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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:15]

National Clean Air Day 2017

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05900, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on national clean air day 2017. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises 15 June 2017 as the first National Clean Air Day in the UK; believes that this is a significant initiative to help raise awareness of the impact of poor air quality on people; understands that air quality is the fourth biggest public health risk across Scotland and the UK; welcomes the research, which was funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and was carried out by Professor Dave Newby at the BHF Centre of Research Excellence at the University of Edinburgh; notes what it sees as the role of this in increasing awareness of the impact of poor air quality on people living with cardiovascular disease (CVD); understands that 84,300 people in the Central Scotland parliamentary region, 79,200 in Glasgow, 60,700 in Highlands and Islands, 79,300 in Lothian, 84,800 in Mid Scotland & Fife, 91,300 in North East Scotland, 97,800 in South Scotland and 92,600 in West Scotland are living with the impact of CVD and are more susceptible to health issues relating to poor air quality, and notes calls for improving air quality to be a public health priority in Scotland.

13:15

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank the members who have signed my motion. I am looking forward to listening to all today's speeches, including that from the Minister for Public Health and Sport. I hope that the cabinet secretaries and other ministers with a remit in this area—particularly those with transport and environment responsibilities—will take note of the debate.

In the developed world, we manage our water resources to a high standard to ensure good health, but air is the only environmental common that we depend on every second that we are alive. It is around us constantly and is inextricably linked to our health and wellbeing.

There is much progress to make on improving air quality in Scotland. The British Lung Foundation cites the evidence that air pollution contributes to the death of about 2,000 people a year. I note Professor Dave Newby's timely research for the British Heart Foundation, which shows the impacts of air pollution on those who

live with cardiovascular disease. His research analysed the impact of air pollution on more than 4 million people across 12 European countries who were living with heart failure, and his team found that the hospitalisation risk dramatically increased when the air pollution level was high.

When air quality worsens, that can have an instant and visible effect. A couple of weeks ago, I attended a meeting in Kincardine with hundreds of local residents who were angry about dust clouds blowing off the redundant ash pans at Longannet, which had forced many of them to take refuge indoors. The situation has been remedied, but questions remain about the actions of agencies, and the issue will be the subject of a forthcoming petition to the Parliament.

Much of the pollution that we now encounter is not the visible type that caused the pea-soupers of the previous century or the ash clouds of west Fife. Today, two thirds of air pollution comes from vehicles in the form of nitrogen oxides—NO_x—and particulates, so it is clear that the primary focus for action needs to be on tackling the air pollution from transport.

Tomorrow is national clean air day. I congratulate Global Action Plan on its campaign and I congratulate Friends of the Earth, the British Heart Foundation and the British Lung Foundation. They are all doing incredibly valuable work to help us to understand the impacts of air pollution and the changes that are needed to protect our health and environment.

The national clean air day theme of reduce, talk, avoid makes it clear that air pollution is everyone's business and that we are not powerless to act. We can be mindful of our own impact and reduce pollution by, for example, switching off the car engine when stationary and using our feet for short journeys.

We can talk about air pollution to headteachers, managers, councillors and parents in order to get action at pollution hotspots, whether that is about engine idling or car sharing. On days when the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's pollution monitoring shows poor air quality, we can take action to avoid areas by walking on side streets and getting out of cars, where pollution levels are further concentrated inside.

Those soft measures are important, and I note that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform visited a school this morning to highlight awareness. Alongside those measures, we need Government intervention to bring about a step change in our transport and planning systems and cut the pollution that is driving climate change as well as ill health.

Yesterday, we saw that although Scottish climate emissions from energy generation continue to fall, transport has overtaken that sector as the biggest carbon dioxide emitting sector. The exhaust pipe problem is also reflected in the high levels of nitrogen oxides and particulates that line our lungs and enter our bloodstream.

There are 38 air quality management areas designated across 14 local authority areas in Scotland. They are triggered mostly by dangerously high levels of NOx or particulates, and 23 of them remain in breach of the legal limits.

Atholl Street in Perth, which is in my region, is one of the worst streets in Scotland for particulates. The air quality objective that was set in 2002 for Atholl Street should have been met by 2010, but Perth and Kinross Council has persistently failed to address the matter. In fact, planning decisions, including the one that was taken recently to build a vast area of new housing in Scone, continue to be made against the air quality concerns of the local director of public health. Air quality is being ignored in the planning system.

The failure to meet the legal European Union air quality limits has been the subject of a protracted legal challenge against the United Kingdom Government by the organisation ClientEarth. In the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, we heard recently that the Scottish Government's strategy was captured by the most recent ruling in the High Court in England, because it appears as a chapter of the UK plan. Given that that ruling was made in December last year, it is disappointing that the Scottish Government did not take the opportunity to consult on a revised Scottish plan.

I welcome much that is in the clean air for Scotland strategy, but there are questions about the level of ambition that is needed to resolve this public health crisis. The introduction of a solitary low-emission zone next year would exclude polluting vehicles from one polluted area of one city. There is now the political will in Edinburgh and Glasgow for implementation, but there are major questions about the preparedness of either city's council to put the required infrastructure in place by next year. I know that a number of members will want to reflect on that in their contributions.

A bolder commitment to more low-emission zones is needed, but alongside that, other measures can be brought in. Members will be aware of the live consultation on my proposed bill to change the default speed limit in built-up areas from 30mph to 20mph. Studies by Imperial College London show that that can have a positive impact by reducing pollution from diesel engines, but the real prize would be to make a change to

the road environment that could be the foundation for an increase in walking and cycling by making our streets safer. Alongside that, prioritisation of walking and cycling infrastructure in the budget would provide facilities to deliver a tipping point in our attitude to active travel and allow us finally to emulate the Copenhagens and Amsterdams of this world.

I look forward to hearing other members' contributions on how we can solve this public health crisis and I invite the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform to allow those views to feed into a refreshed air pollution strategy for Scotland.

13:22

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I congratulate Mark Ruskell on securing this members' business debate on national clean air day. As he rightly states in his motion,

"this is a significant initiative to help raise awareness of the impact of poor air quality on people".

The issue affects many of our constituents and it is absolutely right that we recognise that in Parliament.

Many would be forgiven for thinking that Scotland does not have a major issue when it comes to air quality. We are known for our stunning countryside, not for our polluted cities. However, it is thought that air pollution contributes to more than 2,500 early deaths in Scotland each year, and the situation appears to be getting worse. The number of sites where permitted air pollution levels are regularly breached rose from 33 in 2016 to 38 in 2017. The Scottish Government set out that, by December 2010, the air pollution level should be at 18 micrograms per cubic metre or less; it has missed that target.

We must do more to ensure that the air that we breathe is not killing us—it is as simple as that—and it is incumbent on us as elected representatives to ensure that everything that can be done to make Scotland's air cleaner is done. That means working together, not dividing over party politics, and the Scottish Conservatives are committed to exactly that working together.

I understand that Edinburgh is to bid to have Scotland's first low-emission zone to tackle air pollution and that councillors have agreed to approach the Scottish Government, which has said that it will fund one pilot by 2018. I am open to the idea of low-emission zones, but a full assessment must be made of the economic impact of such a policy. In large cities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, such a scheme might have little impact on the local economy, but that might not be the case if such a scheme were rolled out and implemented in Dumfries or

Stranraer. Consumers are often driven by the cost of parking or, perhaps, congestion charges, and consumers, particularly those from the south of Scotland, might choose Glasgow over Edinburgh if charges were a factor.

There is still much that can be done to reduce air pollution in Scotland. The Scottish Conservatives would introduce more air pollution monitoring sites across the country and make air quality monitors available to all Scottish primary schools, so that we could get a more precise idea of where air quality is below the recommended standard, which would allow us to better target the response.

Much more could be done to increase the use of electric cars, and there are many ways to achieve that. We could introduce free town-centre parking for electric vehicles and allow them to use bus and taxi lanes. We could establish a fund to expand electric vehicle charging points in small towns and rural areas and at train stations. We could require all public bodies to conduct a cost benefit analysis of replacing existing vehicle fleets with electric vehicles and mandate the consideration of electric vehicles in all future procurement plans. We should establish electric vehicle sharing schemes in major cities whereby users can pick up and drop off cars at charging stations. Only last night, there was a television programme that showed how successful such a scheme has been in Paris.

Those are just some of the measures that could be implemented relatively quickly and which could have a huge impact on the health of the people of Scotland. We in the Conservatives want to see positive steps towards improving Scotland's air quality, and we are committed to working across the parties to achieve those ends.

13:26

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate, and I congratulate Mark Ruskell on securing it. Tomorrow, 15 June, is national clean air day. Tackling poor air quality is important to me as the convener of the cross-party group on lung health and as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's sub-group on air quality. Mark Ruskell and I work together on both groups and I have found him to be knowledgeable and passionate about the subject.

Poor air quality exacerbates existing lung conditions and disproportionately affects children, whose lungs are more sensitive to harmful toxins in the air. Children also breathe at a faster rate than adults and therefore the pollutant inhalation rate is increased. Research suggests that children who grow up in areas of severe air pollution are up to five times more likely to have poor lung

development and are more prone to respiratory infections. A 2012 research study estimated that the health impact of air pollution worldwide causes 3.7 million premature deaths, and air pollution has been linked to ischaemic heart disease, stroke and lung cancer.

Although we have made great strides in tackling air pollution in Scotland in recent years, it must be acknowledged that there are still areas of poor air quality in some of Scotland's towns and cities. Air quality standards are identical across the UK, and achievement of them is a requirement for EU member states. In contrast to the EU requirements, Scotland has set stricter levels for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which is particulate matter that measures 10 microns and 2.5 microns. In April 2016, the Scottish Government became the first Government in Europe to adopt the World Health Organization recommended guideline value for PM_{2.5}.

In 2015, the Scottish Government published its strategy for tackling air pollution, "Cleaner Air for Scotland—The Road to a Healthier Future"—or CAFS—which is a national cross-government strategy that sets out how the Scottish Government and its partner organisations propose to reduce air pollution and meet Scotland's legal responsibilities as soon as possible. A number of key actions are proposed, including a national modelling framework, a national low-emission framework, a national air quality awareness campaign and, as I mentioned, adoption in Scottish legislation of World Health Organization guideline values for particulate matter.

The British Lung Foundation has called for a number of measures to be taken to address poor air quality. For example, it calls for carefully designed clean air zones that use cleaner public transport, active travel—I walked to Parliament today and it was actually quite nice this morning—and emissions testing for all vehicles. The British Lung Foundation also calls for the measuring of and reporting on air pollution near schools to protect children's lungs, which has been mentioned.

Recent figures from the BLF revealed that three quarters of Scottish councils do not have air quality monitors outside their local schools and that only 10 schools in the whole of Scotland have some form of air pollution monitor within 10m of them. A new clean air act at Westminster could make it a requirement to monitor air quality outside schools. That would allow us to target areas that have been identified as having poor air quality, which would be welcome. Local authorities also have an important role to play in achieving that and could choose to monitor air quality now.

As part of my work as the convener of the cross-party group on lung health, I have met researchers

at the University of the West of Scotland to discuss some research that they are conducting that will be very valuable in the south of Scotland. The UWS researchers propose a three-tier strategy consisting of a preventative message, a research journey linking with PhD projects and engagement with schools to encourage air quality monitoring.

As the Scottish Government's strategy correctly points out, to successfully address poor air quality, we require a partnership approach involving the Government, local authorities, business and industry, non-governmental organisations and the public. The work that is being done by UWS will be valuable in the south of Scotland.

I look forward to continuing to work to improve air quality, using the cross-party group as a vehicle to encourage research and collaborative working across sectors as well as to empower those who are suffering from poor lung health to be heard. I would welcome any MSPs who are interested in pursuing better air quality joining us in the cross-party group.

13:31

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I, too, thank Mark Ruskell for bringing the debate to the chamber, and I compliment him on an excellent speech.

As we have heard, air pollution is a public health crisis in Scotland. Statistics suggest that, each year, more than 10 times as many people die from air pollution as die in road crashes. Poor air quality has links to heart and lung conditions, dementia, cancer and many more health problems. Is it not ironic that, in a sophisticated, developed country such as Scotland, which is part of the world's fifth largest economy, our young, our old, our ill and our poor are dying from diesel pollutants that would have brought a blush to the face of the most hard-nosed Victorian factory owner?

Air pollution is also a huge environmental issue. It affects climate change and biodiversity, with many species of flora and fauna being subjected to the same pollutants as our communities are breathing in.

The need for clean air must be addressed now, and in my view there are three main ways in which we can work towards the goal of lowering the levels of the emissions that cause pollution. First, we can manage demand by creating a modal shift in behaviour away from the use of high-polluting vehicles. Secondly, we can control the options that are available by making a step change in the provision of electric cars and charging points. Thirdly, we can improve the natural environment, including by increasing green areas in cities.

In order to change the demand for polluting vehicles, there needs to be significant modal change in behaviour by transport users, but that will not happen without effort and investment from the Government. We need more schemes such as low-emission zones. Why limit our ambition to one city when Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen are all in need? We need better cycling and walking infrastructure, higher targets for electric vehicles and improved public transport. Why not ban polluting diesel buses from our cities and towns and bring in bus regulation to give councils more powers over that? We should also consider setting up consolidation centres—such as the ones in Holland that I visited in the previous session of Parliament—and ensuring that polluting heavy goods vehicles avoid built-up areas. Those steps would all have a significant impact and reduce emissions in our cities.

However, as the chief executive of Glasgow City Council, Annemarie O'Donnell, said to me in a letter in April:

"The introduction of a LEZ can be costly, with the established London LEZ being estimated to have cost approximately £100 million. A more recent cost analysis undertaken by DEFRA for the recently announced Clean Air Zones in England (which are effectively LEZs) estimated that for the five cities involved—Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham, Southampton and Derby—the total local authority costs for implementation and running the scheme would be £101 million over 10 years."

Let us look at best practice. The London mayor, Sadiq Khan, used the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act 1956 to introduce a suite of new clean air policies such as ultra low-emission zones; clean bus corridors, with the cleanest buses being put on to the dirtiest routes in a bid to tackle air pollution hotspots; and a diesel scrappage scheme. Sixty years ago, pollution in Scottish towns and cities caused by coal fires was visible and obvious to all. Nitrogen dioxide and the tiny particulates that lodge in our lungs today are invisible. We are stunting the lungs of generations who are yet unborn. How can it be, all these years after the industrial revolution and the smog of the 1950s, that we still allow our population to breathe in air that breaches so many EU health directives and literally cuts short their lives?

We need to be brave, ambitious and bold. In Scotland, our children deserve a war on air pollution in cities and towns. We are at our best when we are at our boldest.

13:35

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Like other members, I thank my colleague Mark Ruskell for securing the debate. I am not sure whether I should begin by declaring an interest, because I have the dubious privilege of being a resident of one of Glasgow's air quality management areas,

the Dumbarton Road-Byers Road corridor. I happen to live on Dumbarton Road and I walk and cycle on those streets. I know that, if I open my window, I am not confident that the air that comes into my flat is safe to breathe. That is a pretty profound sense of environmental insecurity and we are allowing people to live with that in far too many places in Scotland. As Mark Ruskell said, air is a basic necessity of life that we depend on minute by minute for our survival. The idea that it is not fit to breathe is a failing of our society.

I am pleased to speak in the debate, because the subject is the same as that of my first members' debate, way back in session 2 of the Scottish Parliament, when I was a little more fresh faced and bright eyed and a bit less cynical than I am today. At that point, we were already failing, year after year, despite having air quality management areas, air quality action plans and a Government strategy. We cannot breathe strategies, action plans or management areas. We had all those documents in place and we were still making the problem worse, not better.

During that debate, I observed that we were anticipating—around that time or a few months after the debate—a significant improvement in the air in Scotland, because we were going to ban smoking in pubs and other enclosed places. People would be able to sit in a pub, perhaps on Hope Street in Glasgow, and enjoy a pint while breathing clean air before walking out into the most severe air quality crisis in Scotland. That was Hope Street at the time, and the problem is far more prevalent now.

I want Glasgow to be seriously considered for the first low-emission zone. My colleague Alison Johnstone has insisted that I say that Edinburgh must also be considered, and those members who have said, "Why should there be only one?" are absolutely right—the mechanism should be in place everywhere that it is needed, not simply in one place.

Those who are concerned about the cost of implementation are correct in that it needs to be resourced if it is to be effective. However, they should consider the cost of the 14 years and more of inaction since that members' business debate. Since then, strategies have been written and management areas have been declared, yet air quality has continued to worsen and the number of places with poor air quality has continued to increase—the list grows longer. The cost of that inaction is surely greater than the cost of taking action to reverse the problem.

I also pay tribute to Mark Ruskell for working on the introduction of new speed limits in our cities. A 20mph default speed limit is good for our air quality, our safety and the happiness and joy that people can experience in the built environment.

The idea for it comes out of the desire not just to reduce harm from poor air quality and road traffic accidents but to ensure that people are safe enough to enjoy the place where they live.

As we know, a great many of the relevant regulations have been decided at European Union level. Faced with the reality of being taken out of Europe against the will of the people who live in Scotland, it is essential that we redouble our efforts to ensure that there is no diminution in the air quality standards that we impose and no reluctance on the part of the Government to do everything that is necessary to meet those standards.

13:39

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Mark Ruskell for securing this debate to mark national clean air day and for helping to bring the issue to the attention of the chamber and the wider public.

Poor air quality is an issue that has for some time gone unheralded, with most people assuming Scottish air to be fresh and pollutant free. With the implementation of a national clean air day and pioneering research such as the work that has been done by Professor Dave Newby on the link between poor air quality and cardiovascular disease, the issue has rightly come to the fore. Highlighting the high number of people who live with CVD and have to contend with health issues resulting from poor air quality makes it clear that measures to improve Scottish air quality must be undertaken as a public health priority.

Although most people would like to think that poor air quality is a problem only in major cities, it is a factor that needs to be considered in smaller communities too. There are a number of initiatives and schemes that have proved successful in my region of West Scotland, such as the implementation of an air quality management area in Bishopbriggs in East Dunbartonshire; combined with an expansion of public transport options and new road infrastructure, that has led to a dramatic fall in the levels of nitrogen dioxide in the town and the surrounding area—so much so that they are now fully within acceptable limits.

Although air quality management areas have been in existence since the formation of the Scottish Parliament, it is logical that we should be aiming to tackle air quality issues before they reach levels that are harmful to human health. As my colleague Finlay Carson said, the Conservatives would do that by increasing the use of air monitoring sites and making air monitors available to all of Scotland's primary schools.

Action to improve public transport would help to solve the problem. Professor Newby details in his

report the link between inhaling nanoparticles that are found in exhaust fumes from cars and the increased risk of blood clots resulting in heart attacks and strokes. It is therefore vital that alternative forms of transport be promoted and that efforts be made to relieve congestion in order to lower the risk of such particles being inhaled by those at risk. To realise that aim, the Conservatives would introduce policies that are designed to encourage motorists either to switch to electric cars or to use alternative means of transport. We would incentivise electric car ownership by introducing a raft of measures such as free town centre parking and permitted use of taxi and bus lanes, along with the establishment of a fund to expand electric vehicle charging in rural locations. Cycle paths would also be prioritised, with an additional £5 million being invested to improve existing paths and create at least one new segregated route per city.

With national clean air day being introduced, my hope is that improving air quality will become a greater public health priority in Scotland, which will lead to more funding being allocated to tackle this underrepresented problem. It is also clear from the British Heart Foundation report that public awareness of the dangers of poor air quality remains relatively low, with a YouGov poll that was conducted alongside the report showing that only half of those polled thought that air pollution was harmful to heart health. Efforts should therefore be made to increase public awareness of the dangers of poor air quality, alongside increased efforts to counter dangerous pollution levels.

In conclusion, I thank Mark Ruskell again for securing the debate and look forward to hearing from the Scottish Government about what steps it will take to improve air quality for those living with CVD and the wider public of Scotland.

13:43

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Like others, I welcome this members' business debate and the opportunity that it gives the Parliament not only to highlight national clean air day and the work that is being done in partnership across Scotland to address the problems that we have in this area but to recognise the importance of tackling poor air quality.

I congratulate Mark Ruskell on securing the debate and on his timing. As he said, national clean air day is tomorrow—15 June—and I encourage everyone in the chamber and throughout Scotland to consider what simple measures they can take not just tomorrow but every day to help to reduce air pollution in Scotland and its impact on the health of all of us.

Like Mark Ruskell, I put on record my thanks to all the organisations, such as the British Lung Foundation and Global Action Plan, whose efforts continue to raise awareness of air quality and its impacts on public health.

Although I am pleased to respond to the debate, the response could equally have been given by either Humza Yousaf or Roseanna Cunningham. That fact symbolises why it is important to tackle the issue across portfolios. It is an issue that is cross-cutting and requires focus across traditional boundaries.

To develop a theme that was started by Mark Ruskell, my portfolio of public health impacts on and cuts through many areas, such as education, transport, planning and a host of others. Today, Mr Ruskell raised themes to make us reflect on and consider deeply the places we inhabit and how they are developed. That is actively part of my consideration as Minister for Public Health and Sport. I do not want my role or work in public health improvement to be focused solely on hospitals and health professionals. It needs to reach far beyond that.

We need to have good housing, good employment and good spaces and places to live in if we are to transform public health. That also includes opportunities for people to become active in their daily lives. As we develop the obesity strategy, and as we work with partners on shared public health priorities, I will be sure to engage with members who have contributed to today's debate. The pieces of work that I am pursuing in my portfolio will be of equal importance to many of the members who have spoken today and who have touched on areas that are incredibly cross-cutting.

We should take pride in the fact that Scotland's air quality is among the best in Europe. However, we must also recognise that pockets of poor air quality remain and that action is needed to tackle such problem areas. The threshold values that we have adopted in Scotland to protect public health are among the toughest of any nation in the EU and reflect the importance that we place on the subject. The science, though, is often complex, and confounding factors such as obesity, poor diet, smoking or social deprivation make it difficult to draw direct links between air pollution and ill health and death.

That said, we know enough to know that air pollution has a negative impact on the health of all of us. In Scotland, poor air quality shortens average life expectancy by three to four months, compared with six to seven months across the UK, and the impact is especially large for those with pre-existing heart and lung conditions. Emma Harper and David Stewart rightly acknowledged the impact of poor air quality on our very youngest

people, with the quicker breathing and developing lungs of our children making them far more vulnerable to the ill effects of poor air. That is not fair or right, which is why the Scottish Government has committed, through the cleaner air for Scotland strategy, to protect and enhance health and wellbeing, the environment, place making and sustainable growth through improved air quality across the country.

Mark Ruskell: The High Court ruling in England in December 2016 was that the whole UK strategy was inappropriate and therefore needed to go back out to consultation. The cleaner air for Scotland strategy is part of that. Will it be refreshed, and will it go out to consultation in Scotland?

Aileen Campbell: We are actively considering that and taking the opportunity to consider what further updates to the Scottish plans are required in light of the second judicial review, which referred only to the UK Government. I also reiterate to Mark Ruskell that our strategy delivers against our EU air quality objectives and was fully consulted on at the time. Of course, that does not mean that we would not always seek to engage where we can make improvements.

It is also important to remember that, despite the narrative from Patrick Harvie—fresh faced or not—we have made substantial progress on air quality in recent years. Pollution emissions have reduced significantly since the 1990s. For example, particulates have reduced by 46 per cent. That has been achieved through tighter regulation on industry, improved fuel quality, cleaner vehicles and an increased focus on sustainable transport.

Where we agree with Mark Ruskell, Patrick Harvie, David Stewart, Emma Harper and others is in saying that, despite those achievements, more could and should be done. Further action is needed. “Cleaner Air for Scotland—The Road to a Healthier Future” was published in November 2015 and is Scotland’s first distinct air quality strategy. It draws together work right across government into a coherent programme; that includes work by Transport Scotland, SEPA, Health Protection Scotland and local authorities.

The strategy’s vision is for Scotland to have the cleanest air in Europe. By 2020, we will have made significant progress towards revoking all air quality management areas in Scotland and we will be in full compliance with EU air quality legislation. However, that ambition has to be underpinned by action on the ground. We will achieve that through new initiatives, including a national modelling framework to standardise air quality assessment methodology across Scotland and to ensure a level playing field for local authorities; a new national low-emission framework to provide procedures for local authorities to determine air

quality measures at local level, including guidance on low-emission zone implementation; adoption of World Health Organization guideline values for particulate matter in Scottish legislation, making Scotland the first country in Europe to do so; and the development of a national air quality awareness campaign.

We will also deliver on our programme for government commitment to introduce a low-emission zone in Scotland by 2018. Much of the detailed work on delivering LEZs is well under way, and a consultation on their shape and form is planned for the summer. It is essential that there is support for LEZs across Scotland, and it is encouraging that local authorities and all stakeholders are playing their part. The major cities, in particular, are showing strong commitment to being early adopters of an LEZ.

David Stewart: I think that most members who have spoken in the debate will be strongly in favour of LEZs. I favour the expansion of LEZs to all Scottish cities, but the cost in London was more than £100 million, and the whole of London is covered by vehicle recognition closed-circuit television technology which, as I understand it, we do not have in any of the Scottish cities. There is huge investment, but what will local authorities be bidding for if the infrastructure is not there?

Aileen Campbell: As we set out in our programme for government, we are working towards having LEZs. We are winning the hearts and minds of local authorities, which might have been a bit apprehensive about LEZs and reluctant to adopt them. It is important to recognise that the establishment of the first LEZ will create a legacy for other areas to build on. Far from the introduction of an LEZ being the negative story that David Stewart unfortunately seems to be portraying it as, I think that it is a positive development for Scotland, and one that we want to build on for other areas across the country.

As others have mentioned, Scotland has an international reputation for stunning natural environments, and rightly so. It is in the interests of all of us that we do all that we can to protect and preserve those national treasures, but we should not shy away from addressing problems where they exist. In our towns and cities—Mark Ruskell and Patrick Harvie mentioned specific examples—we know that there are still pockets of poor air quality that impact negatively on public health. We have made significant progress, but there is much more to do. We will continue to work across professional and traditional boundaries and the political spectrum to bring about the improvement that so many of us seek, which will help us to address the public health concerns that have been raised today.

I again thank Mark Ruskell for raising such an important matter.

13:52

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Education and Skills

Science (Teaching and Studying in Schools)

1. **Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it supports the teaching and studying of science in schools. (S5O-01099)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Government is continuing to invest in science teaching and learning in line with the broader series of ambitions and aspirations set out in our draft science, technology, engineering and mathematics—or STEM—strategy. Specific actions supporting science education include funding the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre's work on delivering professional learning programmes for secondary and primary school teachers, which look in particular to develop the confidence of primary teachers to teach science topics. We are also supporting the raising aspirations in science education programme, which places leaders of primary science in 10 local authorities to further boost the teaching of science in schools.

Ruth Maguire: Next week, I will attend a girls with grit event at Ayrshire College. The initiative supports women and girls who are studying STEM subjects or working in the STEM sector. Can the minister elaborate on what the Scottish Government is doing to address the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM subjects and careers?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I, too, support the event that the member is going to. It is fantastic that such events, which inspire women and girls to go into STEM careers through the use of positive role models and the provision of information about the jobs and careers that are out there, are happening across the country. The Scottish Government will continue to encourage that work through the developing the young workforce programme and our work in the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. We are also tackling gender stereotyping in STEM subjects in schools through our improving the gender balance project, which looks at innovative ways of raising the issue of gender bias with parents, families and teachers.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): What steps is the Scottish Government taking to encourage people into STEM teaching, given that

more than one in four maths teacher training places are unfilled?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As the member will no doubt be aware, the cabinet secretary has launched a series of initiatives for new routes into teaching. The inspiring teachers marketing project, for example, was specifically built around STEM subjects. The Government is very aware of the challenge of recruiting teachers into STEM subjects; it is taking action in that respect, and it will continue to look at new initiatives to take that forward.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): It was revealed in figures released towards the end of last year that, since 2007, laboratory technicians have been cut by a quarter and lab assistants by almost half. That has led some to say that it is no longer feasible to teach practical science safely. What is the minister's reaction to that? How does that approach support the teaching of science?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Obviously, those decisions are taken by local authorities, and it is for local authorities to answer for the decisions that they take at the local level. However, I recognise the importance of lab technicians and the support that is provided in schools; indeed, that is why the funding around SSERC covers lab technicians and support staff in that respect.

Principal Teachers and Faculty Heads (Secondary Schools)

2. **Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the cabinet secretary.

To ask the Scottish Government how many secondary school principal teachers and faculty heads there are. (S5O-01100)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): In September 2016, there were 5,328 principal teachers in publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland. That information is contained in the teacher census publication, which is available online. Data on faculty heads is not collected by the Scottish Government.

Jenny Gilruth: Does the Deputy First Minister agree that certain local authorities have used curriculum for excellence as a rationale for justifying a reduction in middle-management teacher numbers through, for example, the creation of faculty heads rather than principal teachers? As the Scottish Government will be publishing its next steps document on the governance of schools tomorrow, will he give serious consideration to headteachers in schools being free to decide their own management

structures, including how many principal teachers they have and whether they wish to continue with the drift towards faculty heads?

John Swinney: It is important that there are very clear and attractive routes for progression in the teaching profession. The number of principal teachers and the opportunities for progression were discussed at a recent Education and Skills Committee meeting in which I expressed my view that it is important that those attractive routes are in place.

I will, of course, reflect on the points that have been raised today as we consider the conclusions of the governance review. I will make a statement on that review to Parliament tomorrow and set out the proposals that the Government will bring forward.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In light of the cabinet secretary's answer to Jenny Gilruth's question and the evidence that the Education and Skills Committee has taken, would it be appropriate for a decision to be made about whose prime responsibility it is—whether it is that of principal teachers in departments or faculties, or of the principal teacher of the school—to decide on teacher training placements, as that is a very big issue for schools?

John Swinney: I am not sure what particular distinction Liz Smith is inviting me to make. If she wishes to give me specific further information on that point, I will, of course, reflect on it.

Just this morning, I had a discussion with the teachers panel that I recruited to consider initial teacher education issues. The importance of colleges of education and schools jointly participating in the delivery of effective initial teacher education and of opportunities for aspiring teachers to enhance their teaching capability is at the heart of the arrangements that we have to put in place. I see that as a joint responsibility of schools and colleges of education, and we must ensure that the approach operates effectively to deliver a strong learning experience for the development of new teachers in Scotland.

Arms Industry

3. **Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what role it considers the arms industry should have in education. (S5O-01101)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Schools are encouraged to develop external partnerships with a range of employers to help them develop young people's skills for the workplace and make learning stimulating and relevant. It is for teachers and local authorities to determine which relevant and appropriate external

partnerships to build. It is also for them to determine how to involve those partnerships in learning and teaching, and how to use them to support young people to gain work and life skills, capability and confidence.

Ross Greer: The cabinet secretary will be aware, as I have already written to him about this, of a teaching resource that is available to teachers in Scotland that encourages pupils to role-play as arms dealers in a “Dragons’ Den”-style scenario. It encourages children to develop their numeracy skills by calculating the rounds per minute of a machine gun, and they can improve their literacy skills by learning words such as “flame-thrower” and “bayonet”. An advantage is recalling the “benefit of each weapon”. Children are asked to come up with a battle plan and to talk about what problem their weapon solves, and they are to

“create a judgement on which weapon would have been the most effective”.

Given that weapons are used to end human life, does the cabinet secretary believe that it is appropriate to ask 12-year-olds to role-play as arms dealers?

John Swinney: It is important that teachers exercise professional judgment on the appropriateness of materials that are used in the classroom—we rely on teachers to consider that. Obviously, strong judgments have to be made on the issues that Mr Greer raises, but it is fundamentally for individual teachers to determine whether the material that is being considered and used in the curriculum is appropriate in every respect.

National 5 Qualifications

4. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that pupils from deprived backgrounds gain more national 5 qualifications. (S5O-01102)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): We are undertaking a range of activities to raise standards for all and to close the attainment gap. One measure of success of that will be young people from deprived communities gaining more national qualifications.

Our investment of £750 million during this session through the attainment Scotland fund will provide targeted support for children and young people in primary and secondary schools in the most deprived areas in a range of local authorities. That includes £120 million of pupil equity funding in 2017-18, allocated directly to schools.

Through the developing the young workforce programme, more young people are able to

access a wider range of qualifications that better reflect their different needs and career aspirations. That has resulted in an increase in the number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 5 or above.

Dean Lockhart: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the average percentage of secondary school pupils from deprived backgrounds who achieve five or more awards at level 5 or higher is 39 per cent. In Fife and Clackmannanshire, the average percentage has consistently been below the Scottish average for five years. The data show that, in Fife, the figure is just 37 per cent. In Clackmannanshire, it is further down, at 34 per cent. Can the cabinet secretary explain why the attainment gap in Scotland is now based not only on deprivation but on postcode?

John Swinney: I imagine that, if Mr Lockhart looked at the detail, he would find that there is a relationship between postcode and the existence of deprivation—unless I am missing something in his question.

At SCQF level 5 or better, 53.3 per cent of young people achieved one or more awards in 2007-08, when the present Government came into office. In 2014-15, the figure was not 53.3 per cent; it was 74 per cent, which represents a significant increase in the level of qualifications that young people from the most deprived backgrounds are able to achieve. That figure relates to young people from the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland and is evidence of rising attainment among young people from deprived backgrounds. The interventions that the Government is making are designed to improve that performance further and ensure that young people, regardless of their background, can fulfil their potential.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): What reassurances can the cabinet secretary give to parents who cannot afford private tuition for their children outwith the school day that those children will not be unfairly disadvantaged by the changes that he has made to national 5 qualifications, and that those changes will not exacerbate the attainment gap?

John Swinney: I give a reassurance that the course content for national 5 has not changed as a consequence of any changes that I have made. The assessment arrangements have indeed changed, but not the course content. I do not think that the circumstances that Monica Lennon suggests might prevail will prevail.

I return to the point that I made in my answer to Dean Lockhart: the increase in the number of young people achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better has increased significantly

under this Government's term in office, and I am determined to increase it further.

Childcare (Local Authority Funding)

5. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what funding will be made available to local authorities to increase the availability of childcare. (S5O-01103)

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): The Scottish Government has provided local authorities with £650 million since 2014 to fund the expansion to 600 hours. We are committed to funding fully the almost doubling of that entitlement to 1,140 hours per year by 2020.

We have provided additional funding to local authorities in 2017-18 to support the first phase of capacity building that is required for the expansion to 1,140 hours. That includes £21 million of additional revenue to invest in the first phase of workforce expansion—for increasing the size of the workforce and for equipping existing staff with new skills—and £30 million of additional capital funding to allow local authorities to invest in infrastructure developments, which will expand capacity.

Neil Findlay: Can the minister clearly set out the role of registered childminders in the Government's plan to expand childcare? What percentage of the budget is expected to be spent on childcare with registered childminders?

Mark McDonald: I have been keen throughout the process to ensure that registered childminders have a role to play in the expansion. We are currently in discussion with local authorities regarding what their plans will be for the expansion, and we expect them to report back to us in September on those plans.

I have made it very clear, both in the statement that I gave to Parliament and in the direction that we are taking by using the model of the funding following the child, that registered childminders should be viewed as an integral part of the process.

I cannot give Neil Findlay specific percentages at this stage, because that will depend on local capacity and on the plans that local authorities come back to us with, but I am in regular discussion with the Scottish Childminding Association and with local authorities on the work.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Will the minister outline how much funding the Scottish Government provided to local authorities for the increase to 600 hours, how much of it was spent on the expansion and what discussions to address any issues have taken place with councils since the publication of the financial review?

Mark McDonald: As I have said in the chamber previously, the Scottish Government recognises that we have fully funded the expansion. That was evidenced by the financial return, which showed the £650 million of investment since 2014 and demonstrated that not all that money had made it to being spent on early learning and childcare.

Our focus now is to ensure that we continue discussion and dialogue with local authorities. The leaders forum met for the first time in November 2016. I have been in regular dialogue with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and I look forward to striking up a relationship with its new education spokesperson when that person is appointed, which I hope will be later this month.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): Does the minister acknowledge that many parents no longer work the standard Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 pattern and that often nurseries close too early and are not open at weekends? Will he have a dialogue with COSLA and local authorities to see whether nurseries could be expanded to meet parents' needs by not being closed at weekends and by opening later in the evening?

Mark McDonald: It is important that we ensure that flexibility is an integral part of the offering. I made that clear in my statement and in my discussions with local authorities. However, I believe that there has to be flexibility in both directions. I recently addressed a conference on family-friendly working in Victoria Quay, at which I said that as well as flexibility from early learning and childcare providers we need employers to provide flexibility and to understand the needs of employees who have family commitments. We need to see how that can be worked in on the employers' side of things. Flexibility is key, but it has to work in both directions.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Given the increase in funding to local authorities for early years provision, what is the minister's view on Labour-Tory run North Lanarkshire Council closing all its baby rooms? What impact does he believe that will have on the most vulnerable babies in North Lanarkshire?

Mark McDonald: When local authorities take the decisions that they must take in terms of their priorities, it is important that they think very carefully about the impact of those decisions. I recognise the concerns that Fulton MacGregor is raising—he has raised them with me previously, outside the chamber. Local authorities need to think carefully about the importance of early intervention and funding to support early years provision and families, and they must take decisions based on those priorities.

Educational Institute of Scotland (Meetings)

6. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills last met the Educational Institute of Scotland. (S5O-01104)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): I last met members of the EIS executive on 13 December 2016 and I will have my next six-monthly meeting with them on 21 June 2017. I also met representatives of the EIS alongside other teacher organisations at the assessment and national qualifications group on 27 April, and I met EIS Further Education Lecturers Association representatives on 14 May. I participated with EIS representatives in the international summit on the teaching profession in late March.

Iain Gray: The regular meeting that will be held in June is timeous, because at its annual general meeting last week the EIS rejected the Government's Teach First proposal, threatened to withdraw co-operation with the Government's new tests and school league tables, and sanctioned a ballot on industrial action over pay and workload. This week, in the EIS survey, 86 per cent of teachers told us that their workload has increased in the past year—it has not decreased, as the cabinet secretary has claimed. Does the cabinet secretary understand that he has completely lost the confidence of the teaching profession?

John Swinney: Well—it is another cheerful Iain Gray afternoon, once again.

Iain Gray: That is from teachers—from the EIS.

John Swinney: I am talking about Iain Gray's characterisation of the matter. Let me go through the litany of misery that Mr Gray has brought to the chamber. The first point was about Teach First. The Government is introducing new routes into teaching that must be certificated by the General Teaching Council for Scotland and must have an academic partner involved. There is no commitment from the Government to any proposal involving Teach First; Teach First must be free to bid for any projects, but it must have an academic partner.

The second point was about school league tables. This Government is not producing school league tables.

Thirdly, I answered questions on pay yesterday, one of which was from Mr Gray, when I acknowledged the strain that public sector workers have experienced from pay constraint. The Government acknowledges that, and we have set out that we intend to address those issues as we continue our negotiations.

Finally, on workload, the Government has put in place measures to tackle the bureaucracy that is imposed on schools by local authorities, by simplifying the guidance that is available to teachers, by putting in place benchmarks, which have simplified the curriculum, and by giving clear curricular advice to members of the teaching profession.

The evidence—[*Interruption.*] The evidence that is coming to the Government from the teaching profession through the inspection arrangements that are in place indicates that workload is reducing as a consequence of the reforms that the Government is putting in place. The EIS is, of course, free to publish the survey evidence that it wants to publish; I am also free to put to Parliament evidence that members should take seriously.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary does not like our tone when we discuss education. Perhaps that is because he does not like what he is hearing from the EIS and teachers, themselves. I remind him that his Government has had 10 years to address teacher workload. Does he agree that poor delivery of curriculum for excellence has increased teacher workload?

John Swinney: If Mr Greene had been following the reforms that I have put in place, he would know that we have set out guidance that gives the teaching profession clarity on delivery of curriculum for excellence, and draws together all the various other bits of guidance that the teaching profession requested, to which the Government, its local authority partners and the professional associations all signed up over the years. The measures that we have put in place over the past 12 months are designed to simplify delivery of curriculum for excellence and ensure that the appropriate guidance and resources are available to teachers, to enable them in their task.

Teachers' Representatives (Meetings)

7. Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when a minister last met representatives of teachers and what issues were discussed. (S5O-01105)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Ministers regularly meet representatives from the teacher organisations to discuss matters that relate to education in Scotland. This morning, the Minister for Childcare and Early Years met representatives from the union Voice.

Johann Lamont: The cabinet secretary is evidently aware of the surveys that have been conducted by the Educational Institute of Scotland,

the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers and others. They confirm the evidence that has been presented to the Education and Skills Committee, which is that there are significant systemic problems in education that are having a massive impact on teachers and young people, alike. Let me say to the cabinet secretary that it is no good shooting the messenger; he needs to listen to the message.

In particular, the cabinet secretary is aware of the recent EIS survey that highlights the alarming and deteriorating situation for teachers, which is having a massive impact on the ability to recruit and retain teachers. Will the cabinet secretary be serious, in his response, in looking at what the survey says, or will he criticise the EIS for generating negative media coverage and, like the rest of us, talking down teachers and Scottish education?

John Swinney: Johann Lamont makes a super job of summing up my opinion of her contribution to the debate.

The Government has taken a number of steps, at the request of the professional associations, to reduce teacher workload—

Johann Lamont: They are not working.

John Swinney: Let me just go through the steps, for the benefit of Parliament. We have put in place the clarity around delivery of curriculum for excellence that the professional associations requested. We have removed, at the request of the professional associations, the unit assessments for national 5, and will do so for highers. We have put in place the clarity that is required around the achievement of levels and benchmarks at every stage, which teachers requested of me when I met them in the country's staff rooms. We have also gone back to local authorities to reinforce work that the authorities committed to do to reduce teachers' administrative workload; we went back to local authorities on that and we intend to follow it up.

Of course, I am regularly involved in dialogue about all those issues. I think that it is also important that the Parliament recognises the steps that the Government has taken to address teacher workload. We will continue to take such steps.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary clarify the evidence that workload is reducing as a consequence of the measures that he is taking? How is he ascertaining that they are having a positive and practical effect?

John Swinney: I set out in my response to Johann Lamont a number of steps that have been taken by the Government to reduce workload, at the request of the professional associations. I will,

of course, continue my dialogue with the professional associations to tackle teacher workload, because I want to ensure that the profession has the opportunity to focus on enhancing learning and teaching that will close the attainment gap and deliver excellence and equity for all in Scottish education. I will continue to engage in that dialogue to ensure that that is the case in the period ahead.

Islamophobia (Schools)

8. Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle Islamophobia in schools. (S5O-01106)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): There is no place in Scotland for any sort of discrimination, prejudice or bullying in schools or elsewhere, and that includes Islamophobia.

The Government is clear that schools should be peaceful and safe environments that have a positive influence on children and young people by promoting inclusion and equality and challenging discrimination. That is why all young people in Scotland experience religious and moral education as part of curriculum for excellence, helping them to understand the world's major religions and allowing them to be challenged by different beliefs and values, as well as developing their own capacity for moral judgment.

We have established and funded respectme, our national anti-bullying service, and are working with a range of stakeholders, including the Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee, to refresh our national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people.

Ben Macpherson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that comprehensive and reassuring answer. Has he seen the recent report "Islamophobia in Edinburgh Schools" by Samena Dean, which was released on 2 June at Annandale Street mosque? Does the cabinet secretary share my concerns about its content, and will he agree to meet me, Samena Dean, the imam of Annandale Street mosque and, potentially, other stakeholders to discuss the report's findings and how to tackle Islamophobia in our schools?

John Swinney: I welcome the material that Ben Macpherson has drawn to my attention, and I will certainly look at it. The Government finds it completely unacceptable that any individuals experience Islamophobia and we have to ensure that we take the steps within our education system to ensure that our approach to the tackling of bullying in that respect is comprehensive and

effective. I will be very happy to hear further from Mr Macpherson on the material and those questions, and look forward to exploring in detail the material that he has drawn to my attention.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): Statistics released last week showed that cases of religiously aggravated crimes have increased by 14 per cent over the past year. In Edinburgh, funding has been made available by the Scottish Government, in collaboration with the council and police, to eradicate Islamophobia at a local level through the shared vision project. Are there plans to extend such projects beyond Edinburgh to cities such as Glasgow?

John Swinney: The Government will look with great care at the steps that are taken across my portfolio and across those of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities to ensure that we have in place all the necessary interventions and programmes to tackle issues of discrimination. The Government has on-going reviews of the projects and proposals that it funds to ensure that it can deliver on its ambitions.

Education System (Media Coverage)

9. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what impact it considers negative media coverage of the education system could have on pupils and teachers. (S5O-01107)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): The Government does not control media coverage. I strive to present a balanced assessment of our education system, and I encourage others to do likewise. The number of our young people leaving school for a positive destination is at a record high of 93.3 per cent. Success in national qualifications is well documented. In every school that I visit, I meet confident, engaged young people who have a huge contribution to make to society. It stands to reason that if those messages do not get across, the perception of Scottish education will be undermined.

Rona Mackay: In my Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency, we are fortunate to have excellent schools that produce record-breaking exam results. St Ninian's high school in Kirkintilloch has just won the raising attainment in numeracy award. Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that the opposition parties in this chamber talk down and misrepresent Scotland's education system and its hard-working pupils and teachers far too much, and that the extra money being given directly to headteachers will allow all pupils to reach their potential?

John Swinney: Last Wednesday, I had the pleasure of attending the Scottish education awards, where a whole range of tremendous achievements in our education service was on display. [*Interruption.*] I should also point out, if I can get a word in edgeways over the muttering on the Labour benches, that the awards ceremony was a joint venture between Education Scotland and the *Daily Record*. It was a celebration of the achievements in Scottish education. It was my pleasure to present to St Ninian's high school, which is in Rona Mackay's constituency, the raising attainment award as an illustration of the achievements that are being made in our schools, day and daily.

I encourage members of Parliament to reflect in Parliament the strengths and achievements that they see in the schools in their constituencies, because wherever I go in Scottish education, I see plenty of achievement that is worth celebrating, and it would be nice if some opposition members could come to the chamber and celebrate that just the once and interrupt their miserable routine in Parliament.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Rona Mackay's question rather reflects the cabinet secretary's clear belief that he should be immune from criticism. Did the cabinet secretary or his ministers, advisers, officials or parliamentary liaison officer have any role whatsoever in inspiring, suggesting, encouraging or drafting that ridiculous question? If so, he should be embarrassed.

John Swinney: None whatsoever.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Question 10 has been withdrawn.

Learning Equipment (Local Authority Funding)

11. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that there is adequate funding for local authorities to ensure that all pupils have access to necessary learning equipment. (S5O-01109)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Local authorities spent £4.9 billion on education in 2015-16, a real-terms increase of 2 per cent on the previous year.

It is each local authority's responsibility to allocate the total financial resources available to it on the basis of local needs and priorities. All education authorities have a duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide learning materials to enable children and young people to learn and to succeed at school.

Maurice Corry: An investigation by *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* recently revealed that the charges at private finance initiative and public-private partnership scheme schools for repairing school infrastructure are diverting money away from basic classroom resources, such as jotters, pens and pencils. There are even examples of teachers being forced to delve into their own pockets to cover the shortfall—up to the sum of £300 in some cases in my West Scotland region. What action will the cabinet secretary take to ensure that schools are not being short-changed and forced to resort to those desperate measures?

The Presiding Officer: Before the cabinet secretary responds, I ask other members to refrain from having conversations.

John Swinney: That was an extraordinary question from Mr Corry. He is a representative and supporter of a Government that has, since 2010, championed austerity and reduced public expenditure. He has the nerve to come to this chamber and to complain to me about costs in schools when the party that he supports has savaged public expenditure. It is an absurd question for Mr Corry to have the nerve to ask me in Parliament.

As for PFI/PPP, although the Labour Party put lots of schemes in place, the Conservative Party was the originator of PFI. Years later, we are wrestling with the consequences of the mistakes of the Conservative and Labour Parties.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Drivers)

12. **Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking with Skills Development Scotland to address the reported shortage of HGV drivers. (S5O-01110)

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn): Skills Development Scotland, working with key partners including the Road Haulage Association, commissioned a review of the labour market issues that relate to the shortage of drivers in the Scottish transport network. The review made a number of recommendations that are aimed at tackling the skills supply-and-demand issues that relate to HGV drivers. In response to those recommendations, a stakeholder group has been established to address skills shortages in the area, and the group will meet for the first time this month. In addition, through the transition training fund, the Road Haulage Association will deliver 250 new HGV job starts to tackle the driver skills shortage.

Angus MacDonald: The minister will be aware that haulage contractors in my constituency and

throughout Scotland are now paying the apprenticeship levy, which they are—legitimately—calling for value for money from. Will he ensure that a fair share of funding from the apprenticeship levy is allocated to addressing the serious driver shortage in the haulage industry?

Jamie Hepburn: I remind all members that the apprenticeship levy was the creation of and inspired by the United Kingdom Government; it was not introduced by this Administration. Unlike the UK Government, we consulted widely on how we should respond. We have committed to skills and employability training the entire hypothecated allocation of the levy that comes through the Scottish block grant.

There is the possibility for those who are involved in the heavy goods industry to benefit now from certain frameworks that are offered through Skills Development Scotland for modern apprenticeships. If firms want to meet me to discuss what more we can do, I am willing to do that, but I make the point that through the transition training fund we have demonstrated our willingness to do what we can to support the industry.

Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Recommendations)

13. **Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce. (S5O-01111)

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn): We are making excellent progress with the developing the young workforce agenda. That includes creating new vocational learning options; enabling young people to learn in a range of settings, such as college, in their senior phase of school; embedding employer engagement in education; offering careers advice at an earlier point in school; and introducing new standards for careers guidance and work experience.

We have established 18 regional developing the young workforce employer groups across the country to focus on school and industry partnerships, work inspiration, work placements, recruitment and equalities, and we are opening up new apprenticeship opportunities for young people through an increase in modern apprenticeships and foundation and graduate-level apprenticeships.

Maree Todd: Does the minister agree that really great work is going on in the Highlands and Islands to get our young people into employment, such as the science skills academy, which is part

of the Inverness and Highland city region deal? Will he outline what support the Government is providing to develop young people's skills in rural areas?

Jamie Hepburn: I agree that great work is taking place in the Highlands area. In Fort William earlier this week, it was my pleasure to address the developing the young workforce regional group for West Highland, along with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce. It was clear to me that a great range of work is happening there in conjunction with the local college and that a lot of remote learning takes place, which is always helpful in rural settings. From this year forward, we will also provide a rural supplement for training providers that are based in rural communities as part of our modern apprenticeship support.

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): I welcome the developing the young workforce strategy and I particularly welcome the fact that it has clear milestones for every year. That really helps in looking at where we are going and where we are getting to.

I noticed that this year the Government is looking at gender imbalance and implementing the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council plan. At the moment, only one in 10 of the people who are on construction and engineering courses are young women. If the Government succeeds in tackling the gender imbalance, what will happen to courses, such as those in mechanics, that are oversubscribed in some areas and are filled by young men? Will there be more money to improve the gender balance, or will young men find that the number of available places is reduced?

Jamie Hepburn: That question allows me to welcome Michelle Ballantyne to the chamber. It is the first time that I have had the opportunity to interact with her in this forum. She can rest assured that the Government has a great commitment to all young people who want to take part in modern apprenticeships. That is why we are expanding the number of modern apprenticeship starts. We had a target of 26,000 such starts last year and, as we have done every year, we exceeded the target—there were 26,262 starts. This year we have set a target of 27,000, and there will be 30,000 such opportunities by the end of the parliamentary session. Michelle Ballantyne can rest assured that there will be plenty of opportunities for Scotland's young people, regardless of the agenda.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Just today, I have had information that the Blackburn local employment scheme in West Lothian, which has operated for 30 years to get young people into work, training and self-employment, is being mothballed because the Government did not lift a

finger to help the project. Is that the commitment that the Government gives to the young workforce?

Jamie Hepburn: We have a serious and strong commitment to Scotland's young workforce. That is demonstrated by today's labour market statistics, which show that the youth unemployment rate is at 8.8 per cent, which is among the lowest figures in the European Union and is down from the previous quarter.

I am aware of the local situation that Mr Findlay refers to. I reiterate the point that has been made to him that any contract with a training provider is given on the basis of specific delivery through a contractual arrangement with Skills Development Scotland—it is not core funding. He should understand that by now but, if he has continuing concerns, he can raise them with the Government. I utterly reject the characterisation that we have not responded to his concerns.

Scotland's Economy (Opportunities for Growth)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, opportunities for growth.

14:41

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): I am grateful for the opportunity to set out to the Parliament Scotland's economic strengths, our resilience to the economic challenges that we undoubtedly face and the opportunities that we are creating to grow and strengthen our economy for the benefit of all in our society.

Since coming to power, the Government has supported an improvement in Scotland's economic performance during a uniquely challenging economic period that has been dominated by global financial crises and the United Kingdom Government's austerity programme. Since 2007, over that very difficult period, the number of registered businesses has risen by 15 per cent; business research and development expenditure has increased by over 40 per cent in real terms; our international exports have increased by 41 per cent; and productivity has risen by 7.5 per cent, whereas it has stagnated at a UK level.

There are also over 80,000 more people in employment, and Scotland's labour market has been remarkably resilient in the face of the challenges that we have encountered. The latest statistics, which were published this morning, show that the unemployment rate continues to fall and now stands at a record low of 4 per cent. The UK figure is 4.6 per cent, which is the same as it was previously, so it is stagnating. Our unemployment level is below that of the UK as a whole and below those of most other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. Indeed, the previous quarter was only the second quarter in the past 25 years in which unemployment has been that low.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): We, too, welcome the fall in unemployment that has been announced today. However, like the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, we are concerned about the fact that Scotland has experienced a significant rise in the number of people who are dropping out of the labour market altogether. The inactivity rate in Scotland is one full percentage point above the rate in the rest of the UK. Can the cabinet secretary explain why inactivity levels in Scotland are increasing?

Keith Brown: I am happy to do so. The member will find that much of the explanation lies in the number of students who are going into higher education, who are, of course, economically inactive. There are 30,000 more of those than there were previously, and the rate is higher than the rate in the rest of the UK.

It is interesting that the member says that the Conservatives welcome today's figures because, two years ago, at around this time, Murdo Fraser said:

"The Scottish Government must explain why unemployment rates north of the border are now significantly higher than the rest of the UK".

Does that mean that the UK Government should now explain why unemployment is much higher in the UK than in Scotland? It will be interesting to see whether that issue is addressed in the Tory speeches.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The rate is going down.

Keith Brown: It is 4.6 per cent, which is the same as it was in the previous quarter.

I know that it is disappointing to the Conservatives and the Labour Party that the numbers are so low, but today's encouraging numbers reflect the importance that the Government attaches to getting on with the day job of supporting our economy and creating jobs.

It is those strengths that continue to make Scotland one of the most attractive locations for inward investment. The latest Ernst & Young attractiveness survey shows that, in 2016, Scotland attracted 122 foreign direct investment projects, which was more than any other part of the UK outside London. It is particularly welcome that Scotland attracted more R and D projects than anywhere else in the UK and was, again, second only to London in securing software projects. All three of Scotland's largest cities—Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen—are in the UK's top 10 for numbers of FDI projects secured. Again, we wait for congratulations from the other parties for the people who have secured that investment.

The publication today of the Scottish Government's chief economist's state of the economy report provides a timely analysis of the economic opportunities and challenges that the Scottish economy faces. I note that 2016 was a challenging year for the economy, with gross domestic product growing just 0.4 per cent over the year and contracting marginally in the final quarter. As the chief economist's report mentions, that slowdown stemmed principally from the continued challenges that the oil and gas sector faces. That is why we are continuing to support that sector both through the work of the energy

jobs task force and by supporting innovation and ensuring that Scotland can maximise the economic opportunities that decommissioning presents.

Murdo Fraser: I think that we all agree that we want to see more growth in the Scottish economy. When will the Scottish Government publish some results from its growth commission, which is chaired by Andrew Wilson?

Keith Brown: That commission is not related to the Government. It is not part of the Government, so we do not report on it to the Parliament. I know that Murdo Fraser knows that, but I do not know why he failed to take the opportunity to ask the UK Government to explain why its unemployment figures are so much worse than Scotland's. That was his first chance to do that, and he has failed.

As I said, the chief economist's report points to the challenges that the oil and gas sector faces, which are why we continue to support it. Nevertheless, we are seeing encouraging signs that conditions are improving for oil and gas companies. Yesterday's oil and gas survey by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce shows that confidence is rising among North Sea oil and gas firms and now stands at its highest level since 2013, while the Bank of Scotland purchasing managers index for May signalled growth across manufacturing and services sectors.

However, it is clear that the UK faces economic challenges. At 0.2 per cent, UK GDP growth in the first quarter of 2017 was lower than that of any other country in the EU, and rising inflation is squeezing household incomes. Those pressures are particularly acute for families that are being hit by the UK Government's benefits freeze.

It is also time to look again at the pay restraint that is faced by the public sector. I recognise that the pay restraint has been hard for public sector workers. It has been in place at a time of UK Government-imposed austerity in order to protect jobs and public services, but, at a time of rising inflation—with the Tories failing to control inflation and failing to control debt, having added £100 billion to the UK's debt every year since they took office—it is clear that the restraint is putting pressure on public pay. We will take a fresh look at next year's pay policy in order to address that issue. We must ensure that pay rises are affordable now and in the future, but they must also reflect the real-life circumstances that people face.

That brings me to the main risk that is facing Scotland's economy: the UK Government's continued determination to impose a hard Brexit on Scotland. I will reflect particularly on the significant contribution that European structural

funds and European territorial co-operation make to Scotland's economy.

European structural funds programmes are worth around £828 million to Scotland over the period from 2014 to 2020, which is a very significant investment at a time when public sector budgets are under pressure. To date, more than 200 projects have been approved, committing over £383 million of European structural funds across Scotland to boost small and medium-sized enterprise growth as well as to support innovation and skills and reduce poverty and social exclusion. I am pleased to have been able to make a number of announcements in that regard over the past year, including our investment in the £250 million SME holding fund, which is projected to support innovation in 500 businesses and create 2,000 jobs.

Alongside that, the European territorial co-operation activities complement and strengthen the investments that are made through structural funds to support growth and jobs in Scotland and across Europe. Many organisations in Scotland benefit from working on projects with organisations from different countries to tackle common challenges and develop shared opportunities. Those investments include the €3.2 million award to the funding ocean renewable energy through strategic European action—or FORESEA—project, which is led by the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, to develop ocean energy technology and the €3.5 million award to allow our enterprise agencies to work alongside Invest Northern Ireland and InterTradelreland to support innovation co-operation between SMEs and research institutions.

Such projects demonstrate the vital role that European funding plays in supporting sustainable and inclusive growth in Scotland, which is why it is essential that the UK Government commits to replacing that funding in full following Brexit. Will the Conservatives guarantee that Scotland will retain the equivalent amount of money in the longer term if they are successful in dragging Scotland out of the EU—

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Keith Brown: I am sorry, but I do not have much time left.

Will the Conservatives guarantee that money if they are successful in dragging Scotland out of the EU and the single market against the wishes of the Scottish people? I look forward to the Conservatives proving that their MPs are going to work in Scotland's interests at Westminster by making that commitment on behalf of their party here and now.

The funding that is provided by structural funds also complements the wider actions that we are taking to drive productivity and to create opportunities for growth through investment, innovation, inclusive growth and internationalisation as set out in Scotland's economic strategy. We are making significant investments to support businesses and to drive productivity growth. For example, we are investing billions in transforming Scotland's infrastructure—a key driver of long-term productivity growth—with many projects that have been neglected for decades under the Conservative and Labour parties. If members do not believe me, they should listen to Patrick McLoughlin, the former Conservative Secretary of State for Transport, who said that, for decades, the problem in Scotland was that there was not the requisite investment in transport infrastructure.

Willie Rennie: Today, the First Minister has written to the Prime Minister about Europe, saying that her platform on the European single market did not “garner support” and that

“a new proposal is urgently needed to protect the economy and bring people together.”

Does that not also apply to independence and the Scottish National Party?

Keith Brown: I have not mentioned independence in today's debate, yet Willie Rennie, who is utterly obsessed with it, has once again sought to Hoover it into the debate.

It was interesting that, on the morning after the election, Jeremy Purvis—elected by nobody, but speaking on his platform—said that it was time that the SNP dropped its commitment. He was immediately asked whether he would drop his commitment to another referendum and he could not answer the question. As for Christine Jardine's appalling statement on Sunday, I do not know what to say. Once again, the Opposition parties are obsessed with independence. Let us get back to the economy, which is what we should be talking about.

As I mentioned, the funding that is provided through structural funds complements the wider actions that we are taking to drive productivity. The investment in infrastructure includes projects such as the Queensferry crossing, the dualling of the A9, the dualling of the A96, the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the M8, M73 and M74 improvement project. Furthermore, the Scottish growth scheme will provide £500 million to support innovative SMEs with high growth potential that struggle to obtain finance through conventional means. We are also investing more than £1 billion in our universities this year alone, and we are supporting collaborations between

universities and businesses through our innovation centres.

Inclusive growth is at the heart of our actions to grow the economy as we equip our young people for the future, which is why we are increasing the number of modern apprenticeship opportunities to 30,000 per year by 2020 and expanding funded childcare to improve young children's outcomes and reduce barriers to parents' participating in the economy. We are also driving internationalisation by boosting Scotland's trade and international connections.

Scotland's economic fundamentals remain strong, but we face economic challenges from, in particular, the damage that will be caused by the UK Government's desire to take Scotland out of the EU and the single market. I have set out a range of actions that we are taking to grow and strengthen our economy for the future. We must continue to invest for growth by promoting and supporting innovation, investment and internationalisation, as is set out in Scotland's economic strategy. I urge members to support the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's economic fundamentals remain strong with opportunities for growth; welcomes the fact that Scotland has closed the gap in productivity performance with the UK as a whole, the continued attractiveness of Scotland's economy for inward investment and, in particular, the recent analysis by Ernst and Young, which shows that Scotland attracted more research and development foreign direct investment projects than anywhere else in the UK in 2016; recognises and acknowledges the challenges facing Scotland's economy, in particular from the downturn in the oil and gas sector and the damage that will be caused by the UK Government taking Scotland out of the EU and the single market; believes that Scotland must continue to invest for sustainable and inclusive growth by promoting and supporting innovation, investment and internationalisation, as set out in Scotland's Economic Strategy; highlights the important contribution that European structural and investment funds make to support sustainable and inclusive growth in Scotland, and calls on the UK Government to commit to ensuring that it replaces this funding in full following Brexit.

14:53

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

The Government has today presented a wide-ranging motion on the economy, which is a subject that it was curiously silent on before the election. Nonetheless, I will start with some areas of consensus.

We agree that there are opportunities for growth in Scotland's economy. We have a world-class workforce, world-class universities and world-class cities. With the right Government and the right policies in Holyrood, Scotland's full economic potential could be realised.

We also agree that the economy in Scotland faces a number of challenges that need to be addressed. However, despite what the Government motion says, those challenges reach far beyond the oil and gas sector and they existed well before Brexit. In fact, Scotland's economy has suffered below-trend growth for the past 10 years under the SNP, with average annual growth of 0.7 per cent. Last year, growth in Scotland was only 0.4 per cent, while growth for the rest of the UK was almost five times faster.

It is no wonder that Ernst & Young described Scotland's economy as

"being stuck in the slow lane"

with Scotland halfway to recession and forecast that, for every year until 2020, Scotland's economy will continue to underperform the rest of the UK.

At this stage, the cabinet secretary usually intervenes to tell me that I am talking Scotland down. I will save him the bother by saying that I am not. Rather, I am identifying the economic challenges that the country faces. Those challenges are evident across a range of other indicators. For example, innovation and productivity levels continue to lag behind OECD averages; foreign direct investment jobs declined by 47 per cent last year, despite a small increase in FDI projects; and Scotland's export base is too small, according to Scottish Enterprise, with only 50 companies accounting for 50 per cent of exports. Further, according to EY, we need to diversify our sector base, as recent economic growth has been overreliant on public sector construction, which declined last year by 3.3 per cent, according to the "State of the Economy" report that was issued by the Scottish Government today—of course, I have to say that the construction sector has contributed to the Scottish economy for a bit longer than expected, due to the delays on the Queensferry crossing.

Despite those challenges, there are real opportunities to improve economic performance in Scotland, but only if there is a corresponding real change in the substance and direction of economic policy in Scotland. As the cabinet secretary said himself in this chamber less than three months ago,

"the status quo will not deliver the economic step change that is necessary".—[*Official Report*, 30 March 2017; c 82.]

We agree with that. If the Scottish Government wants to deliver that step change in the economy, it must listen to key stakeholders across Scotland who have been calling for economic policy to change in a number of areas.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I am interested to know the member's feelings about the post-study work visa. The issues with that are stopping us recruiting people from other

parts of the world, when our universities are investing in them. When I have spoken to university leaders, they have raised that as an important issue.

Dean Lockhart: We recognise that that is an issue, and it will be involved in the Brexit negotiations.

I will address the areas in which stakeholders across Scotland have been calling for a change in policy.

First, the Scottish Government should work more closely with the UK Government to capitalise on opportunities that are available under the UK-wide industrial strategy. For example, the Scotch Whisky Association says:

"The UK Industrial Strategy presents an opportunity for ... the Scotch Whisky industry to Flourish as a flagship manufacturer and exporter."

However, it goes on to say that the industrial strategy will only serve the interests of all the nations of the UK if the devolved Administrations play an active role in its implementation. We agree. The industrial strategy can also act as a policy framework to expand key sectors in Scotland such as life sciences and financial technology.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Dean Lockhart: Let me make a bit of progress; I will take an intervention later.

The UK Government has appointed two fintech envoys to explore how Scotland can capitalise on this critical area for the Scottish economy. A recent report from Strathclyde business school has warned that the Scottish financial sector could face a loss of 14,000 jobs if it fails to embrace fintech. I look forward to the cabinet secretary or the minister telling us of their plans for working with the UK Government on the industrial strategy.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Dean Lockhart: Not right now; let me just finish this point.

Stakeholders are also calling for a more competitive tax system in Scotland. Thirteen leading business organisations across Scotland have called on the Scottish Government to abolish the large business supplement, which adversely affects 20,000 businesses across Scotland and penalises them with higher rates than are applied to their counterparts elsewhere in UK. My colleagues will expand on that during the debate but, with that unfair tax in place, it is not surprising that the rate of shop closures in Scotland is the highest of any part of the UK.

Stakeholders have also called on the Scottish Government to expand support for Scotland's exporters and to boost trade with the rest of the UK. Indeed, that was a key finding of the recent report by the Economy Jobs and Fair Work Committee on the economic impact of leaving the EU. Evidence that was provided to the committee informed us that, in 2016, 65 per cent of our trade was with our domestic UK market, 20 per cent was with the rest of the world and 16 per cent was with the EU single market, and that the fastest growing areas of trade were with the rest of the UK and with the rest of the world. Reflecting those trading patterns, the committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses that more needs to be done to support Scottish businesses in exporting across the world, including to the emerging markets, and that Scotland's number 1 trading priority must always be to keep the trading relationship with the rest of the UK open and fluid. The committee also heard evidence that Scottish businesses want the fullest possible access to the EU single market, which is exactly what the UK Government's objectives have been and will continue to be in the Brexit negotiations.

I will give way now.

John Mason: I thank the member for giving way; I think that it was to me rather than to Ms Martin.

Dean Lockhart talked about a competitive tax rate, by which I think he meant a low one. Does he not accept that that would be a risk and that public services would suffer, our workforce would be less well educated and we would have less money for infrastructure?

Dean Lockhart: I do not have time to go into the Laffer curve right now. However, we just need to look at the high streets across Scotland to see that the large business supplement is putting people out of business and that local and central Government are getting less tax revenue as a result of that misguided policy.

The final key policy message for the Scottish Government comes from the most important stakeholders of all—the people of Scotland. In last week's general election, they were told by the First Minister that independence was

“at the heart of this election”.

The people of Scotland listened, they thought long and hard about that and they voted. The result was once again an overwhelming rejection of independence, with more than 63 per cent of votes being cast for parties in support of Scotland remaining part of the UK. So it is now time for the SNP to listen to the people of Scotland and to abandon the policy that has most damaged Scotland's economy: the SNP's constant campaigning for independence.

Keith Brown rose—

Dean Lockhart: Not now.

It is time for the SNP to remove the uncertainty of a second independence referendum and to get on with the day job.

I move amendment S5M-06045.1, to leave out from “that Scotland's economic” to end and insert:

“opportunities for growth in Scotland's economy; welcomes the continued attractiveness of Scotland for inward investment; acknowledges the many challenges facing Scotland's economy, including negative economic growth and low business confidence; considers that these can be addressed by the introduction of a more competitive tax system in Scotland and by the Scottish Government removing the uncertainty of a second referendum on independence; believes that Scotland can best achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, and increase innovation, investment and internationalisation through active cooperation and participation in a UK-wide industrial strategy, and supports the objectives of the UK Government in achieving the maximum possible access to the European single market while maximising the opportunities afforded by fostering stronger trading relationships with the rest of the world.”

15:01

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):

Complacency and denial are the twin problems facing the SNP in relation to the economy: complacency on the state of the economy and denial over a second independence referendum, which, aside from Brexit, is the biggest threat to our economy.

I see the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work laughing, but perhaps he would do well to listen. In debate after debate, Opposition parties come to the chamber only to hear from the Scottish Government that there is nothing wrong with the economy and that what we are doing is simply talking Scotland down. The cabinet secretary has recently taken to hiding behind businesses, using them as some sort of human shield so that he does not have to answer for challenges in the economy.

So let us be clear: the Scottish Labour Party supports businesses. We recognise their central role in growing the economy. The challenge, of course, is for the Government to provide them with the right support at the right time. That is not rocket science. Business leaders—whether the Scottish Chamber of Commerce, CBI Scotland or the Federation of Small Businesses—are not shy about coming forward and telling us what they want. They tell us that they want involvement with the Government in setting the strategy for economic growth, investing in infrastructure, maximising the opportunities for SMEs in procurement and investing in skills. None of these should come as a surprise to us.

They also tell us that they want certainty, yet both Governments have given them exactly the opposite. First we have Brexit—on the back of a referendum pushed by the Tories to settle their internal divisions on the EU—and now, after the general election, the Tories are in complete disarray about the way forward.

Then we have the issue of independence that was rejected by the people of Scotland in 2014—the cabinet secretary may laugh, but I suggest that he listens—and rejected again one week ago, in the general election. While the First Minister might be in denial and, judging from the noise emanating from the back benches, the rest of the SNP is too, none of her cabinet has enough backbone to stand up to her—

Keith Brown *rose*—

Jackie Baillie: —in a minute—and the rest of us think that she had a calamitous election. Dropping from 50 per cent of the vote to 36 per cent is part of a pattern of decline: losing the SNP majority in this Parliament, staggering falls in her personal popularity and, of course, declining support for independence. We have passed “peak SNP” and “peak Nicola Sturgeon”.

I will take an intervention from the cabinet secretary.

Keith Brown: On the question of last week’s election, as long as the Scottish Labour Party is content to be third—with the worst result that it has had since 1918—we will be content to be first.

Jackie Baillie has failed to mention unemployment or to welcome today’s figures. Eighteen months ago, she said that the SNP Government had the wrong priorities. [*Interruption.*] Would she agree that the Scottish Government has the right priorities, given the unemployment results?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): There is time in hand, Ms Baillie, so I will give you the time back. You do not need to worry about whether an intervention is a speech—that is for me to decide.

Jackie Baillie: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I am always in your good hands.

I say to the SNP that its priorities are entirely wrong. Frankly, anybody who can describe a reduction in their share of the vote from 50 to 36 per cent as a victory needs to look at doing their sums again.

The SNP now has an opportunity to put the economy first and to set aside—clearly, with no fudging—the pursuit of independence and restore business certainty. That is what our economy needs and what the country needs.

The truth is that there are mixed reviews on the economy. Today’s positive statistics on employment and unemployment are to be welcomed, but the rise in economic inactivity remains a problem that the cabinet secretary simply brushes aside. There are 776,000 people of working age in that category, and the figure increased by 12,000 in the most recent quarter. Overall, the figure is 1 per cent higher than it is in the rest of the UK.

If confirmation is needed, members need only look to Tony Mackay of Mackay Consultants, who says that the true level of unemployment is 4.4 per cent, which is much higher than the claimant count of 2.4 per cent, or to Professor Brian Ashcroft, who pointed to the fact that real unemployment was rising more than five years ago. Indeed, the Scottish Trades Union Congress has previously expressed the concern that the official statistics do not show the real condition of our jobs market. I suggest that, instead of trying to invent an explanation about students, the cabinet secretary should recognise that the present situation is not good for our economy and do something about it.

The statistics also show that wages are declining in real terms. With inflation rising, there is less spending power and less consumer demand, which has an impact on business. Not surprisingly, the Scottish Retail Consortium is concerned about the future and, not for the first time, we have called on the Government to develop a retail strategy with the sector. I hope that the Government eventually gets round to agreeing.

If we want to make a real difference to workers and increase their spending in the economy, we need to pay them a living wage of £10 an hour, ban zero-hours contracts and provide them with the skills that businesses need for the future. In other words, we need to invest in people to drive growth in the economy.

The Government’s chief economist tells us that the Scottish economy grew in 2016. Yes it did, but only by 0.4 per cent, which was well down on expectations, and it is on a downward trajectory. In the most recent quarter, the economy shrank by 0.2 per cent, and the fear is that we could be heading for a recession. No one wants to see that happen, but instead of rising to the challenge of reversing that trend and growing the economy, the SNP has been spending its time working on its rebuttal. In advance of the next quarter’s GDP stats coming out, which will happen soon, the SNP has shifted how it analyses the measurement. It has simply stripped out London, so that we do not look so bad in comparison with the rest of the UK; then, everything is marvellous. That is the limit of the SNP’s ambition: reinterpreting and spinning

the figures instead of focusing on growing the economy.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Jackie Baillie: No—I do not have time.

Our economy has lost out on money and jobs as a result of the SNP's mismanagement. If we look at the growth sectors that our enterprise agencies are charged with focusing on, we see that five out of six of them had not recorded any growth at all by the end of 2016. When we look at the rate of job creation, we see that the rest of the UK has grown jobs in those sectors three and a half times more quickly than we have since 2009. The cabinet secretary is shaking his head, but those are facts that have been provided by the Government's own statisticians. That is huge potential that we are not tapping into.

I turn to foreign direct investment. The EY report notes the increase in the number of projects, which is welcome, but the number of jobs that are being created is much lower. In 2016, the number of foreign direct investment jobs that were secured fell by 47 per cent, and let us not forget that in 2014, before the independence referendum, foreign direct investment slowed noticeably. Companies delayed making decisions until they knew that it was all over. That is another reason to take indyref 2 off the table if we want our economy to grow.

Internationalisation, innovation, investment and inclusive growth are all laudable headlines, but the Government's strategy takes no account of Brexit and no account of what it needs to do to change. The Fraser of Allander institute said that it needs to be urgently reviewed. It is simply not credible to continue as normal.

Let me make one final observation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, I have given you extra time. Please move your amendment.

Jackie Baillie: I move amendment S5M-06045.3, to leave out from "economic fundamentals" to end and insert:

"economy remains fragile, with no growth in the fourth quarter of 2016 and that growth in Scotland has lagged behind the UK for a number of years; further recognises the challenges Scotland faces in particular from the downturn in the oil and gas sector; considers that the previous UK administration's approach to a hard Brexit is a major challenge to the Scottish economy and should be abandoned; believes that the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy must be urgently reassessed, and notes the Fraser of Allander Institute comments that 'all of the [Scottish] government's economic strategy priorities - internationalisation, innovation, investment and inclusive growth - have been turned on their head by the decision to leave the EU. It is simply not possible to continue as normal. An urgent review of current policy initiatives is needed'; further believes that the growth of Scotland's

economy should be inclusive so that everyone benefits and people and jobs are put first; considers that the Scottish Government should accelerate investment in infrastructure, innovation and research to nurture business growth, stimulate the economy and create jobs; further considers that the Scottish Government should ensure that a real living wage of £10-an-hour is paid in all public procurement and commissioning contracts; regrets that the Scottish Business Pledge has not been widely taken up; considers that the Scottish Government's continued priority of a second independence referendum, which was rejected at the General Election, creates uncertainty for business and households, and therefore commits the Scottish Government to abandon its plans for a second independence referendum."

Let me also say, Presiding Officer, that if the SNP wants the economy to grow—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, you may not say that. Naughty, naughty.

Jackie Baillie: It should take the independence referendum—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sit down, please, Ms Baillie. I gave you your time back, and now your microphone is off and what you say will not be recorded. I have the power to do that.

I call Patrick Harvie to speak to and move amendment S5M-06045.4.

15:10

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Am I right that seven minutes is the speaking time?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Indeed, and I will allow you 30 seconds' flexibility. I will give you a bit of extra time for an intervention.

Patrick Harvie: I feel that I must begin with an apology because, in drafting an amendment for the debate, I regret to say that I looked only at the title of the debate as it is written, so I have written an amendment about the economy rather than the constitution. The unspoken and unwritten title of the debate—given the huge appetite of the political parties that would like us not to talk about independence for talking about independence all the time—is something that I will come to, but I hope that I can beg members' indulgence and talk about the economy just a little bit first.

As is my normal style, I recognise that there is some agreement across all political parties. The motion and most of the parties' amendments—although I will not be able to vote for the motion or any other amendment tonight—recognise some balance between opportunity and challenge in our economy. Even the Conservatives' amendment talks about the need for an industrial strategy, and it is good that our country, the UK, which went for so long with Government after Government taking a hands-off approach and assuming that the

market would fix every problem, now has some consensus that the Government needs to have at least an industrial strategy.

I disagree with the Conservatives about what that strategy would be, just as I disagree with the Scottish Government. Greens will continue to make the case for investment in the transition to a low-carbon economy, while the UK Government and the Scottish Government remain unwilling, so far, to abandon their continued tax breaks and subsidies to the big polluters in our economy. As has been shown in the past couple of months in leaked documents from the UK Government, the subsidies to oil, coal and gas companies since 2000 amount to some £6.9 billion, most of which has been awarded since 2010, when the Tory coalition was formed. Through our work on jobs in the new economy, the Greens have advocated that there is far more to be gained than to be lost in the transition away from fossil fuels, but that will happen only if we invest in it instead of continuing to subsidise the cause of the problem.

I agree with the commitment in the Labour amendment to a real living wage of £10 an hour. Naturally, we support that—of course we do. It was in our 2015 election manifesto and I am pleased that the Labour Party has taken it up.

As for the importance of Europe, the SNP motion refers to the importance of structural funds and investment in infrastructure, and Keith Brown gave a long list of the road building projects that he is keen on. It is a shame that he could not list any sustainable infrastructure projects, because they are urgently needed.

The Lib Dem motion references skills shortages. They are a challenge in many industries and in our public services, which are an important part of our economy in their own right and which also create the conditions that our whole economy depends on. We have seen recently that there has been a 96 per cent drop in the number of nurses from the rest of the EU who are registering to work in the UK—the figure is down from 1,304 in July last year to just 46 in April this year. The challenges that will come from skills shortages as a result of the UK Government's insisting so far on abandoning and scrapping the right of free movement are a huge and long-lasting threat.

In its amendment, Scottish Labour quotes the comment from the Fraser of Allander institute that

“all of the [Scottish] government's economic strategy priorities—internationalisation, innovation”

and so on

“have been turned on their head by the decision to leave the EU”,

and it also says that

“the previous UK administration's approach to a hard Brexit ... should be abandoned”.

I certainly agree with that commitment, and I wonder whether it means that the Labour Party now supports staying inside the single market. I hope that it does.

We must question again what the Conservatives actually mean by “maximum possible access” to the European single market, which is a phrase that we hear so often from them. Will a worker have maximum access to the single market if they cannot decide where they wish to move for work, whether it be to or from this country? Will a family have maximum access to the single market if they cannot stay together and if they face, as so many do, the threat of deportation?

Although there is common ground in the debate and agreement across the political spectrum on some issues, I also argue that critical issues are being missed by all the other parties. The chamber will be familiar with the Greens' argument on growth. We reject the idea that narrow metrics such as GDP represent a meaningful assessment of the economy's health.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): As a north-east MSP, I am particularly interested in finding out whether the Greens think that the North Sea oil and gas industry is an asset to Scotland's economy.

Patrick Harvie: Our overreliance on fossil fuels that we cannot afford to burn is an incredible source of vulnerability. If we want an area such as the north-east to have the prospect of a brighter future, we need to invest in that transition instead of kidding people on that business as usual will continue.

The SNP motion mentions increasing productivity, and the Greens agree in principle with that. In that respect, I mention in particular the UK Government's obsession with reducing public debt; the fact is that, if we do that without increasing productivity, we will only increase the much greater stock of private debt in the economy, which is already a bigger problem.

We also need to consider how we measure productivity. After all, it is quite possible that the future wave of automation might increase productivity by reducing employment or the quality of employment. Who will share in the proceeds of that increased productivity? It will not be the affected workers.

I move on to the constitutional question that others are so keen to discuss. I challenge the leave campaign's conceit that the UK can be treated as a unitary state in the Brexit process; that conceit is now being challenged, and it will fail. I also challenge the idea that the UK

Government has any kind of mandate for a hard Brexit; it sought and was refused that.

I challenge the idea that Scotland has consented at all to the Brexit process—it has not. Unless the UK Government changes its position, we will still have UK ministers—with the support of their new best friends among the climate change deniers, creationists, misogynists and homophobes of the Democratic Unionist Party—negotiating a deal with the EU institutions, after which every other EU member state will have its say and the outcome will be imposed on us.

Earlier this year, the Scottish Parliament voted in favour of seeking a section 30 order to give the people who live here their own say in their future.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I do not have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last 30 seconds.

Patrick Harvie: If the UK Government wants to change that position, the ball is clearly in its court. I urge it as the Government that triggered an unnecessary referendum and lost it, and which then triggered an unnecessary election and lost its majority, to think again, to drop its plans for an extreme hard Brexit and its arrogant approach to imposing a deal on us and to work collaboratively with others in every part of these islands—most particularly with those who recognise the need to protect our place inside the single market and the rights, freedoms and social protections that it gives us.

I move amendment S5M-06045.4, to leave out from “economic fundamentals” to end and insert:

“economy must serve the needs of citizens now and in the future by respecting the limited resources of the planet; notes Scotland’s continued overdependence on the fossil fuel industry and considers that this is a source of significant vulnerability; considers that the GDP growth of an economy is a poor indicator of the wellbeing of its citizens or the health of the ecosystem that sustains them; urges the Scottish Government to build on the steps that it has taken with the National Performance Framework and develop a comprehensive approach to measuring meaningful economic progress instead of continuing to place undue emphasis on GDP growth, and considers that economic development must focus on creating well-paid work, building local economies, ensuring fair redistribution of wealth, and developing low-carbon industries as a replacement for, rather than an addition to, the role of fossil fuels in Scotland’s economy.”

15:19

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Turning away from our strong relationship with our European partners will damage our economic progress. All but a handful of MSPs agreed with

that statement last year. Trade barriers in the form of differing regulatory systems, tariffs and workers’ rights will cost jobs and growth; indeed, the Fraser of Allander institute reckons that 80,000 jobs in Scotland could be at stake because of a hard Brexit.

Most agree that turning away from our neighbours would damage us—except when it comes to England, which is our closest neighbour. Apparently, turning away from England will have the opposite effect: it will boost trade, jobs and growth. That is curious if we consider the relative economic importance of the UK and Europe. Scotland’s exports to the UK are worth four times as much as those to the EU. Scottish sales to England, Wales and Northern Ireland were worth about £50 billion in 2015, compared with sales of about £12 billion to the EU internal market.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: No—not just now.

That is the nonsense of the SNP’s position. It parades the value of partnership to accelerate us forward, except when it comes to the UK, which is apparently holding us back. The issue should never be an either/or one. We should seek to grow exports to the rest of the UK and exports to the rest of Europe. We must break down barriers, not build them up.

There is an opportunity to turn away from a damaging hard Brexit. Theresa May called the general election to get an overwhelming mandate for her Brexit plan, but she failed. That is why I support calls for a cross-party Cabinet committee to prepare a new plan that can secure the maximum support possible across the UK.

Earlier, I quoted to the cabinet secretary the First Minister’s letter to Theresa May, which says:

“During the election you sought a mandate for your proposals to leave the European Single Market. That proposal failed to garner support, it is now clear that a new proposal is needed urgently to protect the economy and bring people together.”

The cabinet secretary did not take the opportunity to respond to that. I argue that, on 37 per cent of the vote, such a position equally applies to the SNP and its plans for independence. However, a different standard is somehow to be applied in Scotland.

Keith Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: If he is going to answer the question now, I will absolutely take an intervention.

Keith Brown: I will decide on my own interventions, thanks very much. Will Willie Rennie answer a question? One of his colleagues said that, as a newly elected MP, it is important that

she should be allowed to continue to put the arguments that she successfully put before the electorate to be elected. Does that apply to all MPs?

Willie Rennie: On the way that interventions work, when I made a point earlier, he was supposed to reply to it, and when I asked him to reply to it now, he had a second chance to do that. However, he does not want to answer the questions that I pose to him. We are holding the Government to account, and he should at least have the grace to answer the question. I will therefore not be gracious in answering his bizarre question in response.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Rennie, I remind you to refer to the cabinet secretary by name, not just by a pronoun, as doing that is no good for the *Official Report*.

Willie Rennie: Thank you very much—I will do that.

Our best interests are served by remaining in the EU. However, close observers might have noticed that the Liberal Democrats did not win the election, either. We are constructive and reasonable people who will work with others on a new plan that gets all the benefits of a close relationship with our European partners, even if that relationship is not what I would ultimately want. That is reasonable and pragmatic.

It is not reasonable and pragmatic to use Brexit for the sole purpose of winning independence. Brexit is the latest excuse from the SNP in its relentless independence campaign. It is absurd that the SNP seeks to use Europe to get an independence referendum that cannot guarantee European Union membership in return. We could end up not just being outside the UK but being outside Europe. We would certainly be isolated then.

The voters are not buying it. If the election failed to endorse Theresa May's plan for Brexit, it certainly failed to endorse Nicola Sturgeon's plan for independence. The loss of big political creatures such as the SNP's former leader Alex Salmond and its former Westminster leader Angus Robertson requires an appropriate response. To carry on regardless would be failing to understand what just happened. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, to lose one leader may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose two looks like carelessness.

Something strange is going on in Scottish politics and in the SNP. Once upon a time, Alex Neil was a fundamentalist who demanded independence without delay and Nicola Sturgeon was the gradualist. The roles are now reversed, and Nicola Sturgeon has gone from arch-gradualist to neo-fundamentalist in just two years.

Nicola Sturgeon's carelessness is not just harming the SNP; it is harming the economy, too. Official figures show that Scotland is on the brink of a recession. Ernst & Young reports that the Scottish economy is

"stuck in the slow lane".

The EY Scottish ITEM club has predicted "below par" GDP growth of 0.9 per cent in 2017, which is half that expected for the UK.

Our economy is set to lag behind that of the UK, with consumer and company confidence falling. The employment level in Scotland is forecast to fall this year. It is expected to drop by 0.1 per cent in 2017, followed by further decreases of 0.5 per cent and 0.3 per cent in the following two years. Consumer spending is to rise by just 1 per cent in 2017 and by less than 1 per cent from 2018 through to 2020. That compares with an average annual rate of 2.3 per cent over the past five years.

Scotland today is set to be behind. Brexit affects us all, but independence plans and the Government's failure to perform and deliver are hitting us, too. The SNP Government should abandon its plans for independence and focus on what it was elected to do.

Liberal Democrats have big plans to invest in our people, through education and mental health services. We have plans for a close relationship with Europe to boost trade and jobs. We have plans that will open up and advance our country—not close it off and hold it back.

I move amendment S5M-06045.2, to leave out from "welcomes the fact" to end and insert:

"however, recognises that official figures show Scotland on the brink of a recession while Ernst and Young reports that the Scottish economy is 'stuck in the slow lane'; believes that repeated warnings about the fragility of the economy and business confidence have been dismissed; recognises and acknowledges the challenges facing Scotland's economy, including the threat of another divisive independence referendum, a hard Brexit and skills shortages, and believes that a long-term plan to build a strong economy must include the removal of the threat of a referendum on Scottish independence and avoiding a hard Brexit, combined with transformative additional investment in education and a step-change in mental health to help people achieve their potential and enable businesses to find the skills they need."

15:26

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I stand before you as someone who has worked at the sharp end of businesses across the globe. I have seen economies boom and bust, and I have witnessed the decisions of policy makers as they impact on people's lives. Because of that, and in my role as parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for the

Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, I know just how lucky we are to live in Scotland, one of the world's most prosperous countries, being in the top 20 of OECD nations for income per head. I recognise the responsibility that we have as politicians to protect it.

Scotland is lucky to have an expanding food and drink sector and a globally recognised tourism industry. We are lucky that research and development investment has gone up 41 per cent in real terms over the past nine years. We are lucky to have world-class universities and gold-standard research, and even a blossoming space industry. We are lucky to have lower unemployment and higher productivity growth than the rest of the UK.

Those things did not happen by chance. They have happened because the SNP Government has worked hard to ensure that Scotland's place in the world is an outward-looking, international one and has ensured that the fundamental drivers of growth have been strong over the past decade.

Dean Lockhart: Given the wonderful performance of the SNP Government over the past decade, why has average growth been a mere 0.7 per cent over those 10 years, whereas long-term growth in Scotland is about 2.5 per cent?

Ivan McKee: The member will know that growth in the UK is now collapsing as a consequence of Brexit. That is the situation. If he looks back over the years 2014-15 and 2015-16, he will see that growth per head in Scotland was higher than that across the UK, and UK growth is higher because of immigration and significant increases in population. The forecast, with population coming down because of the Brexit policies, shows a collapse in UK growth going forward. As they say in business, you make your own luck. The SNP Government is committed to Scotland's economic future.

Growing Scotland's economic and business base is a key priority. We have cut taxes for businesses. The small business bonus scheme has saved 100,000 businesses more than £1.2 billion in rates. We are supporting Scottish businesses on the international stage, with the Scottish growth scheme providing £500 million in investment guarantees for companies to grow and export more.

We have worked hard to make Scotland an attractive place to do business, with record foreign direct investment into Scotland representing the best performance in the UK outside of London for the fifth year running. We have grown productivity, the long-term key to economic success, at four times the rate of the UK. Scotland has the highest

average pay anywhere in the UK outside of London and the south-east.

The SNP Government is not just investing in business; we are also investing in people. We have one of the most highly educated workforces in Europe. I am proud that our Government values education and innovation, investing £1 billion per year in higher education and funding research and innovation to keep our economy competitive. An educated population benefits us all. Most of all, I am proud that our Government values inclusive growth, which is fundamental to our advancement as a society and imperative to our economic growth.

However, there is no denying that there are challenging times ahead. Of course, the biggest threat to our economy right now is Brexit. We need to do all we can to protect our economy from the Tory Government's insane decision to leave the European single market and implement a hard Brexit. Since that decision was taken, inflation has risen, wages have been squeezed and businesses have been losing confidence. The pound fell again this week as the Prime Minister formed a coalition of chaos with the DUP in the aftermath of a wholly unnecessary general election.

The cracks are showing in our economy because of the reckless actions of the UK Government. The fact that, for example, applications from EU nurses to work in the UK are down significantly is storing up future problems for our public services.

Today sees the publication of the latest unemployment statistics. Once again, Scotland leads the way, with unemployment now down to a record-beating 4 per cent, which is much better than the UK's performance. Particularly pleasing is the fact that Scotland's youth unemployment rate is almost 3 percentage points lower than that of the UK. That is a consequence of the Scottish Government's focus on positive destinations for our young people.

The coherent focus of the Scottish Government is on what matters—getting on with the day job. It is focused on further improving positive destinations for our young people and delivering highly effective and targeted interventions to save and grow key sectors, while the UK Government obsesses with doing as much damage to the economy as possible through the pursuit of a chaotic Brexit, which is now not just hard but shambolic.

These are difficult times. Uncertainty, which is not of our making but was created in another place, is driving growth rates down and inflation up across the UK. We are at the start of a rocky ride. At some point reality will intervene and the illusion of fortress UK isolating itself from our European

neighbours will be revealed as the economic idiocy that it is.

In the meantime, the Scottish Government is focused on doing what it can, with the limited powers that we have, to protect and build Scotland's economy and to make the case strongly and coherently for Scotland's future as a European trading nation that understands that the benefits of membership of the single market are critical to the future success and prosperity of this country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Liam Kerr, to be followed by Gillian Martin.

15:32

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Do I have five minutes or six minutes?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Six. [*Interruption.*] I am sorry; it is five minutes.

Liam Kerr: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I thought so.

Two years ago, the Scottish Government set out a new economic strategy. I believe that most of us in the chamber would agree with the strategy's general assessment of Scotland's economy back then:

"Scotland is a wealthy and competitive economy by international standards. However, many similar-sized economies perform better, not just economically, but also on measures of equality, wellbeing and sustainability."

Two years on, little progress has been made. In fact, on many indicators, Scotland's economy has fallen further. The economy is halfway towards recession. The job creation rate is 2.7 per cent, against a UK rate of 9 per cent. Ernst and Young forecast a year of stagnation and below-par growth.

As we all know, the Scottish Government will take no lessons from anyone in the chamber, but perhaps it will take a lesson from itself. In particular, it could revisit page 7 of "Scotland's Economic Strategy", which states:

"Boosting competitiveness is key to supporting long-term economic growth."

I agree, so why make Scotland uncompetitive, with a high-tax, low-growth economy that acts as a drag?

In the shortened time allotted to me, I will focus on two areas. First, the Scottish Government needs to reconsider the business rates system. The current system is not fair; it is a disincentive to success. In the words of Jerry Schurder, head of rating at property consultancy Gerald Eve:

"When judged against the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, fairness and transparency, it is clear that the business rates system is failing on all grounds. It has become a cumbersome, opaque albatross around the neck of businesses, stifling growth and placing too much of the burden on the shoulders of those who can least afford it."

I know that the Scottish Government introduced the small business bonus scheme. I know that because I write to Mr Mackay almost weekly at the moment on behalf of yet another business that has pleaded with me to try to get him to do something about business rates because it made the mistake of growing too big for the exemption—a business that, on being hit by perhaps a 200 per cent rates rise, faces the choice between laying off a couple of staff and diminishing its offering or deciding that it is just not worth it and closing its doors altogether.

Mr Mackay writes back to me to tell me again about the small business relief scheme, regardless of whether there is any possibility of my constituent availing himself of it. Sometimes Mr Mackay tells me about capping certain industries' rates at 12.5 per cent, but even if my constituent's business can use that, it is only for one year; it is a sticking plaster solution, which does not resolve the problem of the punishingly steep increases that some businesses face.

Uncertainty is the nemesis of investment. A long-term solution is needed to boost business confidence in the rates system. The Federation of Small Businesses has said clearly that the business rates system needs reform, and I agree.

The second issue, which is particularly relevant to the north-east, is the land and buildings transaction tax, which Bill Corbett, of McEwan Fraser Legal, describes as "punitive". According to Rettie & Company, Scotland's housing market has lost 10 per cent of sales of homes valued at more than £425,000. Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Edinburgh are disproportionately affected by the land and buildings transaction tax, as the value of the average family home typically exceeds £325,000. Savills recently showed that sales of properties over £400,000 have fallen by 51 per cent—and no wonder: a buyer at the higher end in Scotland pays 27 per cent more in tax than they would do south of the border. Retired people cannot sell their large homes to downsize to something more manageable. Expanding families cannot buy larger homes, because they are priced out by taxes.

LBTT does not even maximise tax revenues. The Scottish Property Federation found that LBTT generated revenues of £481 million in 2016-17—some £57 million less than forecast.

If the Scottish Government is serious about boosting economic growth, it must design a tax system that maximises growth, maximises

revenues and does not act as a drag on growth. Businesses must have confidence in the taxation system if they are to invest, innovate and grow.

Businesses also need to be confident that the Scottish Government will not be the cause of economic uncertainty. The best way to provide that confidence is to shelve any plans for a second independence referendum. We have had endless referendums and elections over the past few years, and in each one the people of Scotland gave the Scottish National Party a clear message: no more. The people want the Scottish Government to focus on skills, jobs, taxation systems and the stimulation of Scotland's sluggish economy.

Ivan McKee: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is winding up.

Liam Kerr: I urge members to vote for the Scottish Conservative amendment, and let us see the Scottish Government focus on those issues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise to members. I was not aware that we were having five-minute speeches—I am now.

15:37

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): The Scottish economy continues to be a magnet for investment from abroad. Last year, 2016, was another good year for foreign direct investment in Scotland, with FDI projects at a 10-year high. I am proud that Scotland's economy continues to succeed, in spite of the UK Government's austerity actions and last year's potentially toxic decision to leave the EU, which has had an impact on the UK's reputation across the world as an outward-looking country.

The UK Government continues to put political games—Brexit, and the political misjudgment of last week's snap general election—ahead of what is best for the people of Scotland. However, Scotland's success in attracting foreign investment increasingly looks like a testament to the benefits of an altogether different approach by this Government and our agencies.

I was particularly pleased to see in Ernst & Young's report that between 2016 and 2017 Aberdeen moved from being the 10th most attractive place in the UK for FDI to being the seventh most attractive place, the number of projects having doubled since 2015. That shows the resilience of the north-east economy in very testing times.

There has long been innovation in the north-east in the oil and gas industry. In yesterday's meeting of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

Committee, it was interesting to hear evidence from National Grid, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, Energy UK and the UK energy research centre, on Scotland's leadership and reputation on renewable energy.

From the roots of its oilfields in the North Sea and our onshore gas plants, the north-east of Scotland has a strong and established supply chain and infrastructure that can support a renewables industry. Renewables-related research and testing at our universities, and growing port infrastructure developments, mean that Scotland can be at the centre of the renewables industry.

I live in an area that has a very high concentration of engineering talent and resource, so I am at great pains to ask the Government to capitalise on that resource at a time when many people in oil and gas are facing uncertainty as a result of the global oil price. I urge those who are looking at the city region deal for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to have procurement processes in place that favour local companies, such as Primarc Engineering that I met the other week when campaigning. It has long relied on oil and gas for a great deal of its business and needs assistance on how to apply for contracts outwith that area. I urge the Government to give more guidance to small and medium enterprises on how to do that, as they have transferable skills that could benefit from that guidance.

The Scottish Government's energy strategy lays out a target for powering our country by 50 per cent renewables in the next 10 years. We are already ahead of the game, and it is a huge area of growth. The fossil fuel future will be diverted into manufacturing, and chemicals, and there will not be one thing in the chamber that is not touched by a by-product of oil. That will not change any time soon, but the future of light, heat and power is with renewables and that is an area in which we can make an impact.

In 2016, Vattenfall confirmed that it will construct a £300 million 11-turbine wind farm off the Aberdeenshire coast; that European offshore wind deployment centre will be a test and demonstration facility and the largest of its kind in Scotland. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire's infrastructure—the port, airport and helicopter facilities—make it a natural place for investment. Keith Brown mentioned the investment in the AWPR that will make the area even more attractive as the road nears completion.

The renewables and oil and gas industries build on Scotland's existing strengths, but in my final minute I want to consider how we can encourage Scotland's new businesses to seek investment and innovate. Business angel investing is one way in which that can be done, by providing support for

a large number of early stage and start-up businesses. However, very few business angels in Scotland are women—about 3 per cent—and investors tend to invest in people who remind them of themselves. If the vast majority of business angels are men, the vast majority of recipients will be men—I am sorry, but that is a fact.

When we promote growth, we should consider what is growing and what is being invested in. In these uncertain economic times, we should work to develop an inclusive and fair economy. One way to do that would be to develop a women's business angels network; I have come across that idea in my work with Women's Enterprise Scotland. One such business is that of Leah Hutcheon, from Appointedd, who is a WES ambassador. She was initially supported by a Scottish Government EDGE grant, then expanded her appointment booking software company to a wide variety of small businesses; she now has 12 staff and is recruiting. If we take what Leah has done and replicate that across a lot of other women-led businesses, we will be able to tap into a massive resource.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There we must conclude. I am sorry—that was a good example, but you must conclude.

15:42

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): This debate has been wearingly familiar: from the SNP, we have heard the story that all is rosy and that the couple of things that are wrong are all the fault of other people. From the Tories, we have heard about the Laffer curve again.

To be frank, the debate is not good enough—the Scottish economy deserves better. We need a frank and honest assessment. Of course the Government cannot control every aspect of the economy, but it must take responsibility for preparing the economy and it must be honest about the opportunities and the threats that are before us. It is disappointing that Keith Brown's opening remarks mentioned that it is right to celebrate that unemployment is down, but failed to mention that inactivity is up. He was right to celebrate productivity, but he was completely wrong to fail to mention that it is lagging behind that of the rest of the UK.

It is disgraceful that it took Keith Brown a full eight minutes to talk about anything that the Scottish Government is doing to improve the economy and 10 minutes to talk about anything that it will do in the future. That is not good enough. We need a frank assessment of Scotland's economy. If we have that, the conclusion is clear: Scotland's economy is not

performing well—it is fragile and it lags behind that of the rest of the UK. Scottish growth is a third of that of the UK and it has lagged behind the UK in every quarter, bar one, since 2014. We are on the edge of a technical recession.

There are strengths: we have strengths in industry, for example in financial services and technology. A responsible Government has to view our strengths and weaknesses, and our opportunities and threats in the round. It is not good enough to just point to Brexit and the oil price. Brexit is only a partial explanation, because it affects the whole United Kingdom, not just Scotland, but it does not explain our lag. The oil price has gone from being a one-off shock to a persistent and stubborn trend in the economy. To be frank, as the Greens have highlighted, that exposes the weaknesses and the failure of the Scottish Government to pursue a diversification strategy.

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): The member raises the issue of the balance between the low-carbon economy and oil and gas. Will he at least acknowledge that we have, in the energy strategy, set out a clear role for the oil and gas industry in the low-carbon transition, and that we have set the extremely ambitious goal for 2030 that 50 per cent of our energy requirements are to be served by renewables?

Daniel Johnson: Of course I welcome the strategy. However, as with much since we came back to Parliament this time last year after the election, we have seen strategies, objectives and goals, but very little in the way of how they will be achieved or on implementation.

Today's debate and the motion are very characteristic of the Scottish Government. Although it is willing to trumpet good news, it ignores the bad and makes vague promises that it will do something in the future. Indeed, the motion is something of a tale of two EY reports. The Scottish Government is very happy to hold up the "EY's Scotland Attractiveness Survey 2017: Standing strong in uncertain times" report, which celebrates foreign direct investment, but it completely fails to recognise the other recently report published by the EY Scottish ITEM club on Scotland's "stagnating" growth.

After 10 years of SNP Government, that should come as no surprise. It is selective in the presentation of its facts and it fails to be clear on the challenges. It is far too quick to blame others, which prevents it from being proactive on the issues that we need to face. Therefore, we should be totally unsurprised that it is vague in setting out actions and reluctant to use the powers that it has.

Gillian Martin: Will the member take an intervention?

Daniel Johnson: No, thank you.

The overarching issues that the economy faces are risk and uncertainty. The one decision that is completely within the Scottish Government's control and that it could take now to de-risk the economy would be to rule out a second independence referendum.

It is ridiculous to hear SNP member after SNP member say that it is the other parties that are talking about a second independence referendum. Maybe their televisions were off, but it was the First Minister on 13 March who announced that there would be a second independence referendum. Maybe they have not been paying attention. Maybe they should be checking their phones, because I think that she was tweeting about the issue today.

The true tragedy is that this is not just about headline figures or the economy, because there are key issues about underemployment, people's ability to advance and gain employment, in-work poverty and the hollowing out of mid-tier, mid-wage jobs.

Employment is down by 20,000. This is the only part of the UK in which economic inactivity has risen. The level of job-to-job moves—that is, people getting new opportunities—is two thirds of the peak figure and below the UK average. In reality, the promise of work is being undermined. Work should be able to provide security, the means for a person to provide for themselves and opportunity for the future. This Government's actions are failing on that promise.

We face a number of issues, including automation and increasing self-employment. This Government's inactivity is completely failing to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. Above all else, we must rule out a second independence referendum in order to give back certainty and stability. Frankly, this Government is undermining that with every step that it takes towards a second independence referendum.

15:48

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): When we examine the statistics on Scotland's economy, we see both the strength of its foundations and the improvements that have been made in recent years. It is true that our gross domestic product has grown at a slower rate than that of the UK as a whole. That is in large part due to the global slowdown in the oil and gas sector, but it has been counterbalanced by continued impressive foreign direct investment and our low unemployment rates. However, with

financial uncertainty due to Brexit looming large in the near future, there is no guarantee that the situation as it stands will be spared volatility.

I am sure that my colleagues across the chamber today would agree that public sector investment can strongly enhance a country's economic performance. Such investment helps to develop long-term growth enablers including schools, transport and communications, and it plays a key part in improving quality of life.

Despite cuts in Scotland's capital budget—it is estimated that the budget will be £600 million lower in real terms in 2019-20 than it was a decade previously—the Scottish Government will take steps to maximise investment through a range of measures including capital borrowing powers, revenue funded investment through the non-profit distributing programme, rail regulatory asset base funding and capital receipts.

The planned investment over 2015-16 and 2016-17 is estimated to support over 30,000 full-time equivalent Scottish jobs in the wider economy. That comes on top of the many projects that the Scottish Government has invested in over the years prior to 2015. Many of those projects are intended to provide benefits for the whole of Scotland. The digital Scotland superfast broadband programme, for example, was one of the most ambitious infrastructure programmes undertaken by any Government, and has clearly been a tremendous success. The initial target of providing fibre broadband access to 85 per cent of premises by March 2016 was reached six months ahead of schedule, and we are on track to hit our overall target of 95 per cent by the end of this year. Given that more and more our daily lives rely on some form of internet access, a fast and reliable connection is more important than ever.

Close to my constituency is the reinstatement of the Borders railway, which has proved to be an outstanding success. In the six months following its opening, almost 700,000 passengers used the service—22 per cent more than had been forecast. At the end of last month, a report was published by the campaign for Borders rail which examines the advantages of extending the line via Hawick to Carlisle. That extension could provide innumerable benefits to people in the south of Scotland and beyond. I look forward to seeing the conclusions that arise from the Scottish Government's project review, into which that report will feed.

Energy is another area that has benefited from investment. In 2014, the Scottish Government created an energy expert group to examine the potential for expansion of geothermal energy. As a result of that group's work, the low-carbon infrastructure transition programme invested £185,000 in four geothermal projects. In April it

was announced that the Natural Environment Research Council is to invest in a geoenergy observatory in central Scotland that will focus on geothermal energy.

Parents and children across Scotland have benefited from investment in schools. In my constituency alone there has been investment over the past few years in new or rebuilt schools, including Newbattle high in Dalkeith and primaries in Wallyford, Roslin, and Paradykes in Loanhead. Beyond that, the Scottish Government has provided £10 million to the University of Edinburgh to support construction of the Roslin innovation centre at Easter Bush.

All those examples are before we even consider the Scottish Government's successes: in housing, in which we have exceeded our target to build 30,000 affordable homes by late 2015; in regeneration, with over £372 million having been directly invested in related activity up to 2015-16; and in health, which has seen substantial investment in a wide range of new hospitals and care projects.

However, the steps that it is proposed will be taken in future years need to be filtered carefully through the prism of Brexit. The result of last week's general election has made it clear that voters across the UK have no interest in a hard Brexit, but given the current uncertainty over who will actually be involved in the negotiations from the UK, and possibly even who the Prime Minister will be, we are no nearer achieving clarity.

What we do know is how a range of likely outcomes are expected to affect Scotland's economy. The EU market provides access to about 500 million people, and Scotland's exports are now worth more than £11.6 billion annually, which equates to about 42 per cent of our international exports. It is estimated that there are roughly 1,000 EU-owned companies in Scotland employing more than 115,000 people. Approximately 173,000 EU citizens live in Scotland, providing a range of skills and expertise that help to encourage productivity growth. Regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, all those benefits will be heavily affected one way or another.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There you must conclude. There is no need to turn the page.

15:53

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): The state of the economy is rightly considered to be a gauge by which to rate the success or otherwise of any Government. That being so, the Scottish Government clearly has nothing to crow about. It presides over an economy that is performing badly and which by many factors is considered to be

halfway to recession. Output was down by 0.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2016 compared with growth of 0.7 per cent in the rest of the UK. It is a flatlining economy, compared with an increasing economy elsewhere in the UK. The respected Fraser of Allander institute has said that the Scottish economy "remains fragile" and EY has said that Scotland faces a year of "near stagnation".

Paul Wheelhouse: Does Alison Harris agree with me that Brexit and the oil and gas industry troubles have had an impact on the Scottish economy, or does she—like her colleagues—think that they have played no role whatsoever in the performance of the Scottish economy?

Alison Harris: Although Brexit will be challenging, the real threats to the Scottish economy are indyref 2 and higher tax.

Compared to the rest of the UK, Scotland has lower employment, higher economic inactivity and lower jobs growth. That is the SNP's record on the economy. The SNP might attempt to use Brexit as a fig leaf to cover its failures, but Professor Graeme Roy, who is the director of the Fraser of Allander institute, has warned against making that linkage. He has said:

"Scotland's economic challenges and underperformance predate that vote".

He has also stated:

"With any Brexit uncertainty affecting the UK as well, it's hard to argue that Scotland's weaker performance can be explained by the outcome of the EU referendum."

Let us look at some of the real factors that contribute to the poor growth in Scotland's economy. There is a failure to invest in the future. Up to 2015, the SNP cut the number of college places by 152,000. That is 152,000 students who could have done much to reduce the skills gap and boost future productivity. Educational standards in schools are slipping backwards, and Scotland is falling down the programme for international student assessment—PISA—rankings. Scottish Government figures confirm that attainment in numeracy and literacy is down on its watch. The Government is failing our children on the most basic of skills—the lack of which will be a drag on economic growth in years to come.

There is a failure to innovate. Research and development funding here continues to lag behind that in the rest of the UK, and entrepreneurial activity remains substantially below that in the other home nations. Scotland continues to suffer from lower productivity and we sit well down the rankings of innovation-driven countries.

As the perception has increased that the Scottish Government is more interested in the upheaval of a second referendum than in

providing the basis for a successful economy, business has taken note. EY says that Scotland is lagging behind in attracting new companies to invest and to set up headquarters in Scotland. China and India rank among the UK's top inward investors, but they are not even in Scotland's top 10. "EY's attractiveness survey Scotland 2016" reveals that only 4 per cent of investors rank Scotland as the most attractive UK area for investment. Lloyds Bank has shown that confidence among Scottish companies is the lowest of that in any home nation. To cap it all, the leading investor Alasdair Locke, who is the chairman of Motor Fuel Group, says that until the uncertainty that is being caused by the prospect of another referendum is cleared, he will not be investing in Scotland. Sadly, he is not alone.

Along with the political uncertainty, the additional tax burden that is being imposed by the Scottish Government will do nothing to turn around our economy. Johnston Carmichael has warned that higher taxes in Scotland could see businesses move elsewhere in the UK, and Martin Bell, who is the head of tax at BDO UK, highlights the difficulty for Scottish businesses that are struggling in the competition to attract and retain the very best talent.

The four pillars on which the Scottish Government set out its economic strategy are all based on shaky foundations. Investment is underutilised, we are lagging behind in innovation, we are stagnating in internationalisation and we have stalled on inclusiveness. The SNP Government needs to start listening to experts and businesses and, most of all, to the voters of Scotland, who are demanding that it get back to the day job.

The way to turn round Scotland's struggling economy is for the Government not only to listen and to take proposals for a second referendum off the table, but to recognise the need to keep taxes in line with those in the rest of the UK, in order not to deter jobs and investment. The way to increase growth and boost the economy is to have a competitive economy and to make Scotland a more attractive destination in which to do business by improving enterprise, innovation and skills.

I support the Conservative amendment.

15:58

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The Brexit chaos, crisis and uncertainty were caused by the Tories' EU referendum last year. One aspect of that is the 90 per cent reduction in the number of EU nurses registering to work in the UK. There is also the fact that, according to the British Medical Association, 42 per cent of doctors from EU countries are

considering leaving the UK. Yesterday, we heard that London will potentially lose its EU euro clearing role, which would cost it hundreds of millions or billions of pounds every year.

That highlights once again the Brexit chaos and the crisis that the Tories have caused for the economy, which not only Scotland but the rest of the UK is facing. To top it all off, the Tories are now going to be marching to the beat of a DUP drum. Where is that going to lead us—in terms of the economy—in the months and years ahead?

Alison Harris finished by saying that we should keep taxes in line with those in the rest of the UK. I am sure that other members will join me in asking whether the point of devolution was not that a Scottish Parliament, irrespective of who was in power, would be able to do things a bit differently if it so wished.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Will Stuart McMillan take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: I will if it is brief.

James Kelly: If that is the point of devolution, why did the SNP not make the most of its powers and put up taxes for top earners to increase the Scottish budget?

Stuart McMillan: If Mr Kelly wants to make the poorest pay, that is something that he will have to argue for, but the SNP certainly does not want to make the poorest people in Scotland pay.

There is another aspect, because 2016 was a record-breaking year for foreign direct investment in Scotland and the 2017 EY Scotland attractiveness survey shows that Scotland has retained its position as the top location in the UK outside London for foreign direct investment. That gives a clear indication that Scotland remains established as a location of choice for investors.

Also, today's excellent employment statistics—

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: I have already taken one and I have only five minutes. I am sorry.

Today's excellent employment statistics highlight that unemployment in Scotland is now at a 25-year low. I do not think that any member in the chamber is complacent, as there is still a lot more work to do, but the fact that Scotland attracted more R and D projects than any other UK nation or region in 2016—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Just a wee minute, Mr McMillan. Could the conversation that Ms Baillie and the cabinet secretary are having cease? It is not very kind to Mr McMillan.

Stuart McMillan: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

In 2016, Scotland attracted more R and D projects than any other UK nation or region including London. In addition, Scotland was second only to London in securing software projects, and all three of Scotland's largest cities—Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen—are in the UK's top 10 for numbers of FDI projects secured. However, as I said a few moments ago, we cannot be complacent.

Liam Kerr talked about taxation and business rates. A "TravelGBI" report stated:

"The Conservative manifesto promises a full review of business rates with more frequent revaluations and Labour promises a review of the entire system in the longer run."

That tells me that business rates elsewhere in these islands are a shambles and an absolute mess. When it comes to the economy, Mr Kerr should look at his own party and its failings in power rather than at anybody else.

In my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency, we have a huge opportunity to grow the tourism business base as well as the marine and renewables sectors. On Monday night, I held a tourism summit at the Beacon arts centre—a centre that has been funded partly by the Scottish Government as well as by many other folk including Inverclyde Council—and the point was made there that it is important to bring together many people, partners and organisations that have a genuine interest. For the Scottish economy to continue to improve and prosper, we need those areas that have sometimes been considered to be not as successful—Inverclyde is certainly one of them—to step up to the plate, and that tourism summit reflected one of the ways in which we will improve and add to Scotland's economy.

16:04

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): It has been a hectic time on the election trail, and opponents in the chamber traded a lot of blows in the election debates, so this afternoon I want to be helpful to the Scottish Government. I have no doubt that Keith Brown wants to promote the Scottish economy and see it go from strength to strength, so I will make some reasonable and practical suggestions.

I will start with the second independence referendum. If I was making a speech that was based on narrow political advantage, I would not mention the second independence referendum and I would not call for the SNP to scrap it because, as each day goes by, it is quite clear that more and more people are becoming disillusioned by the SNP due to it sticking with the second independence referendum.

Keith Brown: Does James Kelly realise that this is a debate on the economy? Can he confirm

whether Labour's position is that the UK should stay in the single market?

James Kelly: I am coming on to the economy and I will frame it along those lines.

The reality is that the SNP is tying itself in knots trying to explain the election result and why the second independence referendum should be on the table, so it is not able to concentrate on the issues that matter to people. Ensuring that we have skilled workers, that businesses are growing and that people are being paid fairly are the key components of growing the Scottish economy, but the SNP is not able to concentrate on those issues because, as a Government, it is being distracted by the second independence referendum.

Keith Brown: Single market?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me. I remind members that they should not be speaking to each other; they should be speaking through the chair.

James Kelly: The SNP should do itself a favour and take the second independence referendum off the table.

It would also be useful to make more use of the powers of the Scottish Parliament and to increase the Scottish budget. I understand the argument that the SNP Government advances, which is that, to an extent, it is a victim of austerity from Westminster, but that is not an excuse for simply passing the cuts on to local communities, as happened in the recent budget with £170 million-worth of cuts. If the Government had made full use of its powers, it could have alleviated those cuts and there were good reasons for doing that.

One of the interesting aspects of the recent election was the debate about fair pay. Those who have had a pay cap for the past eight years, including those in the Scottish public sector, have seen their wages rise by less than inflation, so they are worse off. In Scotland, there are 467,000 people who earn less than the living wage. Not only is that a scandal, it is not good for the economy. Surely it is better to have money in the pockets of those workers who earn less than the living wage so that they will spend it supporting local businesses and companies in their communities, rather than having money lying in the bank accounts of people who are high earners and who will not spend it. As well as being fair, it makes good economic sense to give workers a pay rise—that will help the economy.

The other reason why taxation is good for the economy is that it can be used to support skills and education. The Scottish Government has reduced the number of teachers by 4,000 over the past 10 years. That can only be to the detriment of the education that children get in school, so it

undermines Scotland's ability to produce kids to go into courses such as information technology and engineering, which are key to the economy.

In all honesty, I am trying to give good, practical advice to the Government: take indyref 2 off the table, increase the budget, support fair pay, support economic growth and prioritise education and skills. Those are good points that would help the Government.

16:09

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

There are a lot of positives in the Scottish economy, which we must not forget. We have a higher GDP per head than anywhere else in the UK outside London; our exports rose by 41 per cent from 2007 to 2015; and we have the highest foreign direct investment outside London. The food and drink sector, to take just one sector, has been a success story, with a turnover of around £14.4 billion and ambitions to double that to £30 billion by 2030. Clearly, we need to be at the higher end of that sector and others. Our fish, beef, whisky, beer and soft fruit—the list goes on—are quality products that command a premium price, and we should focus on that part of the market.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): Does Mr Mason regard farmed salmon as one of the foods at the higher end of the quality food market?

John Mason: I think that the buyers look at all Scottish salmon as being at the higher end of the market, but there are clearly issues around how salmon are kept and so on, which the committees that Mr Wightman and I are involved with are looking at.

The SNP Government has made major investments to benefit the economy, including investments in the Queensferry crossing, in the M74/M73/M8 development near my constituency and in the field of rail, among other things. Modern apprenticeships continue to be a success, and we are building towards having 30,000 per year by 2020. The small business bonus scheme has been a huge boost for business, and I note that the FSB, in its briefing for the debate, reckoned that one fifth of businesses would close without that scheme. This Government and this party are business friendly. We aim to get the balance right between the Conservatives, who crush ordinary people, and Labour, which has traditionally owned and run everything at a loss.

However, the UK is far from perfect. It is worth pointing out that the UK is far too centralised a country. Some people would say that London is the driver of the economy, but others have clearly said that it is a black hole that is sucking wealth out of the rest of the country—it depends how one

looks at it. I was a bit surprised that Jackie Baillie did not seem to acknowledge that point in her statement when she criticised some of the figures that we are dealing with. I find it interesting that the SNP can be accused of centralisation when Labour and the Conservatives have failed to tackle the challenge of London centralisation over many decades.

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee has been doing a lot of interesting work recently. On Monday, a group of us went to Fife, where we visited the University of St Andrews's Guardbridge centre, which is involved in a district heating system. That reminds us that universities are a huge and successful part of our economy. People at the centre told us that the investments that the university had made in district heating were having a positive impact on climate change and were protecting people from volatile oil and gas prices.

We also went to Methil to see the 7MW wind turbine there, which was the largest in the world when it was erected. Scotland was at the forefront of that technology at that time, but did not take advantage of that fact, leaving others to profit. I note that the Institute of Physics says that physics-based industries contribute £15 million annually to the economy.

Finally, we visited the hydrogen office project, which has a wind turbine that produces electricity for eight buildings, one of which is used by East Fife Football Club, and produces hydrogen for the local bin lorries. The experiments that are being done there are cutting edge and demonstrate that hybrid technology, using diesel and hydrogen, is probably the best way ahead rather than using pure hydrogen. Some of the processes are not commercially viable at this point, but they are an indication of what Scotland can do and where the Scottish economy can go.

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee has also been examining the gender pay gap and we will, I hope, publish our report on that fairly soon. The issue is important not just because it is about treating women more fairly, which is, obviously, good in itself, but because the evidence is that the economy loses out if we are not using our workforce to its full potential. Scotland's economy can do better if we have more women in leadership positions and if more women are represented in all sectors, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Brexit has already led to a weaker pound, with a rise in inflation—now at 2.9 per cent—that is probably linked to that. The dithering of the Conservative Party has not helped. I agree that the weak pound can give a temporary boost to exports but, in the longer term, a weak currency reflects a weak economy—that is, the UK economy. Brexit could also lead to a skills

shortage, as others have said. There is already a shortage of workers in some sectors, and the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee have heard from organisations that are highly dependent on EU workers, including businesses that are involved in agriculture and food processing, and universities and the national health service. That issue is a key concern for Scotland.

I see that I have run out of time. I support the motion.

16:14

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): Today's debate takes place in the chamber of the most powerful Parliament of its kind in the world. It is one in which we can now scrutinise the use of the extensive economic levers that the Scottish Government has at its disposal in order to influence the Scottish economy positively.

Sadly, what we have seen in recent months and years has been an economy in Scotland that has been flagging in relation to that in the wider UK. This afternoon, we have heard figures from other members—I shall not repeat them—that show that Scotland's economy has been underperforming. It has been doing so not just relative to the UK economy in general but in comparison with the economies of English regions such as the northern powerhouse. How do we turn that around and use the levers that we have to encourage growth in Scotland?

There is much that the Scottish Government could be getting on with that would ensure that Scotland sent a positive message to the rest of the world that we are open for business, but it is how we approach the challenge of the coming years that will determine our success. Lyndon B Johnson said:

"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."

Ivan McKee: At the start of his speech, the member said that he believes that this is the most powerful non-state Parliament in the world. In Canada and Australia, the state Parliaments have power over regional immigration policy. Does he believe that this Parliament should have power over such policy?

Gordon Lindhurst: No.

Scotland can win in the world if it seeks out positive trading relationships with partners across the globe. In the coming months and years, we will, no doubt, continue to maintain good trade links with our European partners, for whom good relations are equally important. At the same time, the rest of the world offers significant growth

potential. If we can sell brand Scotland to those places, there will be few limits to our growth potential.

This year, GDP growth in the euro area is projected to sit at 1.5 per cent and GDP growth in emerging and developing markets is projected to be 4.6 per cent. However, the growth rate in China is expected to be 6.2 per cent, and in India it is forecast to be 7.6 per cent. Only 0.7 per cent of our exports go to China and only 0.3 per cent go to India. Given that neither country has a trade agreement with the EU or, by extension, with the UK, the growth potential arising from our building deeper relationships with those countries could be significant for Scotland.

Earlier this year, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee heard evidence about the impact of leaving the EU, including on the potential for greater trade beyond Europe. Furthermore, Scotland Food & Drink previously gave evidence that there is

"potential for us in premium markets and tapping into consumers' desire for quality, authenticity and provenance".—[*Official Report, Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee*, 8 November 2016; c 34.]

I fully agree with that statement. We have a lot to be proud of in this country, and we have a global reach that is the envy of many. We must harness that potential, and the Government needs to play its part in making sure that Scottish businesses have the help that they need to increase their exports.

First, we must ensure that we play a positive role in trade negotiations rather than a negative one that focuses only on risk.

Stuart McMillan: Will the member take an intervention?

Gordon Lindhurst: Not at this stage.

We can do ourselves a favour—to use James Kelly's phrase—and be positive about leaving the EU because of the opportunities that will arise. For example, the UK intends to bring back the power to negotiate its own trade deals. Those can be ones in which our interests are not watered down or held up for years on end because of negotiation as a consequence of a complex block of 28 different countries seeking to further their own interests. Scotland will be able to have a much greater input into such deals, and ensuring that our voice is heard will be of paramount importance.

Secondly, the Scottish Government and its agencies must do more to encourage growth in exports. Larger companies can manage the complexities but others cannot. We must improve on our current situation.

Scotland has always been an outward-looking country. I believe that, by embracing that approach, many opportunities for growth will be presented by the circumstances that we now face.

16:19

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The debate has been varied and wandering—it has certainly not been just about Scotland's economy. I will touch on some of the issues that have been raised.

When Gillian Martin challenged Mr Lockhart on the post-study work visa, he said that that was an issue for the Brexit negotiations. If there was ever anything that was not to do with the Brexit negotiations, it is the post-study work visa, because it applies to non-EU students. We supported the post-study work visa, which was introduced by Labour, because it brought great advantages for Scottish universities, yet it was snatched away by a Tory Government. I ask Mr Lockhart to explain to the principals of Scotland's universities why Oxford and Cambridge universities merit a special arrangement but our universities do not. It is extremely damaging to our economy that the post-study work visa has been taken away.

In an intervention on Daniel Johnson, Mr Wheelhouse mentioned our transition to a low-carbon economy. Mr Johnson said that, although he welcomes strategies, he cannot see any benefits from them. He needs to open his eyes a bit more. Only this week, Scotland met its emissions reduction targets six years early, with emissions down by 46 per cent. We are working towards a low-carbon economy; what a great advantage that is for Scotland's standing in the world.

Patrick Harvie *rose*—

Clare Adamson: I am sorry. I am tight for time, so I will not take any interventions.

Scotland's economy is something of which we should all be proud. The oil and gas sector is starting to recover and to show signs of growth, and the labour market has remained resilient despite the pressures on it. Scotland also continues to be the most attractive part of the UK outside London for foreign direct investment. In the five years from 2010, Scotland's GDP growth was in line with the UK average and Scotland's GDP growth per head was above the UK average when the figure for London is excluded.

Dean Lockhart: Will the member give way?

Clare Adamson: No. I am not taking interventions.

Let us look at the situation in particular sectors. I declare an interest as a member of the British Computer Society. Every year, ScotlandIS, which is the body of the software industry in Scotland, carries out a survey among the software companies in Scotland. Its most recent survey, which is from 2016, shows that they are very positive about the way forward for software in Scotland. It also shows that there has been an increase in the uptake of modern apprenticeships in the IT sector, which are a fantastic alternative route into the industry to the more traditional routes of higher and further education. That increase is welcome, and I thank the Data Lab for its briefing for today's debate.

The Data Lab has been working with companies to demonstrate the value of big data and the internet of things and the positive benefits that those could have for the Scottish economy. That reminded me that I recently visited CENSIS, one of our centres of excellence, which is a place that works on the internet of things—the cabinet secretary mentioned it. It is important that we continue to invest in such areas, because Scotland is world leading in some IT areas and in financial technology. Colin Beattie also spoke about the life sciences innovations in his area. We should be extremely proud of the benefits that those sectors bring to Scotland.

Ivan McKee mentioned the productivity level in Scotland, which is very important. As many members have said, a higher productivity level means that we have fewer of the low-value types of employment that seem to be favoured by the UK Government. The fact that productivity is better in our economy means that people are better paid and there are fewer zero-hours contracts. I declare an interest as a real living wage employer. We support the real living wage, not the pretend one that was introduced by the Tory Government, which does not meet the needs of a modern economy.

I ask Conservative members to speak to their colleagues at Westminster about the post-study work visa. Perhaps they could speak to them about VAT, too. Today, Liz Cameron of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce is calling on the UK Government to look at the help with inflation that could be provided by a reduction in VAT. While they are at it, Conservative members could also ask their Westminster colleagues whether they could return the money that has been picked from the pockets of our police and fire services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We move to the closing speeches. It is disappointing to note that not all those who contributed to the debate are in the chamber.

16:25

Willie Rennie: There have been several revelations in the debate. James Kelly wants to be helpful to the SNP, and John Mason has been to Fife and is raving about it, as he should. John Mason's revelation was followed by other speakers saying that there are a lot of positives about the Scottish economy. Gillian Martin said that it was a success and a magnet; Clare Adamson just said that it is world leading; and Stuart McMillan talked about Scotland being record breaking. Colin Beattie admitted weaknesses but blamed someone else, and John Mason said that Scotland was the best in the UK as long as we ignored a large part of the UK. Paul Wheelhouse blamed the oil industry—the very industry that the independence white paper and the case for independence were based on. He made all those claims, and it is quite right for SNP members to be cheery, because that is their job, but we need to point out that there are some weaknesses in Scotland's economy, even if SNP members choose to ignore them.

The FSB published in April its most recent business confidence index, for the first quarter of 2017.

Stuart McMillan: Will Mr Rennie take an intervention on that point?

Willie Rennie: No.

That FSB report suggested that confidence in Scotland is still in negative territory, at -9.6, and is behind the UK average of 20. According to the Institute of Physics, Scotland spends about 1.4 per cent of GDP on research and development, compared with the UK average of 1.68 per cent, and Scotland spends about 0.6 per cent of GDP on business R and D, compared with the UK average of 1.11 per cent. Those problems are long standing, but the SNP Government is hardly making any difference on moving in the right direction in those areas.

If Scotland wants to be a high-technology, high-productivity and high-prosperity economy in the future, it must tackle that stubborn performance gap. Scotland has lagged behind the rest of the UK and many other modern economies for far too long. If it were not for the funding from the UK research councils, we would be even further behind. A renewed plan to boost research and development is essential, with more tax breaks and incentives for companies to invest in R and D.

We need a long-term plan to build a strong economy that is based on investing in the best asset that we have—the people who live and work here—and I want to make common cause with Clare Adamson on a point that she made about Scottish universities and the post-study work visa. Scottish universities have seen a 60 per cent drop

in Indian students since 2012, which risks the £800 million that overseas students contribute to the Scottish economy. The Scottish Government should be able to sponsor new post-study work visas, which will support Scottish universities to be the best in the world.

We should guarantee the rights of EU citizens in this country, and that guarantee should extend to the rights of EU staff and students in our universities. At the University of St Andrews, which John Mason visited, a large proportion of student numbers, staff numbers and grant volumes of cash comes from the European Union. That is incredibly important and we should seek to protect that.

A transformative additional investment in education and a step change in mental health provision would help people to achieve their potential, too, and it would enable businesses to find the skills that they need. As we all know, the performance of Scottish education has dropped down the international rankings. To get it back up to the best in the world, we need to invest. We say that a modest penny on income tax would allow us to invest £500 million in nurseries, schools and colleges. Others may have other ideas, but colleges have lost 152,000 places, which has especially affected older people and women. Lifelong learning has been abandoned by the Government, but it should be a priority again and should give people the skills and retraining that they need for work.

Schools are struggling and the OECD report is a cause for great concern. In reading, science and maths, we have been falling behind other competitors in the past 10 years. The pupil equity fund is six years late and falls short of the equivalent fund in England—the pupil premium—which has closed the attainment gap by 5 percentage points.

We also need to invest in nursery education. It is the best educational investment that we can make, but the signs are that the SNP Government is struggling to roll out its programme. According to the annual survey of the nursery sector, only half of private and state nurseries plan to offer the places that are needed to achieve the expansion.

We also want a focus on mental health, given its critical importance to a healthy workforce. We want new mental health services in every general practice, accident and emergency department, police division and school, and a new five-point plan for offering mental health support to young mothers.

That is the Liberal Democrat plan for investing in people, attracting the best to our country and, through those people, generating growth and opportunity. Our plan is to use a modest increase

in taxation to invest in education—nurseries, schools and colleges—and in mental health services in all sectors of the health service.

Theresa May must avoid a damaging hard Brexit. Her plan was rejected at the ballot box; she needs to revisit what she plans to do now, and a new cross-party approach is required. However, the real threat to the Scottish economy comes from the SNP and its plans for another divisive independence referendum. Public opinion has swung away from that party and those plans; given that it is the biggest shift in public opinion away from the SNP ever, we deserve more than this.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Willie Rennie: That is why the SNP should respond by cancelling the referendum right now.

16:31

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): The last time that I spoke—indeed, we spoke—in a debate on the economy was on 19 April, which was the day after the Prime Minister called a general election. Although this is a debate on the economy, it is perhaps not surprising that other parties have chosen to use it to raise questions about the constitution.

The result of the Tories' decision to have a general election is even greater chaos. It follows the 2015 general election, when the Tories, including some members who are present, stood on a manifesto that promised voters in the UK that they could vote Conservative and not only preserve the UK's place in the single market but strengthen and expand that market. The reality is that it is the Conservatives who have made much of the constitution to deflect from their own disastrous actions—first, in calling a referendum on the EU and, secondly, in causing the chaos that the country now faces in the wake of the general election.

Our amendment focuses solely on the economy, because that is what the motion is about. As members will know—and as my colleague Patrick Harvie indicated at the beginning of the debate—the Greens take a very different view on matters to do with the economy. As I highlighted back in April, our party is part of an international movement that has been developing green economics over decades and which recognises that endless growth is not possible on a finite planet. Green economics also recognises that the climate crisis is leading to growing instability, unrest and economic decline, and we recognise that, to stay within the Paris climate targets, we need to keep in the ground the majority of the

hydrocarbons that other parties in the Parliament often tout as part of Scotland's economic future.

Mike Rumbles: As a north-east MSP, I am very keen to know whether the Greens consider the North Sea oil and gas industry to be an asset to the Scottish economy.

Andy Wightman: The North Sea oil and gas industry has clearly been an asset to the Scottish economy in the past, but it is not part of the future. The faster we can transition away from a hydrocarbon economy to a renewables economy, the better.

We have heard explanations as to why GDP figures are as they are in the United Kingdom and in Scotland. It is worth highlighting that the majority of the GDP growth across the UK lies in private consumption. In March 2015, private debt stood at over £1.5 trillion, which means that most of the so-called growth that others have welcomed is in fact just more debt as a result of people buying things that they do not need with money that they do not have.

Liam Kerr and other members talked about non-domestic rates. I agree that we need non-domestic rates reform; indeed, we need reform of a suite of taxes that relate to land and property. I look forward—as I am sure that Liam Kerr and other members do—to the Barclay review reporting on that issue soon. I hope that it questions why no rates have been paid for more than 90 per cent of land in Scotland in 50 years, for example, and that it questions the small business bonus scheme among other things.

Back in April, I talked about some of the scheme's failings and about a small business in East Lothian that was happy that it was paying no rates because of the increase in the threshold for the scheme. However, the rent for the empty shop next door was being increased in recognition of the fact that the occupier would no longer need to pay rates, so that occupier would be no better off as a consequence. The tax breaks were being capitalised into rent.

We will soon publish research that shows the losses, which run into tens of millions of pounds, to councils across Scotland and particularly in Edinburgh as a result of the rent-seeking behaviour of landlords, which are increasingly using property for short-term lets. As a consequence of the thresholds that have been set for the small business bonus scheme, some landlords are paying absolutely no tax to the City of Edinburgh Council and other councils, which provide the essential services on which their business is based.

If the Government was interested in investment in a sustainable economy, the cabinet secretary would not have been so enthusiastic in reeling off

in his opening remarks the list of the A96, the A9, the M8 and the big bridges, which are supposedly part of the sustainable economy. Although we agree with much of the Government's economic strategy, including much of the good work that it has done on renewables—John Mason mentioned the fascinating work that is being done across the country; we visited some of that on Monday—its economic strategy is fundamentally misconceived by having at its core the notion of sustainable economic growth.

The economy is not judged by growth; it is judged by how well the people of Scotland are housed, what savings and investments are being made in sustainable technologies, the state of the natural environment—the air, water, soils and seas—and the health of the population. With a healthy society, we should be able to reduce spending on the national health service rather than increase it. The economy is also judged by the strength of our democracy—particularly our local democracy.

The Scottish Green Party has done a lot since its establishment in 1990 to argue that we need a very different economic model. We can begin to achieve that with devolved powers, but we cannot fully realise the transformation without fundamental change in how the UK economy is run, from its financialisation of the housing market and its isolationist approach to Europe to the rise in public and private debt. The Green amendment highlights the challenges that the Scottish economy faces and I commend it to members.

16:37

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): It is all very well for the cabinet secretary to declare in his opening speech that our labour market is “resilient”, but he should have a look again at the extent of low pay, underemployment and zero-hours contracts in Scotland. It is true that, year on year, zero-hours contracts are down slightly, but more than 50,000 workers in Scotland are still on them. It is also true that the living wage is slightly up in Scotland, but the facts remain that one in five workers in Scotland is paid below the living wage and that many of them are low-paid women workers in social care, contract catering and cleaning, and retail. They are on poverty pay.

It is no good saying that the plight of the working poor is statistically worse in parts of England or Wales, or that 2 or 3 per cent more of the working poor are surviving in abject poverty in Bridgend than are doing so in Coatbridge. There is no crumb of comfort in that for the people whom I represent across Central Scotland.

Ivan McKee spoke of limited powers. The cabinet secretary has chastised members for not

having original thoughts. Here is an original thought: why does the Government not use the powers that it has over industrial policy, manufacturing policy, taxation policy—which James Kelly mentioned—planning policy, housing policy, education policy, skills policy and training policy to start to plan the economy?

In the debate, we have once again witnessed complacency rising from the SNP and self-congratulation rising as a result of the Government motion. There is a lack of understanding of what is going on out there in the real world. I sometimes wonder whether that is because of a wilful lack of understanding or because it is the inevitable consequence of a chauffeur-driven lifestyle—or maybe it is simply that it is not the political priority of nationalism.

The cabinet secretary can rhyme off EY attractiveness surveys, but what matters out in the real world is that wages are being squeezed harder than ever, while prices are rising. We wake up to headlines that price inflation is now running at 2.9 per cent. Real inflation, including housing costs—from the retail prices index—now stands at 3.7 per cent, which is why, in our amendment, we demand a living wage for all, and it is why the cabinet secretary, in his opening remarks, acknowledged the need to remove the cap on public sector pay.

My message to the Government on productivity is that people are not commodities or units of production. They are not simply wage earners. They are human beings. Scottish productivity may have grown, but if that is a result of cuts in hours, especially in offshore oil and gas and in manufacturing, it represents a pyrrhic victory.

I will now say a word or two about investment, which is featured in the Government motion. On 11 April this year, just a few days into the start of the new financial year, an email was sent out to the staff of Scottish Enterprise from Kerry Sharp, who is director of the Scottish Investment Bank, in which she warned—I will quote her at length, because this is what is happening out there in the real world—that

“We have insufficient budget to meet anticipated demand for everything we are being asked to consider under enhanced SIB ... New investments, the level of follow on expected, support for FDI ... We therefore need to prioritise our funding and people resource ... which will ultimately mean us investing in some companies and not others, even when they might be strong investment propositions ... As funding this year is more constrained than to date ... We will continue to support the pipeline of new investment opportunities but this may be at a reduced rate than last year”.

So, the head of the Scottish Government's key agency for industrial investment finds it necessary to warn operational staff in the Scottish Government's key agency for economic

development that the Government's provision in the teeth of Brexit and in the face of a growing investment gap is not to increase funding, but to cut funding. That is a damning indictment of a Government that claims to be stronger for Scotland.

I cannot close without reflecting on two lessons from last week's election. The first lesson—I hope that the SNP from the top to the bottom understands this—is that people from right across Scotland are saying—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt, Mr Leonard. Could we stop the private conversations among Government and Labour members, please?

Richard Leonard: The first lesson from last week is that people are saying that they have already given an answer to the question whether we want a separate Scottish state, and the answer was a resounding no. The Government now needs to remove the threat of that second divisive referendum.

The second lesson from last week is that nearly 13 million people voted Labour on a manifesto pledging an extension of public ownership, an end once and for all to the economics of austerity, a shift in power in the direction of working people, with a new generation—of young people, of older people, of working people—voting not just for a party but for an idea. That is a platform upon which we can build, so that we have an economy working for the people rather than people simply working for the economy. That means an economy with different priorities, providing people with hope and a vision for a better society—not just a narrow vision of a better Scotland, but the grander vision of a better society for all, underpinned by an economy that is run for the many, not the few.

16:44

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This has been a wide-ranging debate, with the inevitable party and constitutional battle lines being drawn. The background to it is the overall performance of the Scottish economy—an issue that we have discussed in the chamber on numerous occasions.

As we have heard again in the debate, we know that, during the latest quarter, the output of the Scottish economy contracted, whereas it grew strongly across the UK. Over the past 12 months, the economy in Scotland flatlined, whereas it grew at a rate of 1.9 per cent across the UK.

Although the unemployment rate in Scotland is lower than the rate in the UK as a whole—I confirm, for the benefit of the cabinet secretary, that we welcome that progress—the employment

rate is lower and economic inactivity is higher, as Dean Lockhart reminded us. We are simply not doing as well as we should.

We are still waiting for the Scottish Government's explanation for this state of affairs. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, who is not here today, previously blamed it all on Brexit, but surely any Brexit impact would be the same across the whole United Kingdom and would not specifically affect Scotland. There are surely other issues at stake, but we did not hear much about those this afternoon from the SNP.

Keith Brown: I ask Murdo Fraser to consider not just my statement or Derek Mackay's statement on this, but the statement from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund that

“the major risk for the UK economy is the uncertainty surrounding the exit ... from the European Union”

which could damage “domestic and foreign investment”.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for that intervention, but it does not answer my point. Why is Scotland alone seeing a downturn in the economy that is not affecting other parts of the United Kingdom? If it was down only to Brexit, we would see that impact across the whole UK.

We know that the Scottish Government does not like criticism from the Conservative Party or from other Opposition parties, so let us look at what some others are saying. We know that the Scottish National Party feels that it does not have many friends in the media, so I will not quote the *Daily Mail* or *The Daily Telegraph*. Rather, I will quote the SNP's house journal, *The National*—which is a favourite read of mine. An article that it published last month stated:

“Since Nicola Sturgeon took over, I'm sorry to say, Scottish economic policy has become a bit of a shambles. She herself appears ignorant of and indifferent to economics. The man who might have looked after these things for her, John Swinney, unwisely shifted himself into the quagmire of Scottish education, where he is in danger of sinking. So the Scottish economic shop is being minded by two men, Derek Mackay and Keith Brown, for whom the term clueless would be a compliment. While fatuously claiming the economy is resilient, they have in fact exposed its fragility.”

Those are cruel and unkind words. I would never use them myself; I am merely quoting directly Michael Fry, the well-known yes supporter and supporter of the SNP, writing in *The National* just last month. If that is what their friends say about them, are they surprised that they get criticism from other parties?

We agree with the Scottish Government that there are a number of strengths in the Scottish economy. In key sectors including energy, tourism and higher education we continue to perform well, although there are challenges.

The Scottish Government has set out its four priorities: investment, innovation, internationalisation and inclusiveness. In all those, there is a mixed picture. When it comes to investment, we are still doing relatively well in relation to foreign direct investment, although figures are lower than they have been previously—they are down 9 per cent on last year. We continue to struggle to attract migrants to Scotland compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. In education, our standards are falling against international competitors.

Stuart McMillan: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: No, thank you. I want to make some progress.

When it comes to innovation, our productivity levels lag behind those of other economies. The Scottish Government trumpets in its motion the recent increase in productivity compared with the rest of the UK, but according to the Fraser of Allander institute, that has been driven by a reduction in the number of hours worked, not by an increase in output per hour. The reality is that we are in the fourth quartile of innovation-driven countries—behind Norway, Ireland and Sweden, while the UK as a whole ranks above them. Our entrepreneurial activity rate is 5.5 per cent and the UK's is 8.6 per cent. Our rate decreased 19 per cent from the previous year, against a rise of 18 per cent for the UK.

What do we need to do to get better? First, we accept that we have to get Brexit right. We have to get the maximum possible access to the single market for UK business. That is the very clear position of the 13 Scottish Conservative MPs who are now in the House of Commons to speak up for Scotland and articulate our interests. What is not in the interests of Scotland is for Scotland to have a differentiated deal from that of the rest of the UK.

Andy Wightman: Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: No, thank you.

The rest of the UK is by far our biggest market for goods and services; it is worth four times as much as the EU market is. To pursue our relationship with the EU at the expense of our relationship with the rest of the UK would be to cut off our nose to spite our face. That is not a road that we should go down.

We must keep Scotland competitive, as Alison Harris said. We must not have a situation in which taxes in Scotland are higher than they are in the rest of the UK. The business community has warned of the impact of going down that route.

Andy Wightman: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: No, thank you. I have no time.

How can we attract the brightest and best to come and work in Scotland, where they have to pay more income tax, where they have to pay more to buy a house because of land and buildings transaction tax rates, and where businesses with larger premises are paying a business supplement at double the rate that applies elsewhere in the United Kingdom? That will not make Scotland competitive.

I was interested to hear Gillian Martin's call for lower taxes—

Gillian Martin: When?

Murdo Fraser: I wish that SNP members would make up their minds. Do they want higher taxes in Scotland or are they calling for lower taxes, as Gillian Martin did?

Gillian Martin: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: I am in my last minute.

What we need is for the Scottish Government to rule out a second independence referendum. That was the clearest possible message from last week's general election. Up and down Scotland, people turned against the SNP, which lost 21 seats and half a million votes and saw its vote share fall to just 36 per cent. People across Scotland sent Nicola Sturgeon the clearest possible message that they do not want a second independence referendum.

It is uncertainty that is hampering the ability of the Scottish economy to succeed. My friend Liam Kerr said, with a Churchillian turn of phrase:

"Uncertainty is the nemesis of investment."

He is absolutely right. Let us reject the second independence referendum and get the Scottish economy back on track.

16:51

Keith Brown: I welcome the opportunity to respond to some of the points that were made in the debate and to highlight the underlying strengths of Scotland's economy—because, let us face it, none of the Opposition parties will do that.

I emphasise that Scotland's economy is fundamentally strong. We have advantages and resources in Scotland that few nations can match.

We have one of the most highly educated workforces in Europe. We have a long-standing reputation for innovation, and we have an internationally recognised brand.

The Conservative and Labour denial of the fact that inactivity numbers include the vastly increased numbers of people who go into higher education is in itself an attack on the very idea of higher education.

We are world leaders in key industries of the future such as life sciences, financial services and financial technology, creative industries and sustainable tourism.

It is important not to diminish those strengths. I agree that we must acknowledge the challenges in the Scottish economy, many of which have been mentioned in the debate. We must also recognise and build on the strengths that we have, which are part of the reason why, as the EY attractiveness survey demonstrates, Scotland continues to be the number 1 location outside London for foreign direct investment projects in the UK.

We face challenges, not least from the on-going pressures in the oil and gas industry. Willie Rennie was completely wrong to say that Paul Wheelhouse blamed the oil and gas industry—that is Willie Rennie for you. We also face the potentially disastrous impact of a hard Brexit.

Scotland's economy continued to grow in 2016, by 0.4 per cent, but the slight contraction in the final quarter of 2016 emphasises that there is no room for complacency. Today's state of the economy report shows that approximately two-thirds of the slowing in growth between 2014 and 2016 in Scotland can be attributed to impacts on the oil and gas sector. That is why we continue to provide support to the sector directly, through measures such as the energy jobs task force, the transition training fund and the decommissioning challenge fund.

It is also why we continue to invest for sustainable and inclusive growth more broadly in our economy. I mentioned a number of major infrastructure projects; there is also the Borders railway, which John Mason mentioned, the huge investment of nearly three quarters of a billion pounds in the electrification of the Edinburgh to Glasgow railway line, and the huge investment that we have made around the country in Scotland's national cycle network.

We are helping small businesses to grow, through our small business bonus scheme, which removes the business rates burden entirely from 100,000 premises.

During speeches from Conservatives, there was no mention of the record low unemployment in Scotland until Murdo Fraser's speech at the end of

the debate. Of course, unemployment used to be the key criterion on which the Tories judged the Scottish Government's performance in relation to the economy. It no longer is, because that does not suit the Tories; they have moved on to something else. Inactivity is their preferred measure today—I explained why in many ways the results are good, because they tell us that more students are going into higher education. Of course, it was at exactly the point when Scottish unemployment levels dropped below those of the UK that the Tories thought that they had better steer away from the subject.

There has been virtually no mention of Brexit. Alison Harris's denial of the impact of Brexit on the Scottish and UK economies beggars belief. I have quoted the OECD's figures and its view that Brexit is the major impact and threat facing the UK economy. The OECD says that

"the major risk for the UK economy is the uncertainty surrounding the exit ... from the European Union"

which could hamper foreign direct investment.

We have also seen the Institute of Directors survey, taken immediately after the election amid the shambles that is now the UK Government and the hung Parliament, that showed a 34 per cent negative swing in business confidence. Yet, there was not a mention, apart from the one that I pointed out, from the Tories about the impact of Brexit. They are determined to try to deny the fact that Brexit is a real and present danger to the Scottish economy.

Willie Rennie: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Keith Brown: No, I will not.

We do not know what the Tory position is on Brexit, because we have a roundabout Ruth. We had "no Brexit", "soft Brexit", "hard Brexit", and we had something apparently called "open Brexit", but that only lasted for 24 hours before she was told by Theresa May, "You will get behind whatever Brexit we want to give you." I think that that Brexit is a "Shexit", because it is a shambles and an absolute disaster. The Conservatives have no idea what they are doing—within a week of going into the discussions with 27 countries lined up ready to negotiate, they do not have a clue what they are going to say to them. That is the danger to the Scottish economy.

Labour bizarrely argued that we should not liaise with business, and then it said that we should liaise with business. The fearless class warrior Richard Leonard was too scared to take an intervention because he knew that he could not, as James Kelly could not, answer the question of what Labour's position is on the single market. Nobody knows. Is it John McDonnell's position,

which is that we will not stay in the single market? That seems to be confirmation that they want to come out of the single market. We know that they do not support freedom of movement, which is a disastrous and wrong-headed approach from the Labour Party.

Jackie Baillie mentioned that we have to change Scotland's economic strategy. It has changed since the last days when the Labour Party was in government, when Labour's economic strategy was short and snappy. It was only five words: there is no money left. That is what the Labour Party left us with.

Jackie Baillie: People all agree that Scotland's economic strategy contains many of the things that the Labour Party would put in it. There has been common agreement about the direction of travel. However, faced with Brexit, the SNP Government's previous head of policy has said that the strategy has been turned on its head. Why will the Government not review its economic strategy?

Keith Brown: In addition to the economic strategy of "there is no money left", we had Richard Leonard complaining that there is an insufficient budget. Why does he think that there might be an insufficient budget? Does he draw any connection with the Labour party's disastrous management of the economy? That is why we have had seven years of austerity from the Conservatives. Labour started it and has passed it on to the Conservatives.

When Willie Rennie spoke, he obviously forgot what the debate was about. He made no mention of the economy. The obsession that the other parties have with independence! Willie Rennie got himself into a complete and comic fankle. He failed to rescue his hapless new MP, Christine Jardine, who says that only Liberal Democrats are allowed to continue to promote the policies that they stood on in the election. Nobody else is allowed to do that—that is not very Liberal and not very democratic.

Willie Rennie: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Keith Brown: I will give way to Willie Rennie.

Willie Rennie: The cabinet secretary is not afraid to take interventions after all. He mentioned clear and present danger. The one clear and present danger that he has not addressed this afternoon is independence. Will he give us an answer about independence? Is he for it, or is he against it?

Keith Brown: For those who were not here during the debate, that was all that Willie Rennie talked about in his opening speech. That is why he forgot to even mention the Scottish economy. The

biggest threat to Scotland's economy is not what Willie Rennie says it is; it is a hard Brexit. Many Conservatives mentioned the Fraser of Allander institute, but they did not mention that the institute says that, after a decade, Brexit will cost us 80,000 jobs, billions of pounds and £2,000 per year for every employee. None of them mentioned that; there is no concern on the Conservative benches for the people who work in this country.

The Conservatives also refused to answer the point of whether they would replace funds lost when the EU structural funds are no longer applicable. They were asked that direct question and they failed to answer it. It is essential that the UK Government commits to replacing that funding in full following Brexit.

Scotland did not vote for a hard Brexit. We did not vote for a Brexit at all, and the Scottish Government will continue to make the case for single market membership. Whatever happens over the coming months, the Scottish Government will continue to promote and defend the Scottish economy.

Today, I have set out that Scotland's economic fundamentals remain strong, that we are an attractive place for investment and that there are opportunities here for growth. Of course, the outlook for 2017 is finely balanced, challenges remain in the oil and gas sector and we face the prospect of a hard Brexit. We have demonstrated that the Scottish economy is well placed to meet those challenges, but we must continue to invest for sustainable and inclusive growth by promoting and supporting innovation.

The Tory record on the economy is £1.8 trillion pounds of debt—£100 billion of new debt for every year that the Conservatives have been in office—unemployment at 2.9 per cent and a massive trade deficit.

The SNP's record, because it has been getting on with the day job—[*Interruption*]. I will repeat that: because the SNP Government has been getting on with the day job, Scots across Scotland can get on with their day job.

I support the motion.

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-05575, in the name of Andy Wightman, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on membership of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's proposal to appoint Bill Bowman to be a member of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit.—*[Andy Wightman]*

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of motions S5M-06002 to S5M-06004, in the name of David Stewart, on behalf of the SPCB, on the appointment of trustees to the Scottish parliamentary contributory pension fund.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament appoints Mark Ruskell MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to his nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.

That the Parliament appoints Pauline McNeill MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to her nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.

That the Parliament appoints Alison Harris MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to her nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.—*[David Stewart]*

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-06082, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 20 June 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Ministerial Statement: Policing 2026

followed by Ministerial Statement: Next Steps for the Crofting Commission

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Air Departure Tax (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 21 June 2017

1.15 pm Members' Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Health and Sport

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 22 June 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30pm Ministerial Statement: Provisional Outturn 2016-17

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Limitation (Childhood Abuse) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 27 June 2017
 2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Railway Policing
 (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 28 June 2017
 1.15 pm Members' Business
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Communities, Social Security and
 Equalities
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Education
 Governance Next Steps
followed by Standards, Procedures and Public
 Appointments Committee Motion: Code
 of Conduct for MSPs and Written
 Statement Revision
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 29 June 2017
 10.45 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 10.45 am Members' Business
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions—[*Joe
 FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-06007, on the establishment of a private bill committee.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament shall establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: Writers to the Signet Dependants' Annuity Fund Amendment (Scotland) Bill Committee.

Remit: To consider matters relating to the Writers to the Signet Dependants' Annuity Fund Amendment (Scotland) Bill.

Duration: Until the Bill is passed or rejected, falls or is withdrawn.

Number of members: 3.

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party.

Membership: Tom Arthur, Mary Fee, Alison Harris.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Decision Time

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): On the first question, I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Dean Lockhart is agreed to, all the other amendments will fall.

The question is, that amendment S5M-06045.1, in the name of Dean Lockhart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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 (Cairnness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 27, Against 91, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendment in the name of Jackie Baillie is also pre-emptive—if it is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Patrick Harvie and Willie Rennie will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S5M-06045.3, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 18, Against 100, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: If the amendment in the name of Patrick Harvie is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Willie Rennie is pre-empted.

The next question is, that amendment S5M-06045.4, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 112, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-06045.2, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)

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)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)

Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 22, Against 96, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-06045, in the name of Keith Brown, on Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and 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)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's economic fundamentals remain strong with opportunities for growth; welcomes the fact that Scotland has closed the gap in productivity performance with the UK as a whole, the continued attractiveness of Scotland's economy for inward investment and, in particular, the recent analysis by Ernst and Young, which shows that Scotland attracted more research and development foreign direct investment projects than anywhere else in the UK in 2016; recognises and acknowledges the challenges facing Scotland's economy, in particular from the downturn in the oil and gas sector and the damage that will be caused by the UK Government taking Scotland out of the EU and the single market; believes that Scotland must continue to invest for sustainable and inclusive growth by promoting and supporting innovation, investment and internationalisation, as set out in Scotland's Economic Strategy; highlights the important contribution that European structural and investment funds make to support sustainable and inclusive growth in Scotland, and calls on the UK Government to commit to ensuring that it replaces this funding in full following Brexit.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-05575, in the name of Andy Wightman, on the membership of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's proposal to appoint Bill Bowman to be a member of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motions S5M-06002 to S5M-06004, in the name of David Stewart, on the appointment of trustees to the Scottish parliamentary contributory pension fund, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament appoints Mark Ruskell MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to his nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.

That the Parliament appoints Pauline McNeill MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to her nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.

That the Parliament appoints Alison Harris MSP as a Fund trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund, further to her nomination for such appointment by the Parliamentary corporation.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-06007, in the name of Joe

FitzPatrick, on the establishment of a private bill committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament shall establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: Writers to the Signet Dependants' Annuity Fund Amendment (Scotland) Bill Committee.

Remit: To consider matters relating to the Writers to the Signet Dependants' Annuity Fund Amendment (Scotland) Bill.

Duration: Until the Bill is passed or rejected, falls or is withdrawn.

Number of members: 3.

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party.

Membership: Tom Arthur, Mary Fee, Alison Harris.

Lyme Disease

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-04825, in the name of Alexander Burnett, on Lyme disease: the need to do more. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises that Lyme disease is affecting many people across Scotland, including in Aberdeenshire; considers that there is a lack of awareness and education to prevent further infections in 2017; notes calls for the issues surrounding diagnosis and treatment to be explored further; further notes calls for public education on the dangers of tick bites and for doctors to become better informed so that patients are not left undiagnosed, and notes the support for Lyme Disease UK's campaign to help increase awareness of this disease.

17:09

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I thank members from across the chamber who have helped me to achieve cross-party support for the motion to be debated, which will help to increase awareness of Lyme disease, a devastating disease that silently affects thousands of people throughout the United Kingdom.

I welcome the many people in the public gallery who are all working to tackle the disease. I am honoured to have facilitated the attendance of representatives of charities such as Lyme Disease UK and Lyme Disease Action as well as the attendance of businesses and groups from across the country, including the Outward Bound Trust, the Forestry Commission and the Grampian and Angus glens moorland groups. I also welcome those constituents and others from throughout Scotland who have taken the time to attend the debate. Many of them either suffer from Lyme disease or have a loved one or friend who does. I thank them for coming to listen to what I expect to be an informative debate for all.

I am sure that many members will, rightly, go through the statistics, but what is Lyme disease? It is caused by a spirochaetal bacterium from the genus *Borrelia* and is the most common tick-borne human infectious disease in the northern hemisphere. Ticks carry the bacteria and are responsible for their being endemic across the UK, particularly in woodland and heathland areas as well as in urban parks and even city gardens. If Lyme disease is detected early, it can be treated effectively. However, if it is not detected early, a person can live for years with devastating symptoms.

One of the most common early symptoms is the bull's-eye rash, although one in three people with Lyme disease will not develop that. If the disease

is not detected early enough or is left untreated, serious symptoms can develop several weeks, months or even years later. Those symptoms can range from joint pain and swelling to nervous system complications, heart problems and inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. That sounds very scary, and it is. As the title of the motion states, there is a need to do more.

I had a quick look on several hillwalking websites and was surprised by the lack of information on the dangers of tick bites. We need to ensure that all mediums that promote the use of our woodland and heath areas outline not only the potential weather dangers but the health risks, too. I emphasise that I do not wish to deter people from taking advantage of our fantastic Scottish countryside. However, if people are to be able to continue enjoying themselves, they need to know how to protect themselves from infection.

Notably, the World Health Organization has confirmed that there is a 65 per cent increase in Lyme disease cases each year worldwide, and those are only the reported cases. With a lack of action now, we could reach epidemic levels within a decade. However, that can easily be prevented, and we have a chance to change the trajectory now. It does not have to be complicated—we have all heard the saying, "Education, education, education."

In our schools, we need to educate our teachers on the dangers of tick-borne diseases so that they can protect our children. Young people who decide to take part in fantastic schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award, those who join the scouts or the girl guides and those who just explore the countryside on their own need to be aware of the risks. In our local communities, we need to educate our charities, families, friends, neighbours, farmers, gamekeepers, ghillies and rangers—I could go on. People need to know how important it is to protect themselves and others from tick bites and that it is vital to be aware of minor symptoms.

In our national health service, we need to educate staff to ensure that, when they review symptoms, they do not exclude the possibility of Lyme disease. Although the Scottish Government's response to a recent question of mine stated that it is considering improving knowledge of Lyme disease among our health professionals, I urge the ministers to ensure that those methods are effective. The charities that are represented here today are finding increasing numbers of people who were told inaccurate information by their doctors but who could have been helped if the right course of action had been taken.

Herein lies the problem. Our NHS guidelines for treating Lyme disease are outdated and not fit for purpose. In the United States, where the town of Old Lyme in Connecticut gave the disease its name, people have been fighting the disease for some time and many agencies over there have been working together to find a preventative and medical solution. We can learn from their example.

I therefore urge the Scottish Government and the NHS to collaborate with local charities, businesses and other groups to update our approach to tackling Lyme disease and help to stagnate the rate of infections in Scotland. Only by working together to educate everyone across Scotland on the disease do we stand a better chance of preventing more lives from being shattered.

I urge everyone—parents, nurses, teachers, hillwalkers, dog owners and even those who are not outdoor people—to educate themselves and others on Lyme disease, because it does not discriminate. It affects the healthy and the young and robs people of years of their lives. That is why I express my personal support for Lyme Disease UK's campaign to increase awareness of the disease.

I hope that any members who would like to find out more about Lyme Disease UK's campaign and what we, as parliamentarians, are hoping to do to tackle the disease will join me at an event that I am sponsoring after the debate in committee room 2.

17:16

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

As you know, Presiding Officer, I am unable to stay for the full debate. I apologise to the Parliament. I hope to join Mr Burnett at his event, but it will be much later on.

As members know, I grew up in the Highlands and I still live there. Ticks are a pretty normal part of life up there—in fact, the Highlands have been described as tick heaven. In our family, we routinely check each other for ticks after a day outdoors, as do lots of folk who live in the area. However, I have discovered that one of my staff, who comes from Northern Ireland, is not half as familiar with ticks as I am.

What are ticks? They are wee spider-like insects that attach themselves to people's skin and feed off their blood. They can carry a bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which can cause an infection in humans. That infection is Lyme disease, and it can be pretty nasty, particularly if it is not diagnosed or treated early, as Alexander Burnett said. If people do not check for and remove ticks promptly, they can remain unnoticed and feed for several days before they drop off. They become

easier to spot as they feed because they become more swollen, but the longer the tick is in place, the higher the risk of transmitting Lyme disease. That is why everyone at home checks for ticks after they have been outdoors.

Early symptoms include a target-shaped rash and the person feeling unwell, as if they have flu. Those symptoms are reasonably common, and if the disease is caught at that stage it is pretty easy to treat it with a course of antibiotics. The problem is that not everyone has the rash, as Alexander Burnett said. Doctors need to have a pretty low threshold for giving antibiotics if they think that Lyme disease is a possibility. However, that is completely at odds with the usual advice, which is designed to avoid the spread of antibiotic resistance, so education on the matter is vital.

Another complication at that early stage is that we cannot rely on blood testing, because lots of people do not test positive in the early stages of infection. However, if the disease is left untreated or if treatment is delayed, the person can go on to develop a chronic illness, which is sometimes called the great imitator because the symptoms are non-specific and similar to those that are experienced with a number of other conditions. Diagnosis then becomes tricky.

Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr Roger Evans and his team at Raigmore hospital in Inverness. He is one of the UK's leading experts on the disease, and they are doing fantastic work up there to collect data and improve the quality of testing. If the research is fruitful, it could transform the testing and care of folk with Lyme disease not just in Scotland but around the world. An important piece of work that the team did involved testing samples from blood donors to get an idea of the prevalence of the disease in Scotland. Some 4.2 per cent of the population tested positive, but that rate more than doubled to 8.6 per cent in the Highlands. It is no wonder that we are leading the way on research into the condition.

"Finding Joy" is a newly published book by a fellow Highlander, Morven-May MacCallum. I hope that she is in the chamber tonight, as we had a bit of a mix-up when we tried to meet before the debate. The book provides powerful insights into the daily struggles of living with the condition. My book club is reading it at the moment and, from the discussions that we have had so far, we heartily recommend it.

We can all try to avoid tick bites where possible. There are various ways in which that can be done, such as by wearing long-sleeved and light-coloured clothing, avoiding long grass, wearing insect repellent, ensuring that ticks are removed promptly and treating our dogs so that they do not get ticks.

Although a lot of people in the Highlands are aware of ticks and Lyme disease, not everyone is. In addition, a huge number of tourists visit every year, many of whom have not even heard of the disease let alone the pitfalls that they should avoid.

One simple solution that was suggested to me by Ingrid Watt from the Lyme disease support group in Inverness is to have information boards or signs at popular walking and camping spots. The Inverness support group is really worth knowing about. They meet every month and provide a space for people to share knowledge, and they support anyone who knows someone with Lyme disease or who suffers from it themselves.

We can agree that much needs to be done to educate the public and health professionals to improve diagnosis and treatment of those who are affected by Lyme disease. Accurate testing and data collection are vital, but raising awareness is the important first step.

17:21

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank my colleague Alexander Burnett for bringing the issue to Parliament today and I also extend a welcome to representatives from Lyme Disease UK and other associated charities who are in the public gallery, as well as to other individuals.

We have an important opportunity to discuss an issue that connects rural affairs and public health, and I am delighted to contribute. It is interesting that there are members from around Scotland in the chamber tonight, which demonstrates how prevalent the disease is throughout the country. On my way into the chamber, I spoke to my colleague Jamie Greene, who spoke about the issues in Arran and about how a group there is dealing with the disease.

Other members will cover the broader aspects of the issue, but I will talk about how Lyme disease affects a particular area of the Highlands and Islands region: the Western Isles and, in particular, the Uists, which Lyme disease affects more than any other part of Scotland. According to a report by NHS Western Isles, ticks are particularly common in the grasslands of the Uists and in areas that are frequented by deer. The Royal Forestry Society notes that there are around 1,200 confirmed reports of Lyme disease each year and around 100,000 worldwide. However, the Western Isles alone contributed 33 cases of the rash in 2016, of which six were confirmed positive following diagnosis. As we have heard, the rash is often, but not exclusively, a sign of the early stage of Lyme disease and it is sometimes in the shape

of a bullseye. A serology test is the blood test that is often used to confirm a case.

Between 2010 and 2013, there were 33 confirmed cases across the Western Isles which, for a population of fewer than 30,000 people, makes the incidence rate significantly higher than the UK average. The Uists accounted for 20 cases of the rash in 2016 alone.

As my colleague Alexander Burnett noted, there is a clear need to improve public awareness of the disease so that, when the early signs appear, diagnosis can be carried out quickly and treatment can begin. As with many infections and conditions, early intervention is vital to ensure that the public are protected and, given that Lyme disease is acquired following the bite of an infected tick, that is particularly relevant.

As the father of three young children—I am delighted to have this in common with Maree Todd—we make a point of checking them and us for ticks every night if we have been out and about, especially in the summer. Like the Western Isles, Lochaber has its share of Lyme disease and it was there that I first heard of a friend catching the disease 20 or so years ago. It was unusual and almost unheard of then and only recently has it become much more well known. I suspect that that is because of greater public awareness, which we have to keep working at.

I welcome the seriousness with which the issue is being taken by NHS Western Isles and I welcome the actions that it is pursuing to raise public awareness. With the Scottish health protection network, NHS Western Isles is organising a symposium on Benbecula in August, which I hope to attend. The symposium aims to raise awareness nationally of the public health priority in relation to ticks and Lyme disease, and to explore possible interventions. It will allow delegates to consider how the experience in the Western Isles can be applied to the wider Scottish context.

NHS Western Isles has developed and implemented an awareness-raising campaign, which it launched in South Uist in March this year. Resources have been sent to businesses, shops, general practitioner practices and other locations, and information packs have been sent to schools, which is crucial because, if we can ensure that our young people are aware and able to deal with potential tick bites early and safely, we are well on the way to addressing some of the issues. NHS Western Isles is also looking to collaborate with the research arm of Public Health England to further the understanding of Lyme disease.

It is vital that we continue to support such efforts and learn from them as we try to lower the incidence of Lyme disease in Scotland. One issue

that has been mentioned concerns improving the testing, so that we can get early diagnosis.

I congratulate NHS Western Isles on the good lead that it has taken on this matter, and I welcome its efforts and the efforts of all the charities that are represented here tonight to improve public awareness.

17:25

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo other speakers' thanks to Alexander Burnett for bringing this important issue to the chamber. This is one of a number of debates on raising awareness of particular conditions that, as Labour's public health spokesperson, I have spoken in during the past few months. I think that I am correct in saying that the last one, a few weeks ago, was on hypertension—or high blood pressure, as it is more commonly known. A couple of weeks after that debate, I received a text message from my GP surgery inviting me to a well man check. Members will have guessed that I was promptly diagnosed with high blood pressure. Therefore, I rise to speak in this debate with a degree of trepidation, wondering what might happen next, after yet another debate on an important health condition.

On a serious note, Lyme disease, just like hypertension, is a condition in relation to which early detection, diagnosis and treatment is crucial to avoiding a more severe outcome at a later stage. That is why raising awareness of what is a potentially devastating condition is so important. As previous speakers have said, if left untreated, Lyme disease can result in issues such as joint and heart problems, chronic pain and neurological and cognitive problems. Treatment is more likely to be effective if the disease is diagnosed at an early stage.

Raising awareness is also crucial if we are to learn how to protect ourselves, our families and our pets from this potentially dangerous disease. That is becoming increasingly important, as Lyme disease is a growing problem in Scotland. The number of diagnosed cases has increased from fewer than 30 in 1996 to 220 in 2015, and GPs estimate that only 20 to 40 per cent of cases are referred. With a growing numbers of cases, it is an appropriate time to re-evaluate our approach to research, identification, treatment and public knowledge surrounding Lyme disease.

In the south of Scotland—the region that I am proud to represent and to have been brought up in—we are blessed with beautiful countryside and an abundance of woodland and open spaces. In that area, it is still very much the case that children spend most of their time playing with friends outside, and families enjoy the benefits—including

the health benefits—of spending time outdoors, often while walking their family pets. However, that can bring danger—in this case, danger in the shape of tiny blood-sucking ticks that feed off animals and humans. The consequences can be nasty.

During the recent spell of good weather that we enjoyed in May, two young boys from Collin near my hometown of Dumfries contracted Lyme disease after playing in a park close to their homes. The accounts from the boys' mothers were truly harrowing. One of the mothers said that her five-year-old son, Aaron,

“woke up one morning and his face was totally paralysed”.

Aaron was eventually diagnosed with Lyme disease and needed an magnetic resonance imaging scan to rule out more severe neurological problems. In March, the second of the two boys, Dylan, who was just eight years old, had to undergo surgery to have ticks removed, and was given a three-week course of adult antibiotics for treatment. However, he was back in the accident and emergency department last month, after a further tick bite made his back swell up badly.

Of course, children cannot be wrapped in cotton wool and denied the pleasure of playing outside, but we can do more to make the public aware of the danger of ticks and how to minimise the risk of bites by staying on paths, using a repellent, covering up when in long grass, checking themselves and their children and pets regularly for ticks when walking in a high-risk area and quickly removing ticks correctly and quickly when they are found.

We can also do more to raise awareness among medical professionals to ensure that the collection of symptoms of Lyme disease can be recognised at the earliest possible opportunity in order to avoid serious complications. Although testing is available, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of such testing. Lyme Disease Action has stated:

“there are no conclusive tests for Lyme Disease currently in routine use in the UK that will accurately diagnose Lyme Disease or distinguish from past infection.”

The similarities in symptoms between Lyme disease and many other conditions, and the co-infection that often comes with being bitten by ticks, also cause difficulties with diagnosis. However, if Lyme disease is diagnosed in a timely manner—ideally, when early symptoms such as a bull's-eye rash and flu-like symptoms are noticed—and it has not developed, it is, thankfully, straightforward to treat with antibiotics. It is therefore imperative that testing and public awareness of Lyme disease are improved. In particular, we should ensure that the testing that is currently available is extended to all *Borrelia*

species found in Scotland and that more reliable tests that do not rely on antibody responses are introduced.

In concluding, I congratulate Lyme Disease UK on its wake up to Lyme campaign and the work that it has done in raising awareness of how people can prevent Lyme disease by protecting themselves from tick bites, as well as increasing recognition of the early symptoms of the disease and information on how to remove ticks. I am sure that Alexander Burnett's debate this evening has added to that awareness.

17:30

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest as a farmer—and one who has been bitten by ticks many times.

I want to say briefly how pleased I am that nationwide concerns about Lyme disease are again being raised in our Parliament. It is now many years since Mike Russell and I first raised those concerns in the TICC Committee—the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee—but the problems that the disease causes remain. I recall that, at the time, there was a hotspot for ticks at Tighnabruaich, where conditions for them are ideal, and GPs there were only too well aware of the problem.

Raising awareness of the disease and its causes is what today's debate is succeeding in doing. I am pleased that Alexander Burnett is airing the subject today, and I congratulate him on his motion.

As ticks have been known for generations to cause diseases in both cattle and sheep, a huge amount of work has been carried out by the Moredun Research Institute in general, and Hugh Reid in particular, to develop the well-known louping ill vaccine that is widely used in the sheep industry. The problems of Lyme disease that were so graphically explained by Alexander Burnett and others have, to some extent, been resolved by vaccination in the sheep industry. I appreciate that it would be very difficult, but perhaps a vaccine could also be developed for human use, for those who are most at risk from this debilitating disease. In the meantime, better awareness of and education on the risks of tick bites are essential and should be a Scottish Government priority. If a vaccine could be developed, there would, self-evidently, be a worldwide market for it.

I hugely welcome our Parliament picking up again where the TICC Committee of 10 years ago left off. I wish the charities every success in resolving the problem, and I hope to attend their reception briefly later this evening.

17:33

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I congratulate Alexander Burnett on bringing this important issue to the Parliament. I also thank two of my constituents, Janice Margos and Liz Richardson, who have kept me very informed and who stoically go on despite suffering very debilitating effects of the illness.

It seems as though my childhood playing in heather and a work life in the rural environment have been reckless in some respects, given what we have heard here.

We know that Health Protection Scotland monitors the incidence of Lyme disease. Certainly, on one of the checks that I made on the number of people who are affected by it, there was a fifteenfold difference between the lowest and the highest estimates. I understand that the discrepancy is due to several factors, including the difficulty in diagnosing and the fact that symptoms often are non-specific and overlap with those of other conditions.

In response to constituents' concerns, I have raised a number of matters. I raised with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service concerns that had been expressed about screening of donations. I was assured that the disease is not transferable and that, as far as evidence shows, it is not considered a risk factor. However, there was also advice that those diagnosed should wait for at least four weeks after diagnosis before donating.

I also put down a parliamentary question about whether Lyme disease should be a notifiable disease in Scotland. I will briefly quote part of the response:

"Although endemic in the UK, Lyme disease does not cause outbreaks requiring urgent public health action following diagnosis of a case and is not transmissible through person to person contact. As a result, it is not a notifiable disease in Scotland."—[*Written Answers*, 27 June 2016; S5W-00860.]

However, it is important to note that the organism that causes Lyme disease—I will not attempt to pronounce it—is a notifiable organism under the Public Health etc (Scotland Act) 2008. There is also surveillance of any positive blood test by diagnostic laboratories in Scotland. As my colleague Maree Todd mentioned, the national testing laboratory is at Raigmore hospital in Inverness. I commend the work that is done there, and I agree with what others have said about the importance of education, which is key with Lyme disease, as it is with many illnesses.

The prevalence of Lyme disease in the Highlands and Islands—in the Uists, in particular—was touched on by Donald Cameron. There is a balance to be struck between providing

information and not scaring people. I do not think that anyone wants anything other than people to go out and enjoy the countryside, but they must understand the potential effects of doing so. Knowledge is essential, as is early intervention, which is necessary to prevent the chronic complications that can arise. Testing is key.

I have written to the cabinet secretary about two issues, one of which relates to a United Kingdom matter. In response to a petition that was submitted to the UK Parliament last year that called for improved testing and treatment protocols, the UK Government referred to three separate systematic reviews on the diagnosis, treatment and transmission of Lyme disease, which it said would provide evidence to inform future decision making. Those reviews are expected to be published in the autumn of this year. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance on the diagnosis and management of Lyme disease is in development and is expected to be published in July 2018. I am keen to understand whether the Scottish Government is engaged in that process, because the disease knows no boundaries, and we want there to be collaborative working across the UK and beyond.

An issue that was raised with me by my constituent Liz Richardson was the funding that the Scottish Government provided last year for multiple sclerosis and motor neurone disease research. Given that, as has been mentioned, there is sometimes confusion in making a diagnosis, the observation was made that it was unfortunate that the opportunity had not been taken to include Lyme disease in that research. Liz Richardson said:

“This doctoral programme was yet another missed opportunity to raise the profile of Lyme Disease in Scotland. Hopefully, by flagging up this omission to the powers that be, it might be incorporated into future research programmes. I believe that Scotland can be a leader in Lyme Disease research as well, especially the Highlands. With our landscape being a natural petri dish and an ever-expanding university campus, our location is ideal for a Transatlantic-European partnership in scientific research for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.”

I hope that, in future, that will be picked up.

17:37

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank Alexander Burnett for lodging his motion, which he has titled “Lyme Disease, The Need To Do More”. I strongly agree that we must do more.

I knew a bit about Lyme disease before today, but not a lot. That is the problem. The average person does not know that a study by Public Health England showed that there are tick infection rates of up to 48 per cent; that 4 per cent

of Scottish blood bank donors unknowingly had Lyme disease; and that there are 1,200 confirmed reports of Lyme disease in the UK each year, perhaps 200 of which are in Scotland. The WHO confirms that, each year, there is a 65 per cent increase in the number of Lyme disease cases that are reported worldwide. Even on the basis of a conservative extrapolation, incidence of the disease will reach epidemic levels by 2028.

That is just people. The big tick project found that one in three dogs has an undetected tick on it and that 12 per cent of grey squirrels carry Lyme disease. The welfare impact on animals such as hares, sheep, deer and many birds is extraordinary. The Angus glens moorland group sent me some photos. I intended to bring them with me, but they were genuinely so distressing that I thought that I had better not. John Scott MSP, who knows this piece inside out, talked me through louping ill. It is just awful.

We would think that the public health system would be all over this, yet it appears that there are no accurate figures for Lyme cases in Scotland. According to the Caudwell Lyme disease patient survey, 56 per cent of sufferers were not diagnosed by NHS doctors or testing labs. That is hardly surprising, given that five separate teams of researchers have found that the reliability of the NHS test is lower than 60 per cent.

There is also the personal and social cost. Lorraine Murray, who I think may be in the Parliament today, has been left virtually housebound. She was bitten by a black deer tick in 2014 while walking her dog and has since been diagnosed with three co-infections. She was initially diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome and spent £20,000 of her own money abroad; she was finally diagnosed with Lyme disease and got private treatment.

What more must we do? To effectively protect ourselves and avoid cases being misdiagnosed or missed entirely, it is vital that people have knowledge. Public Health England produces public information leaflets on how people can protect themselves against, and what to do after, a tick bite. Similarly, Lyme Disease UK is sending education packs to all schools, which include risk assessment checklists for school trips as well as lesson plans for all key stages.

However, we need more. Unreliable medical testing and treatment seem to persist. Doctors must be equipped with the knowledge and skills that are essential to spot symptoms earlier. Currently, less than 3 per cent of GPs have taken the free online Royal College of General Practitioners course on Lyme disease, so Lyme Disease UK is to be commended for encouraging them to complete the course.

The UK Department of Health must also be recognised for commissioning three separate clinically driven, evidence-based reviews on the diagnosis, treatment and transmission of Lyme, which are expected to be published later this year. Treatment must be intensively reviewed. Using doxycycline for a few weeks may not work and we must investigate a more multifaceted approach, using, for example, different antibiotics, biofilm breakers, cyst-type antibiotics and immune support.

The estates should also be listened to. Back in 2013, the Scottish Gamekeepers Association floated the idea of potential funding for a scheme to treat deer and hares with an acaricide within a fenced test area between April and June, similar to a South African system. Those animals could then be tested and monitored as to control of ticks. If successful, that scheme could be rolled out further. It is important to note that an awful lot of tick control is being done by the estates, especially on the grouse moors.

Through awareness and education, Lyme disease can be treated efficiently and effectively and further infections can be prevented. It is crucial that we encourage the further training of doctors and continue to explore the issues surrounding treatment and diagnosis, and that we are proactive in raising awareness.

17:41

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): I welcome the debate and am grateful to Alexander Burnett for the opportunity that it provides to highlight the important issue of Lyme disease and the actions that are being taken in Scotland to address the burden of the disease. I thank all members for the specific issues that they have raised.

I assure members that no one is being complacent about Lyme disease, so I want to acknowledge the good work that has been undertaken in recent months by professionals across Scotland. Lyme disease is an important issue and it is, as members have said, a complex disease, for various reasons. There are issues that many countries—not just Scotland—are grappling with, including understanding the true incidence of infection, considering how to improve surveillance of the disease, getting better-quality laboratory tests, and understanding how the impact of the local ecosystem in different parts of the country affects tick populations.

Scotland's multi-agency health protection network has absolutely recognised the importance of Lyme disease, and it is for that reason that a specific multi-agency Lyme disease sub-group was established last year. The sub-group met for

the first time in February 2016 and quickly identified three areas of work that it viewed as being priorities: workforce education and development, improving public awareness, and improving surveillance and diagnosis. I will say a few words about each of those.

In terms of workforce education, we absolutely must ensure that our health professionals know what Lyme disease is, how to spot it and how to treat it. The Lyme disease sub-group has taken forward several pieces of work to help in that respect. Resources have been produced and are being developed, including webinars and podcasts that are aimed at front-line health professionals. There are also information resources on the Health Protection Scotland website and the NHS Education for Scotland website.

Work is also under way to develop and place articles in professional magazines, and I know that the sub-group is actively looking at other ways of raising awareness among the various health professionals. For example, in the first three months of 2017, a series of professional development sessions on Lyme disease was delivered to community pharmacy groups across Scotland. The sub-group will also consider how to make use of existing resources that can be deployed—I know that the Royal College of General Practitioners has developed an online course on Lyme disease, which will be considered in terms of its appropriateness to the Scottish context.

As members have made clear, it is equally important to raise awareness among the public. The sub-group has reviewed and refreshed a number of public awareness resources, including Health Protection Scotland's public information leaflet, that are targeted at people who are most likely to come into contact with ticks. Work has also been done on an information campaign called "Stay healthy in Scotland's outdoors", which will go live this summer, and the sub-group has been working with key partners including Scottish Natural Heritage on ensuring that the campaign's messages are right and effective. Moreover, the Lyme disease sub-group is taking forward work to raise awareness of the disease through youth and outdoor recreation groups to ensure that children and young people are knowledgeable about it.

I am, of course, aware of other groups that are seeking to raise awareness of Lyme disease. As Colin Smyth did, I welcome Lyme Disease UK's "Wake up to Lyme" campaign, which ran during May, and I look forward to hearing more about it at this evening's drop-in session. The more people talk about Lyme disease, the better.

The third area of work that the Lyme disease sub-group prioritised was gaining a better understanding of the true incidence of Lyme

disease in Scotland. In response to John Finnie, I point out that the sub-group is looking at how the surveillance data that is currently collected through primary and secondary care can be improved to ensure that we have the best possible intelligence on the extent of the disease in this country.

An important component of building good quality surveillance information is the ability to diagnose the disease accurately, but at present that is not straightforward for technical reasons. There are gaps in the effectiveness of the laboratory tests that are currently used to diagnose Lyme disease; they are not sensitive enough to detect the early stage of infection, and they cannot differentiate active infection from past infection, which makes it difficult for clinicians to make an accurate diagnosis and start appropriate treatment. Our Lyme disease sub-group includes representation from Raigmore hospital's national Lyme borreliosis testing laboratory, which collaborates closely with experts in Public Health England and elsewhere in order to keep the testing that is offered in Scotland under constant review and to consider what can be done to address the challenges.

John Scott: Is the minister aware of any work that has been done here in Scotland, in the United Kingdom or world wide on developing a vaccine? It would have to be a dead vaccine, not a live one, but has any thought been given to putting that kind of preventative treatment in place instead of simply dealing with the problem once it arises?

Maureen Watt: I am not aware, from the background work that I have carried out for the debate, of any work that is being done on a vaccine. However, if I learn of anything, I will write to John Scott and let him know about it.

The work that I have outlined is not the only work that is being carried out in this area. At UK level, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence—or NICE, as we know it—is expected to publish a review on diagnosis and management of Lyme disease next year. I note in response to Mr Scott that NICE might have considered in that work the issue that he highlighted. Our Lyme disease sub-group will, as part of its regular discussion on priorities, discuss that review once it becomes available.

In addition to highlighting the sub-group's excellent work on addressing Lyme disease in Scotland, I also join members in taking this opportunity to highlight the importance of continued support for hill farming in Scotland. Liam Kerr mentioned use of sheep as what are known as tick mops; indeed, I watched that on an estate in upper Aberdeenshire not so long ago. The sheep are considered to be important in control of Lyme disease because they collect from the pasture ticks that are then killed by anti-parasitic treatment that has been administered to the

sheep. That reduces the number of ticks in the environment.

It is no coincidence that the number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease increased markedly in 2006 and that the number has remained at that high level ever since. That coincided with the decoupling of support and the move to single farm payments. We know that the number of sheep on the hills declined significantly and that there was effective land abandonment in some areas. It is therefore key that we continue to support hill farming through the less favoured area support scheme, otherwise there will be further land abandonment, which could in turn cause a huge increase in the number of ticks and therefore increased potential exposure to Lyme disease. Hill sheep farming is the backbone of many of our remote and fragile rural areas, so the UK Government must respond to the repeated requests by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity that the funding for LFASS payments be maintained beyond Brexit. I am afraid that we have had no such guarantee to date.

As I said at the outset, I am grateful to Alexander Burnett for securing the debate, and I absolutely agree with him that the issue is very important. I hope that I have provided some reassurance about the work that we are doing and about the fact that our professionals absolutely recognise the importance of Lyme disease.

The multi-agency Lyme disease sub-group will continue to co-ordinate work. That will be an on-going priority on which I will be happy to provide updates in the future. As always, I would be very happy to hear ideas about what more could be done and how we can work together to make a difference.

I look forward to dropping into the session after the debate.

Meeting closed at 17:51.

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