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Thursday 7 December 2017

CONTENTS

	Col.
GENERAL QUESTION TIME	1
A75 and A77	1
Non-domestic Rates	2
Thyroid Disorders	3
Scottish-Irish Relations (Post-Brexit).....	4
Salvesen v Riddell Case.....	5
NHS Fife (Meetings)	6
NHS Grampian (Funding).....	7
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	10
Named Person Scheme	10
Local Government Funding	13
Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre	16
Integration Joint Boards (Major Service Changes).....	16
Paisley (United Kingdom City of Culture 2021 Bid).....	17
Waverley Line (Performance).....	17
Rail Fares	18
Brexit.....	20
Middle East.....	21
Accident and Emergency Waiting Times.....	22
Knife Crime.....	22
Organ Donation	24
General Teaching Council for Scotland.....	25
BRAIN TUMOUR AWARENESS	27
<i>Motion debated—[Alexander Stewart].</i>	
Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	27
Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP).....	29
Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	31
Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)	33
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	34
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)	36
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	38
Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP).....	39
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	40
The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell)	42
AIR QUALITY (LOW-EMISSION ZONES)	46
<i>Statement—[Humza Yousaf].</i>	
The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf)	46
SEA FISHERIES AND END-YEAR NEGOTIATIONS	58
<i>Motion moved—[Fergus Ewing].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Peter Chapman].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Tavish Scott].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing)	58
Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con).....	62
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD).....	65
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	68
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	70
Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con).....	72
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)	74
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	76
Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)	79
Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)	81
Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	83
Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP).....	86
Tavish Scott.....	88

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab).....	91
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	94
Fergus Ewing.....	97
DECISION TIME	101

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 7 December 2017

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

General Question Time

A75 and A77

1. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what the scope is of the recently announced report on developing the A75 and A77. (S5O-01544)

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): The south-west Scotland transport study will consider the rationale for improvements to road, rail, public transport and active travel on the key strategic corridors, including the A75, the A77 and the railway corridors to Stranraer and Carlisle via Kilmarnock and Dumfries, and will have a particular focus on access to the ports at Cairnryan. It will examine the case for change in relation to transport infrastructure investment.

Finlay Carson: In 2016, while visiting my constituency, the Deputy First Minister pledged further investment in the A75. Indeed, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform at the time declared in an election pledge that there was a clear demonstration of the Scottish National Party's commitment to the region. Only last year, the Deputy First Minister said that to grow the economy and new jobs we need to improve further the region's transport infrastructure, and yesterday the Minister for Transport and the Islands announced to the chamber that the Scottish Government intended

"to honour the commitments and promises in our manifesto."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 2017; c 67.]

When will the Government honour that clear commitment to Galloway and West Dumfries and provide not just another report but substantial investment in the A75 and A77, which is desperately needed?

Humza Yousaf: On the question about substantial investment, we have invested £50 million in the A75, in six new schemes, and £35 million in four schemes for the A77, and we will be investing in the Maybole bypass. Does the member not have even a tad of shame about coming to the chamber week after week, demanding that we spend more, while his party is cutting taxes for the wealthiest and his Tory Government colleagues—when they can find time in between making a complete pig's ear out of

Brexit—are robbing this Scottish Government to the tune of £500 million over the next two years?

Non-domestic Rates

2. Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that the non-domestic rates system is fair to businesses. (S5O-01545)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): We are doing everything within our powers to support our businesses. This year, we have reduced the non-domestic rates poundage by 3.7 per cent and have funded the most competitive package of rates relief available anywhere in the United Kingdom, worth around £660 million, including the small business bonus scheme, which will lift 100,000 properties out of rates altogether.

We have also gone beyond the recent Barclay review recommendations, with new measures to drive investment. In addition to the growth accelerator, which will mean that businesses pay no rates increases for the first year on new and improved properties, we will ensure that every new-build property does not pay a penny in rates until it is occupied for the first time. Further details will be confirmed in the draft budget next week.

Gordon Lindhurst: The Scottish Government has dealt with only 0.2 per cent of appeals from the non-domestic rates revaluations earlier this year. That accounts for just £161 million of the £5 billion worth of appeal revaluations in 2017. Does the cabinet secretary have any estimates on the number of businesses that are going to the wall while waiting for an appeal to be heard?

Derek Mackay: It really is quite incredible: Gordon Lindhurst, like pretty much every other Tory member, is totally ignorant of the facts when it comes to non-domestic rates. The Scottish Government does not determine appeals in relation to business rates; there is a separate and independent due process for that. It is the case that many businesses appeal their valuations, and material considerations are taken into account, but it is an independent process for a reason.

I will tell the member what I will not do: I will not follow what the UK Government has done in this regard, which is to charge for appeals, causing consternation south of the border. I do not always quote the Scottish Property Federation or the Scottish Retail Consortium when it comes to non-domestic rates, but they are right when they say that the Scottish Government is ahead of the curve when it comes to reforming our business rates regime.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary give assurances to the businesses that qualify for, and benefit from, the

small business bonus scheme—there are more than 100,000 such Scottish businesses—that the scheme will continue to ensure that we have vibrant town centres and an encouraging environment for start-ups?

Derek Mackay: Yes, I can absolutely confirm that the small business bonus scheme will continue. It is on course to lift 100,000 properties out of rates altogether. Although Opposition politicians pretend to care for their town centres, this Government delivers to give them a lifeline in these challenging times. What is more, our package will not only support those properties; I am going to write to other small businesses that I think might be eligible for the small business bonus.

We take the right decisions, we fund our promises and we reach out to support our communities, including the business community, while the Opposition carp from the sidelines.

Thyroid Disorders

3. Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve the diagnosis and treatment of thyroid disorders. (S5O-01546)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government's role is to provide policies, frameworks and resources to national health service boards to allow them to deliver services, taking account of national guidance set out by the British Thyroid Association. A clinician's prime duty is to do no harm and, in making a diagnosis, we expect clinicians not only to take account of all the evidence presented to them, which will include test results, but to consider each patient's symptoms, circumstances and experiences.

We expect all clinicians to demonstrate a patient-centred approach through full engagement and shared decision making on mutually agreed outcomes. That approach is at the heart of all Scottish Government policies and, in particular, the chief medical officer's report "Realising Realistic Medicine".

Elaine Smith: I thank the cabinet secretary for that encouraging response. I was pleased that, in response to my recent members' business debate, a commitment was made to help thyroid sufferers. There has also been good news in NHS England, as triiodothyronine—or T3—will not be removed from the prescribed medicines list after a successful patient-led campaign. However, we need a clear answer on T3 here in Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that general practitioners and health boards will continue to prescribe that life-saving medicine?

Shona Robison: As T3 is licensed, it can continue to be prescribed on the NHS. There are no plans to remove T3 from NHS Scotland. Formularies are set and agreed by boards based on recommendations from local clinicians, clinical expert groups, the latest clinical evidence and any recommendations that come via the Scottish Medicines Consortium.

In my initial response, I should have paid tribute to Elaine Smith's work in this area over a long period. It is recognised that a small proportion of patients do not tolerate thyroxine—or T4—which is the main prescribed drug for treatment in this area, so T3 is available where the clinician is satisfied that it is the safest and most clinically effective treatment option for the individual patient concerned. That is how things have been done and it is how matters should continue to be done.

Scottish-Irish Relations (Post-Brexit)

4. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Irish Government regarding continuing free trade and the free movement of people between Scotland and Ireland after Brexit. (S5O-01547)

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government is in regular contact with the Irish Government on European Union matters. On 5 October, the First Minister met the Taoiseach in Dublin and, on 10 November, there was contact at the British-Irish Council; last Friday, Fiona Hyslop met the Irish foreign minister—who is now the Tánaiste—in Dublin; and, in September, I met the Irish foreign minister in Cambridge in the margins of the British-Irish Association.

The best outcome for Scotland—which is, of course, what people here voted for—is continued EU membership. However, short of that, it is essential for jobs, living standards and our economy that we retain our place in the single market and the customs union. That will ensure that the damage from Brexit is minimised and that we can deepen the very close economic and social ties between Ireland—an EU member—and Scotland and ensure continued freedom of movement between our two countries.

Joan McAlpine: Does the Scottish Government agree that the United Kingdom Government's reliance on a shabby deal with the Democratic Unionist Party to keep afloat risks hundreds of thousands of jobs across these islands and that it is time for the Tories to put the public good before their own political survival?

Michael Russell: We must always be careful when we talk about the circumstances in Northern Ireland. The Scottish Government has been a

long-term supporter of peace in Northern Ireland and particularly of the Good Friday agreement. Clearly, any actions that damage or imperil the Good Friday agreement and the balance of powers in Northern Ireland are not helpful. In that regard, the agreement with the DUP is clearly a disruptive force.

We seek to ensure the very best for Ireland—north and south—and to ensure that the difficulties of the past are not returned to, and we approach the issue responsibly and carefully.

Salvesen v Riddell Case

5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the situation with people affected by the Salvesen v Riddell case. (S5O-01548)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): The Supreme Court published its judgment in the Salvesen v Riddell case in April 2013. The case has now ended.

I have to assume that the member is referring to the litigation that has followed on from the Supreme Court decision. Tenant farmers and landlords are currently engaged in live litigation against Scottish ministers. If that assumption is correct, it is not possible for me to provide an update.

I refer the member to rules 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 of the standing orders, which concern sub judice matters. Under those rules, I am constrained in what I may say about any matter that is the subject of the current litigation.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I thank the cabinet secretary, and I am sure that the member will be aware of the restrictions.

Rhoda Grant: The Scottish Government promised to deal favourably with tenants who are caught up in the Salvesen v Riddell case, but it has not, which meant that the tenants had to sue the Government. However, even though the tenants won the case, the Scottish Government has continued to delay payment and compensation. That is bad enough, but the Scottish Government has obtained a ruling to pursue the families of those tenants for court costs.

When will the Scottish Government honour its commitment to those tenants, who have already lost their homes and businesses, and compensate them fully so that they can make a fresh start?

The Presiding Officer: Most of that question related to a live case. If the minister wishes to make a brief comment, he may do so.

Fergus Ewing: It seems to me that the question is almost entirely out of order. Although I cannot talk about any matter that is subject to current litigation, I am able to say that tripartite mediation was previously offered by the Scottish Government on the basis that, if any party wished to submit a compensation claim against the Scottish Government as part of that process, the Scottish Government would step outside the mediation to consider the matter, and, if liability were accepted, it could continue to be part of that process. No party took up that offer before the tenant farmers lodged their case in court against Scottish ministers, including their associated compensation claims.

Aside from the court action, we have facilitated and funded a Scottish Government mediation service between tenant farmers and their landlords to provide a forum for tenant farmers and landlords who wish to engage to discuss and explore the resolution of issues between them. The mediation service lasts until 2018, and we have made up to £13,000, excluding VAT, available for the costs that are associated with the undertaking of mediation by those landlords and tenant farmers.

I conclude by pointing out to the member something of which I suspect that she is extremely well aware. The Salvesen v Riddell case arose because of a flaw in the law that was passed by the previous Labour-Liberal Administration. That flaw in the law, which the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association pointed out, is such that the current Administration has effectively been left to pick up the pieces.

NHS Fife (Meetings)

6. Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met NHS Fife. (S5O-01549)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government meets regularly with NHS Fife to discuss matters of interest to the people of Fife.

Jenny Gilruth: The cabinet secretary will be aware that Levenmouth and parts of Glenrothes in my constituency are among some of the most disadvantaged areas in Scotland. Does she agree that the number one priority for NHS Fife and for Fife's health and social care partnership should be providing services that directly tackle health inequalities?

Shona Robison: I certainly agree that NHS Fife and Fife's health and social care partnership should be working with partners across Fife to tackle health inequalities and their underlying causes.

For its part, the Scottish Government is focused on addressing the underlying causes by ending poverty, paying fair wages, supporting families and improving our physical and social environments. We continue to protect the most vulnerable and people on low incomes. To that end, we are investing more than £100 million every year to mitigate the worst impacts of the United Kingdom Government's welfare cuts. We are funding things such as the links worker programme, which is right on the front line of the battle against health inequalities, and we have committed to increasing the number of links workers who support general practices in Scotland. There are now 53 in post, and more will be recruited next year. I am sure that the people of Fife will benefit from those links workers.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In September, more than 1,150 people in NHS Fife had waited for more than 18 weeks for treatment. That is the highest number on record. How will the cabinet secretary ensure that that upward trend is reversed as soon as possible?

Shona Robison: Alexander Stewart should recognise that, despite the challenges that it faces, NHS Fife's performance on waiting times has been very commendable; indeed, the work that it has done to improve some of its waiting times is being looked at elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr Stewart will be aware of the £50 million that has been deployed this financial year to make improvements to waiting times. NHS Fife has received £3.4 million of that. In addition, Professor Derek Bell is doing work to reform the way in which elective capacity is organised, to make sure that we can meet the demands and expectations of the population in the here and now and into the future.

NHS Grampian (Funding)

7. Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what the impact has been on NHS Grampian's patient service record of the figures from the Scottish Parliament information centre, which suggest that the board's NRAC funding targets have not been met since 2009, leading to a £165.6 million discrepancy. (S5O-01550)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): As I explained last week, NHS Grampian was 3.7 per cent behind its target funding allocation when the NHS Scotland resource allocation committee formula was introduced in 2009-10. That is a position that we inherited. The Scottish Government has invested significantly in supporting the boards that are behind parity and, since 2015-16, NHS Grampian has received additional funding of £47 million for

the specific purpose of accelerating the achievement of NRAC parity.

We expect all health boards, including NHS Grampian, to meet and maintain national performance targets and standards from the resources that are provided. As with all boards, we are continuing to work with NHS Grampian to ensure that public money is being used effectively to deliver better services, better care and better value.

Mike Rumbles: Is the cabinet secretary aware—I hope that she is—that, in the past year in NHS Grampian, there have been 3,471 fewer planned operations than in the previous year, that NHS Grampian has the second-worst waiting times in Scotland, that hundreds of operations have been cancelled for non-clinical reasons and that specialist services to treat veterans have now been withdrawn because of a lack of funding from the board? Is she also aware that the NRAC formula aims to give NHS Grampian only 90 per cent of the funding of the average health board per head of population, which is the lowest level in the country? Is she satisfied with that state of affairs?

Shona Robison: We are working very hard with NHS Grampian to make improvements. Of course, it has received a share of the £50 million to make those improvements, and it is working hard across the whole of the north region to look at how elective capacity can be better organised.

Mike Rumbles fundamentally misunderstands how the NRAC formula works. The Scottish Government is supporting all national health service boards that are behind parity, and it has committed an additional £884 million over a six-year period to those boards that are below their NRAC parity levels. All boards are now within 1 per cent of parity. Given the year-to-year movements in the NRAC target allocations, it would not have been possible to move NHS Grampian—or any other board that is below parity—to absolute parity, as that would have resulted in an equivalent reduction in funding for those boards that are above parity, which include NHS Shetland and NHS Orkney. I do not imagine that Mr Rumbles's Lib Dem colleagues would have wanted me to take that action.

The NRAC formula works by bringing about a gradual movement in the funding of those boards that are below parity. That is the sensible and responsible way to allocate funding to the NHS boards.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): It has recently been reported that NHS Grampian spent more than £10,000 on a trip to recruit nurses from Australia and commissioned a US delegation to help to reduce waiting times. All the while, the health board is having to make £75

million-worth of savings by 2020. Does the cabinet secretary admit that her Government's failure to put in place proper workforce planning has left NHS Grampian understaffed and struggling to meet waiting time targets?

Shona Robison: NHS England, of course, has no workforce plan, as Jeremy Hunt revealed just a few weeks ago, so I will take no lectures from the Tories about workforce planning. We have expanded the number of our nurse training places to 2,600 and I encourage all boards to look at innovative ways of recruiting nurses, rather than criticising them for doing so.

I will end on this note: the biggest impact on recruitment in Scotland for nurses, care staff and others is the absolutely reckless Brexit approach that is being taken by the United Kingdom Government, so the Tories should not come here and lecture us about recruitment to the national health service.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general questions. Before we turn to First Minister's questions, I am sure that members will wish to join me in welcoming to our gallery the Hon Dr Darryl Plecas, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Named Person Scheme

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):

I am sure that the whole chamber will join me in wishing Paisley well in its bid to become the United Kingdom city of culture 2021. The bid team has run an incredible campaign and we all wish them well for this evening.

I ask the First Minister, after yesterday's events, why the Scottish Government is persisting with its named person scheme?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, let me also take the opportunity to wish Paisley 2021 the very best of luck this evening. All of Scotland is behind the bid. The bid team has done an absolutely fantastic job and I am sure that the whole country is proud of them and will rejoice if Paisley wins the bid this evening, as all of us hope that it will.

The Scottish Government will proceed with its named person plans for the simple reason that they are in the best interests of children, particularly vulnerable children, across the country. Often, when Ruth Davidson raises the issue, she does so from a political perspective—that is her right; the Tories oppose the named person scheme in principle—but when we talk about it we do that from the perspective of the protection of children. I submit that that is the most important—indeed, the only—consideration that should drive us.

In relation to the Education and Skills Committee decision, concerns have been expressed at and by the committee about the draft code of practice. The draft code of practice is exactly that—it was always intended to be illustrative, and the Deputy First Minister has committed to working with practitioners to develop the final code of practice. He has also developed a practice development panel that will be led by Ian Welsh and, crucially, he has committed to giving this Parliament the final say on the draft code of practice.

We are disappointed by the committee's decision—we think that it is unnecessary to delay stage 1—although we recognise it and will now work with the committee and the Parliamentary Bureau on the timing. In the meantime, we will get on with the important work of developing that code of practice, and I will end this answer where I started it: it is about the protection of children. The bill is not about the principle of the named person scheme, but about the information sharing that is

necessary to ensure that vulnerable children do not fall through the gaps in services.

Ruth Davidson: We all want to protect vulnerable children, but after yesterday's events it is clear that this is not the way to do it.

Let us run through the timeline: the original legislation was passed in 2014; it was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court in 2016; the Education and Skills Committee of this Parliament has said that it cannot provide a report—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order, please, Mr Swinney.

Ruth Davidson: —because of the lack of clarity on how changes would work; and now we are told that it will be late 2018 before the Scottish Government can even provide a satisfactory code of practice. So far, the only people who have benefited from that mess are the lawyers, who have coined in more than £800,000 in legal fees. Given that record, does the First Minister honestly think that the policy can be salvaged?

The First Minister: Ruth Davidson should be very careful not to mislead the chamber inadvertently. She said that the Supreme Court said that the named person policy was unlawful. As anybody who has read the judgment will know, the named person principle was said by the court to be “legitimate and benign”. The Supreme Court made a number of pronouncements about the information-sharing provisions, and it is those provisions that the bill is intended to address. Information sharing is vital as part of the efforts of those who work on the front line to protect children, and particularly vulnerable children. In the words of Social Work Scotland:

“information sharing is vital to getting it right for every child”.

Ruth Davidson has asked me about the timeline. It is a bit rich for a party that has sought to politically undermine and delay the named person policy at every juncture, and that now supports a committee decision that would further delay the introduction of the policy, somehow to criticise the Government for the policy taking too long to be introduced. We will continue to do what we said we would do, which is to work with practitioners, through the new panel that has been established, on the final code of practice and to give Parliament the final decision on that.

Lastly, Ruth Davidson said that all of us are concerned with the protection of children. I certainly hope that that is the case. If it is, I hope that all of us will pay attention to what those on the front line, and who work with vulnerable children, are saying. Notwithstanding the concerns that, I concede, they had about the draft code of

practice, a whole range of organisations called on the Education and Skills Committee to pass the bill at stage 1, so that work on the code could be continued. That is the sensible way forward. Notwithstanding the developments of yesterday, we will continue to develop the final code so that we can get on with putting in place measures that are fundamentally about protecting children.

Ruth Davidson: The weaknesses of the policy have been exposed by the lengths to which the Government has gone to try to prop it up. The Deputy First Minister has already been forced to apologise over the failings in the new bill. We have now discovered that witnesses to the parliamentary committee have been lobbied by the Scottish Government in advance of their appearance. The Government says that that is entirely innocent, which is okay. However, if there is nothing to hide, will the First Minister publish the minutes of and the lists of attendees at those private meetings with the committee's witnesses, so that we can all see what has been going on?

The First Minister: If Ruth Davidson is seriously standing up in the chamber and suggesting that a Government that is taking through legislation on an important issue such as this should not seek to engage with and talk to organisations such as Aberlour, Children's Health Scotland, One Parent Families Scotland, Enable Scotland and Social Work Scotland about their concerns, she is demonstrating why she should never be anywhere near Government in Scotland.

It is our duty, as the Government, to listen to the concerns that such organisations have and to seek to address them. It is on the basis of such discussions that the organisations such as those whose names I have read out have said that they think that the committee should pass the bill at stage 1, to allow the Scottish Government to continue to work with them to address their concerns and to finalise the code. That is the sensible way to proceed. If the issue is about the protection of children, rather than political point scoring, that is the way in which all of us should be determined to proceed. Let us put children at the centre of the debate.

Ruth Davidson: It is usual that organisations lobby Government and not that Government lobbies organisations. What the First Minister does not understand is that the policy is a mess. It is only she and the Deputy First Minister who cannot seem to see that. Everybody wants protection for vulnerable children, but it is now clear that Parliament has joined the public in no longer having confidence in the named person plans. We should focus resource on those who actually need it, rather than having blanket interference for every family in Scotland. We are willing to get around the table to find a fresh solution but, first, the First

Minister needs to ditch this broken plan. Her named person policy is in tatters. Will she simply concede that, so that we can all move on?

The First Minister: Let me explain the difference between the Tories and this Government when it comes to engaging with stakeholders. Yes, stakeholders lobby the Tories when they are in government and the Tories ignore them. Organisations lobby this Government and we respond and seek to address the concerns that they have. That is how responsible government operates.

Now, Ruth Davidson says that this should be about reflecting the opinion of not just Parliament, but people outside Parliament. We should pay particular attention to those who work on the front line with children, particularly vulnerable children. I am about to read the second paragraph of a letter to the Education and Skills Committee signed by Children in Scotland, Aberlour, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, Action for Children, The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures, Crossreach, Social Work Scotland, Children's Health Scotland, COSLA, Includem, One Parent Families Scotland and Enable Scotland—this is what the letter from all those organisations says,

“we are writing to ask you to approve the Bill at Stage One in order to allow time for the Scottish Government to demonstrate its commitment to making improvements to it, and the proposed Code of Practice.”

That is what those working on the front line with children want us to do and, as a Parliament, we should listen to them and respond.

Local Government Funding

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): Investment in the arts and culture can be a pathway to economic regeneration and employment, but it can also lift the horizons of the people, so I take this opportunity to extend the support of the Scottish Labour Party to the people of Paisley in their bid to be the city of culture for the UK. The bid has been initiated and led by Renfrewshire Council.

Last week, I asked the First Minister whether Scotland's 32 councils will get the more than £0.5 billion in funding that they need just to stand still in maintaining local services, but I received no answer. Austerity is not an abstract concept: it means real cuts to real local services; it means the closure of breakfast clubs; it means the axe falling on holiday activity programmes for children with disabilities; and in the real world, it means cutting teachers for children who have additional support needs. How can the First Minister possibly justify those kinds of cuts to local services?

The First Minister: Richard Leonard asked me last week what the budget would have in store for local government, and I said to him that he would find out in two weeks, when Derek Mackay presents the budget to Parliament. I can update that answer today: he will find out one week from today, when Derek Mackay presents the budget to Parliament.

Just as we have done in previous years, this Government will do everything possible to protect front-line services from the impact of Tory-imposed austerity. We face, in the coming financial year, a real-terms cut to our day-to-day spending of more than £200 million that is being imposed by the Tory Government—which Richard Leonard still prefers having control over those issues, rather than a Government of this Parliament.

However, in response to Richard Leonard last week, I also pointed out that the only councils that have not, in this financial year, taken the opportunity to maximise their revenues through the council tax, are Labour-led councils. If he is concerned about the services that he has talked about, he can perhaps address the point now. Why is it only Labour councils that this year are not using every penny at their disposal to protect front-line services?

Richard Leonard: I have to report to Parliament that the cuts to children's services that I listed are not being planned by just any council—they are being planned by the SNP-run Falkirk Council. They were being discussed yesterday. New figures that were published last week show that 39 per cent of children in Falkirk live in material deprivation. Meanwhile, the SNP council there is planning to cut childcare to the bone, to close down breakfast clubs, and to axe teachers for children who have additional support needs. Does the First Minister believe that we will—if she fails next week to properly resource councils and to invest in local services—see the material deprivation that is faced by Scotland's children go down, or will we see it go up?

The First Minister: We are not just protecting the health service: we are also protecting, as far as we possibly can, local services, and we are investing more money directly in our schools through the pupil attainment fund. We will continue to do that.

When the budget is published next week, whoever leads councils will be able to finalise their budget plans. When Richard Leonard and others see the budget next week, they will see evidence of a Government that is continuing to protect front-line services where they matter most.

Richard Leonard has still not addressed my point. If he thinks that local government is short of

cash, why are Labour councils not maximising the money that they have to spend? If Labour wants to have a properly constructive discussion, it is about time that it made some concrete proposals. Richard Leonard wrote to Derek Mackay late last week about the budget, but there was not a single figure in the letter—there was not a single concrete proposal about what should be spent and how the money should be raised. If Richard Leonard was to engage in a proper and serious discussion, we might start to take him seriously.

Richard Leonard: One of the things that too many children who are living in material deprivation miss out on is a new winter coat to keep them warm. Yesterday, I visited the Cottage family centre in Kirkcaldy, where I had the privilege of meeting the volunteers, including a group of selfless pupil volunteers from Balwearie high school. They were sorting parcels for needy families for Christmas. The parcels included winter coats, scarves and gloves to be delivered to families who are living in abject poverty. That is the reality of Tory Britain, and the reality of SNP Scotland. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Richard Leonard: It is a Dickensian Scotland, where too many families are forced to turn to food banks, and where schoolchildren are dispatching emergency parcels to help their classmates at Christmas.

If cuts to children's services are imposed by the First Minister, she is not standing up for Scotland: she is failing the children of Scotland. Will the First Minister use her powers, show her political will, stop Tory austerity in its tracks and protect funding for those vital services? Yes or no?

The First Minister: When Derek Mackay sets out the budget a week from today, he will show that the actions of this Government stand in sharp contrast to the empty rhetoric of the Labour Party.

Poverty, in particular child poverty, is an issue that is of the utmost seriousness. In the past couple of weeks, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report that shows that poverty is lower in Scotland than it is elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and that child poverty has fallen faster and more sustainably in Scotland than it has elsewhere in the UK.

My view is very simple. For as long as one child is living in poverty, that is one child too many, so we have more work to do. That is why the Government has recently legislated for statutory targets on child poverty, which makes us the only Administration in the UK to have set statutory targets. That is why we have established our poverty and inequality commission to advise and challenge the Government to go further. It is also why we outlined in the programme for government

our intention to set up a new tackling child poverty fund.

I could list a wide range of policies in other areas, from council tax reduction to free school meals, and a host of other Scottish Government policies to tackle child poverty, many of which are not happening anywhere else in the UK. We will continue to show the priority that we attach to it not just through our budget, but through every single policy that we pursue.

Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): The First Minister might be aware that the Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre took the difficult decision yesterday to close its waiting lists. The service that the organisation provides is a vital lifeline to women and men in Fife who have been the victims of sexual violence. Does the First Minister agree that Fife Council must ensure that funding is maintained for the Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes—and I hope that that will be the case. I am happy to ask the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to look into the issue to see whether there is more that the Scottish Government can do. Such services are absolutely vital in protecting the most vulnerable women and children in our country. I hope that we can, whatever political disagreements we might have, can come together across the chamber to support the work that organisations such as Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre do for the benefit of us all.

Integration Joint Boards (Major Service Changes)

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware that the Western Isles integration joint board is carrying out a review of dental services on the Uists, which could leave some patients facing a 60-mile round trip to visit the dentist.

Currently, if a health board implements a service change, the Scottish Health Council can determine whether it is a major service change and, if so, refer it to Scottish ministers. However, it has come to light that the Scottish Health Council has no formal jurisdiction to rule on IJB matters and, therefore, cannot make a determination that would enable the service change in dental services to be called in. That means that any such proposals by an IJB can go ahead with no scrutiny from Scottish ministers. Will the First Minister impose a moratorium on such decisions until that loophole is closed?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): No—it would not be right to impose a moratorium on the

work of local integration joint boards because they have a duty to get on with the work of designing and improving services for their local populations. However, I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to write to Rhoda Grant. It is my understanding that the Scottish Health Council can decide to involve itself in advising integration joint boards about such matters. All integration joint boards are expected to consult fully their local population on any proposed service change. I will ask Shona Robison to look at the detail of the issue and to respond to the member as soon as possible.

Paisley (United Kingdom City of Culture 2021 Bid)

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Will the First Minister join me in congratulating the Paisley 2021 bid director Jean Cameron and her team on all their endeavours to get Paisley to this stage in the United Kingdom city of culture 2021 competition? As everybody will be aware, the winner will be announced tonight. Will the First Minister wish the bid team and the great town of Paisley the very best of luck? We look forward to the team bringing the title to Scotland.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Today would not have been complete without George Adam getting to his feet to do what he does best, which is to stand up for Paisley. As I said earlier, I and, I am sure, all members across the chamber wish the Paisley 2021 team every success this evening. Jean Cameron, the bid director, has done an outstanding job, and everybody who has been associated with and backed the bid, formally and informally, has been awesome. Paisley deserves to win the bid, so let us all root for Paisley for the remainder of the day and hope that it has the success that it deserves when the results are announced this evening.

Waverley Line (Performance)

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The First Minister will be delighted to hear that performance on the Waverley line has improved recently. However, I have received complaints from constituents in the Scottish Borders about overcrowding and no additional carriages being put on, despite a predicted increase in demand. Does the First Minister agree that every passenger on the Waverley line deserves a seat, no matter the time of year?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I do. I have been glad to see the improvements that have been made but, if further improvements are required, they must be taken seriously. If Rachael Hamilton would like to write to me or, perhaps more appropriately, to the Minister for Transport

and the Islands with concerns that have been raised by her constituents, I will make sure that they are properly responded to.

Rail Fares

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I add the support of the Scottish Green MSPs for Paisley's bid for city of culture and congratulate everyone involved in the bid.

It was confirmed this week that rail fares will see their biggest increase in five years. From next month, those who commute to work at busy periods will see a 3.6 per cent increase. That is alongside the overcrowding, the delays and the daily problems that rail users across Scotland experience. Does the First Minister agree that that is simply an unacceptable situation? Does she agree with the findings of research by Common Weal and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association that, under a public operator, if the money currently being extracted from the system for private operators' profit was reinvested, we would instead be seeing an average cut in fares of 6.5 per cent?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I absolutely understand that people do not want to see any increase in rail fares. I think that we all understand that. It is important to point out, though, that regulated fares in Scotland will increase by less than the rate of inflation and increases in Scotland will be below the average rise reported for England and Wales, meaning that Scotland will have the lowest level of fare increase in the United Kingdom.

It is also important to point out that in Scotland, fares fund a lower percentage of the total funding for railways than is the case elsewhere in the UK. The Scottish Government funds 55.5 per cent of the cost of the Scottish rail industry, compared with the UK Government, which funds only 34 per cent of the cost in England.

It is fair to point out that ScotRail's performance has continually improved over the past year, resulting in it becoming the best-performing large train operator in the UK.

On the issue of a public sector rail bid, Patrick Harvie is aware that we secured the right for a public sector operator to bid for the next franchise. We did that after it was repeatedly denied by successive Labour and Conservative Governments. We welcome the TSSA report because we, too, recognise the social and economic benefits to be derived from a publicly-run railway. That is why we committed in our programme for government to enable a public sector body to bid for future rail franchises. Work to ensure that is under way.

Rail franchising and competition policy are still reserved to the UK Government. Neither a direct award of the contract nor full renationalisation is currently possible, due to the legislative constraints of the Railways Act 1993, which is reserved to the UK Parliament. Patrick Harvie will agree with me that all of those powers should be devolved to the Scottish Government, and I hope that he can help us to persuade other parties in this chamber that that should be the case.

Patrick Harvie: I am very glad that the First Minister welcomes the TSSA report. It is unacceptable that people will see an increase in their fares when we know that a cut in fares would be possible under a public operator. I welcome the fact that there is some appetite for that. If the matter were to be brought to the chamber, the First Minister would find that there is a strong majority here in favour of a public sector operator. Our railways have been run for profit for more than 20 years. In that time, public transport fares have gone up relentlessly, while high-carbon modes of transport have become cheaper. The Scottish Government, with its tax plans, wants to make them even cheaper.

Investment is needed, too. Our analysis shows that the Scottish Government's capital spending is far too dominated by high-carbon projects. Reopening rail lines and stations would be a hugely positive way of redressing that balance. There are examples around the country, such as the Levenmouth line, that could be taken forward quickly and easily. Will the First Minister commit the Scottish Government to backing our proposals for low-carbon infrastructure, including those obvious quick and easy opportunities to improve Scotland's railways?

The First Minister: We will always look favourably at good ideas, but we have our own plans for low-carbon infrastructure. When I set out our programme for government back in September, it was described by environmental campaigners as

"the greenest programme for government"

in the lifetime of this Parliament. The commitment to the low-carbon transition in transport across other sectors of our society will be reflected not just in that programme but in the budget that we present next week.

We will continue to take steps to support what needs to be done to secure that transition in a range of sectors, including in transport and our energy sector. I look forward to continuing to have environmental campaigners consider us to be the greenest Government in the lifetime of this Parliament.

Brexit

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): It was supposed to be buccaneering Brexiteers striding the globe, but this week we witnessed the pitiful reality. Halfway through her soup, Theresa shuffles out of a Brussels lunch red faced, because Arlene has told her no. The Conservatives are weak—split from top to bottom and in hock to the Democratic Unionist Party. However, the good news is that a Survation poll at the weekend showed that a majority of people in Britain want the power to reject a bad Brexit deal. They do not trust the Conservatives and the DUP to decide what is good enough. Will the First Minister join me and support a public vote on the Brexit deal?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I think that the Prime Minister fell into her soup, rather than being halfway through it. This week, the Tory United Kingdom Government—strictly speaking, it is a Tory-DUP UK Government—has been shown to be dissembling, mendacious and totally and utterly incompetent. It is not just leading this country over a Brexit cliff edge; it seems determined to do so blindfold. I do not think that we have seen a more incompetent UK Government in my lifetime, and that is saying quite something.

In my view, the priority now has to be to unite those who think that the most commonsense compromise option is for the UK as a whole to remain within the single market and the customs union. I believe that if Labour was to get its act together—if Jeremy Corbyn was to get his act together—that position could command a majority in the House of Commons. Let us try to unite all those who are of that opinion to stop these incompetent, reckless, ideological Tories taking the UK, and Scotland with it, off a Brexit cliff edge.

Willie Rennie: Surely the best way out of this is to give the British people the final say. Last week, the Conservatives agreed to pay billions, when the national health service was expecting £350 million a week. On Monday, there was the shambles of the Irish border; yesterday, there was the chaos of David Davis; and next week, there is the deadline of the European Council, and the Cabinet has not even discussed what kind of trade deal it wants with Europe. If the Conservatives cannot trust themselves to decide, why should we let them? Surely the British people should decide what is best. That is why now is the time. The First Minister can help build the momentum for a new vote across the UK. She can persuade others. Labour's Sadiq Khan is on side. Businesses are outraged. I think that the public mood is changing. Will the First Minister help us build that campaign?

The First Minister: It is interesting how selective Willie Rennie is in his support for second

referendums. In all seriousness, I would say that that is a decision for later. I have said publicly, and I will say it again, that it may well be that the case for giving people across the UK another opportunity to have their say on Brexit becomes difficult to resist. However, the more immediate necessity is to stop this reckless UK Government driving the entire UK over the cliff edge. I think that the majority exists in the House of Commons—if Labour gets its act together—and across the whole UK to stop that happening. The sensible compromise option and the best option—or the least damaging option—for our economy is to stay within the single market and the customs union. Everybody who is of that view should come together now and make that happen.

The real lesson from this whole debacle for those of us in Scotland is that as long as we continue to allow our future to be in the hands of Tory Governments at Westminster, rather than in our own hands, we will always be at the mercy of reckless decisions taken by them. The sooner we are in control of our own future here in Scotland the better. This week has proved that.

The Presiding Officer: There are a couple more supplementaries. The first is from Anas Sarwar.

Middle East

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Yesterday, President Donald Trump made the frankly dangerous decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It is now clear that under his leadership the US cannot be seen as an honest broker for peace and that, in fact, he is a threat to a just settlement, to a viable independent Palestinian state and to wider middle east peace. Will the First Minister add the voice of the Scottish Government, and urge the United Kingdom Government to add its voice, to the growing consensus in the international community, from the Pope, the United Nations secretary-general, the European Union and our NATO allies, including Germany, France and Turkey, in condemnation of President Trump's decision? Will she resolve to work right across the UK in order to urge the international community, in our world of chaos, to make the case for middle east peace?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I will. I have already condemned Donald Trump's decision on behalf of the Scottish Government and I am glad to see that, for once, the UK Government has also condemned that decision.

Let us remember that Jerusalem includes occupied Palestinian territory. The decision that Donald Trump took on Jerusalem was reckless, wrong and a real threat to peace in the middle east. That is why the decision has rightly been condemned across the international community.

The status of Jerusalem should be determined in a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians and ultimately, of course, Jerusalem should be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. That is an important principle.

Yesterday's decision, as I say, was reckless and wrong. It threatens peace in the middle east and it is incumbent on all of us to condemn that decision and to work even harder to secure peace in the middle east and, even at this late stage, to call on Donald Trump to think again. [*Applause.*]

Accident and Emergency Waiting Times

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Reports this morning show that fewer patients in Scotland are waiting more than four hours in accident and emergency than they did five years ago; in Tory-run England, the number of patients waiting has doubled. What investment is the Government making in our health service to ensure that it continues to improve?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This gives me the opportunity to do what I hope all of us across the chamber will want to do, which is to thank everybody who works in our national health service, because the figures that Ivan McKee has just cited are to the credit of those who work so hard in our emergency departments and across our NHS.

The figures show that long waits in A and E departments in Scotland have reduced over the past few years by 9 per cent. In England, they have gone up by 155 per cent. That difference is a tribute to the hard work of A and E departments in Scotland. This Government will continue to support them through record investment in our NHS. During our time in office, we have increased the budget of our health service by around £3 billion and next week's budget will underline continued investment in our NHS.

Knife Crime

5. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is tackling knife crime. (S5F-01787)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): There has been a sustained, long-term reduction in violent crime in Scotland over the past decade. That includes a 59 per cent fall in the number of people admitted to hospital due to assault with a sharp object, which is the equivalent of almost 800 fewer admissions in a year.

Alongside enforcement of legislation, we have invested more than £14 million in violence prevention since 2006-07, including almost £9 million for Scotland's national violence reduction unit and funding of more than £3.4 million for the no knives, better lives programme.

Much of our effort has been focused on young people in schools, and local authorities are supporting us in the implementation of wider strategies to prevent knife crime.

Kenneth Gibson: A decade ago, knife crime in Scotland had doubled under Labour and the Lib Dems. However, since 2007, under this Government, the number of people carrying knives has plummeted by 69 per cent, from 10,110 to 3,111. In North Ayrshire, the fall is a heartening 77 per cent. Between 2006 and 2011, 40 young people died in homicides involving a knife; that fell to eight deaths in the following five years, with thankfully none so far this year.

In England and Wales, 2017 looks set to become the worst year for knife deaths in a decade according to *The Guardian's* beyond the blade report, with 35 deaths so far this year. Does the First Minister agree that with 1,000 more police on our streets compared with a fall of 20,000 down south, Scotland's communities are safer than they have been for 43 years? Will she commend Police Scotland, Medics against Violence, the violence reduction unit and the no knives, better lives campaign for the enormous contribution that they have made to that historic success and will she encourage authorities elsewhere in the United Kingdom to follow Scotland's approach?

The First Minister: I certainly agree that the figures are extremely encouraging. There is still a way to go before we can finally put a stop to the culture of violence, but the decline in knife crime in Scotland over the past decade has been dramatic. I am sure that, across the chamber, members will join me in paying tribute to the work of Scotland's national violence reduction unit and front-line police, schools and national health service workers, who are driving that positive trend and challenging the behaviours that have held us back in the past. The success is due to a range of policy interventions and it is fair to say that other Administrations throughout the United Kingdom could perhaps learn something from our experience.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): In October, we revealed that almost half of councils do not collect data on the number of knives that are found in schools. In response, the First Minister promised to take action to ensure that they do. What progress has the Government made?

The First Minister: We are making sure that there is progress on that. I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to write to the member to update him on precisely what is being done.

Ensuring that we have the data on such issues is part of the work that we require to do to continue to make progress on reducing knife crime and

knife incidents. It can safely be concluded from the figures that we have just been talking about that the policy interventions that have been undertaken in Scotland are working, so we must continue to ensure that we pursue them vigorously.

Organ Donation

6. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to improve the availability of organs viable for donation and transplant. (S5F-01800)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We continue to work with national health service staff to increase the numbers of donors and transplants that are available in Scotland. We will also introduce legislation in this parliamentary year to bring forward a soft opt-out system of organ and tissue donation. Over time and as part of our wider package of measures to promote a culture change in favour of donation, that should help to increase the number of deceased organ donors further.

Jamie Greene: The issue holds great personal significance for me, as it does for many. I was blessed with the gift of a grandmother thanks to a kidney donor in the 1980s and have family members who passed at an early age but, through donation, gave the gift of life and health to others. However, a report released this week by the Welsh Government found that, despite the introduction of an opt-out system for organ donation two years ago, the number of donors had not increased. What steps will the First Minister take to ensure that any such system in Scotland takes into account any potential issues with availability, eligibility and family overrides while addressing any other concerns that the public might have with the plans?

The First Minister: Those are important and legitimate questions. The early indications from the Welsh system are mixed. Complex factors are involved in donation. Donor numbers fluctuate and the evaluation report in Wales suggests that a longer time is needed to draw firmer conclusions about the impact of the change in the law. We will continue to learn from the experience in Wales and, indeed, other countries that have already adopted an opt-out system in order that we can deliver a workable, safe system in Scotland. It is important that we take the time to get it right.

I will make two quick points. First, there has been an increase in donations in recent years. Between 2007-08 and 2016-17, deceased donor numbers in Scotland increased by 146 per cent. All of us should welcome that.

When I was health secretary, I came at the issue having a long-standing instinctive position in favour of moving to a soft opt-out system. In my

various discussions with transplant surgeons and others, they persuaded me that we should not rush to make that change and that it was more important to do what they described to me as the hard miles—to put in place the infrastructure that would support an increase. We spent a lot of time doing that and it is behind the increase that I just cited. However, having done that, it is now time to consider that move and that is what the proposed legislation will allow the Parliament to do openly and responsibly. In doing that, we should pay attention to what is happening in Wales and other countries.

General Teaching Council for Scotland

7. Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Educational Institute of Scotland's reported opposition to plans to disband the independent General Teaching Council for Scotland. (S5F-01792)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are currently consulting on the establishment of the education workforce council for Scotland, which would take on the functions of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. The workforce council would create a national system that would ensure that the full range of practitioners, not just teachers, have the skills and expertise that are required for them to do their jobs effectively.

The consultation makes clear that we intend for the body to operate independently from Scottish ministers. A strategic working group has been established, with representation from the General Teaching Council for Scotland, to consider the full implications of establishing the education workforce council. We will consider all responses to the consultation when it closes on 30 January 2018.

Tavish Scott: Does that mean that the proposed body would be independent of the Scottish Government and all its education agencies? Why has the Government not carried out any legal, financial or risk assessment of the proposals? Will yet another discussion over education structures help with narrowing the attainment gap and the professional learning and development of Scotland's teaching profession from Stranraer to Shetland?

The First Minister: I will make a number of points. First, we are consulting on the proposal at the moment. As I said, the consultation does not close until the end of January next year and we will look at the consultation responses, reach a final decision and then do whatever work is required after we have taken that decision.

As I said in my original answer, the intention would be for the new body to operate completely

independently from Scottish ministers. I appreciate that there will be a range of different views on the matter and I think that it is important that we debate them openly and frankly. However, we should be mindful of what underlies the proposal, because the education workforce has changed significantly in recent years and there are a number of professionals working within education who are currently not required to register with the GTC; that includes classroom assistants, additional support needs auxiliaries, teaching and support staff in the higher education sector and school library staff.

What is proposed is about making sure that, for everybody who works in our schools with children, we have the appropriate arrangements in place. Let us take it forward in that way and, of course, we will reflect on all the points that are made in the consultation and by members in the Parliament.

Brain Tumour Awareness

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-07735, in the name of Alexander Stewart, on brain tumour awareness in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament understands that brain tumours are the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under the age of 40 in Scotland, reducing life expectancy by 20 years on average; believes that this is the highest of any cancer, but that the treatment for and understanding of brain tumours are 20 years behind those relating to more common cancers; notes that brain tumours often cause side effects that have a severe impact on quality of life; understands that 37% of patients with brain tumours in Scotland went straight to hospital for diagnosis, compared to 9% of all cancer patients in 2016, according to the Scottish Cancer Patient Experience Survey; notes the experience of Mark Richardson from Dunfermline who died suddenly of an undiagnosed brain tumour in May 2016 aged just 32; believes that there are myriad forms and over 130 different brain tumour types; further believes that some symptoms of brain tumour can mimic other equally serious conditions that often render early diagnosis and treatment more difficult in some cases; understands that brain tumour charities are working hard to fund pioneering research, raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of brain tumours, and provide support to those affected; commends the success of national campaigns, which it considers have contributed to a reduction in the average diagnosis times for childhood brain tumours from 9.1 to 6.5 weeks since 2011; believes that national campaigns are a basis on which to develop further awareness, and notes the encouragement of fundraising initiatives with the focus of delivering better outcomes for brain tumour patients.

12:48

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am delighted and grateful to have the opportunity to lead this members' business debate on brain tumour awareness. In order to set the stage and explain briefly why I feel strongly that something more must be done to increase the awareness of brain tumours, it is appropriate for me to highlight some of the salient issues.

Brain tumours are the largest killer by cancer of children and adults under the age of 40 in the United Kingdom. Brain tumours reduce life expectancy by an average of 20 years, which is the highest figure for any cancer that we currently know of. In 2014, 971 people in Scotland were diagnosed with a primary brain tumour, with a total of 475 people in Scotland dying from the disease in 2015. A full 60 per cent of people diagnosed with a high-grade brain tumour will die within one year and only 19 per cent will survive for five years or more. Brain tumours are one of the four cancers with a 10-year survival rate of less than 15 per cent.

About a year ago, I heard about a tragic situation in my region. Mark Richardson lived in Dunfermline; he was a father of two, with an older stepson, and husband to Shona. Shona has kindly agreed to join us in the public gallery, and I pay tribute to her for having gone through such a harrowing situation, for the tenacity that she has shown and for the work that she has done to support others in a similar situation.

In May 2016, at the age of 32, Mark, a highly popular manager with Diageo, was suddenly and tragically struck down by an undiagnosed brain tumour the size of a golf ball—Shona found him collapsed in their Dunfermline home. It came to light that Mark had been afflicted with extreme tiredness, which Shona had put down to his demanding job and having to deal with two lively children. He had also been suffering from neck pain and, prior to his death, had had a bleed on his eye, although even an eye test had found nothing.

After Mark's passing, Shona, their friends and Mark's Diageo colleagues decided to have a dinner in tribute to him. The event raised tens of thousands of pounds, which was matched by Diageo. In total, £62,000 was raised for the Brain Tumour Charity and, to date, more than £80,000 has been raised in Mark's memory as a result of events that Shona and the family have put together. For example, there was a climb up Ben Nevis in September, with 30 of Mark's family and friends; and, only a month ago, Shona organised a charity walk around Loch Leven of between 2.5km and 20km—depending on what people could manage and how much they had been exercising—on which she was accompanied by her sons and 50 of her family members and friends.

Brain tumours are a cancer of unmet need. The investment needed in research to improve diagnosis and to find more effective and less harmful treatments—and, ultimately, a cure—has been woefully insufficient in past decades. I acknowledge the work of Cancer Research UK on the matter, but the fact is that progress across the various sectors has not been equal. The five-year survival rate for brain tumour patients is less than 20 per cent, yet in 2016 less than 2 per cent of cancer research funding was spent on such tumours.

On 29 October, a \$100 million fund to beat brain tumours was launched in Australia, a move due in no small part due to the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, which worked hard with the Australian Government to secure the funding. That encouraging announcement came at the same time as the United Kingdom Brain Tumour Charity is right in the middle of a five-year planning strategy to invest £20 million in research centres

across the world in Germany, the Netherlands and, indeed, Australia.

I firmly believe that Scotland can comfortably follow Australia's lead, and I suggest that we work together with all the third-sector funders of brain tumour research across the world to combat this disease. The Scottish Government should work closely with brain tumour charities to look at all the research that has been carried out. Many people in Scotland have added to that, and I pay tribute to individuals such as Dr Paul Brennan from the University of Edinburgh, who has been researching the pathway to adult diagnosis. The ultimate goal here should be increased awareness of adult brain tumours in Scotland.

The most important issue in all of this is the patient experience, which has to improve, the goal being to give everyone equal access to treatment and care. The Scottish Government must ensure that brain tumour patients have access to clinical nurse specialists or key workers to ensure that all their holistic requirements following diagnosis are assessed, with signposts in place for patients to access local support. Patients who have a brain tumour should also have the opportunity to discuss palliative care with consultants at the point of diagnosis.

I pay tribute to all those who have lived with or supported individuals with a brain tumour and acknowledge the devastating effects on their lives and the lives of their families. I also urge the Scottish Government, the Brain Tumour Charity and health professionals to work together to support and protect people on this journey; indeed, we need a public awareness campaign to educate us, give us information and ensure that we understand what we are dealing with.

I pledge that I will do all that I can in this Parliament to fight the corner for awareness of this devastating disease. We need action, not words. We need commitment from Government. If we can work together, we can achieve together, to support patients and their families.

12:55

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a registered mental health nurse who holds an honorary contract with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

I thank Alexander Stewart for bringing this important debate to the chamber today. It is welcome that people are now increasingly aware of brain tumours and of the devastating effects that they often bring, but I am sure that we all agree that we can certainly go further.

Over the past two decades, a number of high-profile public figures have been diagnosed with the condition, which in turn has propelled it into the mainstream. In the music world, we witnessed Russell Watson's brave fights over the years with two pituitary tumours. In sport, people followed John Hartson's journey in overcoming both a brain tumour and testicular cancer. In the world of politics, we sadly lost the late Mo Mowlam, who suffered from a malignant tumour prior to her death 12 years ago.

Improvements in the prevention, detection and treatment of cancers have seen survival rates double over the past 40 years, but progress has sadly not advanced equally for all forms of the disease. Brain tumours are often perceived to be a rare condition. However, around 10,600 people in the United Kingdom are diagnosed each year and it is our ninth most common cancer. In 2014, more than 800 people in Scotland alone were diagnosed with a brain tumour. As Alexander Stewart has said, although brain tumours are less common than other types of cancer, brain tumours are the biggest cancer killer of children and of people under 40 in the UK.

Depending on where the tumour is found and on the rate of its growth, brain tumours cause a range of different symptoms. Common signs include headaches, sickness and vomiting, and people can be prone to having seizures. Sufferers might see changes to their senses, particularly their hearing and sight, and people's behaviour can change. I hope that the debate will not only raise awareness and increase people's understanding of the effects and symptoms of having a brain tumour themselves, but will also help them to pick up on such changes in others.

Only one in five people with a brain tumour will survive five years, but even more devastating is that 60 per cent of people will die within one year. As well as the low survival rate, 60 per cent of younger people will be left with a significant disability. Unlike many other forms of cancer, such as breast cancer, a benign brain tumour can be equally as devastating as a malignant one. Due to the growth being positioned on the brain, removing even a benign lesion can have a huge and persistent impact on the person. One in four people with a tumour will have sensory loss or will lose cognitive function, one in three will experience changes in personality and behaviour, and one in two will find their memory impacted. For those who survive brain tumours, many will be heavily affected and might have a poorer quality of life.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I am grateful that Clare Haughey brings her expertise to the chamber today. It has been useful in understanding some of the issues. In the

circumstances that she describes, is it welcome that the Scottish Government is bringing forward a neurological action plan, which could begin to address some of the issues that she is laying out in her excellent speech?

Clare Haughey: I absolutely support the Scottish Government's action on that. The Scottish Government, through its "Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action" strategy and the accompanying £100 million investment over five years, has provided a blueprint for the future of cancer services in Scotland. It will improve the prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment, aftercare and, ultimately, survival, of people affected by cancer. The £100 million strategy will include £50 million for radiotherapy equipment and to support radiotherapy recruitment and training, £9 million over five years to ensure better support for people with cancer and their families—for example, through link workers—and £5 million to support waiting times and performance. In addition to that, the Scottish Government has invested £41 million in the detect cancer early programme, which is targeted at those living in the most deprived areas. The Scottish Government's continued focus on early diagnosis is absolutely vital and will make a positive difference.

Cancer services have come a long way in the past few decades, but there is much more to be done to reduce mortality rates. Being diagnosed with a brain tumour can be an overwhelming prospect for those affected and their families, so it is vital that we support them from detection right through to aftercare.

13:00

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, thank Alexander Stewart for the chance to debate this topic in the chamber.

At the end of every day that I have the privilege to serve in this Parliament, I know that I will go home having learned new facts and figures. Some remain just that—facts and figures—but some of what I learn becomes ideas that I am driven to support, to see whether I can build on them for the benefit of those I represent.

This topic falls in the latter group. I knew little about brain tumours before I was elected—I had not come into contact with this form of cancer. Little did I know that brain tumours are in the cancer group that is the biggest cause of mortality in children and adults under 40.

Sadly, the treatment of brain tumours is about 20 years behind the treatment of other cancers. There are 130 types of brain tumour, which makes diagnosis difficult, and sometimes the symptoms are mistaken for other serious conditions, which delays treatment.

I am speaking in the debate to highlight early diagnosis of brain tumours and to try to ensure that that leads to early treatment. My reason for wanting to do so is simple. Not long after I was elected to this Parliament in 2016, I was contacted by the parents of a boy called Robert, a piper and a biker, who lived in the Highlands and had been diagnosed with a brain tumour. His parents were doing all that they could and needed a little bit of help to get Robert some additional specialist support. I met them and Robert and, over the next few months, we worked together to take forward his treatment. Sadly, in 2017, despite the support of doctors, Robert lost his fight.

I mention that story because of the importance of early diagnosis. Robert's family were initially concerned when he struggled with his piping, and they took him to his doctor. The doctor moved quickly and Robert was diagnosed quickly, but that is not the case for all children. Although the time taken to make a diagnosis has dropped from nine to six weeks, we need to do more to ensure that that drops further.

Clare Haughey has mentioned the symptoms of brain tumours. I will mention them again, because doing so sheds light on the condition. In babies, we should be looking for persistent vomiting, lack of balance, abnormal eye movements, lethargy, abnormal head position and, sometimes, fits and seizures. In children, the symptoms can also include problems with walking and co-ordination and double vision. In teens, additional symptoms can include delayed or arrested puberty and abnormal growth.

Ever since I met Robert, I have taken a keen interest in two charities. The first is the UK-based Brain Tumour Charity, with which I hope to promote early diagnosis in this parliamentary session. The second is a charity called HeadSmart. I encourage all those who get the chance to visit HeadSmart's website and to look at the stories section, which has nine stories of children who have suffered with brain tumours. They all make clear the importance of early and accurate diagnosis, and that is what we should take home from this debate.

I say to all parents that if they recognise any of the symptoms that I have mentioned in their child, they should take them to the doctor. I say to doctors that if they see any of those symptoms, they should not ignore brain tumours as a possible cause. I say to the Scottish Government that it should do all that it can to increase knowledge of brain tumours. I hope that if we do that as a result of this debate, that will be a fitting tribute to Robert.

13:04

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I, too, add my thanks to Alexander Stewart for lodging his motion and allowing members the opportunity to discuss how best to make progress on the detection and the treatment of brain tumours and to pay tribute to the memory of all those affected by this cancer.

Brain tumours may be the ninth most common cancer in the UK but, as Cancer Research UK and the Brain Tumour Charity highlight, it is one of four cancers of unmet need due to the poor survival rate and the all too limited improvements in the past decade. Tragically, 60 per cent of people who are diagnosed with high-grade brain tumours die within a year, and only 19 per cent will survive for five years or more. As Alexander Stewart and Edward Mountain noted, behind the statistics are real people, real lives and real families who are tragically affected.

The number of people who are affected is on the rise, with brain tumour incidents in Scotland increasing by 16 per cent from 2005 to 2015. Over the same period, the number of deaths as a result of brain tumours has increased by 14 per cent. Although mortality is increasing at a slower rate than incidents, progress remains far too slow. Ensuring that brain tumours are detected and treated as quickly as possible is crucial to improving progress in the detection and treatment of tumours. However, we know that it can be incredibly difficult for those with tumours and for medical professionals to identify tumours. The symptoms of brain tumours are wide ranging and non-specific and can vary depending on where in the brain the tumour occurs. In fact, 31 per cent of those with brain and central nervous system tumours visit a healthcare professional more than five times before being diagnosed, and 37 per cent of diagnoses occur after an emergency admission, compared with an average of 9 per cent across all cancer patients.

However, as the motion notes, there has been some progress. Since 2011, the average diagnosis time for childhood brain tumours in the UK has decreased from 9.1 weeks to 6.5 weeks. Here we can see the positive impact that targeted efforts to improve early detection and raise awareness can have. It is vital that that work continues to improve the recognition and understanding of symptoms in order to further reduce diagnostic time for children and adults alike.

We also need to ensure that primary care services in communities are accessible and adequately resourced. As a common first point of contact in our healthcare system, primary care has a vital role to play in providing early detection, but difficulty in accessing those services adds an

additional barrier to treatment. That is particularly true in the case of people with general and seemingly non-urgent symptoms, which are common among those with brain tumours.

As well as improving diagnosis of brain tumours, there remains a need to improve our knowledge and achievement capabilities through research, which all speakers so far have highlighted. Across the UK, brain tumours are the biggest cancer killers of children and adults under the age of 40, yet, in 2016, less than 2 per cent of cancer research funding was spent researching brain tumours. Pioneering work on the subject is taking place across the world and technological innovations are constantly creating opportunities to transform how we diagnose and treat brain tumours. That important work is being done in several Scottish universities. Dr Nick Leslie at Heriot-Watt University is exploring the potential uses of 3D printing in brain tumour models; Dr Paul Brennan at the University of Edinburgh is working to understand how brain tumours progress and to establish why some adults take longer than others to be diagnosed; and, at the Edinburgh Cancer Research UK centre, a number of teams are working to better understand brain tumours and develop potential new treatments. We must do all that we can to ensure that that vital work has the support and funding that it needs.

It is also important to recognise the role that social care can play in delivering care for those who have or have had brain tumours. The Scottish cancer patient experience survey found that the proportion of people with brain tumours who were offered a care package was the second lowest of any cancer type, at just one in five. In palliative care, the situation is equally lacking, with research by the Brain Tumour Charity finding that the majority of people with a terminal brain tumour diagnosis were not given a choice of end-of-life care options and that almost half felt that they had not been given appropriate information about end-of-life care.

It is clear that much more still needs to be done in detection, treatment and care to tackle this cancer, which many argue has not had a high enough priority.

13:08

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I congratulate Alexander Stewart on securing the debate and welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to it. I apologise for the fact that, because the Justice Sub-committee on Policing is taking place right now—Calum Steele and I have some catching up to do following yesterday's debate on policing—I will have to leave this debate slightly early. However, I will certainly read with

interest in the *Official Report* the speeches that are made during the rest of the debate.

As others have said, this is an important issue. I, too, pay tribute to the work of Cancer Research UK, which has highlighted brain cancer and supported research into the causes and into how it can be treated more effectively.

As others have said, over the past 40 years welcome improvements have been made in prevention, detection and treatment that have revolutionised cancer medicine and survival rates, but progress has not been consistent across the piece. Brain cancer is one of the four cancers of unmet need that have rightly been identified by Cancer Research UK. As has been mentioned, those cancers have poor five-year survival rates, in which very limited improvement has been made over the past decade, and Cancer Research UK is right to prioritise improvement of the quality and the quantity of research into them. That is certainly the view of those who are involved in the Friends of the Neuro Ward Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, who deserve our gratitude and support, as do the campaigners whom colleagues have already mentioned. I pay tribute to Caroline Critchlow and Carolyn Toshney, in particular, but they are well supported by other volunteers in the group. Over the years, they have done incredible work, not only in raising money for the neuro ward in Aberdeen but in raising the profile of the issue that we are debating.

Caroline Critchlow is in no doubt that the main issue is that diagnosis is still being made far too late. There are many different brain tumours and, as Clare Haughey outlined, their symptoms are easily confused with those of other conditions, as the tragic case that Alexander Stewart referred to illustrated. There seems to be a reluctance, for whatever reason, to refer people for MRI scans. As a result, too often people are presenting at accident and emergency departments, by which stage it is invariably far too late.

In turn, that puts pressure on neuro wards, which tend to be underfunded because of the wide-ranging nature of the referrals that they receive, which include cases of head injury, spinal tumour, MS, motor neurone disease and Parkinson's. The neuro wards do not appear to be benefiting from the funding that supports all those diseases.

I am told that the new Glasgow hospital does not include a neuro ward, and I would be interested to know the reasons for that decision.

Clare Haughey: I have a point of clarification. There is a neuro department at that hospital.

Liam McArthur: That was helpful—it is encouraging to know that.

The underlying problem is that not enough is known about brain tumours. Only 1 per cent of cancer research funding is spent in this area and, in real terms, the amount that is spent has gone down rather than up. That is tragic and rather inexplicable when, as we know, brain tumours are the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under the age of 40.

More research, earlier diagnosis and greater awareness are needed. I thank Alexander Stewart for helping at least with the last of those, and I hope that much more progress will be made on the first two.

I again apologise to Alexander Stewart, the minister and others for leaving the chamber shortly in order to attend a committee meeting.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is fine if you want to leave now; the Justice Sub-committee on Policing is sitting.

To allow me to call all the other members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Alexander Stewart*]

Motion agreed to.

13:13

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Alexander Stewart on bringing this important debate to the chamber. I must remind members that I am a registered nurse. The operating theatre was one of the areas of clinical practice in which I gained experience. The debate is about raising awareness of brain tumour and the effects that the signs and symptoms, diagnosis and treatment have on not only the patients but the families of those who are affected.

While researching for the debate, I was reminded of terms such as glioma, glioblastoma, astrocytoma stage 1 and stage 2, stereotactic biopsy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. All those terms are part of the language that is used in caring for people with brain tumours. I acknowledge that, as the motion says, there are more than 130 types of brain cancer.

In 2003, while working at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, I was able to participate in the form of tumour removal surgery that is called awake craniotomy. Sometimes a tumour is in an area of the cerebrum where the speech centre is located. Preserving speech following surgery is an obvious optimal goal, and that can be achieved by using the specialist technique of awake craniotomy. I was reminded of my participation in

that work when I read the motion and did my research for today's debate.

In 2014, 971 people in Scotland were diagnosed with a brain tumour, and in 2015, about 475 people died as the result of a tumour in the brain. I, too, pay tribute to the people, families and lives affected by brain cancer. One of the most important factors in the successful treatment of a brain tumour is early diagnosis, and I am going to focus my time on that.

Last year, I was contacted by the HeadSmart campaign and asked to help to raise awareness of the HeadSmart programme, which has already been mentioned by my colleague Edward Mountain, using my social media contacts. HeadSmart is an internet-based programme that helps by providing education about the symptoms of brain tumour, which can lead to an earlier diagnosis, especially in children.

According to the Brain Tumour Charity, 10 to 15 per cent of childhood brain tumours in the United Kingdom are high-grade astrocytoma called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG. That is a fast-growing tumour originating in the brain stem and it often appears in children who are only six years old. In children, teenagers and young folks, the symptoms may go undiagnosed until they become more problematic, because adults may think that some of the symptoms are part of growing up. One description was of a young teacher who forgot her pupils' names and whose text messages became garbled; later she was diagnosed with a brain tumour, so the garbled text messages and forgotten names were actually associated symptoms. When individual symptoms are connected, action can be taken.

The HeadSmart site describes symptoms as persistent or recurrent vomiting; persistent or recurring headache; abnormal eye movements; and blurred or double vision. The abnormal eye movement, for example, could be the appearance of a new squint, bulging eye or other eye problems. Other symptoms are problems with hearing and loss of balance or co-ordination—some of the children described wobbly legs—and fits or seizures are also symptoms.

The HeadSmart decision-support tool for healthcare professionals on the internet site gives guidance on when to reassure, review or refer and it will lead to a neurological examination, computer tomography or magnetic resonance imaging scan as part of the clinical pathway for diagnosis and treatment. Much is involved in the care, treatment and family support needed for people with brain tumours, but recognition and diagnosis at the earliest opportunity is one of the most important aspects of getting the right support and care. The impact of the HeadSmart campaign is that

childhood diagnosis time is reduced from 14.4 to 6.5 weeks. That is a great achievement.

I conclude by once again welcoming the debate and reiterating the importance of raising awareness of cancer of the brain, and I thank Alexander Stewart again for securing the debate.

13:17

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I thank Alexander Stewart for bringing an important motion to the chamber. As we have heard, brain tumours unfortunately impact families and communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

Today's debate was highlighted for me by a constituent who got in touch to share the story of how he tragically lost his son last year to a brain tumour. Two more of my young constituents—Luke Stewart from Tranent and Alex Logan from Prestonpans—have recently been diagnosed with an extremely rare form of malignant tumour known as DIPG, which is extremely difficult to treat. That form of brain tumour affects only 20 to 30 children a year in the UK, but we have two cases diagnosed within a few miles of each other.

The local communities have rallied round Luke and Alex. Luke was told by the national health service that it could provide only radiotherapy to give him a semblance of good quality of life. He is now receiving treatments in Mexico, after hundreds of thousands of pounds were raised to fund a new treatment, which he is only the seventh patient in the world to receive. The family reports that the benefits have been significant—but how hard they have had to fight to get them.

Alex's family are now fundraising too, and once again their friends and neighbours are stepping up to the plate—not least Prestonpans boxing superstar, Josh Taylor, who dedicated his recent defence of his World Boxing Council silver super-lightweight title to Alex and his campaign, in front of a television audience of millions.

Although it is welcome that Luke now has access to the treatment that he needs, and I know that Prestonpans will not let Alex Logan down, we have to put our hands up and say that we are letting them and their families down. They should not have to depend on fundraising to get the treatment that they need and that can help them, and they should not have to travel to Mexico to find that treatment.

As we have already heard, over the past 10 years in Scotland, survival rates for brain tumours have shown little improvement. They kill more people than leukaemia in Scotland, and deaths have increased by over 15 per cent in the past 15 years. Brain tumours kill more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer, yet we

have also heard that less than 2 per cent of cancer research spending in the UK is dedicated to work on brain tumours. That simply cannot be right. It is time that we did better for youngsters like Luke and Alex.

13:20

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank Alexander Stewart for bringing this important topic to the chamber today.

This debate is fundamentally about raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of brain tumours. The importance of doing so cannot be overstated: it really is a matter of life and death. I am sure that I was not alone in being shocked by some of the statistics and stories that I read in preparation for the debate. For example, nearly one third of people visit a healthcare professional more than five times before being diagnosed, and 37 per cent of patients with brain tumours in Scotland went straight to hospital for diagnosis, compared with 9 per cent of all cancer patients in 2016. That is because of a lack of understanding among both the general public and healthcare professionals, which means that such tumours often go unidentified and undiagnosed for a long time. When they are finally diagnosed, it is often too late to treat them effectively, with the result that the patient deteriorates quickly and dies rapidly.

That can—and must—be improved. By raising awareness, it can be. That has been proved beyond doubt by the UK-wide campaign HeadSmart, which has radically improved average diagnosis times for children and young people. Based on the “Diagnosis of Brain Tumours in Children” guidance that was produced in 2008, HeadSmart is a public-facing campaign that focuses on raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of brain tumours in children and young people.

Through educating both the public and healthcare professionals, the campaign has succeeded in saving countless lives and in markedly reducing long-term disabilities. Before 2008, average diagnosis time for children with brain tumours in the UK was 13 weeks. Four years after publication of the guidance for healthcare professionals, that was reduced and, most recently, average diagnosis times have been further reduced to 6.5 weeks. The goal is now to get the average diagnosis time down to four weeks. So far, the campaign has demonstrated how much of a difference can be made simply by raising awareness. I am confident that we can, if we continue to do that, achieve that goal for children and young people, as well as for adults.

As well as raising awareness of what we currently know, another crucial strand in dealing better with brain tumours is new research. I was pleased to read about the pioneering research projects that are currently under way in Scotland, at the University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University. I hope that the Scottish Government will in due course capitalise on those research findings, in addition to the action that it is already taking, including the “Scottish Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2015/16”—the first such survey—that it published in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support in 2016. The findings of that survey highlighted good practice as well as areas for improvement.

Responding to that report in September this year, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport announced the formation of a ministerial cancer performance delivery group to drive forward improvements in waiting times for diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients, supported by £1 million of new funding. An additional £3 million was announced to increase the number of radiology trainees in Scotland by at least 50 over the next five years. That investment, plus more national awareness raising, will continue to focus our minds on further improving outcomes for brain tumour patients, whose diagnosis and treatment still lag behind those of other cancer patients, which can and must be improved.

13:24

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I, too, thank Alexander Stewart for bringing the debate this afternoon.

I welcome some of my constituents to the chamber for the debate. I have been contacted by a number of constituents who are living with brain tumour diagnoses and whose stories have been very effective in highlighting the challenges that people face when fighting the condition and trying to get on with living their lives.

I would also like to thank the Brain Tumour Charity and Cancer Research Scotland for their briefings in advance of the debate. Alexander Stewart highlighted the key issues around the experiences of people, the health and emotional impacts, difficulties with diagnosis and lack of awareness of the condition.

I was struck by two issues following the briefings. The first is the stress on individuals while trying to achieve a diagnosis. One third of diagnoses result from emergency admissions to hospital, and 31 per cent of patients have to visit their GP at least five times before a diagnosis can be made. I acknowledge the difficulty in trying to diagnose the condition, as highlighted by other members, because it can present similarly to other

conditions. It is relatively uncommon for a GP to come across the cancer, so I understand the difficulties with diagnosis. However, that must be extremely frustrating for the person who is awaiting diagnosis, and for their families.

As others have said, brain tumours are a cancer of unmet need. Investment has been inadequate in addressing the key issues around improving diagnosis, finding more effective and less harmful treatments and, ultimately, finding a cure. The briefings, and other members, emphasised the importance of research. It can make a meaningful difference to people: the work of Dr Paul Brennan and Dr Dirk Sieger, who is looking at enabling faster development of drugs to treat tumours, was highlighted. There are examples of treatment being difficult for patients to tolerate, so there could be improvements in patient care.

The second issue that struck me is the patient experience. Models of care for other cancers could be replicated for brain tumour treatment. We have clinical nurse specialists in other areas and we know the benefits that they provide. They are vital in supporting patients. It is often recognised that the experience that patients have in clinical care is excellent, which is important. However, when that engagement finishes, patients often feel abandoned. They must deal with the shock and stress of receiving the diagnosis, and sometimes cannot remember the answer to questions that they asked. They often have many unanswered questions following a brief meeting with the consultant. They also face significant changes in how they live their lives. At that point, a clinical nurse specialist could provide valuable support and signposting.

A brain tumour is the most prevalent and life-shortening cancer for children and adults under the age of 40, which must make diagnosis extremely concerning. I will highlight emails that I have had from constituents.

Michelle was diagnosed with a brain tumour just over a year ago, when she was only 25. She says that her whole life has changed due to the symptoms that come with this horrible disease. She had to give up her job and her college course because she was so ill. She is only 26 and feels that she has no life anymore because of the diagnosis. It has physically and mentally taken over her life. Because the cancer affects that age group, we are not as experienced in how to deal with supporting patients, so we need to focus on that.

The disease impacts significantly on people's home lives. Parents can have young children who are affected. I was contacted by Elizabeth, whose husband has been diagnosed with a brain tumour. She and her husband both work, and they do not claim state benefits, but they were trying to access

early nursery care for their young daughter following his diagnosis. They feel that the situation that they are facing should have made it easier for them to qualify. They were unable to pay for child care, but were both in work and not claiming benefits, so that affected the answer that they were given about how to deal with the situation. Their situation has been resolved, but that example illustrates the challenges that families with this diagnosis who are trying to look after young children face.

It is an extremely stressful time for patients, and the statistics demonstrate that they do not often have the support that they need. They often do not have the understanding of their employers or agencies, which suggests a lack of understanding about the impacts of the condition. All of that is reflected in the emails that I have received.

Finally, I will mention Ewan, who contacted me to say that another key interest, for him, is the nature and provision of support post-operation. The impact on families and their patients is enormous and the challenges last a lifetime—especially the mental health and wellbeing aspects, and we must also pay attention to those.

13:29

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): I, like other members, thank Alexander Stewart for securing this debate. I appreciate all the contributions that members have made this afternoon, but I pick out particularly the professional and authoritative contributions from Clare Haughey and Emma Harper.

The Scottish Government recognises the damaging impact of all cancers, including brain cancer, on individuals, their families and friends. Brain cancer has a devastating impact on younger people, as it is the biggest cause of cancer-related deaths in those aged 40 or under.

I pay tribute to Mark Richardson, who is mentioned in the motion, and welcome Shona to the chamber. I recognise the tremendous effort to raise an enormous amount of money in memory of Mark and I reiterate how sincerely sorry we are for his sad passing. Edward Mountain spoke about Robert, and it sounds like he was a wonderful and talented lad. It was important that Edward Mountain took the time during his remarks to raise awareness of all the signs, especially those that might be missed by parents.

I appreciate Iain Gray for raising the stories of Luke and Alex. We all wish them well, and I extend an offer to meet Iain Gray to find out about their cases and whether anything more could have been done, if that would help. Again, we probably all want to put on the record our hopes that both

Alex and Luke get the recovery that we all want for them.

Clare Haughey mentioned the fact that it is not just constituents who have been impacted by brain tumours. Many notable people such as John Hartson and Mo Mowlam have also been affected.

I pay tribute to a teacher at a school in my constituency, Moira Struthers. She was an incredibly popular teacher who was heavily involved in the community. She volunteered, raised money and did all that she could to help anyone who was in need. Many constituents have contacted me about this debate, all of whom have echoed the calls that we have heard today about the need to raise awareness and for more research, and to make sure that Moira's experience informs the way that we move forward.

What unites all the stories that we have heard today is the need to do more and to redouble our efforts around brain cancer and brain tumours.

I want to outline some of the national approaches that we are taking through our cancer strategy. In March 2016, the Scottish Government unveiled its "Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action" strategy document, which serves as a blueprint for the future of cancer services in Scotland. The Government is aware that early detection of all cancers, including brain cancer, is crucial. The strategy will deliver £100 million of investment to improve prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and aftercare for all those affected by cancer.

There is good work, but, as we have all acknowledged, the improvements in some areas of cancer have not been replicated in others, which shows that there is still much more to do. Our £41 million detect cancer early programme has increased diagnostic capacity across Scotland, as well as increasing awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer. Next year's programme will focus on early detection for all cancers. It will aim to encourage anyone with any concern or changes to their body to visit their GP.

On raising awareness of brain cancer, my officials met representatives of the Brain Tumour Charity and HeadSmart earlier in 2017 to share crucial information on signs and symptoms of brain tumours via our wee c social media channel. I have instructed my officials to meet colleagues from brain cancer charities to discuss how we can further support awareness messages and to consider research opportunities, which will build on Alexander Stewart's request for charities, the third sector and Government to work together.

To improve cancer diagnosis, the Scottish Government has supported the Scottish referral guidelines for suspected cancer that were revised and published in 2014. They include a specific

section on brain cancer and are intended to help clinicians to identify those people who are most likely to have cancer and require urgent specialist assessment. The guidelines are due to be reviewed and refreshed next year, and that will be assisted through engagement with those third sector organisations that have a particular and specific knowledge of brain tumours. That will enhance our ability to raise awareness and make sure that clinicians can identify the people who are most at risk and not be caught up in the fact that the symptoms can often mimic other conditions.

We all know that even where a diagnosis of brain cancer is made, the huge variance in site and tumour type can make treatment challenging. Clare Haughey was right to point to the impact that even a benign tumour can have.

I welcome the research funding in Edinburgh and Glasgow from the Brain Tumour Charity and the increased focus from Cancer Research UK on less survivable cancers, such as brain cancer. The centres are carrying out internationally leading research into many areas, such as diagnostic improvements, developmental biology, neuroregeneration and neural stem cell biology.

Researchers can also apply to the Scottish Government chief scientist office for funding; applications that are aimed at improving the diagnosis and treatment of brain cancer would be very welcome.

Ruth Maguire and Claire Baker talked about the importance of the patient experience. The first Scottish cancer patient experience survey was published in June 2017 and covered all aspects of the cancer care journey, from a person thinking that something might be wrong to the support that they receive after acute care and treatment. Although national results revealed that 94 per cent of people said that their overall experience of cancer care was positive, areas for improvement were noted. Particular concerns for people with brain tumours included the high number of emergency admissions, provision of care plans, access to information and access to clinical trials. The findings will assist with identifying where to target improvements. I hope that those improvements will be reflected in the next cancer patient experience survey.

I also hope that the suggestions that have been made in the debate will be taken on board. For instance, Claire Baker described the need for a broader package of support to be in place alongside the initial clinical interventions.

Members talked about the need for appropriate palliative and end-of-life care. The Brain Tumour Charity has highlighted the need to ensure that people with a brain tumour have the option of

discussing palliative care with clinicians from the point of diagnosis.

I am pleased that Scotland has a very good reputation for palliative and end-of-life care. This year, the University of Bath institute for policy research published a policy note in which it commented that Scotland is taking bold steps to improve palliative and end-of-life care services and support.

We want to ensure that everyone has access to palliative and end-of-life care that is tailored to their individual needs. Our “Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care” contains a number of commitments to improve services and support, to help to meet the needs of people and their families. If we are to achieve our aims, we must create the right conditions nationally to support local communities in their planning and delivery of those services. That ethos is at the heart of our health and social care integration agenda, and it is reassuring that we are beginning to see the positive outcomes of that agenda.

We must keep looking to improve how we deliver care. We must consider how we can equip ourselves to deliver even better health and social care services in future. The cancer strategy will assist, and it will require us to work collaboratively, with contributions from people who live with cancer, carers, voluntary groups, professionals and professional organisations and, of course, our dedicated NHS staff.

In memory of Mark Richardson, Moira Struthers, Robert, Michelle and all those who have been impacted by brain tumours, we must ensure that their experiences inform our actions. We must make improvements in areas such as life expectancy and the broader impact on families. There must be an increase in research, with the opportunities that it presents to make the improvements that I think that we all want to secure, in memory of everyone who has been mentioned in the debate.

I thank Alexander Stewart for taking the time to raise this important issue and I thank members for their speeches. I acknowledge that we want to do more to make the improvements that are so necessary.

13:39

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Air Quality (Low-emission Zones)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a statement by Humza Yousaf on improving Scotland’s air quality and putting in place Scotland’s low-emission zones.

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): Clean air is essential for our health and wellbeing. Overall, Scotland’s air quality is good, but we know that areas of poorer air quality still exist in some of our towns and cities. We also know that some groups in society—the very young and old, and people who have existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions—are more likely to be affected by poor air quality.

People rightly expect to be able to breathe clean air. The Scottish Government is determined to ensure that we continue to make progress in tackling the issue, and that we achieve our vision of Scotland having the best air quality in Europe.

Low-emission zones are a tool that we can use to manage the impact of vehicle pollution in areas where the air quality is poor. They allow us to put restrictions on the vehicles that can enter designated areas and they help to encourage a move towards cleaner vehicles and greater use of public transport—an ambition that all of us around the chamber share.

In our programme for government, we committed to establishing low-emission zones in each of our four biggest cities by 2020, with the first being put in place by 2018. In October, it was announced that Glasgow will be the location of the first low-emission zone, which will be put in place in 2018.

In addition, by 2023, low-emission zones will have been established in other air quality management areas, where the national low-emission framework has demonstrated the establishment of a zone’s value in improving air quality. The commitment to delivering multiple low-emission zones across Scotland over the next six years is ambitious; it represents the largest-ever programme of transport-based air quality mitigation in Scotland.

The design and implementation of low-emission zones will be led by local councils, but we recognise that delivery of the ambitions will require partnership working across the whole of Scottish Government and a range of public bodies. We have therefore created a low-emission zones leadership group with the four largest cities and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to

support implementation of low-emission zones. That will ensure that low-emission zones are based on robust evidence, and that stakeholders and the public are engaged and involved. The group will share knowledge and identify issues where nationally consistent standards for design and delivery of low-emission zones are required.

We are working collaboratively with Glasgow City Council as part of the multidisciplinary delivery group that it has established to progress design of the low-emission zone for Glasgow. Work is under way with the City of Edinburgh Council, Dundee Council and Aberdeen City Council to support them in developing their plans for progressing low-emission zones.

Decisions on the location and design of low-emission zones will, as I have said, be led by local authorities. We are urging them to be ambitious in their design and scope, with all vehicles being included within the low-emission zones at the appropriate time. The design process will build on assessment of the evidence that has been developed through partnership between local councils, SEPA and Transport Scotland over the past 12 months.

We know that low-emission zones will set an environmental limit on vehicles on designated roads within the specified towns and cities, and will allow access by only the cleanest vehicles. Only when local authorities create the final designs will we know exactly how many vehicles will be affected.

It is intended that low-emission zones will be based on road-access restriction schemes. Such schemes exclude vehicles that do not meet the relevant emissions standard, with a penalty being imposed on non-compliant vehicles when they enter the designated zone. The aim of low-emission zones is to improve air quality, so we want to incentivise compliance and discourage non-compliant vehicles from entering such zones.

It is, of course, for the local authorities to decide the timescales for the phasing in of different vehicle types, but we expect that low-emission zones will have nationally consistent lead-in times. Those lead-in periods will allow people who will be affected—bus and commercial fleet operators and private car owners—time to prepare before full compliance is required.

To support consideration of design, a national consultation on the principles for low-emission zones was launched on 6 September. It closed on 28 November and received more than 900 responses. That was a remarkable response to the consultation, which sought views on issues including emissions criteria, the scope of vehicles to be included, enforcement and penalties, and lead-in times and phasing. That was such a high

response rate, and analysis of the responses is under way. The outputs from the process will inform decision making on the standards that will be adopted in the design of low-emission zones.

The consultation responses will also inform finalisation of the national low-emission framework document, which will provide the framework within which low-emission zones will be introduced, and is a key commitment from “Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future”—the strategy that was published in 2015.

I turn now to one or two of the sectors that will, I hope, be positively affected by low-emission zones. The bus sector is integral to helping to manage air quality issues in towns and cities through providing a key alternative to use of private cars. A well used low-emission bus fleet will help to reduce emissions. Engagement with the bus industry on low-emission zones is ongoing; operators have expressed understandable concern about securing compliant fleets to allow service levels to be maintained when low-emission zones come into force.

To support that, the programme for government committed to working with the commercial and bus sectors, the Energy Saving Trust and the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership to establish an engine retrofitting centre in Scotland. Discussions are under way with the Energy Saving Trust and the bus sector to establish the bus-emission abatement retrofit programme in Scotland. To support that, we have committed £1.6 million for the first phase of the programme by March 2018. The seventh round of the green bus fund has also been successfully completed, and will in due course introduce another 47 low-emission buses to service.

Low-emission zones should also interact with other transport policies. We will encourage councils to consider wider measures to tackle congestion, for example traffic management and parking arrangements, as part of their consideration of implementing low-emission zones. That approach could help to improve bus journey times, to make car use less attractive and to increase modal shift towards active travel and public transport.

Low-emission zones have the potential to act as a catalyst for reimagined city-centre place making by helping to ensure that our city centres remain vibrant places in which to live, work, shop and socialise. We will encourage councils to consider low-emission zones as a component part of larger projects in their cities. Low-emission zones must also be designed with consideration of the potential for unintended secondary effects—for example, the potential for displacement of air pollution to areas outwith the zones.

Equality issues are central to consideration—especially to the communities around our towns and cities that rely on public transport to move around. We anticipate that local councils will carry out equalities impact assessments as part of the process of designing their low-emission zones.

Low-emission zones are not the only measure that will help us to address issues around vehicle pollution, and to deliver our vision of having the best air quality in Europe. We will continue to drive down vehicle-exhaust emissions through our ambitious target for phasing out the need for new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032. To support that, we will continue to expand the electric-vehicle charging network through a range of incentives to local authorities, businesses and individuals.

Funding will be crucial; funding to support the design and implementation of low-emission zones to meet the 2020 commitment will be considered as part of the forthcoming spending review. The programme for government also established an air quality fund to support local authorities that have air quality management areas to deliver transport-based mitigation, as identified by the national low-emission framework.

Although we have made considerable progress, air pollution remains a significant public health and social justice issue in some towns and cities. Through the introduction of low-emission zones, we are adopting an approach that will help us to deliver improvements in air quality and public health. Those improvements will, of course, benefit people today, but crucially, they will also create a healthier world for future generations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues that have been raised in his statement. I will allow about 20 minutes for that.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for prior sight of his statement, although, with the greatest respect, I say that there was nothing in his 10-minute statement that we did not already know.

The minister has confirmed today that the first scheme will be in place by 2018 and that schemes will be in place in our four largest cities by 2020—but 2018 is just 24 days away. The Conservatives are supportive of the eventual outcome of the zones, but we are concerned about the unrealistic timescales for roll-out and the distinct lack of detail in the plans.

There remain straightforward and substantial questions that need to be answered. What types of vehicles will be affected by the new access restrictions? When will those vehicles be restricted from entering our cities? Will we end up with confusing and different schemes in different cities? What type of infrastructure will need to be in place

when schemes go live, and how long will that infrastructure take to build? How much will it cost and who is going to pay for it?

Many thousands of law-abiding everyday drivers, city centre residents and local businesses will be affected by the restrictions and will, as they watch these proceedings today, be justifiably worried about the potential of being banned from driving to and from their own doorsteps. Can the minister answer some of those very basic questions today?

Humza Yousaf: Yes, I can. I have the greatest respect for Jamie Greene and he knows that. It is only right and proper that we come to Parliament, not just with detail—I respect that he may well know some of that—but so that members can ask questions, as he has just done, to get clarification and to scrutinise and, where appropriate, to critique Government policy. I think that the statement is very much justified, in that sense. Many of the questions that the member asked will be answered when we have analysed the consultation responses. He might well have responded to that consultation, which asks about vehicle types, and so on and so forth.

When I was asked about low-emission zones at committee a couple of days ago, I made the point—which I hope Jamie Greene will agree is a reasonable one—that we will have a national framework for towns, cities and local authorities that wish to adopt low-emission zones, but there will clearly have to be flexibility because we know that one size does not fit all. We know that what might work for Glasgow's low-emission zone might not work for Dundee's or other cities' air quality management areas. We have to allow for that flexibility.

On the point that we are less than a month away from 2018, we said that we would introduce the first low-emission zone in 2018, but I do not expect that that will happen on 1 January. Glasgow City Council and the national Government are working very closely to make sure that the zone is introduced in 2018. To give Jamie Greene some reassurance, I point out that I welcomed an email—which I think members across the chamber also received—from the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland that highlighted the federation's view that there must in particular be consideration of phasing and lead-in times. That is a very important point. I reassure the member, as much as I can, that the local authorities that the Government has spoken to understand the need for appropriate phasing and lead-in times. If we look at low-emission zones across the wider United Kingdom or, indeed, across Europe, we can see that lead-in and phasing times have been crucial, so I give the member the absolute assurance that we want to work with the business

community and others to ensure that things are done similarly in Scotland.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement. Labour welcomes the lowering of emissions as a strategy for improving air quality in Scotland. As the British Heart Foundation evidence makes clear, 80 per cent of deaths related to outdoor air pollution are due to heart disease or stroke. In Scotland, that deadly air pollution is most likely to come from traffic, and from older, polluting diesel vehicles in particular.

With the Glasgow pilot LEZ, does the minister envisage a 2018 launch date with enforcement some years later? Will the LEZs include, as we have heard, private vehicles as well as commercial vehicles and public transport? Will automatic number plate recognition technology be used to ensure greater compliance levels? Will that be funded by the Scottish Government? Should emissions be reduced per passenger or per vehicle? Will SEPA be funded to have more automatic emissions detection equipment, rather than the traditional diffusion tube? Will LEZs require primary or secondary legislation? Finally, will local authorities with LEZs have additional powers of enforcement over polluting vehicles?

Humza Yousaf: I will do my best to answer the nine questions that I managed to note down.

I have to confess at the very beginning that I have no further information on the diffusion tube issue that David Stewart raised with me and the cabinet secretary a couple of days ago, but my officials are hoping to write to him with an important answer to what is an important question. I also want very much to recognise on the record Mr Stewart's work on and ambitions for low-emission zones. He has banged the drum on the issue for many years now.

I will try to address some of the questions as best I can. I told the committee of which David Stewart is a member that the Government realises that we will have to be partners in funding and resourcing low-emission zones. As I said in my statement, we are a week away from the spending review, and I would certainly not attempt to preempt that. However, the Government understands that we have to step up and put our money where our mouth is, and that conversation is on-going with Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee. Of course, we want the local authority to put resources into the zones, too.

I will also do my best to answer the member's questions about enforcement. There is no suggestion from the other low-emission zones that have been introduced across the United Kingdom, particularly that in London, that enforcement began from day 1 of their introduction. If my

memory serves me correctly, the evidence that the committee received from London made a very good point about why enforcement needed a phased approach or some lead-in time. There is a sensible argument to be made in that respect.

The flipside of that is that we must ensure that the timeline does not run away from us. We want enforceable LEZs as soon as is practicably and pragmatically possible, given the outcomes that they can achieve. Of course, a successful LEZ is one where no fines are being racked up and people are complying with the designated zone.

With regard to enforcement through number plate recognition, again, it will be for the local authority to come forward with what it thinks is the most appropriate infrastructure. David Stewart and I are probably at one in feeling that we should not talk about doing LEZs on the cheap. When it comes to designating and enforcing zones, we should be striving to have the latest and best technology and to do something that Scotland can lead on, while, of course, giving consideration to the budgetary constraints that we are under. I know that Glasgow and Edinburgh are exploring number plate recognition, but I cannot give a definitive answer as to whether they have settled on one piece of enforcement infrastructure.

As for the question whether things should be measured on a per vehicle or per passenger basis, internationally recognised air quality measurements, particularly on nitrogen oxide and particulate matter, are the driving force and the criteria to be met in existing air quality management areas or local air quality strategies. As a result, we are not necessarily looking at measuring things on a per vehicle or per passenger basis. However, I should say that the bus industry has made the absolutely reasonable point that the more bums on seats that we have on buses and the fewer that we have in cars, the better that will be for everybody. Indeed, it will be a win-win, and I think that buses are absolutely part of the solution.

On the question about legislation, we certainly believe that the legislation already exists for some elements of LEZ enforcement. I can tell David Stewart that if we think that there is any legislative requirement for other elements—as we think there might be; I can give him some more details about that later on—we will bring that forward in the transport bill that we have committed to introducing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can see already that we are not going to get through all the questions, so it is up to members and the minister to have quicker questions and answers, please.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Just over 360 buses have been replaced through the green

bus fund, and in evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee earlier this week, the minister indicated that some operators were replacing polluting vehicles at their own expense. Can he give a broad indication of the number of low-emission buses that he expects to be in service by 2020, taking account of new and, as a result of the emission abatement programme, retrofitted vehicles?

Humza Yousaf: I cannot give Mr Dey an exact number and I would not try to hazard a guess, but he is right to say that the £16 million-plus that we have spent on the green bus fund has allowed 362 buses to be greened. I have mentioned that another tranche is coming, and in the programme for government the First Minister promised to extend and expand the green bus fund, which will be welcome.

On top of that, we are working closely with the bus industry to see how we can create an abatement retrofit scheme for buses, which will incentivise retrofitting where that is appropriate. However, many bus companies have told me that they do not want money for retrofitting. They do not want to retrofit a 13-year-old bus; they would rather have assistance to buy a brand-new electric bus or a Euro 6 bus. We therefore have to ensure that the fund is flexible, so that bus companies that are at different stages, depending on the age of their fleet, can make use of it.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The minister mentioned the FSB's concerns, and he will accept that residents and small businesses will be worried about the short timescales that he outlined in his statement. What assurances can he give small businesses, which face enough costs and bureaucracy as it is, about the impact on their enterprises? What action is he taking to ensure that the interests of those who live and work in low-emission zones and who use diesel vehicles are not prejudiced by a failure to engage with them during the implementation of LEZs?

Humza Yousaf: Donald Cameron will have heard from my answer to his colleague Jamie Greene that I welcomed the FSB's contribution. I look forward to meeting representatives from the FSB and the chambers of commerce, to whom I have written today to find out when we can have a conversation about low-emission zones. As I told Jamie Greene, although we are looking at introducing the LEZ in Glasgow by 2018, a phased approach with lead-in times will be taken. I hope that that gives businesses some reassurance.

I am unsure at this stage whether the Conservatives support LEZs or not, but it would be helpful to get some clarification from them on that in due course. However, I can give Mr Cameron an absolute assurance that we will be engaging

with the public and with businesses, as well as engaging continually and collaboratively with local authorities.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Concerns have been raised in my constituency by, among others, Cambuslang community council about air pollution in Cambuslang Main Street in particular. Although I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to put in place low-emission zones in cities, can the minister advise me what measures will be put in place to reduce air pollution in Scotland's towns?

Humza Yousaf: Clare Haughey will be aware that, as well as committing to introducing low-emission zones in the four largest cities by 2020, we are also committed to introducing, by 2023, low-emission zones in air quality management areas where the evidence shows that they are needed. We will continue to work with SEPA, Transport Scotland, Health Protection Scotland and others to further reduce air pollution and to deliver benefits for human and environmental health. All local authorities with air quality management areas have in place either final or draft action plans. We are working closely with them. For example, we provide local authorities with practical and financial support to tackle air pollution hotspots, including £4 million in annual funding to improve air quality, £1 million of which was additional funding. "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" sets out how the Scottish Government and partner organisations will deliver further improvements to air quality over the coming years.

Although no AQMAs have been declared in the Cambuslang area, South Lanarkshire Council will keep the situation under review and will take appropriate action where needed.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): The minister referred in his statement to the potential for LEZs to have unintended secondary effects. I welcome the £1.6 million funding for the bus abatement retrofit programme in Scotland. Can he reassure the chamber that heavily polluting buses will not be allowed to move into areas outside LEZs, as I fear that that could threaten residents' health in deprived suburbs?

Humza Yousaf: The member is absolutely right, and let me put on record that I recognise her interest in the issue, on which she has campaigned. She is right to mention displacement, and I hope that she heard me mention it in my statement.

We, and the local authorities, are very conscious of that. Glasgow City Council has still to come forward with its final proposal on the scope of the low-emission zone in Glasgow, but we

would not want displacement to affect those areas outside the Glasgow box, or zone.

I reassure the member that the bus companies that I have spoken to, particularly large operators such as First Bus, Stagecoach, McGill's Bus Service and Lothian Buses, have hugely impressive and ambitious plans for greening their fleets. If she has not visited any of those bus operators, she would do well to do so, because they all understand that this is the direction in which Scotland is going.

Can I give the member an absolute commitment and promise that, on day 1, no bus with a Euro 3 engine will be outside a low-emission zone? Of course I cannot do that, and I do not think that she would expect that to be the case. Can I say that we are working towards having the cleanest and the greenest fleet possible? Can I say that we will help to assist that through the abatement scheme? I absolutely can say that. I give her a further assurance that it is not just the Government that has that ambition—the bus companies that I have spoken to absolutely share it, too.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Notwithstanding the answer to that previous question, the minister's statement identifies that only 47 buses went through the previous round—round seven—of the green bus fund. That is less than 1 per cent of the total fleet. Does the minister acknowledge that, in the year ahead, there will need to be an acceleration in the conversion of buses, or the purchase of new buses, if we are not just to tackle the LEZs, but to roll out actions to the air quality management areas?

Humza Yousaf: For the sake of brevity, my answer is that that is absolutely the case. We have made significant progress, but we understand that, when it comes to the introduction of low-emission zones, we will have to make progress at a quicker speed. When the spending review is produced, the members will—I hope—see more detail about that in it. As I have said, we are committing £1.6 billion to the abatement scheme, which I hope will lead to progress.

I suggest to the member, as I did to Claudia Beamish, that because of his interest in the issue he would do well to visit the bus operators and hear from them about their ambitious and welcome plans for greening their fleets.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I too, thank the minister for early sight of his statement. He refers to the ambition to expand the electric charging vehicle network, which I very much support. However, does he recognise that key to improving the take-up of EVs is improving the maintenance and the reliability of the network? Will he outline the steps that the Government

plans to take to ensure that that happens? Will he commit to ensuring that free vend is the default on charging points in order to address some of the problems that have been arising with the network?

Humza Yousaf: I acknowledge the member's interest in the issue. We have met on many occasions to discuss electric vehicles. Orkney is a leader when it comes to the take-up per capita of electric vehicles.

I share the member's ambitions. Some of our charging points default to free vend. However, he is absolutely right—having that across the network is a very good idea. I assure him that, after our most recent meeting, when he suggested that to me, my officials are exploring that very idea.

On the infrastructure, we are very proud that we have more than 700 charging points. From memory, I think that more than 150 of them are rapid charging points. We have a good charging network, but we must expand it if we want to get to our vision for 2032. However, it is hugely important that we also work on behavioural change. In addition, we must work to reduce the up-front capital cost of electric vehicles. That is happening anyway due to the market forces of supply and demand. Our scheme, which is in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust and allows an interest-free loan for the purchase of electric vehicles, is part of that. We will, of course, introduce any other initiatives in good time. I am sure that the member will welcome that.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Urban consolidation hubs can enhance low-emission zones by reducing business costs, helping to standardise freight traffic and tackling congestion and pollution problems. Will the minister expand the trial project in Dundee, which is a pollution hotspot, to cover the city comprehensively, as well as create another hub in Glasgow, which is another pollution hotspot, in 2018?

Humza Yousaf: I acknowledge the member's persistence on the issue of freight consolidation centres; I have met him to discuss them before. There is much evidence to suggest that they help with regard to carbon reduction and improvement in air quality. I should say that some evidence across the United Kingdom suggests that their impact is not as significant as that of other measures that we can take, such as low-emission zones. That is not to discard the issue; it is simply to take an evidence based approach.

I can say to the member that I will reflect on the question that he asks me, although it is not within our current plans to further fund consolidation hubs in Glasgow and the other cities that he mentioned. I will give the issue consideration, but the member will realise that, given the budget

restrictions and other restrictions that we have, we must ensure that we invest where we get the biggest bang for our buck, and, for me, low-emission zones present us with an exciting opportunity that has been tried and tested in other parts of the United Kingdom and across the European continent. However, that is not to discard the member's point about consolidation hubs and, as I said, I will reflect on his question.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): I am glad that the minister's statement has a significant focus on modal shift from private to public transport but, clearly, there is a risk that there will be unintended consequences if bus fleets are not in a position to operate in the LEZs. That is a particular issue with regard to Glasgow city centre, where the same bus would run right through the city. Does the minister agree that there is a risk that one unintended consequence of the provision could be a rise in private transport due to the unavailability of buses? Further, can the minister give us any information on the plans and timescales for the engine refit centre?

Humza Yousaf: I do not disagree with Ivan McKee; he is absolutely right. The introduction of a low emission zone has to be coupled with better and more affordable public transport that is more frequent and more accessible to people. That is why phase-in and lead-in times are important. I would simply reiterate the answer that I gave to David Stewart: there has to be a balance between giving the bus industry, private car owners and businesses an appropriate lead-in time, and our need to push ahead with the proposal so that we can realise the benefits of air quality improvements for generations to come.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is the end of questions on the statement. My apologies to those I was unable to call.

Sea Fisheries and End-year Negotiations

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-09406, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations.

15:02

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): I am pleased to open our annual fisheries debate by welcoming the broad consensus across the Parliament in support of the motion.

We go into the year-end talks with an industry and sector in rude health. The mood on the quayside right now is positive, and rightly so, with a 25 per cent increase to £557 million in the real-terms value of landings in 2016. Therefore, we must focus on the current needs and interests of the industry, the onshore sector, our coastal communities and our marine environment, and build on that success to ensure a good year of sustainable fishing in 2018.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I understand that a number of the smaller boats that fish inshore are worried about the increasing costs of licences. Is the Scottish Government aware of that and is there any way that we can tackle that issue?

Fergus Ewing: That issue has been raised on a number of occasions on which I have visited several of the smaller fishermen. I am therefore recommending that, with immediate effect, we make shellfish entitlements detachable from parent licences. That will enable smaller vessels that need that entitlement to get access to licences and shellfish entitlements without directly competing against, for example, a big pelagic skipper. I believe that that is of particular importance to local inshore vessels. I know that the issue has been raised by fishermen in the Western Isles, the Clyde, Orkney and Fife, and I hope that the announcement will be warmly welcomed by those fishermen.

There are, of course, dark Brexit clouds on the horizon. I do not intend to focus too much on the politics of that; rather, I want to concentrate on the work that we are doing to get the best possible deal for Scottish fishermen. However, I welcome the Liberal amendment in that regard, which acknowledges the uncertainty that has been caused for the sector, offshore and onshore, by the prospect and risk of Brexit.

We now have the full set of scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, which, as usual, shows mixed fortunes.

The advice on white fish in the North Sea is broadly encouraging. Increases are advised for a range of stocks, including cod, haddock, whiting, saithe and monkfish. There is also positive advice for North Sea prawns. However, the west coast remains more difficult, with the fortunes of cod and whiting remaining challenging, and a cut advised for west coast prawns. For pelagic stocks, the science advises increases for blue whiting and North Sea herring but decreases for mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring, or ASH.

One of the Scottish Government's key negotiating principles is to follow the best scientific advice. Respecting such advice enables us to make decisions and secure outcomes that are responsible, credible and objective, and which have sustainability at their heart. That commitment to sustainability and responsible management is one of the reasons why we need to press forward with effective measures to tackle discards. The Scottish Government remains committed to the ambitious principles behind the landing obligation—namely, to reduce waste, to improve accountability and to safeguard the sustainability of fishing stocks.

Next year—2018—will be the final year of phasing, and the full discard ban will take effect from 2019. To that end, we must endeavour to tackle the issue of choke species. It is essential that the livelihoods of our fishermen are protected. I am absolutely clear that I could not accept any situation in which our fleet is unnecessarily tied to the quayside when there is still quota available to fish. However, there has not yet been sufficient progress at a European level. By themselves, the existing tools, which I support the full use of, will not result in a total solution to choke species in some areas.

Therefore, we must urgently explore other solutions. For example, to avoid choke risk, quota distribution must more accurately reflect the distribution and abundance of fish that are likely to be encountered on the grounds. North Sea hake, whose distribution has shifted since the current quota shares between member states were fixed, is a perfect example of the mismatch that exists. Those and other tools will be discussed at the forthcoming Brussels negotiations, and I will make those points forcibly.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that remote electronic monitoring is an important part of our toolbox?

Fergus Ewing: There are many tools, and I accept that monitoring and the use of TVs and so on increasingly form part of the overall approach to sustainable fishing. Electronic monitoring is appropriate in some cases.

This year's talks are now well under way, and some strong results have been delivered at the coastal states talks and the talks between the European Union and Norway, which, together, deliver more in economic terms than the December council does.

At the October coastal states talks on mackerel—which is our single most valuable stock—our officials were key in influencing the shape of a new long-term management strategy for the stock. Fishing levels were aligned with the principles of maximum sustainable yield and the reduction in catching opportunities was constrained to 20 per cent in 2018. That is worth around £130 million to the Scottish industry.

The coastal states talks on blue whiting and ASH continue in Copenhagen, and we are working hard to secure agreement—we hope to do so today—on a full, five-party deal that will deliver sustainable and sensible fishing levels for the coming year.

Last week's negotiations between the EU and Norway delivered increased catching opportunities for five of the six North Sea stocks that are jointly managed with Norway, with four of those six stocks now being fished at sustainable levels. We also successfully secured a strong additional package of inward North Sea quota transfers from Norway that is aligned with the priorities identified by our industry. That included increased tonnages of whiting, Norway others and Norwegian monkfish compared with last year. For North Sea whiting, the effect of a 38 per cent increase in the total allowable catch, combined with an additional inward transfer from Norway of 800 tonnes, will give a significant increase in quota for whiting stocks. As such, there can now be no rationale for the United Kingdom Government to continue to top-slice the Scottish whiting quota for the sole benefit of English vessels, and I expect that to cease immediately.

Of course, by definition negotiations involve compromises; there will inevitably be areas in which we are unsuccessful in fully achieving our aims at the EU-Norway talks. The EU has continued to trade away saithe in both the North Sea and the west of Scotland. That is a significant choke-risk stock for Scotland in the North Sea and we remain firmly opposed in principle to giving away to Norway stocks that we remain short of ourselves. That makes neither economic nor fishing sense, and it risks putting the industry in a difficult position under the landing obligation.

Furthermore, the EU has again retained an overreliance on the use of northern blue whiting as a currency with which to bring in Arctic cod quota from Norway. Within the EU bloc, the UK is the largest shareholder of blue whiting; Scotland holds more than 92 per cent of that and yet we do not

receive a single tonne of the Arctic cod that comes back in return. Despite those disappointments, I considered that on balance the incoming package of North Sea opportunities was stronger than last year's and signalled a sufficient shift in the dynamics of the exchange with Norway to allow me to accept the deal that was on the table.

The EU-Faroes talks are currently under way, and they are of particular importance to fishermen in Shetland. The agreement provides essential quota and access opportunities to Faroese waters for our whitefish fleet, which are worth about £2 million. In return, Faroese vessels may fish a range of quota in our waters, including mackerel. While I accept that, I have previously made clear that I cannot accept how the level of Faroese access was fixed in 2014, via a private deal done by the European Commission without any consultation with member states. Members from fishing constituencies are only too well aware of that unfairness. I therefore welcomed the significant step forward at last year's talks, which put that issue back on the negotiating table. While I recognise that delivering a reduction from the current 30 per cent access level is going to be very challenging, my officials will continue to pursue that goal during this week's talks. Next week, I and my officials will attend the December council meeting to conclude this year's negotiations, at which quotas for stocks fished solely by the EU fleet will be set.

Today, I seek input and views from across the chamber, as well as support for our approach. My focus at the council will be to champion the interests of the industry and to ensure that Scotland's interests are fully represented by the UK in discussions. In general terms, the best possible outcome entails ensuring that scientific advice is realised as quota, resisting cuts that are not supported by scientific evidence.

I will also seek to secure appropriate quota uplifts to support continued implementation of the landing obligation. That includes seeking action on west of Scotland cod to provide the fleet with additional benefit while solutions are developed for resolving that significant choke risk. I will pursue additional interarea flexibility arrangements that allow the fleet to move quota between different sea areas to address choke risks. The Scottish industry will, as normal, be well represented at the council, and I will discuss progress with it on a regular basis.

The autumn negotiations are complex but vital, and the Scottish Government officials are very well respected and listened to for the expertise and knowledge that they bring to the process. I saw that when I attended the talks in Brussels as the head of the Scottish delegation last year. My recollection is that the representations made with

the excellent assistance of my officials were so proficient, respected and efficacious that we achieved a quite extraordinary 24 out of our 26 negotiating aims—something that was welcomed by the industry.

What is straightforward is that the industry and I will work together closely and tirelessly to deploy all options available to us in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for our fishing interests and our marine environment, enabling our industry, communities and economy to benefit from continued sustainable growth in 2018.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the conclusion of negotiations with Norway on shared stocks in the North Sea and the forthcoming annual fisheries negotiations in Brussels; notes that 2018 will see the last year of phased implementation of the landing obligation for whitefish stocks and that the outcome of the Brussels negotiations will be pivotal in helping Scotland's fishing fleet to reduce the potential impacts of choke species; is concerned that failure to explore and adopt all available solutions in this regard could potentially tie the fleet up; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to respect the scientific advice in relation to next year's quotas, and supports its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland's fishermen, coastal communities, marine environment and wider seafood sectors at the Brussels negotiations.

15:14

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I am glad to lead off the debate for the Scottish Conservatives today. Since the Brexit vote in June 2016, the fishing industry has been extremely positive about the challenges and opportunities that it faces. It has been a pleasure to work with its representatives over the past year and it is a privilege to speak on their behalf in today's debate.

The past 18 months have been good for our fishermen. Landings are up, prices are good, record numbers of new boats are being built and the mood is buoyant. In the past year, Peterhead port has invested more than £50 million in deepening the harbour and building a new, bigger fish market. Likewise, there has been considerable investment in harbour facilities in Shetland, to facilitate increased landings there.

However, the fish processing sector has seen a decrease in capacity. From 2008 to 2016, there has been a 34 per cent decline in processing capacity in north-east Scotland. We are losing business and jobs to Humberside, where fish processing is growing. We appear to be uncompetitive, due, in great measure, to large increases in business rates. We need to reverse that trend in order to handle the extra fish that Brexit will bring.

Cod is a great example of how stocks have improved over the past 10 years. In 2006, Scottish

cod stocks had fallen to 44,000 tonnes from a high of 270,000 tonnes in the 1970s. However, through a combined effort by our fishermen, using innovative technology and gear, and restricting our fishing effort, our cod stocks rose to a level of 149,000 tonnes in 2016. That is good news and a step towards a long and prosperous future.

If anyone mistakenly thinks that the EU or the common fisheries policy can take credit for any of that increase, they should take a look at the dire state of fish stocks in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas. Good stocks saw last week's bipartite EU-Norway talks award increased quotas for five out of the six North Sea stocks. They included increases of 38 per cent for whiting, 25 per cent for herring, 24 per cent for haddock and 10 per cent for cod. Although those increases have been agreed, it is at the annual talks of the agriculture and fisheries council that take place next week that EU member states will divide up fishing quotas for the year ahead.

Although there has been an increase in stocks, there are serious concerns with regard to choke species. For instance, without major uplifts in the quotas for cod and hake at next week's meeting, there is a real industry-wide fear that landing obligations will lead to restrictions on fishing. If those problems occur, the Government must be prepared to act beyond the existing tools of article 15 of the basic regulation. That has already happened, with dab and flounder being removed from the TAC and the quota regulation.

Today, it is important that we recognise that the upcoming end-year negotiations will be the last ones in which the UK will be awarded quotas from the EU for a full year, as, in April 2019, the UK will cease its membership of the EU and will be out of the CFP. We all know that the fishing industry voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU, as membership of it and the CFP has been little short of disastrous. The UK catches only 40 per cent of the fish zonally attached to our exclusive economic zone, while Norway catches 80 per cent and Iceland 90 per cent. That shows the size of the prize that is up for grabs. We can—and we must—start to redress this unfair situation. We must listen to the industry, and we should consider a nine-month bridging arrangement. The industry does not want—and we do not need—a two-year transition period for fishing.

This time next year, at the council talks, the UK will be in a unique position. The negotiation must recognise that three months on from the December 2018 talks, we will be out of the CFP. We will be an independent coastal state with control of, and responsibility for, our EEZ out to 200 miles in March 2019. We must, therefore, start to redress the balance of the quota shares in December 2018 and then allow those agreed

shares to run from March for the next nine months until December 2019 when the UK takes its place at the top table alongside Norway, Iceland, the Faroes and the EU. That is the nine-month bridge that the industry is arguing for and which I hope the cabinet secretary will get behind. Once the UK has achieved coastal state status, it can make clear its intention to seek adjustment to existing fixed shares. The UK would work with others to create new fixed shares based on objective criteria, with zonal attachment being the fairest indicator.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Peter Chapman: Absolutely.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the member telling us that we can retrieve only those parts of the fishery out to 200 miles that are fished by other states with their permission? He seems to be indicating that, rather than, as the fishing industry tells me it expects on the day we leave the CFP, us controlling 100 per cent of the fishery out to 200 miles. He is suggesting that the rights of those who currently fish in our waters will continue. That is what I heard.

Peter Chapman: That is not what I said. It is correct that we will control the fishery zone out to 200 miles but we will also work with our partners. Nobody is saying that, on day 1 in March 2019, the shutters will come down and no other boat will ever fish in our seas. Nobody has ever said that.

Zonal attachment is the fairest indicator. A University of Aberdeen study suggests that significant gains for Scotland based on zonal attachment can be delivered for key commercial species. That is the model that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation is working to achieve and it is being closely studied at Westminster. It has merit, as it is a pragmatic and fair way forward, because we must work collaboratively with our EU neighbours who would continue to have access to our waters, but with lower catching levels. They would operate under our control, and our rules and regulations, just as happens right now when our boats fish in Norwegian waters. We must not swap access to our seas for access to EU markets.

The other big prize once we leave the EU will be our ability to set the rules and regulations governing our fleet. We need a regime that is fair, sustainable in the long term, respects the environment and keeps our fishermen fishing. We can design a better way to manage our fish stocks. This is an important debate, and it has allowed me to outline a possible way through the Brexit negotiations for our fishing industry. We can deliver a vibrant future for our fishing industry, and our towns and villages around the coast that are dependent on fish for their future prosperity. We

aim to realise the sea of opportunity that is within our grasp.

For the past 40 years, oil has been a huge boost to the economy of north-east Scotland but we must never forget that fishing and farming were the mainstay of that economy long before oil was discovered, and both those primary industries will still be important long after the last drop of oil has been pumped from the North Sea.

I move amendment S5M-09406.2, to leave out from “available solutions” to end and insert:

“, including those of a political nature,“.

15:24

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I feel that it is like the end of an era. Some of us, including Lewis Macdonald and, indeed, Fergus Ewing, have been here from the early days of these fishing debates. This is one of those moments when we might wonder whether we will pine for the language of the CFP, common access to a common resource, relative stability and the Hague preference. I recall Ross Finnie being asked by Mr Salmond in the first fishing debate whether he would invoke the Hague preference. As Mr Finnie said to us afterwards, he knew that question would be asked, so he went away and did his homework before the debate to find out what the heck the Hague preference was. Heaven help any fisheries minister who does not know what it is, although, in future, Mr Ewing may not need to know, because it will no longer have any bearing—it will all be gone.

Whatever happens in the future, the common fisheries policy will be gone. It has never been common. It has never been a policy. It has not worked for fishing communities here in Scotland and right across the coastal states of the EU. On that, I entirely agree with Peter Chapman.

I want to make two points today, the first of which is about the reality of the industry now. We are not really debating in detail the catch quotas set for monks or haddock or cod at the recent EU-Norway annual negotiations. This is not a huge fight about days at sea or the discard ban. As the minister and Peter Chapman said, there are problems—choke species being the main one—and Marine Scotland needs to work with the industry to sort them out. However, nothing compares with the high drama and dark days of decommissioning and the financial losses by boats affecting families in every fishing community around the coast of Scotland. Broadly, as the minister rightly said, stocks, science and fishing effort are in reasonable balance. The seas for which we have responsibility appear to be healthy. Science says so.

My second point is that the Government wants to double the size of the food and drink industry by 2030, and seafood has and will have a significant role in that objective. Shetland’s fish landings have grown from 300,000 boxes in 2015 to more than 400,000 in this year. This year, £33 million of whitefish alone will be landed in the isles and, every night, 21 containers of fresh seafood are on the boat from Lerwick down to Aberdeen and on to market.

There are two issues that I ask the cabinet secretary to consider. First, we need to ensure that there is enough shipping capacity as landings grow. If Shetland cannot get fish on to the boats, we cannot play our part in meeting the Government’s export target. Secondly, the ferry freight fares review needs to be concluded. Putting up freight charges by 2.9 per cent, as the Government has done, has not helped the industry’s competitiveness, nor is it consistent with other Government policies, such as the food and drink strategy. I know that Seafood Shetland wrote to the cabinet secretary this week and it would greatly appreciate his assistance on those matters.

To export and expand, to genuinely harvest the sea of opportunity, means having access to market. That is the reason for my amendment this afternoon. Bertie Armstrong’s Scottish Fishermen’s Federation briefing paper for today’s debate is accurate in many respects. Bertie Armstrong writes:

“With trade talks imminent, we must achieve the best and most free access to all markets including the EU.”

That is absolutely right. Much of Shetland’s catch, and that of most ports in Scotland, is destined for the European market. We can argue about weight, volume, value and the statistics that go with all that, but fishing depends on selling fish to Europe. Europeans simply eat more fish than we do.

We therefore need a deal out of Brexit that makes sense not just for the car industry or financial services, but for fishing. However, this week, as we debate the fishing industry, we find out two facts. First, the UK Cabinet has not even discussed the shape of the trade deal that it wants to achieve. Secondly, no impact assessment of fishing, never mind the rest of the economy, has been carried out. That is a dereliction of duty on the part of any Government. We are almost in 2018. We are months away from the UK Government’s date for leaving the EU in March 2019 and the UK Cabinet has not discussed trade, nor do we know what any of this will mean for our economy.

The message for our industry is clear. It should not depend on the UK Government to defend its interests. Sadly, the only party that the UK

Government is defending is the DUP, and that is because the DUP is keeping the Tories in office—in office, but not in power.

The other reason that I worry for fishing is the speech that the UK fisheries minister Michael Gove, a member of the UK Cabinet and a leading Brexiteer, gave to a meeting of Danish fishermen on 31 July. As reported by the *Financial Times*, he assured the Danish food industry that their fishermen would

“still be able to catch large amounts in British waters.”

If ever there was an illustration of the need for our industry to be on its guard it was that. Gove is a highly intelligent individual. He did not misspeak—he meant it. What he was really saying is that the fishing industry is part of the overall negotiations. It does not stand outside them. Many old hands on the quaysides from Lerwick to Anstruther remember what happened in the 1970s when the Tories took them into Europe.

I therefore urge my good friends in the SFF and at home in the Shetland Fishermen’s Association to hold the UK Government’s feet very firmly to the fire. Mr Gove has opened up what many of us feared on day 1 of Brexit—a Danish or Dutch veto of the fishing part of Brexit in their own national interest. It is not just the UK that has national interests. The Dutch and the Danes most certainly do.

In economic terms, the industry is highly significant to both countries. Just as Ireland is currently holding a veto over number 10, and rightly so, it is all too easy to envisage the same from the Danes or the Dutch over access to the UK parts of the North Sea.

The SFF’s advocacy of a nine-month bridge after March 2019 makes intellectual sense, but the question is whether it makes political sense. It is a way forward, but it will need support as part of the Brexit negotiations here and in London and, as an approach to the future management of our seas, it will need to be sensibly explained to other coastal states and to the EU. Who is doing that? I rather doubt that it has got to the top of David Davis’s inbox and Michael Gove seems more interested in being chancellor than fisheries secretary, so it is a tough period for assessing the next steps.

Bertie Armstrong and the SFF are quite right to set out a plan across the nautical chart. It is now a question of how that chart is navigated across a very stormy political sea.

I move amendment S5M-09406.1, to insert at end:

“, and notes the uncertainty of the UK Government’s role in the 2018 EU Fisheries Council, given the anticipated departure from the EU in March 2019, and what this might

mean for the long-term sustainability of the fish catching, processing and supply chain industries.”

15:30

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

This debate is an annual event ahead of the fisheries negotiations with the European Union. The Norwegian talks that concluded at the weekend have been reasonably successful and that augurs well for the forthcoming talks with the EU.

The fishing industry is doing well, which is a good backdrop to the talks. Fish stocks have recovered and there are plenty of fish to catch. Fishing is also more profitable because of the weak pound, which means that exports of fish are bringing more pounds home. As they say, it is an ill wind.

It feels like a long time since the fishing industry was in such buoyant mood. We should not forget the painful decisions that were taken in the past and the real hardship in the industry at that time. However, it looks as though it has paid off. The lesson that we must learn is that we take fish stocks for granted at our peril. We must farm the seas and tend them to ensure that we never face the cliff edges of the past again.

Whether inside or outside the EU, discussions on the control of stocks have to be held with our neighbours as fish respect no borders, and it is only if we work together that we will ensure healthy stocks in the future. The talks could well be our last as members of the common fisheries policy for the full term of the negotiating period, as the next negotiations will be for the year that we are due to leave the European Union. I hope that the parameters for post-Brexit discussions on fisheries management will be in place by then so that those talks can be meaningful.

With our fishing industry so buoyant, it would be good to take stock and to plan strategically for the future. Where will our European exports enter into Europe? How will we ensure the least possible delay for fresh seafood if we are not in a customs union? Are there new markets that we should be exploring and targeting?

The European Union is currently the world’s largest single fisheries market. In 2015, the UK exported more than £900 million-worth of fish and fish products to the European Union, which is almost 70 per cent of total UK exports for the sector. If Scotland is to continue to trade effectively with that market, it is vital that, in future, our seafood industry at least meets, if not improves on, EU standards. We have led the way in the past and we should continue to do so in the future.

For the protection of our islands' fishing industries, we need to ensure that freight costs are island proofed and that there is sufficient freight transport available. It will not matter how big our catch is if we cannot get it to market. Tavish Scott mentioned that there is a looming capacity problem in Shetland, and that must be addressed now so that we are ready for the future.

The main issue that needs to be dealt with at the negotiations is the landing obligation and choke species. Although the landing obligation is currently going well, it will become more difficult when it extends to species in mixed fisheries. To ensure that boats do not flout it, the regime has to be workable. It should not lead to boats being tied up for a prolonged period of time when they cannot fish due to a lack of quota for choke species. There surely must be a way of ensuring that all the fish that are caught are landed, while also making it unattractive to target choke species that are at or beyond their allowed quota.

Before the landing obligation was in place, if fish were caught for which a boat did not have quota, they went back over the side. Let us be clear that that must not happen again. The fish were already dead. When so many people go without enough food, such waste is immoral. It does not conserve stocks, either, because the fish are already dead when they are returned to the sea. Discards do nothing for over-quota species or, indeed, the environment. At best, they provide an easy meal for seabirds and other predators.

If illicit fishing does occur, the result will be unaccounted-for mortality, which will undermine confidence in stock assessments and, in turn, in quotas themselves. That could result in overfishing and a decline in stock, with knock-on negative impacts on fisheries. We need a workable landing obligation policy and not one that stops fishermen working and so causes hardship—not just to those at sea but to processors on land. We need a policy that allows bycatch to be landed and used and that neither punishes nor rewards the boats that inadvertently catch the fish. Landing bycatch should not be profitable, but there is a risk that it will be, especially if the species caught is in short supply and there is high customer demand. There must be a way of allowing a boat enough profit to land the bycatch but not enough to make the catch attractive to target. That way, it will not be wasted.

We must also invest more in science and technology to find ways of fishing more selectively in mixed fisheries, which will allow effort to be much more targeted. Technology is advancing to enable gear to fish more selectively, but it needs much more investment to help to avoid choke species altogether, which is obviously the best option for us all.

These debates happen every year and this year, despite Brexit, they are as important as ever. Our coastal communities are vulnerable and need a stable industry for their survival. It is not just the crews and boats that depend on the industry; processors and workers onshore do, too. We all want the very best deal for our fishing industry. We want a deal that ensures that, while stocks are protected for future generations, the current generation can make a living and we can all have fish to eat.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches of six minutes, please.

15:37

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Not every MSP attends the fishing debates. My first speech in Parliament in June 2001 was on the subject of fishing, just as my 716th today is on the subject. However, fishing and its products touch us all. Only yesterday, the lead item on the menu in the Scottish Parliament canteen was Peterhead smoked haddock fish cake—I see the Presiding Officer nodding—and absolutely delicious it was. This is not an abstract issue; it touches our palate, our stomach and our very being. It sustains and supports our population and our health.

Speaking of health, I think that the fishing industry is in pretty good heart. It is looking forward to the sea of opportunity, which is the Scottish Fishermen's Federation catchphrase for the opportunities to come from leaving the common fisheries policy. For my part, I have always been opposed to the CFP. From the outset of the UK joining the European Economic Community until he demitted office, my political colleague, Donald Stewart MP, the member for the Western Isles, made speeches that are testament to his long-standing opposition to the CFP. Some 20 years ago, before his early death in office, Allan Macartney, that wonderful member of the European Parliament, wrote an excellent paper on what should be a successor plan to the CFP. It is worth getting that out and having another read, because we are now thinking in terms of what next.

This year's negotiation is for the very last complete year before Brexit. We must keep our eye on the prize—fishermen expect that to come in 2019. I understand in tactical terms why Mr Gove has been speaking to the Danes and the Dutch but, given some of the comments that Mr Chapman made today, we are seeing the Tories give away the prize that exists with the sea of opportunity, for no obvious benefit that we are hearing about.

Peter Chapman: Will the member take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: In his response to my intervention on the subject, Mr Chapman provided no meaningful answer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Please sit down, Mr Chapman.

Stewart Stevenson: We have to get 100 per cent control over our waters out to 200 miles. I welcome the hint—or perhaps it was more than a hint—that the London convention will be abandoned, because that will help us between six and 12 miles, although I am not absolutely sure that that is nailed down. Unless and until we get that control, we will not have the opportunity to map a way forward.

In that context, we are looking at what Westminster is doing on the leaving the EU bill, or the great reform bill, or whatever one chooses to call it. The SFF is absolutely clear that the powers in relation to fishing must come straight to Holyrood, because it fears—quite reasonably—that it might not get the kind of solutions that will meet its needs if we rely simply on London. There is a reason for that; I do not criticise, but English fishing interests are mostly in controlling how much we catch by restriction of effort rather than by quota, whereas the Scottish fishing industry wishes to take a quota-based approach. Under the CFP, we went through a period when we had both and it was absolutely horrendous. We would have clarity if we made the decisions in Scotland: we would set the strategic objectives and take control of our waters. That is a simple understanding of where the SFF wants to be.

How optimistic is the fishing industry? New boats are being built all over the place. The new fish market in Peterhead, to which Peter Chapman referred, will open next year—I met the harbour authority on Friday and got an update on that. This very week we had the European maritime and fisheries fund and the Scottish Government providing funding for a factory to take over a facility in Fraserburgh that was previously occupied by Young's Seafood. There truly is a sea of opportunity out there.

Science is important to how we take decisions on fishing—there is no division among any of us on that. ICES is the key place from which scientific opinion and understanding come. It is, of course, unaffected by Brexit, because it has been around for more than 100 years telling us about the fishing industry—it is really the arch conservationist at heart, even if not every individual in it necessarily is—and we will continue to participate in it. However, will the Scottish contribution to the scientific work be damaged by Brexit, given that quite a lot of people who are working on our

science might not readily have a long-term right of residency here?

Peter Chapman said that he speaks on behalf of the industry, but the industry speaks on behalf of the industry—we are all here to support it. I do not know whether Peter has been elected as a representative of any particular part of the industry, but the important thing is that we are all united—I think that we will be at decision time—around a shared position that promotes the interests of our industry, ensures that we can exploit the sea of opportunity and sees success in fishing communities across Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I remind members to use full names when referring to other members in the chamber. I call Liam Kerr, to be followed by Emma Harper.

15:44

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Here we are again at the annual series of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral summits that determine next year's fishing quotas for EU, Norwegian, Faroese and Icelandic fishing fleets. We await the lobbyists, politicians, commissioners, Council officials, European Parliament staffers and journalists at the annual two-day, all-night bun fight at the Berlaymont emerging exhausted and waving the various deals and agreements that they have wrestled over.

It is of course, in the main, a front. The summit is, for the British fleet at least, a rubber-stamping exercise, with the major deals having been agreed with little fanfare. The big decisions for our North Sea fleets, for example, were taken last week at the EU-Norway summit, with deals struck on cod, haddock, whiting and herring.

The December council is fundamentally about dividing the EU's portion that has been decided through the coastal states arrangements. That is concerning because, currently, fishing quotas are allocated to the UK as part of the EU's common fisheries policy, with individual UK countries having devolved responsibility over their share of the UK quotas. This is the final time for that; this time next year, we will be about four months away from being a coastal state, sitting at the table, negotiating for ourselves.

That is good news because currently, non-UK EU fishing boats land, on average, 700,000 tonnes of fish and shellfish, worth almost £530 million, from the UK exclusive economic zone each year. Non-UK EU fishing boats therefore land almost eight times more fish and shellfish by weight from the UK EEZ than UK boats do from other areas of the EU EEZ.

Brexit is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as it involves a systemic change in restoring the UK's exclusive economic zone. That gives the country the potential to become a world leader in seafood production and exports. That is not to say that the UK's position will be one of isolation, of course. After Brexit, the UK will still need to co-operate with the EU on quota setting. Co-operation on sharing stocks is required, as many fish stocks—as was pointed out earlier—are migratory and cross boundaries. Such co-operation is currently seen in Norway and other non-EU European countries and is enshrined in international law. The United Nations agreement on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea require co-operation on the conservation and management of fish stocks, and the UK has ratified both of those.

That leads me to the motion's call for the best outcome for our fishermen, because they work to give themselves that best outcome. Our fishing industry is innovative and hard working and has been at the forefront of pioneering new nets to reduce discarding practices, the voluntary use of closed circuit television monitoring on boats and an on-board observer scheme.

When on board fishing vessels in Peterhead and Stonehaven, I have been struck a number of times by the thought that fishermen are among the country's best entrepreneurs. There are supertrawlers of more than 70 metres, with yards of flat digital monitors and suites costing some £20 million; there are family businesses with shareholder crews; and there are fishermen who foresaw that pelagic fish would be worth something and invested—as the cabinet secretary pointed out earlier, the mackerel that they fish is the biggest value species not just in the UK but in the whole of the EU. That locally driven investment benefits the industry, the locality and the local supply chain. That is why I commend the motion and the Scottish Conservative amendment in calling for support for our innovative, pioneering and hard-working fishing industry.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Mr Chapman did not lay out the reason for the specific detail in the Conservative amendment in his opening speech. Can the member enlighten us?

Liam Kerr: Very briefly, it is to narrow down in the motion the specific political issues that others could raise—if it were not made clear, those might not be a consideration. [Interruption.] Forgive me—someone was not listening. They can read it back in the Official Report.

The industry includes fish processing. To pick up on a point that Peter Chapman made when he talked about fish processing, which draws on the motion's mention of the wider sector, Scottish

processors conduct primary and secondary processing, with many factories carrying out a mix of both types. Peter Chapman rightly highlighted serious challenges: there has been a 34 per cent decline in processing sites since 2008—a decline that has been more marked in Scotland than in England; and seafood-related employment in North East Scotland has fallen by 4 per cent since 2008, while in Humberside, there has been an increase of 7 per cent.

Why has there been that decline? A number of reasons have been suggested, such as high operating costs and challenges in attracting investment—a low-margin industry competing in a global market; and business rates that have disproportionately impacted North East Scotland. At the cross-party group on fisheries, industry expert Jimmy Buchan put together some suggestions, principally around business rates relief and innovative changes, many of which merit further consideration.

We are pleased to back this motion calling for the best-possible deal from the fisheries negotiations and we very much support the Scottish Government in its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for fishermen, coastal communities and the wider seafood sectors.

We acknowledge that the motion seeks to recognise the real opportunity of sustained economic benefit for our coastal communities and seafood sectors. However, such benefits can be realised only if parliamentarians from all parts of the political spectrum join together and throw their support behind our fishing communities to ensure the best possible deal for fishing. As we give that support, let us never forget that, tonight as on every night, there are people out on the boats who are willing to face all weathers and risk life and limb to put food on our tables. That is something for which I hope all members in the chamber are eternally grateful.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is time in hand for interventions—preferably not from a sedentary position.

15:50

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I remind the chamber that I am the parliamentary liaison officer for the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity.

I welcome the Scottish Government's motion and commend the cabinet secretary's constructive involvement in recent negotiations. Scotland secured a number of its objectives as negotiations between the EU and Norway concluded. There will be quota increases for five of the six North Sea stocks that are jointly managed with Norway, which will increase catching opportunities for

Scotland's fishing industry and deliver more economically for Scotland.

The Scottish Government will fight hard to ensure that the negotiated settlement promotes sustainable fisheries and has the best interests of Scotland's fishermen, coastal communities and wider seafood sectors at its heart. Vitality, we will be guided by the science and respect stock sustainability while maximising fishing opportunities.

The EU plays a key role for Scottish fishermen by setting the annual total allowable catches for all quota-regulated species and EU fishing fleets. That is always a complex negotiation and, given Scotland's majority interest in UK fishing, the Scottish Government plays a prominent role in promoting our fishing priorities in Brussels annually. Although the common fisheries policy has been cumbersome for the fishing industry, membership of the European Union has brought benefits and the prospect of Scotland being taken out of the EU has very real implications for the industry, which I will discuss.

The EU is the largest overseas market for Scotland's seafood exports. The UK Government's pursuit of a hard Brexit will likely create huge barriers to trade with vital European markets. In the south of Scotland, fishing is a key industry. The region's harbours and many directly related onshore jobs depend on the industry, as do other local livelihoods not directly connected to it, such as the food and drink sector.

Inshore fisheries in thriving towns such as Kirkcudbright could be financially impacted by non-tariff barriers after Brexit. For example, if trade barriers delay the process of exporting food such as shellfish past a certain time of day, the price can drop by as much as 50 per cent. In the absence of a trade deal with the EU, a switch to the default World Trade Organization tariff arrangements could lead to EU tariffs averaging between 7 and 13 per cent being imposed on Scottish seafood exports to the EU.

Liam Kerr: Does the member recognise that 10 of the top 20 export countries for UK fish are outwith the European Union?

Emma Harper: Yes, but the EU is still our biggest market so, although there are export countries outwith the EU, we should not negate other opportunities as we proceed.

James Withers, the chief executive of Scotland Food & Drink, has described such a no-deal scenario as a disaster. In the absence of full EU membership, Scotland's interests would best be protected by remaining in the single market and customs union. Last week, leaked draft plans for the Irish border showed that British and Irish officials had agreed proposals that would, in effect,

keep Northern Ireland in the single market and customs union after Brexit by retaining EU regulations. If one part of the UK can retain regulatory alignment with the EU and, in effect, stay in the single market, there is surely no good practical reason why others cannot.

It is also vital to ensure that the Scottish Parliament has the powers to fully manage Scottish fisheries after Brexit. That would ensure that fisheries management in Scottish waters reflected the interests of the Scottish industry and fishing communities, and was sensitive to the Scottish marine environment. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation supports that position and has expressed deep concern about clause 11 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which would allow Westminster to retain powers that the EU currently holds. Those powers include the operable elements of the common fisheries policy, which the UK Government has indicated it intends to roll forward and which will become subject to the decisions of the UK Government, but not the Scottish Government, after exit day. In its submission to the Finance and Constitution Committee earlier this year, the SFF referred to that approach

"dramatically limiting Scotland's ability to ... deliver effective, reactive, fisheries management."

That is not an outcome that the industry wants to see, and I look forward to Theresa May beginning to engage fully with our First Minister in an attempt to give us some much-needed certainty over the legislative landscape for the industry post-Brexit.

I know that the Scottish Government will continue to do all that it can to protect Scotland's interests and ensure that devolved functions continue to operate fully and effectively. Scotland is strategically placed to have the best fishing industry in Europe, and the Scottish National Party is committed to doing all that it can to make that a reality.

15:55

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Next year, 2018, will indeed be a complex year for our fisheries. Whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, our ambition to supply high-quality seafood to high-quality environmental standards must never waiver. The cabinet secretary is right to state in the motion that the Scottish Government will look for the

"best possible outcome for Scotland's fishermen, coastal communities ... and wider seafood sectors".

He also recognises that a healthy marine environment is vital for the prosperity of them all.

Although it has had many critics, the common fisheries policy has anchored sustainability into

EU-wide fisheries management. Whatever the future holds, any new trading relationships should enhance that. There will also this coming year be a UK fisheries bill, and we hope that there will be proper liaison with our Westminster colleagues about the issues that affect Scotland and, indeed, the whole UK. There will of course be scrutiny as the bill develops.

I thank all those who have provided briefings for the debate, from a range of perspectives, including that of the SFF and the newly formed charity Open Seas. Scottish Labour is clear that responsibility for our fisheries should revert to Scotland after we leave the EU. There are colossal challenges. We need to support the wide-ranging industry and underpin that with a continuing, robust commitment to the protection and—I stress—enhancement of our marine environment, on which some good progress has already been made. Together, we must forge a sustainable way forward for our fisheries sectors and our marine environment, which gives us such plenty, for now and for the future, as Rhoda Grant highlighted.

We will still be subject to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which demands quotas and sustainable management. I welcome the cabinet secretary's words on scientific advice in the motion. The sharing of knowledge and research is one of the greatest tenets of the EU, and it is a great shame that our involvement in EU-wide data exchange remains uncertain at this stage, although I note what Stewart Stevenson said about ICES being very important.

The European maritime and fisheries fund has made a significant contribution to our coastal communities and maritime sector, as well as to Marine Scotland's expenditure on science, data and compliance. It is therefore concerning to learn that there is no assurance that that position will be protected after Brexit. Will the cabinet secretary acknowledge in his closing remarks the significance of the support that that fund has provided and inform the chamber of any discussions about the need for future funding of that nature and how that might happen?

Climate change is a major threat to our marine ecosystems, and scientific advice will become increasingly vital to support a sustainable fisheries industry in warming seas. The Scottish Association for Marine Science has predicted that global warming could cause cod, herring and haddock—all commercially important species in Scotland—to vanish from our west coast by the turn of the century, unless more is done. Effects of that kind are already being felt, as cod and haddock are now being caught far further north—near Iceland—and being sold back to the UK to satisfy consumer demand. I would welcome it if the cabinet secretary could comment on how

those changing ecosystems and shifting species are being accounted for and discussed in quota negotiations, given that such issues lie alongside other pressing issues such as choke species that are being discussed in this year's negotiations. In that respect, I hope that the cabinet secretary has noted Rhoda Grant's point about choke species.

I commend the fishing fleets for their adaptation to the landing obligation and the steps towards self-regulation that they have taken. Marine Scotland is working to make compliance as easy as possible for fishermen and is experimenting with technologies, but that support—which must indeed be in place—is reliant on the organisation's resources.

Plastic pollution in our marine environment has become one of the most compelling environmental issues of the day, thanks not just to Sir David Attenborough's "Blue Planet" but to the work of the Marine Conservation Society and many other environmental groups. However, people might not know about the impressive work of fishing for litter. Since 2005, that project, which engages the fishing industry, local communities and schools, has landed more than 1,102 tonnes of plastic litters in 18 ports, including some in my South Scotland region. Humans absorb less than 1 per cent of plastic fragments, but the effect is cumulative. In any case, people around the world are interested in our famous fish and shellfish exports, and many are working to sustain that reputation. I am therefore interested to know whether the Scottish Government will raise the issue in this year's negotiations.

Finally, I want to focus again on Brexit. Our significant seafood processing sector must continue to be supported; in Dumfries and Galloway, as in the rest of Scotland, the fishing and seafood sector plays a significant role in the local economy. From fishing out of Kirkcudbright to processing in Annan, the sector contributes more than £20 million to the economy and provides employment for 1,000 people. Indeed, in just one town—Annan—more than 120 people are employed at Young's, which after 70 years is now Scotland's biggest-selling scampi producer, while just around the corner, Pinneys of Scotland, which is now owned by Young's, employs 200 people in fish processing. I know that he is keenly aware of this, but I point out to the cabinet secretary that much of that work can be seasonal. However, some of it is not seasonal, and those workers have brought their families to Scotland and are now part of our world. It is therefore very important that we protect both ways of working.

On behalf of Scottish Labour, I wish the cabinet secretary well—again—in this year's negotiations, and I am sure that that view is shared across the

chamber and by the fishing industry. We look forward to hearing positive results.

16:02

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): As is the Holyrood tradition, I, too, wish the cabinet secretary good luck in the forthcoming December talks. It is always the culmination of a long and very involved stakeholder process across Europe, and having spent a brief spell as a member of the North Western Waters Advisory Council, I recognise the toil involved in spending many months poring over stock assessments in windowless meeting rooms in Brussels. Of course, we do not know what the arrangements in bilateral and multilateral agreements will be post-2019, and nor do we know what common UK frameworks will emerge from the UK fisheries bill. However, whatever machinery of negotiation we end up with, the hard-won principles around sustainability must endure post-Brexit.

It is absolutely clear that nature demands that we do not fish beyond the capacity of a species to reproduce itself, which is why the principle of maximum sustainable yield needs to be embedded. Alongside that, the key European principle of the precautionary approach must be retained, and it is essential that we hold back from levels of fishing effort that could tip stocks into serious decline. Stock recovery plans will always cause fishers pain, but preventing collapse through precautionary action is the best up-front course we can take. With regard to this year's negotiations, will the cabinet secretary be pushing for the science to be followed on all stocks to ensure that we meet our MSY 2020 obligations? If he does not support the advice on some stocks, he needs, in the interests of transparency, to set out in more detail than he has today his reasons for not doing so.

A number of members have reflected on the fact that in the EU we have turned the corner on overfishing. Just a few years ago, nearly three quarters of stocks had been dangerously fished out; the figure today is less than half, but there is still a long way to go. A commitment is needed to ensure that scientific advice and limits are actually reflected in fishing practice on the water. Discarded fish may not contribute to business balance sheets, but they have a big impact on ecology, so a discard ban needs to be enforced. Illicit discarding also undermines the very stock assessments that fishers, conservationists and Governments need confidence in to make the right decisions, leading to a downward spiral of overfishing and further declines in stock health—a point that Rhoda Grant reflected on.

Eliminating discards on the six key whitefish species would clearly add economic benefit, with

estimates showing that the additional value of landings in Scotland could bring in an extra £28 million a year by 2020. It is worth investing in developing the selective gear and techniques to avoid non-target species and Scotland has a good track record in leading those conservation approaches over many years, but we should now also be leading the way in monitoring. At present, less than 1 per cent of fishing activity is monitored at sea. That will change, obviously, and Scotland has the opportunity to lead that race to the top in verifying the quality and sustainability of our produce through remote electronic monitoring cameras on our boats.

I note the cabinet secretary's response to my earlier question. I would like to hear in his closing speech whether he would support remote electronic monitoring on all boats over 10m long, because the data that we can gather through electronic monitoring will not only ensure that we make the best use of limited budgets for compliance, but it will also help to deliver some of the science needed for more accurate stock assessments that benefit everyone, including the industry.

Science also tells us where key habitats and species thrive and how we can save and enhance them through marine protected areas. By enhancing spawning grounds, we protect the parts that lead to greater productivity and resilience overall, which is essential in an age of real and growing threats from climate change. Boldness is needed from the Scottish Government in completing the MPA network set out by Scottish Natural Heritage three years ago.

I turn briefly to the post-Brexit picture—a subject on which we have already heard many contributions in this debate. The fishing lobby in Scotland and the UK want to take back control of the exclusive economic areas of the UK's seas and unpick fishing rights held by other countries, some of which pre-date our entry to the European Union. The question is at what cost that could be done and whether it would actually result in any more fish being landed. The United Nations laws of the sea require states to allow access to surplus fishing quota based on historical use and it is unlikely that the EU would want to strike a deal with the UK without preserving some access to those historical catches. If the UK ignored that, what would the impact be on trade?

We are in a position in which the vast majority of what is caught in our waters is sold to Europe, as we have heard from many members, while the tastes of our domestic markets rely heavily on the nets of Greenland, Iceland and Norway, so unravelling and separating access to markets and fishing areas would be highly problematic. If the UK decided just to walk away from deals, that

could be disastrous, leading parties to ignore the science and go back to the unsustainable levels of catch that we saw during the mackerel wars, alongside all the sanctions and port prohibitions that that brought.

That is why we need a debate on both fisheries and agriculture that focuses on what the public interest actually is and what public goods those sectors can deliver. What replaces the European marine fisheries fund in a post-Brexit UK fisheries policy remains to be seen, but to deliver public goods it must be focused on science and technological innovation to deliver healthy stocks and an industry that serves the needs of communities, rather than a small handful of quota barons.

16:08

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): It has been some time since I took part in a fisheries debate in this Parliament. My last one was probably at the end of session 4, so I am pleased to be contributing today, even though there is a feeling of *déjà vu* and some members still start their speeches with, “Here we are again.”

Being a fan of all things Nordic, I was pleased to see that the relative success of the EU-Norway deal, following negotiations last week, brought some additional success by securing for Scotland a number of its negotiation objectives when fisheries talks between the EU and Norway concluded in Bergen. As the cabinet secretary mentioned, the coastal state negotiations continue with the Faroe Islands as we speak.

As a result of the negotiations in Bergen, there has been a welcome quota increase for five out of the six North Sea stocks that are jointly managed with Norway, with increases of 38 per cent for whiting, 25 per cent for herring, 24 per cent for haddock and 10 per cent for cod. In addition, cod, haddock, saithe and herring will be fished at sustainable or MSY levels in 2018, with whiting on a clearly defined path towards MSY by 2020.

There was, however, disappointment that the EU’s negotiators have continued to trade away saithe quota in both the North Sea and the west of Scotland. Saithe is a significant choke risk stock for Scotland in the North Sea and it seems crazy to give away to Norway stocks that we remain short of ourselves. It makes no economic or fishing sense, and puts the industry in an extremely difficult position under the landing obligation.

Historically, Scotland has been very supportive of the landing obligation and stopping the practice of throwing dead fish back into the sea. We certainly would not want to return to unaccounted levels of discarding, which would ultimately harm

the stocks, resulting in reduced scientific advice and reduced economic returns for the fleet.

Under our catching policy, if we are allowed to develop one, we would deal primarily with fish availability and practical solutions, ideally allowing juvenile fish to be returned to the sea—they have no value—as long as they were accounted for, perhaps by cameras, or cameras on vessels. I will develop that point later.

Overall, it is fair to say that the negotiations in Norway went well. They followed the good news a couple of months ago that the quantity and value of fish landed in Scotland had once more increased with the value of fish landed by Scotland-registered vessels in 2016 increasing by 25 per cent in real terms, according to the latest statistics published by the Scottish Government.

Driven by an increase in the value of pelagic species, 453,000 tonnes of sea fish and shellfish were landed by Scotland-registered vessels, with a value of £557 million, as the cabinet secretary said. Mackerel continues to be the most valuable stock, accounting for £169 million-worth of Scottish landings.

Compared to the previous year, the volume of landings has increased by 3 per cent, so it is far from doom and gloom for Scotland’s fishermen these days, although we still do not know whether, after we leave the EU, powers over fisheries will be returned to this Parliament and not retained by UK Government.

With fish processors also facing the uncertainty of Brexit, it has been good to see the Scottish Government supporting them through the EMFF. We know that the UK has been allocated €243.1 million in fisheries funding from 2014 to 2020 under the EMFF. The Scottish Government fights hard to ensure that we get Scotland’s fair share of that funding, which is currently 46 per cent of the UK’s share, with £81 million allocated from the EU to help Scottish businesses expand and become more sustainable. The Scottish Government provides a further £53 million to EMFF-awarded projects. We are also a major recipient of EU scientific funding.

Although the EMFF funding will remain available while the UK is a member of the EU, once the UK leaves—some of us harbour a slight hope that we will not leave—our fisheries will still need financial support to make the transition to a sustainable fleet that is moving towards discard-free fisheries. That will require funding to improve selective activities—both behaviour and gear—monitoring and enforcement, and strong science to underpin management decisions. Will that funding be available? We will simply have to wait and see, but there is no doubt in my mind that effective monitoring, control and enforcement is key for

sustainable fisheries management, particularly for monitoring the effectiveness of the landing obligation.

It is estimated that less than 1 per cent of fishing activity is monitored at sea, as Mark Ruskell mentioned. Better use needs to be made of existing resources to monitor fisheries compliance at sea effectively. The use of cost-effective remote electronic camera technology to support best practice should be implemented with the added benefit of collecting catch data that could be used to feed into assessments and support quota management.

Scotland has huge potential to market high-quality, sustainable seafood, and it must continue to work hard on providing confidence that that is the case. It is worth noting that New Zealand has just introduced remote electronic monitoring with cameras across its fleet, citing the reasons for doing so as the reduction of waste, more responsive decision making and increased public confidence. I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary acknowledge the benefits of remote electronic monitoring, following Mark Ruskell's intervention.

Without monitoring technology, the only ways of certifying catches involve relying on vessels' own reporting, patchy satellite observations and occasional onshore monitoring of catches, nets and practices. If the move to on-board cameras is resisted by the industry, it is worth highlighting that, since 2015, the cost of modern technology per vessel over 10m in length has come down by more than a fifth to less than £4,000 a year. It is clear that remote electronic monitoring is a gateway to sustainable fishing, providing correct data for science and reassurance for consumers.

I have to take issue with the Tory amendment, which would seem to encourage setting aside existing rules to favour unsustainable fishing, which simply cannot, and should not, be supported.

I wish the cabinet secretary, Marine Scotland and officials good luck at the imminent December council meeting, and look forward to confirmation of a good result for Scotland's fishermen, as was secured last year.

16:15

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It is fair to say that, the last time that Parliament debated the future of Scottish fisheries, there seemed to be a clash over the merits or otherwise of Brexit. I am glad that the cabinet secretary today tried to avoid a repeat of that, and I note that his motion does not mention Brexit. I am saddened that other members have not done the same, but have instead tried to drag the

debate down to the level of "Brexit or no Brexit." Leaver or remainer, it does not matter to me—the message from the public is clear. Whether we are standing on the quayside or in the field, people tell us, "Stop continually bringing us problems: bring us solutions." That is what we should be doing.

I am sure that we are all pro-Scottish fisheries, and we all need to support our fishermen by laying the groundwork for the industry's post-Brexit future. Scottish fishermen want a speedy exit from the common fisheries policy, but they recognise that they will need a nine-month bridge to smooth that exit. I support that. Their sights are firmly set on the future and on what works best for the industry.

However, our fishermen are rightly concerned that the Scottish Government is not always as proactive as it could be in taking advantage of the obvious opportunities that Brexit might present. Why is that the case? It is simple, really: there are too many mixed messages. The SNP says that it opposes the common fisheries policy but it still squirms at the thought of signing the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's pledge to leave the failed CFP. Of course, that is not true of every member of the SNP—Stewart Stevenson might prove to be the biggest catch of the day, after joining Scottish Conservative MPs and MSPs in signing the pledge.

Rhoda Grant: Can Edward Mountain tell us exactly what the Conservative amendment means? Angus MacDonald has given his explanation, but even though I am listening to the third Conservative speech in the debate, I am not entirely clear what it means.

Edward Mountain: Its meaning will be made exactly clear in the summing-up speech.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Another one who does not know!

Edward Mountain: I am sorry, Presiding Officer, but I am not used to taking interventions from members who are sitting down. If someone wants to make an intervention, I will surely take it if they stand up.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is really for me to say, Mr Mountain, not you.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member take an intervention?

Edward Mountain: I will, Presiding Officer.

Mike Rumbles: I thank the member for giving way. I have a genuine question, because we are very puzzled. Mr Mountain is the third Conservative member to speak in the debate, but none of us in the rest of the chamber has a clue what the Conservative amendment means. Could he enlighten us?

Edward Mountain: I am delighted to take an intervention from Mr Rumbles.

The amendment concerns allowing us to use negotiations to get past the problems of choke species. When Donald Cameron sums up, he will clarify what we mean by that.

Signing the pledge does not make the person who signs a Brexiteer; it makes them someone who wants to do what is right for our fishermen by re-establishing the UK as an independent coastal state. That is the prize that I believe our fishermen are after.

Although we welcome the good news of this year's EU-Norway talks, which saw quota increases for five of the six North Sea stocks, it was a different story last year. In 2016, the same talks were a mixed bag for fishermen, with no uplift in the UK quota for blue whiting, and cuts to the size of the quotas for herring and haddock. Those decisions favoured Norwegian fishermen, despite Scottish fishermen having worked hard to restore the stocks to healthy levels, and the quotas highlighted the superior position of independent coastal states in negotiations with the EU.

As our fishermen know only too well, the EU has an uncanny habit of negotiating a bad deal for our industry. This year's talks were far more positive, but Scottish fishermen still lost out, as the EU negotiated what was best for the other 27 member states. The Scottish Conservatives were as disappointed with that as the cabinet secretary was. I want to quote his words back to him. He said:

"we remain firmly opposed in principle to giving away to Norway stocks that we remain short of ourselves. This makes no economic nor fishing sense and risks putting the industry in a difficult position under the landing obligation."

Re-establishing the UK as an independent coastal state with the power to negotiate our own quotas will give us the potential to stop bad deals that are brokered by the EU. When the UK finally sits at the table, it will be able to strike a bilateral deal with Norway on the northern North Sea and a tripartite deal with the EU and Norway on the southern North Sea. Those deals will better serve the interests of Scottish fishermen.

In Scotland, as we all know, we are fortunate to have some of the best fishing grounds in the world, and a fishing industry that is growing in confidence. During the summer, I visited Kinlochbervie and saw the fish market there. I heard about two new boats that were almost ready to go into service. Such examples of investing in Scotland are what we all want.

That is not the only good news in the region that I represent. The Glenmorangie distillery has partnered with Heriot-Watt University and the Marine Conservation Society to restore the

population of oysters in the Dornoch Firth for the first time in 100 years, but it is not stopping there. The distillery is now aiming to establish a new reef within five years.

Those are two success stories from the Highlands that show a confident industry that is investing in its future. Now it is time for the Scottish Government to take a proactive approach that matches the confidence of our fishermen. I urge the Scottish Government to listen to the fishing industry and to make every effort to assist the UK Government in seeking a smooth exit from the common fisheries policy. As the UK moves ever closer to becoming an independent coastal state, the work to prepare for what is required once that happens must begin now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ivan McKee will be the last speaker in the open debate, after which we will move to closing speeches. That is a warning to all.

16:22

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): The fishing industry is vital to Scotland, and its success is critical for many of our communities around the country. It is a central component of our successful food and drink sector and a key part of our national economic growth strategy, built, as it is, on the four pillars of innovation, inclusive growth, investment and internationalisation. Scotland's food and drink sector, whose rapidly growing exports are valued at more than £5 billion, is vital for our future prosperity, being focused on premium products that are in great demand around the world.

Fishing is an industry that we should protect and encourage to grow. All parts of the industry—the catching sector, the larger processing sector and the part that deals with onward marketing and sale of our fish around the world—are important. The catching sector employs almost 5,000 people in Scotland and has seen recent growth. Over the course of 2016, the value of fish landed by vessels that are registered in Scotland increased by 25 per cent in real terms to more than £0.5 billion, and the number of vessels that are registered in Scotland also increased.

Although it is vital that we ensure that the catching sector is successful in order to protect the coastal communities that it is such a key part of, we must also strive to ensure that the processing sector is not threatened by lack of access to the EU labour force on which it relies. Up to 70 per cent of fish processing workers in the north-east are from the EU, and their ability to stay and support that vital sector is under threat as a consequence of the hard Brexit decisions that have been taken by the Tory Government.

Liam Kerr: As I said in my speech, the fish processing sector has suffered a decline since 2008, which was long before Brexit came along. Is not that true?

Ivan McKee: As Liam Kerr well knows, the biggest threat to the processing industry—as it is to so many sectors of Scotland's economy—is the hard Brexit that the Tory Government that he supports is following, and the restrictions that it will place on the industry's ability to access EU workers.

Overshadowing the current fisheries negotiations is the shambles of the Brexit negotiations. The UK Government's ill-advised pursuit of a hard Brexit creates significant risks to Scotland's vital and growing seafood export business. Uncertainty abounds around the Brexit negotiations, and the risk of both tariff and non-tariff barriers to Scottish food exports is real. As James Withers, who is the chief executive of Scotland Food & Drink, has said, a no-deal Brexit would be a disaster. Without free and unhindered routes to market, fish stocks will rot in trucks at customs ports, which will destroy the value of the produce, and of a source of export revenue that is vital to the Scottish economy.

The EU is the largest overseas market for Scotland's seafood exports. Scotland's food and drink exports in the first half of 2017 were £119 million more than over the same period in the previous year. A move to World Trade Organization arrangements would lead to tariffs of between 7 per cent and 13 per cent being imposed on Scottish seafood exports to the EU. In addition, non-tariff barriers are a real risk, including the additional certification that will be needed in order to comply with EU rules-of-origin requirements, which would result in longer delays at customs ports.

We all agree that fish stocks need to be managed, and that that management should be science-based and rely on the work of ICES to inform sustainability of our fish stocks. As the cabinet secretary has made clear, the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring the sustainability of fisheries in line with scientific evidence.

The EU common fisheries policy negotiations are now under way, and are likely to conclude at the December council meeting next week. We support the cabinet secretary in the work that he will do as part of that process. It should be remembered, of course, that Scotland will not have a seat at the negotiation table, but will have to work through UK Government ministers, despite the fact that two-thirds of the total fish that are caught in the UK are landed north of the border. It should also be noted that the UK—unlike the

Norwegians, for example—does not include fishermen in its negotiating team.

The outcome of the Brussels negotiations will be pivotal in helping Scotland's fishing fleet to reduce the possible impacts of choke species and the potential that they have to tie up the fleet. The Scottish Government is concerned to ensure that all available solutions are explored and adopted in order to prevent that happening. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has made many constructive points regarding how the UK Government should approach the December council negotiations, and the briefing that the SFF issued was very helpful in that regard, in setting out how stances that might be taken by the UK Government in this year's negotiations could impact on the success of future negotiations, when the UK will act as a coastal state in its own right.

There is, however, a lack of clarity from UK Government ministers on whether the UK will leave the common fisheries policy in March 2019, when they intend that the UK will leave the EU, or at the end of the transition period. Whatever happens, the key point that we must not lose sight of is that control of Scottish fisheries and Scottish waters needs to come to this Parliament, rather than their being controlled by Westminster. The Scottish Parliament has the best interests of the Scottish fishing industry at heart; Westminster, on the other hand, has other priorities, as has been evidenced by the commitments that were given by Michael Gove to the Danes and the Dutch concerning their access to Scottish waters post-Brexit, as part of wider UK trade negotiations, which has been mentioned already in the debate.

The Scottish fishing industry, including the catching, processing and exporting parts of the business, is not only an iconic part of Scotland's economy and vital to ensuring that many of our coastal communities survive and thrive; it is also a critical part of Scotland's dynamic and expanding high-quality food and drink sector, and as such it has a key role to play in the future success of Scotland's economy.

Scotland is strategically placed to have the best fishing industry in Europe, and the Scottish Government is committed to doing all that it can to make that a reality. With that in mind, I take this opportunity to wish the cabinet secretary the best of success in representing Scotland's interests at the negotiations in Brussels in the coming week.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. We now move to the closing speeches. I call Tavish Scott to close for the Liberal Democrats.

16:28

Tavish Scott: Mr Ewing will be the third fisheries minister to conclude a fisheries debate,

this being the 18th such debate, I think, over the life of this Parliament; he follows Mr Lochhead and Mr Finnie. I had a quick look back last night at some of our more memorable debates, when the cabinet secretary had to have a phalanx of ministers around him to protect him from the vagaries of whatever was being debated at the time. Mr Ewing has only one with him today, so this must go down as a quiet afternoon before he heads for Brussels.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Tavish Scott: I will regret this, but of course I will.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You did say that it was quiet.

Stewart Stevenson: I will not criticise directly the number that the member used, but I will say that, in my first five years here, I participated in 14 fishing debates, so I think that the number is substantially higher than the one that he has just quoted.

Tavish Scott: That, of course, will be right. [*Laughter.*] However, I meant the annual debate on the negotiations, in the lead-up to Christmas, rather than the many others that Mr Stevenson rightly says that we have had.

Mr Ewing set out an entirely fair assessment of the current position leading into the talks. Without a shadow of a doubt, and as members from across the chamber have reflected, the situation is considerably more positive than has been the case in some years, which is a reflection of the state of our seas.

I take the point that Mark Ruskell and Claudia Beamish made about environmental criteria. One of the strongest points that Stewart Stevenson made was about the scientific evidence from ICES and the baseline for that evidence. The fact that we in Scotland—I presume that this is also the case in the UK—absolutely commit to that for the future is important, because the essential component is the long-term data. I also take Claudia Beamish's point about "Blue Planet": not only is it fantastic television, but David Attenborough's narrative throughout is about the strength and importance of science over time. Even for industries such as fishing, which has had its critics of science—there have been some dodgy days for scientific assessments, on both sides of the argument—the fundamental argument that Parliament is making about the strength of science is both reasonable and important for the future.

Rhoda Grant and many other members, including the cabinet secretary, have made the argument about choke species—and they are

right. My only contention—I am sure that Fergus Ewing would be the first to acknowledge it—is that the minute that we enter into a discard ban, we create, as a matter of principle, choke species. That is a point of practical import. When policy is being devised for the future—when and if Marine Scotland and Government advisers ever get the space to get to that point—we have to tackle the fundamental contradiction between a discard ban and the inevitability of choke species and how the quota system works in a mixed fishery. I hope that we will get to that point at some stage. Frankly, if we were to have the famous blank piece of paper, a different policy approach would be important in progressing that. Nevertheless, what members from across the chamber have said about the reality of choke species is absolutely the case.

I was very grateful to Mr Ewing for his point about the so-called EU-Faroes deal in 2014. Many adjectives could be applied to that, but I will not enter into the rhetoric around it, as it is now some time past. However, I am genuinely grateful for his point that the Government is looking closely at how the position can be reassessed for the future in the right way. I hope that he will press that point with all vigour.

Mr Ewing said that he had achieved 24 out of his 26 goals last year. That is an absolute disgrace. Why did he not achieve the full 26? What was wrong with the other two? I hope that he will come back this year with a much better deal that takes all those on board. Of course, it would be unfair and churlish of me to make such a remark, although we might all have some fun later about which two points did not quite make it.

Peter Chapman made two points with which I agreed entirely. The first was on the importance of local infrastructure. He made a point about Peterhead fish market. My recollection is that Peterhead received a large grant from the EU to erect that market. We have the same aspirations in Lerwick, once we get one or two small issues sorted out, such as the tendering procedure. However, Claudia Beamish and a number of other members made a point about the benefits to Scotland of EMFF funding—it used to be called something else, but that is what it is called now—which are considerable and should not be ignored. What will be there after Brexit? Fisheries is another area that will not be funded in the way in which it has been funded in the past. I have yet to see a balance sheet that shows me which fund will replace it in relation to future investment in our quaysides, fish processing sector and important infrastructure such as fish markets.

The other point on which I strongly agreed with Peter Chapman, certainly from the perspective of my constituency, was on oil. He is absolutely right when he says that fishing, and the seafood

industry more generally, will be worth more than the oil and gas industry over the long term. That was an important reflection, and it makes the case as to why funds such as the EMFF have been so important for the future.

I also share a general view that is held by a number of members. I do not envy Donald Cameron. He has to explain what his amendment means. I hope that he will not have to spend his entire 10 minutes doing so, but it would not half help the chamber if he were to do a bit of that to finish up with.

Emma Harper and Ivan McKee mentioned the important issue of tariffs and what that might mean for the future. The truth is that we do not know, but we know how bad it could be. Even if they are part of the negotiations, we learned this week that the UK Cabinet has not even discussed them in the context of a future trade deal. That is not a point for Donald Cameron; it is certainly not his responsibility or fault. However, the country and the fishing industry need clarity on the UK Government's position on these issues without further delay.

I will finish with Stewart Stevenson's observations. He first set an important test that, I suspect, the industry is also setting, which is that there should be 100 per cent control out to 200 miles. It will be interesting to see how that plays out over the coming weeks, months and years and whether it makes it into the nine-month bridge or transitional period, however that shapes up. If Mr Stevenson has made 716 speeches, I am deeply impressed. I am never going to get to the stage of counting how many speeches I make.

I give Fergus Ewing my best wishes for the fisheries council next week. I hope that he will not have to make 716 interventions during that debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Lewis Macdonald to close for Labour.

16:36

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): A number of members have taken the opportunity to look backwards as well as forward, particularly Tavish Scott. I agree with those who said that this year's fisheries council will be historic, but I am not sure that anybody can say today in what way. All that is certain about Britain's future relationship with the EU is that it remains shrouded in a fog of uncertainty, which has only got denser and darker over the course of this week. What that means for the fisheries sector, and for the rest of our economy, is that we are on a journey to a destination as yet unknown. We now understand that the UK Government has not seen fit to look into the impact of leaving the single

market and customs union on any part of the economy, which is bad news for our fish processors and exporters, just as much as it is for everybody else.

We also know that sailing on the sea of opportunity charted by the SFF will not be straightforward, even once the wider issues around Brexit have been settled. The debate has been useful in laying out the areas that will need to be addressed next year and in 2019, and perhaps for a number of years after that.

We will support the Government's motion and Tavish Scott's amendment, with which we entirely agree. The Conservative Party amendment, I fear, remains almost as much of a mystery as Mrs May's Brexit strategy. One thing that we have all surely learned is not to assume that the Conservatives' purpose is what it seems, so in the absence of greater clarity from Mr Cameron, we will not be able to support Mr Chapman's amendment.

Reducing the impact of the landing obligation and choke species on the Scottish fleet will be important, whatever happens with Brexit. As Rhoda Grant said, we agree with the cabinet secretary that the discussions must be driven by the need to find a solution that protects both the future sustainability of fish stocks and the commercial sustainability of the fisheries sector. Indeed, seeking that balance should be the guiding light for everything that we seek to do.

A large proportion of the large-scale commercial fishing fleet in the north-east and Shetland understands that forward planning for both the whitefish and pelagic sectors has to continue to be science based and commercially aware, while the often smaller-scale fishing sector on the west coast and in the Hebrides has recognised the need for a policy to protect some fragile marine environments, balanced with the need to protect some fragile coastal communities. Around our coast, the same essential balance will be required after March 2019 as is required right now, and the views and experience of the catching sector, fishing communities, fish farmers and fish processors must all be taken into account as well as the expertise of those who are focused on protecting the marine environment. We must also continue to support decisions that are based on evidence from scientists in this country and elsewhere. It would be a mistake to assume that the hard work in matching effort and capacity to biomass and sustainability is all behind us. For those who have left the industry in the past 10 years, it would add insult to injury if stocks were to fall below sustainable levels, despite the reductions that have been made in the size of the fleet.

I am glad that we have also heard today about the issues facing the processing sector. Like Stewart Stevenson, I was involved in the Fraserburgh task force that was set up after hundreds of jobs were lost at Young's Seafood in 2015. The other day, I was pleased to hear of new developments on one of the company's former sites in the town, which Mr Stevenson mentioned.

As well as the impact on the local economy of the loss of so many jobs, one of the striking things about the fish processing workforce in Fraserburgh was just how international it had become. Many of those who lost their jobs were from the Baltic states, Poland or Portugal, and many of those workers were mobile enough to find jobs quickly in other towns or even in other countries. There is, however, no doubt that the seafood sector will be hard hit by the loss of free access to EU labour. Indeed, many who work on fishing vessels are not only from outwith the UK but from outwith the EU.

The response of the seafood sector might involve more technology and fewer workers. That is a distinct possibility and threat. Such a response would protect the interests of those businesses at the expense of jobs in coastal communities. The loss of free access to EU markets is also a risk for the sector. Glib assumptions that other markets will open up instead will not be of much comfort if the orders dry up.

The SFF is right to want to talk about what lies ahead in the post-Brexit world. All parts of the wider industry will be affected by whatever deal is done—or not done—in the next few weeks and months. I said that the UK Government appears to have done little work on economic impacts, and that is particularly worrying for a sector such as fisheries. It is surprising that not even a sector such as fisheries, in which, as a number of members have said, there was support for leaving the European Union, has found the United Kingdom Government taking seriously what the economic impact—whether it is the downside or the upside—might be of whatever happens next. That is a sobering thought and a source of real concern.

Older fishermen in north-east ports still talk bitterly about having been sold out at the time of the initial negotiations on joining the European Community back in 1973. The problem then was that access to fishing grounds was a tradable commodity when it came to seeking the best possible deal for Britain on joining Europe. Many fishermen are worried now that access to fishing grounds might still be a tradable commodity when it comes to seeking the best possible deal for leaving Europe. They are right to be nervous at the increasing signs that UK ministers have no coherent plan or strategy for the shape of our

possible post-Brexit relationships—that lack of a clear strategy applies to fisheries as it applies elsewhere—and at the apparent willingness of ministers to offer access to UK fishing grounds as an early negotiating gambit with other members of the EU.

I wish Mr Ewing every success in delivering a fair deal for Scottish fisheries in Brussels in the next few days. We also need to see a fair deal for all our communities in the Brexit negotiations in the weeks that lie ahead.

16:43

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): This is my first fisheries debate and, after the past two hours, I am kind of hoping that it will be my last. I jest, of course. I am delighted to be able to close for the Scottish Conservatives. As a Highlands and Islands MSP with many fishing communities across the region that I represent, I take great interest in this area.

We will support the Government's motion tonight although, sadly, not the Liberal Democrats' amendment. However, let me bring clarity to the murky darkness of the amendment.

The amendment in the name of Peter Chapman, not myself—

Members: Oh!

Edward Mountain: Our amendment.

Donald Cameron: Our amendment talks about “available solutions’ ... ‘including those of a political nature”.

That is a reference to the point in Peter Chapman's speech—I am sure that everyone was listening to it intently—that without the council meeting delivering a major uplift in quotas for choke species, the discard and landing obligations will lead to restrictions. In that scenario, the Government must be prepared to use its political clout by negotiating on choke species so that fishing is not restricted, or boats “tied to the harbour wall”.

I, too, wish the cabinet secretary luck in his role at the council meeting, and I want to close the debate on behalf of the Conservatives in the spirit in which he opened it, and not make it a Brexit tit for tat.

As a representative of the Highlands and Islands region, I am acutely aware of the importance of fishing to our local economy, particularly the shellfish sector, which accounts for the vast majority of catches in the west Highlands and the Hebrides. I am aware of the multiple benefits of a strong seafood industry for the region and for Scotland as a whole. Our nation is, rightly, famed for the fish and shellfish of the Highlands

and Islands, and for many other seafood products. They allow excellent and renowned local businesses such as Loch Fyne Oysters, the Stornoway smokehouse and the Crannog seafood restaurant in Fort William to operate and flourish. I believe that the sector can continue to expand, create new jobs and invigorate the communities that have been built around it, but we will only get that expansion if we secure a good Brexit deal that meets the needs of the fishing sector.

On Tavish Scott's point about access to markets, I am aware of the need for our fish and shellfish to reach the European markets. I have stood on the piers in Oban and Mallaig and seen the boxes of prawns that go off to Spain and France, and I am confident that our fish and shellfish will remain in great demand in Europe. There will still be buyers queuing up to get the top-quality fish that we supply, which should make it even more likely that we will get a comprehensive free-trade deal.

Tavish Scott: I entirely agree that the Europeans will still want our prawns and fish. It is what they want in return for our access to the market that is in question.

Donald Cameron: We have seen what 13 Scottish Conservative MPs, many of whom represent fishing seats, have achieved and I have no doubt that they will stand up strongly in Westminster for those communities, many of which wanted Brexit and voted to leave the common fisheries policy. I have no fear that our MPs will not stand up for those fishing communities or will allow them to be treated as bargaining chips.

The outcome of the recent talks in Bergen shows us that, although good progress can be made, there are also drawbacks and there is talk of the trade away of saithe, or pollock, quota in the North Sea and the west of Scotland. That is one example of being forced to compete with a variety of other states that all have their own interests at heart.

Leaving the EU and the CFP will give us autonomy over our waters and allow us to determine our own fishing policy that balances sustainable fishing—I welcome the comments that members made about that—and ensures that the industry can remain competitive. That is not just the view of members on the Conservative benches, but the mood music that is coming from the sector and the bodies that represent fishermen in Scotland. There is a great sense of optimism and the SFF recently reported on data that showed that

“56 per cent of people agree that exiting the Common Fisheries Policy will provide greater opportunities for UK fishermen”.

Notwithstanding the cabinet secretary's dark clouds, there are also rays of Brexit sunshine.

In a newspaper article earlier this year, Mike Park, the chief executive of the Scottish White Fish Producers Association, said that securing our own waters will mean

“Scotland securing a far greater share of the stocks that swim in our waters and deliver greater stability for the coastal communities”.

He added that that would be of benefit to the

“engineering, haulage and processing firms that often go unmentioned”.

It will undoubtedly be a long process to get the right deal that works for the sector and the country, and it would be useful and helpful if the Government worked to get a good deal overall. I earnestly hope that we do not fail to achieve a good Brexit deal for Scottish fishermen. We must not allow our fishing industry to remain shackled to the common fisheries policy, which has, to paraphrase the SWFPA, scarred coastal communities.

I turn to the matter of the end-year negotiations and the December council and what it means for the here and now. Acknowledging the fact that we are not formally leaving the European Union until March 2019, probably with a period of transition thereafter, we must ensure that Scotland gets a good deal from all discussions that relate to the fishing sector. We must continue to work closely with the EU and those member states that have a stake in the sector, as well as with non-EU nations such as Iceland and Norway. Realistically, this could be the final year in which the pre-December talks include the United Kingdom's position and, once again, I welcome the generally positive agreement that resulted.

In the cabinet secretary's summing-up, I ask him to address the question whether he is in favour of the nine-month bridge in 2019 that was suggested by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

We need to look to the future and plan ahead. With the announcement in the most recent Queen's speech that the UK Government will introduce a fisheries bill, this is the perfect opportunity for our colleagues in Westminster and all of us in this Parliament to engage in that process. We need to ensure that after years of decline, our industry gets the boost that it deserves, while simultaneously working with our neighbours on the continent to ensure proper parity. The bill could be the catalyst to reverse those lost years, which, for example, have seen Scotland fall behind England in seafood processing, with 12 per cent of jobs lost in Scotland compared to 10 per cent in England. I have heard that often enough in my region, the

Highlands and Islands, particularly when I visit places such as Stornoway.

I briefly mention the speeches from Peter Chapman, Liam Kerr, Edward Mountain and others. Claudia Beamish and Lewis Macdonald both brought an interesting perspective to the debate.

We welcome the quota increases secured in the EU-Norway talks, the positive news on total allowable catch and the hard work that our fishermen have put into maintaining stocks. We are mindful of the fact that we are leaving the EU in 2019 and that we must, as the Scottish Fishermen's Federation described it, take advantage of the sea of opportunity to secure a Brexit deal that works for fishing and the communities that depend on it. We all need to get behind that process. I am confident that if we do, one of Scotland's most important sectors will reap the rewards for years to come.

16:51

Fergus Ewing: I am very grateful to members for their support for my efforts and those of the Scottish Government over the next few days to achieve the best possible deal for Scotland. This is a traditional debate and, as some of the older hands have pointed out, traditionally parties unite in wishing the cabinet secretary who has the privilege of discharging that responsibility well. I am grateful for those warm wishes and the generally constructive tone of the debate.

It is always good to hear stories, anecdotes and views about fishing communities throughout the country, from Shetland—which Tavish Scott mentioned—down to Dumfries, including all the fishing ports on the east coast. Fishermen in those communities make an enormous contribution to Scottish society and, as Mr Kerr pointed out, they do so at some risk to their lives. It is one of the few jobs left where there is a genuine, serious risk. When I represented Mallaig some time ago as a humble back bencher, I always made that point in these debates, because I think that we should not forget it.

As it happens, I had the pleasure of opening Aldi's new distribution and administration centre in Bathgate, serving Scotland, where I learned that consumption of fish—sea fish and farmed fish—is growing in comparison to meat. Aside from the obvious enjoyment, more people are seeing the nutritional benefits of fish—not that, as a hardened and committed carnivore, I have anything against meat. More and more people are enjoying Scottish seafood, and that is increasingly the case globally. To refer to Claudia Beamish's point, at the gathering in Gleneagles of 150 buyers from all over the world and 150 food and drink companies

from Scotland, many buyers from places such as Singapore made the point that the provenance of Scotland's seafood, given its clean, green image, is increasingly important for retail purchase. We should not forget that either.

Some members raised the issue of Brexit. I will try to address that issue, although it is not the primary purpose of the debate. In response to Mr Ruskell's point, I say that we are committed to sustainable fishing, which means respecting the science. The scientific evidence is about what is happening beneath the surface of the sea, which is open to debate—it is a legitimate area for discussion. Nonetheless, in principle we accept the science. At the same time, we should recognise the efforts that the fishing sector has made, for example in the cod recovery plan.

There was a headline in a newspaper stating that there were only 1,000 cod left in the North Sea—what rubbish that proved to be! The fishermen, who, as Mr Stevenson said, have a direct interest in conservation, helped to deliver the recovery plan and it is right that they get the credit for that.

Tavish Scott made an excellent speech on choke species. It was perhaps less pressured and stressful than some speeches that he has had to make over the years—I will not go into all that, but he and I know exactly what I mean. He pointed out that having TACs and a discard ban leads to pressures.

I say in response to Mr Cameron's speech that I do not think that the use of the word "political" is helpful in this debate, so we cannot support the amendment. We could support it in the sense that it is ambiguous and does not really have a clear meaning and, if it is part of the motion that is agreed to, it could really mean anything that one wishes it to mean. The reality, however, is that it means acting in an extralegal way and moving away to bad practices. That is how it is perceived and I do not think that it is the correct approach to take. Incidentally, I know that it is not at all the approach that the UK Government will take, so, in that sense it is academic.

On the choke species, as well as setting TACs that take account of current discard levels—discard levels of cod are thought to be around 1,200 tonnes, so that would take care of that if it could be achieved—there is a plethora of other measures, which Mr Cameron did not mention, although perhaps he did not have time. In the west of Scotland, whiting choke species selectivity measures might be a solution. In respect of North Sea ling, a potential choke risk, there could be interarea flexibility—having the TACs and quotas apply across differing areas of the North Sea can provide the flexibility to remove the choke problem.

I do not know whether there is a sustained appetite for another five minutes or so of discourse on the choke species. Tavish Scott is nodding—I have reached the most intelligent of the electorate here on fishing, apart from Mr Stevenson, who I should mention quickly.

It is correct to say that we will not support the Tory amendment. It would send out the wrong signal that we are moving away from the principles that the public expect us to observe of ensuring sustainable fishing, using all the available technology. I confirm that we support that and I think that we will develop the use of technology as time goes on. I want to make that assurance clear, because I know that the Greens have a particular interest in the matter, and rightly so.

Many members mentioned the problems that are associated with Brexit. Mr McKee mentioned the maintenance of processing and the number of people from EU countries who are involved in it. As in so many other areas of the rural economy, it is difficult to see how processing operations can continue without the labour of those who choose to give the benefit of their working lives to Scotland and Scottish industries.

Many members made points about the importance of trade. Rhoda Grant, Stewart Stevenson and Angus MacDonald referred to the importance of trade. Obviously, the European market is the largest overseas market. As far as Brexit opportunities are concerned, it is not clear to me what export market is not currently accessible. What new markets are inaccessible to us at the moment? There are not any. However, if we are subject to WTO rules, the tariffs that the industry will face will be 7 per cent or perhaps up to double that, which I understand would add around £41 million to the tax burden as a direct Brexit cost. Therefore, we should surely all say that that is a very bad idea.

Claudia Beamish asked me to say what we have done about the EMFF. I am happy to do so. As Mr Stevenson said, the EMFF contributes around £80 million—€107 million—to Scotland. Incidentally, our share of the total is not as much as it should be. That money has provided enormous benefits. I have seen what has been done at Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Scrabster to improve harbours and to enable processing plants to up their game and be more competitive and thereby operate more successfully and pay their staff a decent remuneration. It has been invaluable. It is secure up to 2020 but, thereafter, we do not know. I can tell members that I asked Mr Gove when I met him last, “Will you replace the EMFF post-Brexit?” Answer came there none. We simply have no idea—on that or indeed on any other substantive issue—what the UK is saying should happen post-Brexit, and that is unfortunate.

However, on a consensual note, I say that I am grateful for the support of all members and I undertake to do everything that I can to get the best possible deal for fishing communities throughout Scotland over the coming days.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-09406.2, in the name of Peter Chapman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-09406, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, 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)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (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

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (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)
 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)
 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)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 57, Abstentions 14.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-09406.1, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S5M-09406, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

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

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South 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)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 71, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-09406, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South 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)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 70, Against 29, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges the conclusion of negotiations with Norway on shared stocks in the North Sea and the forthcoming annual fisheries negotiations in Brussels; notes that 2018 will see the last year of phased implementation of the landing obligation for whitefish stocks and that the outcome of the Brussels negotiations will be pivotal in helping Scotland's fishing fleet to reduce the potential impacts of choke species; is concerned that failure to explore and adopt all available solutions, in this regard could potentially tie the fleet up; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to respect the scientific advice in relation to next year's quotas; supports its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland's fishermen, coastal communities, marine environment and wider seafood sectors at the Brussels negotiations, and notes the uncertainty of the UK Government's role in the 2018 EU Fisheries Council, given the anticipated departure from the EU in March 2019, and what this might mean for the long-term sustainability of the fish catching, processing and supply chain industries.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 17:03.

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