shouting at me. She is always shouting. She shouted before about a line in the sand and no new powers to Scotland. There was then the prospect of new powers, and it was then a matter of delivering the new powers more quickly. When it came to the finances of the fiscal framework, the Conservatives said to Mr Swinney that there should be compromise. He did not compromise, and he secured a better deal for Scotland and Scotland's budget.

The published block grant adjustment figures will show that we are £46 million better off as a result of using our model compared with using Westminster's model. That shows that John Swinney was absolutely right in standing up for Scotland and ensuring that we got a better fiscal framework that works for Scotland.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I listened to the cabinet secretary's statement; I even had time to read sections of his draft budget. If the economy is so important—and it is—why has he cut the enterprise budget by £50 million? There is a 22 per cent reduction in that budget line. Why has he cut the Highlands and Islands Enterprise budget by £8 million? That is a 10 per cent reduction in its budget line. Why is he silent on how he will fund infrastructure projects? Is that because he had to use all his capital borrowing from last year and this year to cover up for John Swinney's £942 million error in the classification of projects such as the Dumfries and Galloway hospital and the Royal hospital for sick children? Will he tell me what projects will be delayed as a consequence? How much will he need to borrow next year to plug the gap?

Derek Mackay: I will start with Jackie Baillie's question about what projects will be delayed. The answer is none—no projects will be delayed as a consequence of our investment decisions.

We have outlined the position on classification. I have set out plans for investment in digital and housing, as well as in transport, infrastructure, energy efficiency and other areas.

I have covered the points on the enterprise budgets. It is clear from those budgets that I expect efficiencies, but I expect efficiencies across the public sector. I am delivering a good, strong package of support for businesses. I have outlined the Scottish growth scheme and the use of the strength of our balance sheet to support businesses in Scotland, expand our exports, deliver on innovation and productivity, reach out on the living wage and provide a business rates package that is good, competitive and will support Scottish business.

If the member looks in the round at the support that we are offering, she will realise that this is a budget to grow our economy and to support business.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I very much welcome the extra £128 million that the cabinet secretary is making available for schools. Can he confirm that the money will be allocated according to need and, in particular, that Glasgow, which has considerable needs, will get its fair share?

Derek Mackay: Yes, I can confirm that every local authority will keep its council tax revenues

and that the attainment fund will be distributed on the basis of need. Therefore, Glasgow will be a major beneficiary of the fund. Its allocation will be about £1,200 per pupil, which means that Glasgow can expect to receive £21.5 million. That will make a significant impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap in the city.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am sure that all parties will welcome the initial £60 million for expansion of childcare. What is the total cost of the SNP's promise to deliver 1,140 hours of free childcare by the end of this session of Parliament?

Derek Mackay: I am happy to write to Liz Smith with details of that matter. We are expanding childcare to support families and our economy. It is right that investing in staffing and infrastructure and in how we reach out with that programme supports our childcare commitments. The allocation is a step in the right direction, as part of the phased implementation of our childcare policy.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): After months of delays and disruptions, ScotRail passengers deserve a break. I am pleased to see that, after pressure from Scottish Labour and passengers, the Government finally seems to agree. While we wait for more information from the Minister for Transport and the Islands tomorrow, will the cabinet secretary tell us today whether the fare reductions relate to regulated or unregulated fares? Will Abellio be funding any of the fare reductions?

On other fares, will the cabinet secretary explain why he did not see fit to tell Parliament that he plans to cut the concessionary bus fare budget for older and disabled people by £9.5 million?

Derek Mackay: We will consult on the sustainability of concessionary travel, but it is perfectly clear that there is continued support for the concessionary travel scheme.

On rail fares, was Neil Bibby not listening when I said that we would commit £3 million to that package of support, and that the Minister for Transport and the Islands will outline the detail tomorrow? We have moved from Labour's figure of £2 million of support to £3 million of support, but the big question is whether the Labour Party will vote against the budget or support it in order to let that happen while we deliver the £5 billion package of rail improvements, which would be totally undermined by Labour's proposition.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): The draft budget recognises that economic growth has a direct impact on revenue for public spending, with the announcement of a major package of support for Scotland's businesses. Can the cabinet secretary say how rural businesses in particular will benefit? Members

should note that I am the cabinet secretary's parliamentary liaison officer.

Derek Mackay: Today's draft budget outlines details of our actions to deliver economic growth across Scotland, regardless of location. We will double rural rate relief from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. We will expand the small business bonus scheme so that it exempts 100,000 properties from business rates and we will reduce the rates poundage by 3.7 per cent. We are also committed to delivering 100 per cent superfast broadband coverage by 2020-21 to transform connectivity and improve the productivity of businesses in remote and rural areas, which will transform the prospects of people who live there.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Justice Committee is conducting an extensive inquiry into the role of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Witness after witness has said that the service is not sufficiently resourced, but on page 148 of the cabinet secretary's draft budget document, he has cut—*[Interruption.]* Shh! He has cut its budget by £4 million. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service is a pillar of our criminal justice system. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please. We cannot hear Mr Ross.

Douglas Ross: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Why has the SNP Government cut the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service budget, in spite of the clear evidence from witnesses to the Justice Committee's inquiry?

Derek Mackay: My first reflection on Douglas Ross's contribution is "Here we go again, from the Conservatives. Cut tax and spend more." I have engaged with the justice system in Scotland and I am satisfied that the budget position that I have outlined will support the service to continue in a sustainable and satisfactory way. I believe that it is a sound settlement for the service.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): As Labour has been warning, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy presents a real risk to the Scottish Government's skills budget. Will the finance secretary confirm that, despite the new levy on businesses, the skills budget will actually fall by £10 million in real terms? Indeed, the cut to Skills Development Scotland is on top of a cut to Scottish Development International, a cut to Scottish Enterprise and a cut to Highlands and Islands Enterprise. With over £70 million of cuts to enterprise and skills, is not the budget a hammer blow to business support?

Derek Mackay: I have said that information has been outlined and that there will be more detail tomorrow from the Minister for Employability and

Training. Clearly, there are new resources for education and there is support for skills in the workforce development fund. There is a range of measures that will support employers and people who are working their way through the education system, which will ensure that colleges can calibrate their systems to support employment. There are a range of areas in which we are supporting the economy, education and apprenticeships. Of course, apprenticeships have increased under this Government and will continue to increase as a consequence of our investments.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): We are hearing reports of a crisis in social care in England, with workers on low wages and chronic underfunding of the system, so the cabinet secretary's commitment to invest £8 billion in health and social care is a welcome sign that there is no such complacency in Scotland. Can he confirm that, in delivering the living wage for social care workers, that money will also resolve the issue of pay for overnight shifts? How many low-income care workers will benefit directly from the policy?

Derek Mackay: That is a very fair question from Christina McKelvie. *[Laughter.]* The Conservatives are laughing about the living wage in the social care sector. Perhaps they should take the matter a bit more seriously—it is very important.

In response to Christina McKelvie I say that the new support for social care should support delivery of the living wage and should also cover sleepovers. Because there is no clearly established cost for that, we will have to monitor and review the position, but the financial package is to deliver the living wage in the social care sector. It will be key to the transformation of health and social care that we do that, as we help to improve capacity and quality within the system by acknowledging the value of its workers, who do some of the most valuable work in Scotland. I am pleased that we will be able to continue to support them with a well-deserved pay rise.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am disappointed to see in the budget that there is to be an 8.3 per cent slash in sport funding over the next two years. I want the cabinet secretary to explain to me how that speaks to a preventative health agenda. Ministers talk about preventable health problems all the time, but in reality the Government has shown a lack of understanding of how we should approach the matter. I wonder whether health inequality is important to the cabinet secretary. Why would he cut the sport budget by so much?

Derek Mackay: At least the Conservatives are now absolutely consistent in that they are demanding more expenditure in pretty much every area, while wanting tax cuts for the rich.

On sport and healthier lifestyles, we have a great deal of investment in our preventative approach, with more support for family nurse partnerships and more interventions around healthier lifestyles. When it comes to sport and sporting events, there is considerable budget support to ensure that the big sporting events are supported, while we also ensure that sport is supported through schools and other areas. Members should look at the total package that is going to sport, and they will see that the sector is very well supported.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Because of Mr Swinney's mistake with the non-profit-distributing model, £932 million has gone on balance sheet, from being off balance sheet. Despite that, Mr Mackay says that there is not less money for investment in infrastructure projects. Can he explain his great money trick?

Derek Mackay: Trust Neil Findlay to reduce the matter to that level of nonsense.

The Government has invested heavily in infrastructure. Through our pipeline of projects, some of which were opposed by the Labour Party, we have built new infrastructure, schools, hospitals and community centres. We will continue to deliver on capital investment for housing, infrastructure, schools, hospitals, digital, and energy efficiency.

We have set out our capital plans and our spending commitments, and we will spend in a prudent way. We have kept within our financial limits, we have delivered balanced budgets and we have a clean bill of health from the auditors, who have said that we have a good record on financial management. I would rather listen to the Auditor General for Scotland than to Neil Findlay any day.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): The cabinet secretary said in his statement that the Aberdeen western peripheral route will be completed next year, but Keith Brown came to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee just yesterday to tell us that the Aberdeen western peripheral route will not be completed until 2018. If the cabinet secretary got that wrong, what else does he think he has got wrong in his statement?

Derek Mackay: I am surprised that Mike Rumbles does not know that I was talking, in the budget that I have set out, about the financial year. We are delivering the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which the Liberals failed to do after being in office for years. The opposition parties talk about major infrastructure projects, but only this SNP Government has actually been delivering them.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): As far as I can see from the budget document, there is no change to

the empty property reliefs on industrial buildings. Is that—literally—destructive tax to remain at 90 per cent, which discourages investment in new buildings that would help to grow the economy, and which means that buildings are being destroyed daily?

Derek Mackay: We have gone from the message of “Just spend more money on everything” to the other Tory message on the economy in Scotland, which is doom-mongering from John Scott.

We have not changed the position on empty property rates relief, but we have changed other positions, to the advantage of businesses. We have improved the position on poundage—that will mean a tax cut for every business in Scotland. There will be more support through the small business bonus. The large business supplement has been refined and there will be greater relief. That package will be welcomed by many businesses in Scotland, including the many that will be lifted out of paying business rates as a consequence of our non-domestic rates position.

With our package of measures, we will be able to grow Scotland's economy, deliver more receipts and invest in public services. The SNP and the SNP Government have got the balance right.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise for not being able to give you advance notice of this point of order.

As you are aware, copies of statements are provided to MSPs when ministers deliver them. Surely at that point key information should not be redacted. Today, key figures on tax were withheld, which was particularly galling given that they were in the press this morning. Furthermore, the minister said several times that further information would be provided by ministers tomorrow. Surely such important information ought to be provided to members in the chamber. Will you advise why members were given redacted statements, whether that is acceptable and how further important information on the budget should be provided to members?

The Presiding Officer: The provision of budget statements in advance of their delivery is entirely a matter of courtesy and is a matter for the Government. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will reflect on your remarks when thinking about whether to change practice.

Food Waste

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-03102, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on delivering Scotland's food waste target. In the open debate members will have four minutes for speeches, but there is a little time in hand to make up for interventions.

15:38

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I am pleased to open the debate, which has been shrinking as the weeks have gone by. I notice that it is now even shorter than it was intended to be. However, I hope that we have a good debate on the problem of tackling food waste.

The Government's aspiration is that Scotland becomes a good food nation—a country in which people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in and benefit from the food that they produce, buy, serve and eat day by day. The Scottish Government is developing a holistic approach to food, covering how we minimise diet-related disease and raise healthy life expectancy; how we deliver fairer outcomes to Scotland's most deprived communities, where disease, food poverty and hunger hit hardest; how we grow the food and drink industry; and, of course, how we improve resource efficiency and, crucially, reduce the amount of food that is wasted.

Zero Waste Scotland estimated that, in 2013, we wasted 1.35 million tonnes of food in Scotland. That waste arose in households, manufacturing, hospitality, retail, education, health and social care, and wholesale operations. We know that there is also a significant loss of food on farms, although that is more difficult to measure.

The Scottish Government has set a target to reduce total food waste by 33 per cent by 2025. We have aligned our ambition with that of the United Nations, and our target will put us on track to deliver the UN sustainable development goal of reducing food waste by 50 per cent by 2030. We set a target because we wanted to focus action all along the supply chain from farm to plate.

In identifying actions to reduce food waste, we will prioritise initiatives and deliver outcomes on health, food poverty, actions that support our food and drink industry and actions that reduce emissions. Fergus Ewing, who is responsible for food and drink as part of his rural economy portfolio, and I will work together closely on proposals for a good food nation bill, which the First Minister announced to Parliament in September.

The worst thing that can happen with food waste is that it is sent to landfill, where it creates harmful methane gas. Our landfill ban means that no biodegradable municipal waste can be sent to landfill after 2020. Our waste regulations place a statutory duty on councils to provide food waste collections in all but the most rural areas and a similar requirement applies to all businesses that produce more than 5kg of food per week. Once local authorities and businesses have collected food waste, they cannot send it for incineration or to landfill—it must be recycled.

The Scottish Government has invested more than £25 million in food waste collection since 2011, and 80 per cent of all households now have access to a food waste service. We intend to review the derogation for rural areas to ensure that we capture and deal with as much food waste as possible. We are making good progress in our efforts to keep food waste out of landfill. The United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change recognises that Scotland's emissions from waste have reduced by 77 per cent from 1990, and we will continue those efforts as part of our climate change plan.

Food waste that has been collected from households and businesses is able to be used in anaerobic digestion to generate heat and produce digestate. Our waste regulations have helped the anaerobic digestion sector to grow in Scotland and we will continue to support it. However, the real prize is to avoid food ending up as waste in the first place, and that is what Scotland's new food waste target is intended to achieve. I am afraid that the Labour Party appears to have missed that point. We are not starting from scratch. Between 2009 and 2014, the amount of food that we wasted at home fell by 5.7 per cent, which has saved households approximately £92 million.

I will outline some of the initiatives that have helped us to deliver reductions thus far and on which we can build in meeting the new ambitious target. For consumers, the love food, hate waste campaign provides simple solutions to help people to reduce waste and save money at home by planning meals, using up leftovers, portioning, storing food correctly to keep it fresher for longer, freezing and understanding date labels. At this time of year, that is probably one of the most germane things for us to discuss.

The good to go doggy-bag scheme now covers 100 restaurants, with the aim of reducing food waste and bringing about a shift in our culture with regard to food waste. During the pilot phase of good to go, a 40 per cent reduction was reported in the waste from restaurants that participated in the pilot.

We fund the Courtauld commitment, which is a voluntary scheme supported by Administrations

across the UK that aims to reduce to food waste by 20 per cent between 2009 and 2025. Our flagship resource efficient Scotland—RES—service provides free food and drink waste audits to help businesses to cut their waste costs and reduce their carbon footprint. RES is working with NHS Tayside to trial a new catering software system that has the potential to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Zero Waste Scotland is working with small and medium-sized enterprises—10 bakeries and five breweries—to offer in-depth food waste support and create examples of best practice and guidance for the bakery sector. This morning, I visited the Breadwinner Bakery in South Gyle in Edinburgh, which is a great example of a family food business that is thinking hard about how to avoid food waste. Approximately 20 per cent of the bread that would otherwise be wasted in production is given to charity; a further 20 per cent goes to a bio company that makes animal feed; and approximately 50 per cent is donated to a local organic pig farm.

I am sure that members will be interested in the collaboration that is taking place between Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Glasgow City Council, Scottish Enterprise and Zero Waste Scotland, in a project that is piloting an approach to transforming the 200,000 slices of bread that are wasted in Glasgow every day into beer, to minimise the resources that are used in the brewing process and to reduce food waste. Far be it from me to say that there are members in this chamber who probably think that that is a wonderful development.

Those are just a handful of the initiatives that are happening across Scotland. I know that members will have compelling examples to share from their constituencies. We want good practice to be extended.

Members should make no mistake; our ambition is significant. Our target is one of the most ambitious of its kind in Europe and beyond, and in due course we will consult on whether it should be voluntary or statutory. We will need to up our game. We need to learn from our experience thus far and identify the tools that will help us to reduce the food that we waste by 33 per cent. I want to work with all stakeholders, all along the supply chain from farm to plate, to identify the best way to deliver on our ambition on food waste, in parallel with our ambition to be a good food nation.

Last week, Zero Waste Scotland organised the first of a number of cross-sectoral workshops to generate ideas and identify opportunities for sectors to work together to reduce the waste that is incurred along the supply chain. We want to reduce the amount of food that is lost before it even leaves the farm, we want to help manufacturers to avoid the costs of wasted food

products, and we want to help retailers to meet customer demand, while minimising the generation of surplus food.

When surplus food arises, we want it to be redirected to those who need it. Surplus food for which humans have no other use can have a role in feeding animals, and when all other options have been exhausted it can be captured by our statutory food waste collections and used to generate energy through anaerobic digestion.

Reducing food waste is a core element of our strategy, “Making Things Last: A Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland”. The work that Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency have done, in partnership with organisations in all our constituencies, to create a more circular economy in Scotland, has been recognised by the awards programme that the World Economic Forum runs in Davos—the circulars. Scotland has been shortlisted as a finalist at the circulars, alongside entries from China, Canada, the Netherlands and South Africa. We can all take pride in Scotland being recognised on the international stage in that way.

Next year, I intend to consult on the package of measures that we will need to put in place to deliver on our ambitious target. Ahead of that, I welcome all suggestions and ideas from members on action to reduce food waste. I must caution members that this debate is about preventing waste and not just recycling; the recycling element is not included in our 33 per cent target. I fear that Labour has perhaps misunderstood what this is about.

Reducing food waste is an environmental, moral and economic imperative.

I move,

That the Parliament considers that the amount of food, estimated at 1.35 million tonnes in 2013, wasted in Scotland is unacceptable; recognises that reducing food waste is a moral, environmental and economic imperative on everyone in Scotland, from consumers to manufacturers and retailers; notes that reducing food waste will also help families and businesses to save money while reducing emissions; welcomes the progress already made to reduce household and manufacturing food waste, and the Scottish Government’s ambitious target to reduce food waste by 33% by 2025, and commits to Scotland showing leadership in this important area.

15:48

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests—I am a farmer.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government lodged the important motion that we are debating today. Food waste is a huge problem. It is estimated that a third of all the food that is

produced across the world is wasted or spoiled. When millions are starving, that is an international scandal.

Food is wasted at every stage of production—in the fields, in store, during processing, by retailers and in the home. Wasted food is a huge waste of energy, fertiliser and water, and it contributes to climate change as it decomposes and emits greenhouse gases. Here in Scotland, food waste affects household incomes; the average family throws away hundreds of pounds-worth of food every year.

In our house, if food looks okay and smells okay, it probably is okay and I will gladly eat it. That has been my guide for years—and just look what a fine figure of a man I am. [*Laughter.*] That said, I am not suggesting that we should totally ignore things like best before and sell-by dates.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Peter Chapman: I do not have time—sorry.

A little common sense would help us to stop good food being thrown in the bin. I am sure that the whole chamber would agree that tackling excess waste must be something that we seek to deliver across party lines. Nevertheless, as a strong Opposition, we cannot and will not give this Scottish National Party Government a free pass. Although I respect that the minister spoke passionately about the importance of reducing food waste, I am concerned that not enough work is being done on the ground to deliver on these ambitious targets. Indeed, the Government will need to look closely at how it will be able to support more remote local authorities such as those in the Highlands in delivering food waste processing services while adhering to the key principles of waste management.

In the most remote communities, dealing with waste product as close to the point of production as possible will pose the greatest challenge. Looking at the sheer volume of food waste, we see the scale of the challenge. The recent report “How much food and drink waste is there in Scotland?”, which was published just last month, gives us a stark insight into the task that the Government must take on—600,000 tonnes of food and drink waste from households, 740,000 tonnes from commercial and industrial premises, 510,000 tonnes from food and drink manufacturing and another 200,000 tonnes from other sources adds up to a colossal 2 million tonnes annually. That is a staggering amount.

That is why I welcome the Government's ambition. However, it is clear that ambition does not necessarily equal successful delivery. To deliver on the target of no food waste going to landfill in five years, as the SNP plans to do,

seems extremely ambitious. I wonder whether it is realistic. One has to wonder—did 2021 come out of thin air or did it come from a reasoned plan with practical means of delivery? Considering that there are parts of the country that do not yet even recycle food waste, it would be remiss of me if I did not remark on the minister's bravery in committing to the target.

There will be ways to improve the food waste figures; there is no doubt about that. For starters, more could certainly be done at the beginning of the food production chain. More work must be done to utilise imperfect—but very edible—fruit and vegetables. Growing food is not a perfect science and the most talented farmer will always have fruit and vegetables that are not perfect in every way. We need to find a way to get more of those less-than-perfect fruit and vegetables into consumers' shopping trolleys.

I speak from experience when I say that food intended for folk can be—and is—consumed by livestock, usually with a lot less griping about how it looks. That is, however, an expensive second-best option for the grower. If a farmer can sell a tonne of tatties for £200 to a retailer, that same tonne of product—if it does not meet specifications—is worth something in the region of £15 for stock feed. The result of that difference is that whole fields of vegetables can be wasted, because the price offered is less than the cost of picking them.

That said, proposals that are under consideration by the United Kingdom Government, whereby retailers would buy a full crop and then make best use of the produce, would have multiple benefits. Not only would that reduce the potential for food waste, but it would offer farmers far greater certainty in their incomes. My concern is that that sensible step may be too difficult to implement on the ground.

Of course, this debate is not just about the waste that we produce. We need to get smarter when it comes to processing the waste that we create. We need a long-term, sustainable way to manage the treatment of food waste, for which we need to see political leadership from the SNP. The Government needs to look at all the options, whether that is anaerobic digestion plants, feeding more to livestock, composting or using food waste for heat. We also need a Government here in Scotland that recognises the challenge that is faced by local authorities, which are already tied into waste management contracts—sometimes for up to 25 years.

Certainly, more needs to be done to educate people to prevent food waste in households from happening in the first place. That will require more education about people buying only what they

need, which would also help hard-working families make ends meet.

I have spoken about how farmers, and indeed everyone, can contribute to reducing food waste and I am certain that my colleagues and I will always look at practical, deliverable proposals to reduce that waste. This is a fight that we need to tackle for the sake of our planet.

I move amendment S4M-03102.1, to leave out from “in this important area” to end and insert:

“and developing innovative solutions in this important area as part of Scotland’s journey towards a circular economy.”

15:55

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour is positive about supporting the Scottish Government motion and the Tory amendment. Given that the cabinet secretary suggested that there was a question mark over our amendment, I would like to explain that we are supportive of the Scottish Government’s intention to cut food waste by a third by 2025, but we think that the food waste that it is not possible to cut should not go to landfill. That is why we included in our amendment an interim measure to ensure that food waste does not go to landfill. Our proposal covers the range of other possibilities. We are asking the Scottish Government to consider our proposed target of recycling 100 per cent of food waste by 2020. Our definition of recycling is quite broad, and I am sure that Maurice Golden will have something to say about that.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): When Claudia Beamish talks about the recycling of food waste, does she include composting, in-vessel composting and anaerobic digestion? In other words, does the proposal in Labour’s amendment cover anything other than disposal or prevention?

Claudia Beamish: I thank the member for that intervention, and I am happy to clarify that that is indeed our position.

I see that the cabinet secretary now wants to intervene.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You will get your time back, Ms Beamish.

Roseanna Cunningham: I am curious to know what advice was taken when Labour drafted its amendment, because I have had direct advice from Zero Waste Scotland that Labour’s proposal is unachievable.

Claudia Beamish: I have looked, along with colleagues, at the range of options that exist. I have said that it is a proposed target, which would be open to discussion. That is where we are.

We need a new approach to food and food waste in Scotland. As I said, we support the Scottish Government’s motion. We certainly support the statement that

“reducing food waste is a moral, environmental and economic imperative on everyone in Scotland”.

Food is a fundamental human necessity, but it is much more than that—it is an intrinsic part of our culture, our society and our wellbeing.

Food poverty in Scotland—and anywhere else in the world where it exists—is our shame. Here at home, it is a rising and unacceptable problem. In 2014-15, the Trussell Trust provided 117,689 people in Scotland with emergency food aid. Members will know that that is only a small snapshot of food insecurity. When confronted with those realities, the crime of food wastage becomes all the more apparent.

The Scottish Government is right to have ambitious targets for food and drink exports, but Scottish Labour is concerned about the proposed cut of £2.9 million in Zero Waste Scotland’s budget. How can the cabinet secretary square that with the challenges that we face on food waste reduction? Perhaps she can address that in her closing remarks.

More must be done to tackle the uneconomical, unjust and unenvironmental practice of food wastage. It will take behaviour change, and households must be provided with proper information on recycling in their area. That is a challenge for not just the Scottish Government but local authorities. There are many ways in which individuals can make an impact, some of which the cabinet secretary highlighted.

There are a couple of other ways of making an impact, including using food that is past its sell-by date. I am not sure that I would do that, although my partner and I always have a debate about it. Proper understanding of how to store and freeze types of food is also important. All such actions are steps towards the circular economy that is referred to in the Tory amendment, which we will support. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has identified the circular economy making a global saving of £1.3 trillion a year. In Scotland, avoidable food and drink waste costs households £1.1 billion a year.

As one of the sponsors of the annual success that is the Holyrood apple day, I want to use fruit as a proxy for other forms of creativity with surplus fresh supplies. In my region, the Clyde valley orchards co-operative has been formed, which involves members of the community and orchard owners making apple juice from regenerated orchards rather than leaving apples to rot. Food can also be used to inspire social benefits. For example, there is a social enterprise in Edinburgh

called Fruitful Woods, which gets people who are experiencing mental illness involved in outdoor orchard activity, including pressing apples. The initiative is funded by products that are made from surplus apples and demonstrates—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask the member to wind up, as I have given her an extra minute.

Claudia Beamish: It demonstrates the huge impact that would be lost if that fruit was left to rot on the ground. I ask the cabinet secretary to consider further support for community and co-operative activity on food waste.

I move amendment S5M-03102.2, to insert at end:

“; asks the Scottish Government to assess the possibility of a target of recycling 100% of food waste by 2020; commits to Scotland showing leadership in this important area, which can also contribute to reducing food poverty, and calls on the Scottish Government to continue to support the excellent work of community food groups.”

16:01

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): First, I inform members—as I believe we have to do on these occasions—that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

As the MSP for Aberdeenshire East, which includes the town of New Deer, I am delighted to speak in a debate on food waste, as New Deer is a major Scottish hub for the recycling of food waste, with Keenan Recycling there handling 50 per cent of Scotland's food waste. That amounts to 50,000 tonnes of food waste per annum, of which 30,000 tonnes is collected from restaurants and other food outlets. Keenan's turns the vast proportion of the food waste tonnage that it receives into British Standards Institution-approved agricultural compost. That compost, as well as being a means of reusing food waste instead of sending it to landfill, fulfils a dual environmental protection purpose by replacing chemical fertilisers in maintaining the fertility of the farmland soil that is used to grow our food. Keenan's also converts food waste into clean biofuel for anaerobic digestion plants that produce electricity or gas for the public grid. The company has acquired a site at Linwood, in my friend Tom Arthur's constituency of Renfrewshire South, and plans to mirror there the state-of-the-art facility in New Deer, which will more than double the capacity for biofuel.

A Scottish Government initiative launched in January 2016 stipulated that any food outlet producing more than 5kg of food waste per week must segregate it from other waste and have it

collected, which improved on the previously stipulated threshold of 50kg for food waste. During a visit to Keenan's recycling centre earlier this year, I spoke to the managing director, Grant Keenan, who informed me of the amount of food waste that is recycled from small food outlets, bringing their practice into line with that of larger food outlets and improving further the level and quality of the food waste that is recycled into the products that I have described.

I want to highlight the good work of Zero Waste Scotland in the area of food waste education. Of course, the number 1 priority in all waste management is to completely eliminate waste in the first place. The cabinet secretary mentioned the good to go trial that encouraged restaurants to offer doggy bags to customers to take home leftovers of food that had not been eaten. The trial has been highly successful and might change our culture with regard to customers asking to take leftovers home because, for some reason, we have been a wee bit reluctant to do that.

Talking about cultural changes, I have found that having a food waste bin in my home and a local authority food waste collection service has increased my family's awareness of the amount of food waste that we generate. Aberdeenshire Council has taken a number of measures to reduce food waste and to improve our behaviours around food buying, storage, segregation and recycling. It might have taken my generation a wee while to get used to segregating and recycling food waste, but it is already second nature to my children, who do it without thinking at home, school and college. Through education around minimising food waste, we will make those good habits second nature for us, too.

Such behaviours, when encouraged at national and local government levels and hugely assisted by programmes such as those that Zero Waste Scotland promotes, are the reason why we have a very good chance of meeting our food waste reduction targets by 2025. With households, businesses and the public sector carefully segregating what we still produce, we can ensure that our food waste ends up being useful rather than being sent, as it has been historically, to landfill.

16:05

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): There seems to be a fashion for making declarations at the moment. I am not going to declare that I am a farmer, because I do not farm rubbish and nor am I a rubbish farmer. What I would like to do, though, is to take the debate to a much more local level and talk about why the Highlands are different from most of Scotland—not just because the Highlands are the best place to

live and work, but because we deal with waste in a completely different way.

Those members who have listened to that statement will know that it is true in all but one respect: there are 27,000 houses in Inverness whose food waste is dealt with in the same way as that in the rest of Scotland, through kerbside collections—it is estimated that some 1,700 tonnes of food waste are collected per annum. What happens to the rest of the food waste in the Highlands? I am not sure that my investigations have proved that anyone can really tell us.

Perhaps we should look at the size of the problem. Figures suggest that each household in the Highlands generates about 150kg of food waste a year. If we scale that up for the Highlands as a whole, there will be some 16,000 to 17,000 tonnes of food waste annually. To complete the maths—for those who need it—we are capturing only 10 per cent of the food waste that is produced in the Highlands; another 90 per cent is to be collected.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that food waste is composted. Highland Council's calculations suggest that, between 2001 and 2010, 41,236 compost bins were distributed. However, demand peaked in 2006-07 and there has been a rapid decline in demand since. Even if it could be assumed that all the units that were supplied by Highland Council were still being used—which would be false—we would have a long way to go to achieve zero biodegradable waste going to landfill by the end of 2020.

The question must be how the Government thinks it will be possible to achieve the very laudable target that it has set if it ignores the Highlands or does not treat them differently. Saying that we are the same as the central belt, with its large urban conurbations where waste collection is simple, is too easy. As many MSPs know, those conurbations are easy to move around on foot, by taking a brisk walk. It takes those of us who live in the Highlands hours to move from one side of the region to the other, and that is using an insured car. That highlights the issues.

If we look at the cost per household of collecting waste in 2014-15, we see that, excluding Stirling, it is highest in the Highlands, where it is nearly 40 per cent higher than the national average. The cost is extremely high. When I contacted Highland Council earlier this week to find out how it would deal with that, it had no idea. In fact, it had not even commissioned a waste plan for the Highlands. It appears that the problem is too big and that the DIY solutions that have been suggested, which have been used and funded in the past, are only scratching the surface and will not be fit for the future.

So what is the solution? I have to look to the Government for the answer—it is the Government's target, so it must have a solution; or is it just a soundbite policy based on unachievable targets? I hoped that in this afternoon's budget announcement, I would see some money set aside for this, and I would take an intervention now if anyone saw it. I did not, so I have real concerns.

As my time is up, I will conclude. The cabinet secretary must look at the Highlands differently and help us to achieve the target if it is to be a real target rather than a soundbite one.

16:09

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate. The topic may seem minor to most people out there in the context of day-to-day life, but food waste quickly adds up throughout the year. As we heard from the cabinet secretary, it is estimated that Scotland throws away 1.35 million tonnes of food and drink each year, which in turn costs the public over £1 billion, or £460 per household, in unnecessary purchases. When we consider the number of people in Scotland who experience food insecurity daily, we see that those statistics are simply unacceptable.

The Scottish Government clearly acknowledges the problem and is seeking to address the issue with one of the most ambitious targets of its kind in Europe and globally: to cut food waste by a third by 2025. That would make Scotland a global front runner in food waste reduction and save at least £500 million.

We will have to tackle the problem from a variety of angles. We can take a lead from several other countries that have also taken up the fight, and we should not hesitate to look to them for inspiration. For example, France has introduced a law that forbids food waste by supermarkets and compels them to donate unused food to charities and food banks instead of throwing it away. In the UK, as we know, supermarkets donate food on a voluntary basis. They must be commended for that, but there is always room for improvement.

Other options have been explored in Scotland. For instance, as the cabinet secretary and Gillian Martin mentioned, the good to go doggy-bag programme that has been piloted at 15 restaurants across Scotland yielded significant results by allowing customers to take their unfinished meals home in compostable boxes. Such a small step had huge results. There was an average waste reduction of 42 per cent per restaurant, with about 92 per cent of surveyed customers saying that they finished the meal that they took home. That could save the equivalent of 800,000 full meals from being thrown out each year.

Reducing food waste will not only address food insecurity in Scotland but allow us to make positive environmental changes, too. Decomposing food in landfill releases methane, which is a greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to global warming—in fact, it contributes even more than carbon dioxide does. The 2020 landfill ruling is therefore very welcome. Countries such as France are taking strides in reducing food waste, and other countries such as Sweden and Norway have embraced ways of efficiently incinerating waste, using it as fuel for energy production. The household food waste from my local authority area is also used for that purpose at an incinerator in Cumbernauld, so progress is being made. If the two options are implemented together, they could make significant contributions to minimising Scotland's carbon footprint.

My local authority—Falkirk Council—has been at the forefront of the food waste strategy since its inception, achieving some very positive results. It has made finding out how it can do better a priority, and it pushes itself to meet its ambitious aims. As it is one of the highest-performing councils, its work on reducing food waste that goes to landfill is an example of the opportunities that lie ahead.

However, this work can be done only by communities, local authorities and Government working together for the benefit of the environment. We look forward to the release next month of the report on proposals and policies 3, or the climate change plan, which I hope will help to address the issue, ensuring that a landfill ban is the ultimate goal.

The circular economy strategy has massive potential to create jobs and to help to boost the economy, but all of us need to take that on board. We all have a responsibility to look after the environment and to ensure that we have a sustainable outlook on what the future holds for Scotland as a zero waste country.

Needless to say, reaching the point of delivering zero waste to landfill will be extremely challenging, but we have opportunities in the strategies and, working together with our communities, we can ensure that Scotland delivers and achieves our targets. We must all play our part in reducing food waste by 33 per cent by 2025, but if local and national government, along with manufacturers and retailers, show leadership, we can all collectively up our game and reach our goal.

16:14

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): It is shocking that we have to discuss the problems of food waste at all, given that one in nine of the

world's population are starving and increasing numbers of our own citizens are having to turn to food banks, with homeless people depending on soup kitchens week in, week out.

It is clear that the interests of big business and retail do not often reflect those of the environment or the communities that we live in. Granted, some companies do a bit to try and help the third sector to address food poverty—I will come to that later—but too many are simply concerned with their profit margins.

If supermarkets and other businesses are not willing to reform voluntarily, there might be a case for things such as the fines that happen in France, which Angus MacDonald mentioned.

The problem goes beyond that. As we know, 44 per cent of food waste comes from households and that means that habits must change, even though we have seen some advances in habits and in the figures. I put my hand up to having been guilty of not paying enough attention to food waste. I have become increasingly aware of the importance of re-using leftovers, reducing by purchasing less, and recycling the unavoidable waste. Along with education campaigns, encouraging the use of food waste bins and their weekly collection, as happens in North Lanarkshire, is a big factor in reducing avoidable household food waste and educating families about how much food they are wasting.

Councils are making good efforts and the Parliament might want to congratulate North Lanarkshire Council, which was crowned best UK performer in the environmental health category at the Association for Public Service Excellence awards for the second year in a row. However, the good work of councils will not be helped by squeezing council budgets, undervaluing refuse workers and limiting their hours. Although the Government's greener campaign has helped, there is no doubt that more effort is needed across government to achieve transformational change in our approach to food and waste.

There are many examples of good practice in relation to community involvement and we have certainly heard about some this afternoon. In central Scotland, Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership runs and supplies four community food co-ops. Based in Bargeddie, the partnership has been helping local people for 22 years and it collaborates in the fair share project. Along with selling high-quality, fresh produce at a low price and running cookery and nutrition sessions, it gets to the issues that lie at the heart of food waste and brings a community benefit with that.

In Edinburgh, there are initiatives such as the Oxfords Neighbourhood Centre, which receives

food from Marks & Spencer to use at its community cafe. That is a good example and the centre gets assistance by using Neighbourly, a social networking platform that connects local projects with people and organisations that want to help.

Of course, the Co-op has always led the way with fair trade products. It also takes part in fair share schemes and does not send its waste to landfill. Last year alone, the Co-op redistributed 30 tonnes of food, which is around 300,000 meals. Peter Chapman might be interested in the fact that it also sells so-called ugly fruit and veg in its stores.

Community organisations like those that I have mentioned believe that there is no excuse for food waste and such initiatives can help to make Scotland a zero-waste nation and take some power back from the dominance of big business.

As a socialist, I feel strongly about food justice. Its importance is summed up very well by Dave Watson from Unison, who said that, in addition to the union's interest in staffing issues,

"We also have a wider concern to ensure that food policy contributes to a more equal society that protects our environment."

I totally agree with that. The importance of this issue for Parliament, people and the planet cannot be overestimated.

16:18

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank the Government for this short debate. I very much hope that this is just the start of the conversation on our food culture in this session of Parliament.

Our approach to the economy, health, our local and global environment, social justice and identity are all wrapped up in food. The links between those themes will provide much of the backdrop to the debates to come on the good food nation and circular economy bills, and I urge the Scottish Government to be bold in joining up action across agendas to make real progress.

The setting earlier in the year of a target to reduce food waste was a welcome first step, framed around the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions, improve productivity in the food and drink sector and deliver financial savings to households and business. I welcome the consultation on the statutory target and the road map that is to follow.

I emphasise, however, that this is also a social justice issue. It is a fact that more than 130,000 people a year are visiting Trussell Trust food banks in Scotland while we throw away nearly 1.5 million tonnes of food. For example, enough fruit is

thrown away each year to supply the equivalent of an apple to every child and teacher in Scotland every day for 18 months. That is a shocking waste of food. Contrast that with a recent survey that showed that only 6 per cent of us feel any shame in wasting food. I urge the Scottish Government to build on the moral imperative that is mentioned in the motion and ensure that the social justice implications of food waste form a strong part of its educational work.

While, so far, there has been a strong emphasis on household food waste, the majority of waste occurs before it even reaches homes or, in some cases, the farm gate. If the Government's target is to be met, we need a better understanding of the whole supply chain and how waste can be reduced. Manufacturing is responsible for nearly half a million tonnes of food waste, and there is little evidence so far of how Government is engaging with the entire supply chain, especially at the field end.

As the cabinet secretary has already mentioned, there is the voluntary Courtauld commitment for the UK grocery sector, which is aimed at reducing waste, but I believe that the modest targets of reducing product and packaging waste in the early phases of that commitment fall short of this Government's aspirations. Indeed, we have yet to see the results of those early phases being published.

Separately, the groceries code lays out guidelines for the relationship between retailers and producers in the UK, but it is weak on food waste because it covers only the waste that retailers create when food goes beyond its sell-by date. The role of the Groceries Code Adjudicator, who oversees enforcement, is under review and it is vital that a strong message goes out from this Parliament that the role of the GCA should continue and be strengthened, particularly in relation to waste.

It is critical, for example, that we see a supply chain that delivers a fair livelihood for our growers and producers. I am sure that many members have met producers who have had to plough in fields of perfectly edible vegetables simply because of supermarkets' failure to market class 2 produce adequately.

The root cause of that problem is an imbalance in our food system, in which supermarket buyers are able to undermine good practice. Forecasting is one of the main areas of waste, in that orders placed a year in advance can be subject to last-minute variations. Although the code covers good practice on forecasting, it offers plenty of wriggle room for supermarkets. The code should be tightened to require retailers to find outlets for unwanted produce supplied as a result of overforecasting. That could be, for example, via

processing or sale to consumers at a lower cost. In the longer term, stable contracts based on purchasing a whole field of produce need to be reflected in the code, alongside ending the sale or return practices that are leading to huge waste, particularly in the bakery sector at the moment.

Finally, I welcome this debate. There are many initiatives in Scotland that cut across education, environment, business, health and local government that can enable us to take a joined-up picture in order to tackle those crises and to create the vibrant food culture that we need to nurture in Scotland. I look forward to those approaches being at the heart of the forthcoming good food nation bill.

16:22

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Given my performance during First Minister's question time earlier, I should perhaps start by declaring an interest, in that I am guilty of creating food waste in my time. I take Mark Ruskell's pre-emptive rebuke in the spirit in which it was intended.

I, too, welcome the debate. I support Roseanna Cunningham's motion and, indeed, much, if not all, of what she had to say in her remarks. Equally, I support Peter Chapman's amendment that lays particular emphasis on the circular economy, which is helpful. Much as I would like to support Claudia Beamish's amendment, given her track record in this and related areas, and much as I believe that the Scottish Government needs to be aspirational and ambitious in that area, for all the reasons that other members have suggested, I think that we also need to be realistic. In the brief time available to me, I will set out one of the reasons why I do not think that what is suggested in that amendment is achievable.

In Orkney, there is a real appetite to recycle and to improve our environmental performance. Indeed, there is often frustration when people find that they cannot do more. On an island, using resources sustainably and recycling are self-evidently the right things to do, but Orkney, as the cabinet secretary alluded to in her remarks, is currently exempt from the food waste regulations on the basis of rurality. There is no plant. In the main, solid waste is sent north, to Shetland, to the heat and power generation scheme up there. The costs involved in collection in Orkney are prohibitively high at this stage. Nobody is happy with that state of affairs and good work is going on locally to try to find a solution.

The local council is working with SSE, Scottish Water and some of the waste producers in the agriculture, aquaculture, food and drink and shipping sectors to come up with an innovative solution that not only deals with food waste but

provides heat and power to benefit local housing and public buildings in the area, as well as commercial premises.

As one might imagine, and as the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform will not be surprised to hear on the back of the budget statement that we have just heard, that comes at a cost. Officials in Orkney Islands Council have estimated the up-front capital costs at around £40 million to £45 million, which would provide a return in a £1 million to £1.5 million reduction in running costs per year. Orkney Islands Council alone cannot shoulder that cost and, understandably, is looking for match funding from the Scottish Government in due course.

However, the project will also take time to deliver. The official with whom I have been in contact suggested:

"If we started today we are still 4-5 years away from a 'key in the door!'"

Therefore, to return to my earlier point about the Labour amendment, in a practical sense, it is simply not possible to deliver what Claudia Beamish talks about.

The Government is right to be ambitious—the reasons for that have been well articulated by other speakers—but it must will the means as well as the end. I assure Roseanna Cunningham that Orkney stands ready to play its part in creating a good food nation and driving down food waste, but I hope that she will commit to the capital and revenue support that will allow it to do so.

16:26

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate. We should celebrate the fact that Parliament is having a dedicated debate on food waste, which is a good illustration of how the agenda has changed over recent years. I congratulate Roseanna Cunningham, the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, on bringing the debate to Parliament. It is unlikely that five or 10 years ago we would all have recognised food waste as being a subject that deserves its own dedicated debate in Parliament, so things are certainly going in the right direction.

I strongly support the Scottish Government's target to reduce food waste by a third by 2025. There is no doubt that throughout this parliamentary session, the impact of food in all its forms on our health and wellbeing, on our economy—especially given current economic trends—on our environment and on poverty will be much higher up the agenda. The good food nation bill that was promised in the SNP's manifesto will be a golden opportunity to put in place radical,

innovative and forward-thinking measures to progress all those agendas—measures that future generations of Scots will thank us for putting in place when they look back in many years.

If we look at how behaviour has changed in society in recent years thanks to the advent of the Parliament, we see good examples to learn from. For example, the plastic bag levy has helped to change behaviour and, today, we are discussing how 75 per cent of households in Scotland now have a food recycling service. That has been achieved in a few short years. As many other members do, I have my food caddy at home. I now just take it for granted and cannot imagine living without it and the other recycling bins that I have at home in Moray. However, I am still appalled by how often I have to empty the food caddy. There is clearly still a long way to go in our behaviour.

The issue is Scottish, but it is also global. If we have any doubt about how important the agenda is, we have only to look at some of the jaw-dropping statistics about human behaviour, the impact that we are having on the planet and the food debate around that on the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's website. I will quote a couple of statistics. First,

“one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year ... gets ... wasted”—

that is 1.3 billion tonnes—and

“Global quantitative food losses and waste per year are roughly 30% for cereals, 40-50% for root crops, fruits and vegetables, 20% for oil seeds, meat and dairy plus 35%”

of the world's fish stocks. Those foods are wasted. If I remember correctly, nearly one third of the world's fertile land grows food that is wasted. Those are startling statistics that we have to address as a society across the globe. However, we must play our part in Scotland, as well.

Many other agendas that Parliament deals with join up with that—I am thinking in particular about climate change. We have to accept that if we do not tackle climate change the amount of food from fertile land that will be wasted through storms and adverse and extreme weather events will continue to increase. All the energy, nutrients and soils that are put into that production will also be wasted. Also, if food waste is put into landfill it produces gases that contribute to climate change. The agendas are, therefore, tied together.

Many good organisations in Scotland are doing good work. Many food banks—in particular, Moray food bank, with which I am very familiar—are putting efforts into developing new projects that link reducing food waste with tackling food poverty. I ask ministers in the Government to look at opportunities in our communities to tackle those two big issues at the same time. Many projects are looking for funding to use food that would normally

go to waste to feed families who are, unfortunately, too often going without. All those agendas are very much joined up.

I welcome the debate and hope that we will have another on food waste soon.

16:31

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am delighted to participate in this debate on delivering Scotland's food waste target.

The Scottish Government has pledged to cut food waste in Scotland by a third by 2025, as has already been referred to. In order to meet that target, a number of food collection measures will be necessary, but emphasis also needs to be placed on prevention of food waste. My comments will address that issue.

At the start of the year, the Scottish Government launched Scotland's first-ever circular economy strategy—“Making Things Last: A Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland”. Waste prevention is a key feature of that strategy. The document states that

“The first priority in a more circular economy is to avoid unnecessary waste and use fewer resources in the first instance.”

In “Prevention is better than cure: The role of waste prevention in moving to a more resource efficient economy”, the UK Government stipulated that

“Optimising material inputs and reducing wastage through design has to be the starting point of a resource efficient economy. It is not enough to just recycle waste; action is also needed to prevent the waste from being created in the first place.”

One way of encouraging waste prevention is through education, and the love food, hate waste campaign does that very well. Its success can be attributed to its selection of handy tips and hints on anything from portion sizes to storing food, as well as to its innovative recipe ideas, all of which help individuals, businesses and organisations to reduce their food waste. With that advice, people will get the most out of the food that they buy and will, at the same time as they save money, eat more healthily.

We are presented with some quite disturbing figures in Zero Waste Scotland's “How much food and drink waste is there in Scotland?” report. It claims that, in 2014, 60 per cent of household food waste was classed as “avoidable”. That means that food with a price tag of over £1 billion—an average of £460 per household—was put in the bin in that year. We need to do more because of such figures. Everyone, from individuals to businesses, has a role to play in addressing the challenge of food waste prevention. It is imperative

that the Government continues its efforts and that it uses the resources that are at its disposal to promote good practice and invest in educating people on how to prevent and reduce food waste.

Joined-up thinking and working together will result in targets being met and, ultimately, in a reduction in the amount of food that is wasted. We could learn lessons from the Courtauld commitment 2025, which has brought together organisations from across the food sector to try to cut the resources that are needed to provide our food and drink by one fifth over 10 years. Currently, that commitment has more than 120 signatories, which range from supermarkets and trade associations to Government departments and local authorities.

Mark Ruskell: Does Finlay Carson recognise that that initiative has yet to report and that the early targets were extremely disappointing? The target was only 3 per cent in the initial phases.

Finlay Carson: There is no doubt that there is more to be done. The Government can encourage improved performance. I have no doubt that supermarkets and those associations will do everything that they can to reach the targets.

Ahead of the debate, I contacted a number of supermarkets to find out what they are doing to prevent food waste. I am impressed by some of the initiatives. Members will be pleased to learn that a number of supermarkets do not send any food waste to landfill; instead, they send surplus food that is still fit for human consumption to charity partners such as Fareshare.

Last year, one supermarket donated the equivalent of 345,000 meals to more than 370 good causes across the country. In addition, some supermarkets make sure that our wonky vegetables do not go to waste. Instead, the vegetables are used in products such as ready meals, or are sold for less in their wonky-veg boxes.

One supermarket chain is investing £10 million over 10 years in its waste less, save more campaign. The programme is aimed at reducing customers' food waste and saving them money. Initiatives that are being trialled as part of the programme include giving out fridge thermometers, setting up community fridges and—this is an important part of it—rolling out a programme of school engagement.

Supermarkets are crucial to the aim of reducing food waste, so it is good that they are working with bodies including the National Farmers Union, the British Retail Consortium and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board on a project to reduce food surplus and food waste linked to the primary production of fresh produce.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): You must close, please.

Finlay Carson: Furthermore, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons, the Co-Op and other supermarkets all have ambitious plans to cut the amount of food that is sent to landfill from 6 per cent to 1 per cent by 2020.

As I said, at the heart of preventing food waste is education. If we deal with the problem from the outset the benefits will be much greater than simply meeting targets.

16:36

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): First, I will reflect on a positive element of the subject, which others have already mentioned. Household food waste has decreased by an estimated 37,000 tonnes a year—or 5.7 per cent overall—since 2009. However, context is everything. In 2013, across the domestic, commercial and industrial sectors Scotland generated a staggering 1.3 million tonnes of food and drink waste, 600,000 tonnes of which was from households alone. Therefore, if we are to hit the Scottish Government target of a one-third reduction by 2025, we need to achieve a 445,000 tonne annual reduction. That is quite a leap.

There is certainly no lack of incentive from environmental and financial perspectives, let alone from the moral perspective, and nor is rising to the challenge—despite its scale—beyond us. Avoidable waste—60 per cent of household food waste is reckoned to be in that category—generates more than 2 per cent of Scotland's carbon footprint. The value of what is thrown away is, as others have noted, more than £1 billion, or £460 per household. Simply better managing the journey of the food from purchase through our homes would be enough to ensure that we avoid throwing out the estimated 12 per cent of all the food that is purchased.

As with so many climate change related issues, at the root of tackling the issue—certainly from the domestic perspective—is the bringing about of behavioural change. From the perspective of prompting such change, I was struck by research that was commissioned by Sainsbury's that identified six types of shoppers:

“Hungry Hoarders shop while hungry, resulting in impulse purchases. They often fail to plan ahead meaning their shop might not create complete meals.

Ditsy Diarists do not consult their little black books before their trip to the supermarket and as they eat out a lot or work late, much of what they buy sits unused in the fridge and is eventually thrown away.

Food Phobics are ultra-conscious and throw away food on or before the best before date without first checking its condition.

Separate Shoppers are a generation of independent individuals who buy their own food without checking what their partner or housemate has already bought, often resulting in duplication.

Freezer Geezers simply love their leftovers and use their freezers effectively to minimise food waste.

Conscientious Consumers love to make meals out of leftovers.”

Presiding Officer, I will leave it to you, the cabinet secretary and members to consider which of those categories you might fall into. I am pleased to say that I am a freezer geezer, but I will not say who among my family is a bit of a ditzzy diarist. However, a clean out of our—admittedly, large—family fridge last Sunday resulted in the food caddy being filled twice over with items that had passed their sell-by date by between two and four weeks. Like so many members, I suspect that I live in a household that could do more. We can all become freezer geezers or conscientious consumers. Better still, we could reduce the need for that by more efficiently planning our shopping in the first place.

As I have mentioned the work that was commissioned by Sainsbury's, I will also note some of the sensible and welcome measures that are being taken by that retailer so that it can play its part in reducing food waste. It is, among other things, increasingly sourcing directly from producers so that items including citrus fruits and salad reach the store more quickly and have a longer shelf life. It is also increasing the amount of meat and fish that are vacuum-packed and is utilising so-called wonky veg in its Basics range, for apple juice or for ready-made mashed potatoes. Those are simple practical measures that can and, I hope, will make a difference as Scotland seeks to hit a target that, for so many reasons, must be hit.

16:39

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

This has been an important and insightful debate with well-informed contributions from across the chamber. It is ironic that, as the festive season beckons, we have the almost Dickens-esque record that, while the poor faced food inequality and ill health, 4.2 million Christmas dinners were wasted in the UK in 2014, according to Unilever. In that same year, Scottish households generated an estimated 600,000 tonnes of food waste. The Waste and Resources Action Programme has estimated that every year about 270,000 tonnes of food from the food and drink industry could be redistributed to feed people, which would be enough for a staggering 650 million meals for people who are in need.

Tackling the vast scale of wasted food in our country is an economic, environmental and moral

imperative. It is economic, because just a 5.7 per cent reduction in household waste between 2009 and 2014 saved £92 million; environmental, because food and drink production make up about 20 per cent of our carbon footprint; and moral, because so many countries round the world are reporting widespread starvation and many who live in our country are struggling to afford to eat.

It is surely time for a step change in Scotland's food system. As we have heard, around the world, about a third of food is wasted. If that was reduced by only a quarter, there would be enough to feed everyone on the planet.

As we have heard from all the other speakers, to make headway in reducing food waste, a transformational change in food production is needed. To summarise the key points in the debate, we need individuals to change their attitudes to food use; we need large supermarkets to donate unsold food and, as Sainsbury's does, to send zero waste to landfill; we need to cut down on food waste along the supply chain; and, as Elaine Smith said, we need to develop community and co-operative initiatives such as local composting schemes. I refer members to my registered interest as a Co-operative Party member. As we have heard from across the chamber, we also need to develop new technology such as smart fridges and food rescue apps.

The reduce, reuse and recycle mantra is vital to protecting our environment and our population from the challenges that are brought about by food waste. In my region—the Highlands and Islands—Lochaber Environmental Group works hard to raise awareness and educate people about ways in which they can help to reduce food waste, through sessions in schools, home visits and free interactive cooking demonstrations. At Westminster, my Labour colleague Kerry McCarthy MP introduced the Food Waste (Reduction) Bill in the House of Commons, through which she hoped to introduce stricter guidelines to cut waste in the supply chain. Her objective was to encourage redistribution of leftover food to charities that help people who are living in food poverty.

I do not have time to mention all the speakers in what has been an excellent debate, but I cannot resist mentioning Mr Chapman's interesting comment that, if something in his house looks good, he eats it. I ask him to please not invite me to his Christmas dinner on 25 December.

Members: Aw.

David Stewart: I am very sorry about that.

There were extremely good contributions from Gillian Martin and from Edward Mountain, who made the quotable point that he does not farm rubbish and he is not a rubbish farmer. I am sure

that that was prefabricated, but it was nevertheless an extremely good line. He made interesting points about rural costs, which I can relate to as a member for the Highlands and Islands.

Angus MacDonald made interesting scientific points about the damaging nature of methane, which is easy to forget. I endorse Elaine Smith's comments about co-operatives. As always, Mark Ruskell made a thoughtful speech and interventions. My friend Liam McArthur is not going to support the Labour amendment but, in the spirit of Christmas and because I always believe that sinners should have the chance to repent, I hope that next Christmas he will support the Labour amendment. I also endorse the comments of Richard Lochhead, Finlay Carson and Graeme Dey, who is now a freezer geezer.

As we approach the dawn of the new year, we reach the sunset of the old. We have had a year of stunning scientific achievements. We have seen SpaceX successfully land a rocket vertically, which is crucial for the future of manned space exploration. We have seen new research into stem cells that means that disabled stroke patients can walk again. Perhaps more bizarrely, but interestingly, Chinese scientists have discovered that, by adding a one-atom-thick layer of graphene to solar panels, electricity can be generated from raindrops. However, today in Scotland, we have an inequitable society in which the impoverished cannot afford to eat good food, while the affluent relegate food to the bin without a blush. In the words of the secretary-general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon,

"In a world of plenty, no-one—not a single person—should go hungry."

16:45

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests with regard to Zero Waste Scotland and to my being a Chartered Institution of Wastes Management-accredited WasteSmart trainer.

To reflect on the debate, it is positive that there is agreement about the direction of travel on food waste. Gillian Martin did a sterling job; she focused on collections as well as processing and highlighted the good to go doggy-bag campaign. Edward Mountain highlighted a lack of food waste collections in rural areas and the associated costs, and Liam McArthur followed that up by considering potential solutions for Orkney's island community. Perhaps the commercial feasibility of an anaerobic digestion plant on Orkney would offer one solution, and I urge the cabinet secretary to publish any available information that she has on that.

Mark Ruskell and Elaine Smith spoke about food justice with respect to food waste, and Mark Ruskell followed that up with a substantive point on managing food waste throughout the supply chain. Whole-field purchasing was mentioned by Mark Ruskell and Peter Chapman.

Overall, we support the Government motion. We recognise the ambitious target but feel that reference must be made to innovation and the circular economy—hence our amendment. Over the next four and a half minutes, I will explain why innovation is so important by focusing on food waste prevention for consumers and businesses.

Before that, I note that we require information on how to measure as well as how to incentivise food waste prevention, especially given the perverse incentive at local authority level to recycle waste rather than prevent it. I have sympathy with the Labour amendment and with an assessment of a 100 per cent recycling rate by 2020, although I agree with the cabinet secretary's point that it probably would have been best to refer to a recovery rate rather than a recycling rate. According to the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, we would generally not have recycling of food waste in the waste hierarchy, which goes from prevention to recovery and down to disposal. I have a slide on that, too.

Roseanna Cunningham: The member is a geek.

Maurice Golden: Yes.

I fear that not enough progress has been made towards the 2021 target, so an assessment of how food waste targets will be met would be very much welcomed at this stage.

It is important to highlight food poverty. The average household could save £460 per year by throwing away less food—Angus MacDonald eloquently made that point.

Food waste prevention has many benefits. It is a win for consumers and businesses through saving money, but it is also a win for the environment as, every time food is wasted, the water, energy, time, labour, land, fertiliser, fuel and packaging that are put into growing, preparing, storing, transporting and cooking the food are entirely wasted.

The carbon impact of a punnet of strawberries is around 3kg. Globally, if food waste was a country, it would be the world's third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide. On average, preventing 1 tonne of food waste avoids more than 4 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

The love food, hate waste campaign is important in supporting consumers and providing them with advice on how to plan, portion and store food in order to prevent waste—that point was well made by my colleague Finlay Carson. It is

therefore worrying that the Scottish Government has cut funding for that campaign. I recognise the work of the love food, hate waste champions throughout Scotland, and zero waste East Dunbartonshire is one such community group that is worthy of a mention.

Claudia Beamish mentioned the benefits of orchards, which can use waste apples to create apple juice, as well as creating positive mental health outcomes. Richard Lochhead explained that he could not live without his food waste caddy in a passionate speech about his efforts to tackle food waste. Graeme Dey confessed that he is a freezer geezer and wants to encourage conscientious consumers, although he admitted that there is a ditsy diner in his household.

At home, I have been trialling Winnow technology, which involves a set of electronic scales that is connected to an app that logs all household food waste over four weeks. The system then calculates how much has been thrown out and at what cost. That is a great way to review how we can reduce our overall food waste.

We need to look at how we encourage businesses to prevent food waste and develop innovative solutions for processing. Reclassification of aerobic on-site biodigesters would be one way in which we could help businesses—particularly those in rural areas.

We need to develop innovative solutions to reduce food waste for the benefit of the environment, businesses and consumers, as part of our journey towards a circular economy.

16:51

Roseanna Cunningham: This is the kind of debate that probably makes us all feel very guilty. My declaration of interests is that, yes, like everyone else I frequently fail to match purpose to consumption. I probably tick the all-of-the-above box on Graeme Dey's list, although he did not mention one. On the plus side, I grow some of my own food. My freezers—plural—are stuffed with frozen green beans and courgettes, and I have bottled tomatoes in the pantry. On the downside, there are more apples on the ground in my garden than I will ever be able to use, and they will literally be for the birds.

I will mention something worth talking about that has not been raised in the debate, although Maurice Golden referred to it in passing at the end of his speech. I need to say something about the opportunities for business to make the most of the biological resources that flow through our economy. We have not really touched on the subject today, but it is worth a mention. The bioeconomy is one of our four priority sectors, where we can make the biggest environmental

and economic impact. Food waste is a significant source of carbon emissions, and a more circular approach to the beer, whisky and fish sectors could lead to potential savings of half a billion pounds a year. There is a huge opportunity there.

Although our primary focus is on reducing waste, we want an increasing proportion of biological waste to be used for production of high-value materials and chemicals, maximising environmental and economic benefits, and replacing non-renewable chemical feedstocks. I may be wrong, but I think that Peter Chapman, who is sitting at the front of the Conservative benches, referred to some of that.

In February, the First Minister announced £70 million of European and Scottish Government money to deliver our circular economy ambitions and our manufacturing action plan. Some of the actions that relate to food waste will be in those areas. A key element of that is our circular economy investment fund.

In October, Paul Wheelhouse announced £1.5 million of funding for a bioeconomy accelerator programme to support innovative projects, in partnership with the Scottish Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre, which will maximise collaboration between business and research. That speaks to the Conservative amendment, which refers to innovation.

Scottish Enterprise and Zero Waste Scotland have already provided funding and support to successful companies such as CelluComp, which turns vegetable waste into a cellulose-based product that has a number of applications for paint and coatings. They have also supported Celtic Renewables, which is turning whisky waste into biofuel, which is a direct replacement for fossil road fuel, and into other valuable chemicals.

Those of you who follow me on social media will know that I have been nurturing my own circular economy project, by virtue of Aurora Sustainability, which is helping to explore circular economy models. In my case, that has involved growing mushrooms on my windowsill, using waste coffee grinds as the medium in which to grow them. Given the amount of waste coffee grounds that are chucked out every day, one can imagine that, if we can find a solution for their use, it would be extraordinary.

We have heard a number of examples of good practice from members on all sides of the chamber. Peter Chapman raised several issues and asked how we can support the more remote local authorities. That is a real issue, which Liam McArthur also mentioned. To a certain extent, it highlights why there is currently a rural derogation. However, the derogation is currently postcode based, which means that urban areas are

captured unnecessarily, so we are going to look at it again.

Peter Chapman rightly pointed out that there are consumer behaviour issues involved in this policy area. He will be pleased to know that I will accept the Conservative amendment, which speaks of the necessity of innovation. Much of that innovation is already happening, but we all need to look for more progress.

I note in passing that, since 2013, we have given £25 million to councils for food waste recycling, so they have had money from us to address that issue. On the bigger question of funding for zero waste in the draft budget, the budget has been exactly the same—at £20.5 million—in 2016-17 and 2017-18, so there is not a cut. The difference is that, for 2016-17, an extra £3 million was given in-year to enable councils to address particular issues and run projects relating to climate change.

Claudia Beamish spoke to her amendment, to which David Stewart also spoke. However, as I indicated earlier, I have had clear and explicit advice from Zero Waste Scotland that the target that is proposed in the amendment is unachievable. For the avoidance of doubt, as I have been given such clear advice, I cannot accept the Labour amendment. I regret that, because I know that Claudia Beamish will have lodged the amendment with the very best of intentions, but I hope to have further conversations with her on the subject, and we may find more on which to agree than to disagree.

Gillian Martin and Angus MacDonald spoke about local examples of good practice. I was interested to hear of Finlay Carson's conversations with local retailers, and what he reports is heartening. Edward Mountain spoke about treating the Highlands differently—yes, of course. He talked about food recycling which, as has been indicated, is not part of our target. In any case, as I have discussed, the rural derogation takes into account the difficulties that rural areas face, and to a certain extent it highlights the problem that would be posed if we attempted to meet a 100 per cent target.

Elaine Smith rightly spoke about the shame of wasting food in our world when so many have so little. It strikes me that our grandparents and great-grandparents would be bewildered by this debate; I doubt that they wasted so much as a crumb. Mark Ruskell spoke about where most food waste comes from. Actually, the household is the single largest contributor, followed by manufacturing, and the various other sectors are a good deal further down the list.

Mark Ruskell: What specific action will the Scottish Government be taking to strengthen the

groceries code? As we all know, of course, there is nobody in the chamber to speak up for the farmers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before the cabinet secretary responds, I ask members—especially those who are sitting close to the cabinet secretary—to show a bit of consideration and stop having conversations.

Roseanna Cunningham: As Mark Ruskell knows from what I have said during the debate, a number of actions, conversations and initiatives are being undertaken. We have to go through every single layer of the food waste journey in order to achieve what we want to achieve but, as I understand it, supermarkets account for only 2 per cent of food waste. Some of the much bigger targets that we need to achieve are not so much about the supermarkets but involve areas such as manufacturing.

Liam McArthur raised some of the same general issues that were raised by Peter Chapman and Edward Mountain. As we all recognise, the scale of the challenge demonstrates how difficult our work will be, and we have to think carefully about how we will manage it.

I pay tribute to Richard Lochhead, my predecessor as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, for all his work in this policy area. We are where we are now because of the actions that he took over a number of years—indeed, he announced the food waste target in February this year.

I will take away all the points that members have raised and consider them further as we put together a package of actions to deliver on our food waste target. We have launched a series of stakeholder workshops to discuss options to achieve the target, emphasising that all sectors—including farms—need to work together all along the supply chain. The next step will be a formal consultation in 2017 on a set of actions to meet that target, which could include legislative measures for inclusion in the good food nation bill.

I remind all members that the 33 per cent target on food waste prevention does not include food waste recycling. In the debate today, and in the discussions that we might have after it, it can be very easy to conflate the two. We are not treating them as the same: when we talk about the target of 33 per cent by 2025 we are talking specifically about food waste prevention, not recycling. It can be a little difficult to get our heads around that, but we need to remember it.

Our food waste target is one of the most ambitious in the world. It is a testing target. Our circular economy strategy is about keeping valuable products, including food, in high-value use for as long as possible in Scotland—a good

food nation. It is about making things last. As a number of members implied throughout the debate, now we need to make things happen.

Scottish Land Commissioners and Tenant Farming Commissioner (Appointment)

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-03099, on the appointment of Scottish land commissioners and the tenant farming commissioner.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament notes the report from the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, *Appointment of the Scottish Land Commissioners and the Tenant Farming Commissioner* (4th Report (Session 5), SP Paper 50); welcomes the committee's recommendation that the Parliament approves the appointment of Dr Bob McIntosh as Tenant Farming Commissioner and Professor David Adams, Megan MacInnes, Lorne MacLeod, Dr Sally Reynolds and Andrew Thin as Scottish Land Commissioners; further welcomes the committee's endorsement of the selection of Andrew Thin as Chair of the Commission; approves the appointments as required by section 10 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, and looks forward to the Scottish Land Commission starting work on 1 April 2017.—[*Roseanna Cunningham*]

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

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-03167, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Tuesday 20 December 2016—

after

followed by Topical Questions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scotland's Place in Europe

after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Improving the Care Experience for Looked After Children

insert

followed by Legislative Consent Motion: UK Higher Education and Research Bill – UK Legislation—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Presiding Officer's Ruling

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): At the conclusion of First Minister's question time, Patrick Harvie MSP made a point of order and asked me to look into the declaration of an interest in proceedings and consider whether the code of conduct had been complied with. Having done that, I advise members that it is the responsibility of each member to judge whether a declarable interest is sufficiently relevant to particular proceedings to require a declaration. Members are advised to err on the side of caution. I also advise the Parliament that the member in question contacted me immediately after FMQs to apologise for an inadvertent oversight.

Decision Time

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-03102.1, in the name of Peter Chapman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03102, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on delivering Scotland's food waste target, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-03102.2, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03102, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on delivering Scotland's food waste target, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (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)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 47, Against 65, Abstentions 5.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-03102, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on delivering Scotland's food waste target, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament considers that the amount of food, estimated at 1.35 million tonnes in 2013, wasted in Scotland is unacceptable; recognises that reducing food waste is a moral, environmental and economic imperative on everyone in Scotland, from consumers to manufacturers and retailers; notes that reducing food waste will also help families and businesses to save money while reducing emissions; welcomes the progress already made to reduce household and manufacturing food waste, and the Scottish Government's ambitious target to reduce food waste by 33% by 2025, and commits to Scotland showing leadership and developing innovative solutions in this important area as part of Scotland's journey towards a circular economy.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-03099, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on the appointment of Scottish land commissioners and the tenant farming commissioner, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the report from the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, *Appointment of the Scottish Land Commissioners and the Tenant Farming Commissioner* (4th Report (Session 5), SP Paper 50); welcomes the committee's recommendation that the Parliament approves the appointment of Dr Bob McIntosh as Tenant Farming Commissioner and Professor David Adams, Megan MacInnes, Lorne MacLeod, Dr Sally Reynolds and Andrew Thin as Scottish Land Commissioners; further welcomes the committee's endorsement of the selection of Andrew Thin as Chair of the Commission; approves the appointments as required by section 10 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, and looks forward to the Scottish Land Commission starting work on 1 April 2017.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 17:04.

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