



OFFICIAL REPORT
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Tuesday 4 September 2018

Session 5



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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 4 September 2018

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I welcome colleagues back after the summer recess. We begin as usual with the first item of business, time for reflection, for which our leader is the Rev Canon Dominic Ind, former rector and university chaplain, St Saviour's Episcopal church at Bridge of Allan.

The Rev Canon Dominic Ind (St Saviour's Episcopal Church, Bridge of Allan): We have to go back roughly a thousand years, to when Edinburgh and the Lothians belonged to the kingdom of Northumbria, which spanned the seventh century to the 10th century. From that period comes an outstanding figure known as the Apostle of Northumbria. I refer to Aidan of Lindisfarne, who was recognised as a saint by the vast majority of Christians, spanning the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

Aidan died on 31 August 651; in the Scottish Episcopal Church calendar, it is on 31 August that we give thanks for his life. Last week, what did we celebrate about this monastic bishop, who lived so many centuries ago? Does he have any relevance for us in 2018? We can say certain things about Aidan, such as that he is credited with restoring Christianity to Northumbria and the fact that he founded a monastic cathedral on the island of Lindisfarne and served as its first bishop. For me, though, what stands out is this: he was able to connect in a dynamic way with the nobility of the day as well as with people whom we might call the socially disenfranchised.

St Oswald, who was King of Northumbria from 604 to 641 or 642, was described by the historian Bede as a saintly king and was the most powerful ruler in Britain. He was hugely influenced by the monks of Iona and, particularly, by Aidan. The two lived opposite each other, as Lindisfarne faced Bamburgh, and they both worked to serve the people of the kingdom, mixing with royalty on one hand yet having immense compassion for the most vulnerable in society. For example, Aidan would house and educate orphans and he would personally pay for the freedom of slaves.

Aidan speaks to us today because his life and teaching remind us as to how we should treat our fellow human beings. In Scotland, we are used to the phrase "We're all Jock Tamson's bairns" but,

sadly, there are plenty of examples in our society in which the philosophy that we are all the same is not manifestly obvious. That equality, to which probably all of us in this building aspire, starts with our attitude to others—we do not differentiate between rich and poor, black and white and so on. Aidan got that and he did not just teach it; he acted on it. May we, like Aidan, treat all people as sacred and precious.

Thank you for listening, and may God bless this Parliament as members return from the summer recess. *[Applause.]*

One Minute's Silence

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I am sorry to start our business on such a sad note, but members will be aware that we were all deeply touched over the summer by the sad death of our former good friend and colleague Sir Alex Fergusson, who was Presiding Officer of the Parliament from 2007 to 2011. The Parliament will have the opportunity to debate a full motion of condolence later this month, when Sir Alex's family will be able to join members in paying a fitting tribute to him. Given that this is our first sitting since his death, will members and everybody in the public gallery please join me in holding a minute's silence for Sir Alex Fergusson?

Thank you, colleagues. I am sure that members will wish to add their note of commemoration in the book in Sir Alex's name that is currently in the garden lobby.

Business Motion

14:06

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-13658, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 4 September 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister Statement: Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2018-19

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2018-19

followed by *Appointment of Scottish Junior Minister*

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 5 September 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Economy, Jobs and Fair Work;
Finance and the Constitution

followed by *Ministerial Statement: A statement on Scottish National Standardised Assessments*

followed by Continuation of Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2018-19

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 6 September 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Continuation of Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Government's

Programme for Government 2018-19

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 11 September 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 12 September 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Environment, Climate Change and Land
Reform;
Rural Economy

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 13 September 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 18 September 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 19 September 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:

Transport, Infrastructure and
Connectivity;
Justice and the Law Officers

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 20 September 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

and (b) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on 13 September 2018, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister".—[*Graeme Dey.*]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:07

British Transport Police and Police Scotland (Integration)

1. **Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the integration of the British Transport Police and Police Scotland. (S5T-01185)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Throughout the replanning process commissioned by the Scottish ministers, we have committed to listening to stakeholders. As part of that replan, recent advice from Police Scotland on a range of issues and the timing of implementation, particularly relating to information and communications technology, has emerged. Based on that information, I have decided that we will re-examine all options for the devolution of railway policing with clear governance structures that ensure accountability to the Scottish Parliament.

The full integration of railway policing into Police Scotland, as legislated for by the Scottish Parliament, remains a long-term goal, and we will keep the commencement date of the Railway Policing (Scotland) Act 2017 under review. However, there is clearly a need to identify interim arrangements that can give effect more quickly to the Smith commission's cross-party recommendation that railway policing be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The absolute priority for all those involved is the safety and security of officers, staff and, of course, those who use Scotland's railways. I pay tribute to the on-going commitment of officers and staff of both police services, whom I look forward to engaging with on the matter in the very near future.

I commit, of course, to keeping Parliament fully updated on progress.

Daniel Johnson: I welcome the new Cabinet Secretary for Justice to his position and look forward to our future exchanges.

The cabinet secretary deserves credit for listening to experts, unions and officers in reviewing the future of the devolution of railway policing, but if he was really listening, he would know that full integration is not possible or, at the very least, that both its costs and timescales are a complete mystery. That was the message from the Scottish Police Authority board meeting last week. In the cabinet secretary's review, will he not just

put off full integration on an interim basis but rule it out altogether?

Humza Yousaf: As I have said, the current and immediate priority is to find interim arrangements. I think that there are cross-party concerns about, for example, the accountability to the Parliament—or lack thereof—of the British Transport Police, and that has to be rectified. That is the immediate priority.

The long-term goal is to keep full integration under review. That is the sensible thing to do, because there are benefits to full integration, such as having a single command structure, which came out in the evidence sessions, during the debate and in evidence from stakeholders. However, that is not the immediate priority. The immediate priority—in order to give certainty to staff, including officers and others, and, very importantly, to ensure that there is democratic accountability of the BTP—is to come to interim solutions. In that respect, my door is open to stakeholders; it is also open to all members of the Opposition who wish to engage, so that I can listen to any ideas that might come forward from other parties in the chamber.

Daniel Johnson: The cabinet secretary knows that, if there was a viable route forward for full integration, it would have been found by now. Two years on, we are no closer to knowing the costs or the timescales to make it happen. A review of two months simply will not find an answer in that timescale. Does he not recognise that, as long as full integration remains on the table, there is great uncertainty for officers and other staff? If he does recognise that, and if the conclusion of his review is inevitable, all he is doing is prolonging the uncertainty, which is ultimately unnecessary.

Humza Yousaf: No. I disagree with Daniel Johnson's analysis for a couple of reasons. One is that the review that we will be undertaking and the engagement that we will have with stakeholders will not be focused on finding a timetable for full integration; the purpose of the engagement will be about the other options that we can explore to give effect to the Smith commission's cross-party recommendations on the devolution of railway policing to Scotland.

As I have said, full integration, which remains the long-term goal, will be kept under review. Therefore, if Daniel Johnson and those who oppose full integration are right, that is something that will be kept under review. Full integration is not the immediate priority. The immediate priority is to find other options that will give effect to the Smith commission's recommendations. I put that challenge to the member. He and I spoke during my first week in this role. He knows that my approach will be to look for good ideas, wherever they come from in the chamber. I look forward to

hearing his proposals on the other options to give effect to the Smith commission's recommendations.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the commission's service model, which he previously opposed, is very much on the table?

Humza Yousaf: I do not want to prejudge the engagement that I am about to have with stakeholders. Some of that engagement between officials and stakeholders is taking place today and tomorrow. I will personally engage with stakeholders, too. We should be looking for good ideas irrespective where they come from.

I know the commission's model. Reservations were made about it, which are legitimate to express. As I have said, I do not want to prejudge the issue, but we will look at and re-examine all the options that have been considered before. If there are other options that have not been considered, they should be brought forward and examined as part of the process.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, congratulate the cabinet secretary on his new appointment. Does he not regret rejecting the amendment that I lodged at stage 3 to delay the implementation of the merger? Will he assure the Parliament that detailed business plans will be developed on any options that are consulted on and that the Parliament will have a role in determining how we go forward, given the chief constable of Police Scotland's clear views about the risk to public safety of pressing ahead with the merger?

Humza Yousaf: Liam McArthur's point is exceptionally important. I made my decision based on the advice of Police Scotland. It would have been foolish of me to ignore that advice and to ignore its concerns about ICT alignment and so on. It is important to keep that at the heart of this process.

On the member's other asks about business cases and so on, whatever option we come forward with—which we will do in consultation with stakeholders—it is important to give as much confidence about the model that we choose to explore, so I am happy to commit to ensuring that there is as much scrutiny as possible of that option in the Parliament and as much transparency about it as possible.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Does the Scottish Government remain committed to working fully with stakeholders, as it has done so far?

Humza Yousaf: Yes, of course. I will look to do that, especially with those that have been opposed to full integration and those across the chamber. It

is certainly worth keeping that engagement going. Following my announcement that I will re-examine the options, a number of organisations have already told me that they want to engage. My door will be very much open to that engagement, and I look forward to seeing what that engagement concludes about the process for the future.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The cabinet secretary has failed to address legitimate and on-going concerns of BTP officers and staff. What role has that failure played in his failure to deliver on the will of the Parliament on this important issue?

Humza Yousaf: If I had gone against Police Scotland's advice to me about the difficulties of getting a timescale for full integration, in relation to the primary concern—ICT—and other concerns, John Finnie would probably have been the first member to pull me up on that in the Parliament. He will have to accept, as I have done after a period of reflection early on in my role, that although full integration was the intention of the Government and the will of the Parliament, supported by his party, it would be foolish to ignore Police Scotland's advice.

Of course, I am more than happy to speak to John Finnie and any other member in more detail about their concerns. The path that I have chosen to go down is very much based on the advice that Police Scotland has given me. To give more certainty to officers and staff in BTP, the sooner we can get on with examining the other options for devolution of railway policing in Scotland, the better.

Ayr Railway Station (Exclusion Zone)

2. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with ScotRail and South Ayrshire Council regarding the implemented exclusion zone around Ayr railway station, which is causing disruption for many passengers, including those travelling south of Ayr to Girvan and Stranraer. (S5T-01190)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): I discussed the situation with the leader and chief executive of South Ayrshire Council last week, and Transport Scotland officials have engaged with senior officials at the ScotRail Alliance and South Ayrshire Council on several occasions since the exclusion zone at Ayr station affected platforms 3 and 4.

In addition, Transport Scotland established a new task force, which includes other relevant Scottish Government directorates, to support South Ayrshire Council in identifying solutions to the immediate safety concerns.

The key objective is to ensure that a full rail service can be restored safely, as soon as possible; it is also an objective that any long-term solution contributes to the economic prosperity of the town centre and other affected areas.

Emma Harper: The Ayr Station hotel and railway building is majority owned by a Malaysian businessman, Mr Ung, along with Network Rail. I understand that Mr Ung has refused to engage with South Ayrshire Council on work to make the structure safe. That has resulted in platforms 3 and 4 being closed altogether, which means that trains are unable to run between Ayr, Maybole, Girvan and Stranraer.

Will the cabinet secretary say what, if any, action the Scottish Government can take to make Mr Ung accountable for one of his many United Kingdom properties?

Michael Matheson: I recognise the significant disruption that the platform closure is causing at Ayr station and a number of other stations, particularly Maybole, Girvan and Stranraer.

As things stand, the Scottish Government has no powers to take action against the owner of the building. However, the local authority has powers under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 to take action against an owner where their building has become dangerous or fallen into a state of disrepair. South Ayrshire Council has used those powers to serve a dangerous buildings notice and is currently working to make the building safe and allow the platforms to reopen as soon as possible.

The member will appreciate that building owners are ultimately responsible for the upkeep and safety of the buildings that they own.

Emma Harper: Many constituents have contacted me about the disruption, including a young constituent in Stranraer who is unable to get the train to university and constituents who are unable to get to work. Will the cabinet secretary give a commitment that the Scottish Government will ensure that appropriate alternative transport links are put in place and monitored while the situation at Ayr station is on-going?

Michael Matheson: I can give the member that assurance. ScotRail is currently providing a replacement bus for rail passengers who wish to travel on to Stranraer from Ayr. Passengers who wish to travel to Stranraer from Kilmarnock or vice versa are being provided with taxis to and from Ayr station. ScotRail will continue to keep the situation under review and consider whether it could take further action to reduce inconvenience to the travelling public.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The minister will be well aware of the much-reduced rail service between Ayr and Glasgow, which affects my

constituents in Ayr, Prestwick and Troon, and many others on the Ayr to Glasgow railway line. While I appreciate that circumstances cannot change and that different options cannot be taken before a structural engineers' report is produced, will the minister tell Parliament when such a report will be produced and what his plans are for the services on this line if the Station hotel at Ayr has to be demolished? If, on the other hand, the building can be saved, what support could the Scottish Government give for the restoration or development of the hotel?

Michael Matheson: ScotRail is continuing to keep the present emergency timetable in place. That is under review and ScotRail is looking at whether it could take further measures—such as adding carriages at a later stage—to address issues with the number of people who are trying to use the service as it moves towards Glasgow Central, particularly around the Paisley area.

I can assure John Scott that responsibility for the decision to apply an exclusion zone lies with the local authority. Any change to such a zone is also a matter for the local authority. The assistance that the task force is providing is to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to identify what action could be taken in order to reduce that exclusion zone. At present, that work is on-going in consultation with engineers. Once South Ayrshire Council has the report, it will share it with the task force in order to look at what action can then be taken to make sure that any measures that can be implemented are progressed as quickly as possible.

We will continue to support South Ayrshire Council in addressing those issues. We are providing it with legal advice and advice on buildings from our experts in the Scottish Government, so that it understands all its responsibilities and the actions that it can take. The engineers' report will allow a decision to be made on whether the exclusion zone can be reduced, which will be a matter for South Ayrshire Council. We will support it and provide it with whatever assistance we can to progress that action once the report has been completed.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): In April, I chaired a public meeting at Ayr town hall that had been organised by local campaigner Esther Clark. It was packed out with residents who were frustrated at the demise of Ayr Station hotel. Does the cabinet secretary understand the anger in the community over the utter neglect of the former hotel? Will the Scottish Government take action not only to ensure that the building is made safe so that we can end the current rail chaos but to put in place a long-term plan to bring the historic building back into use for the benefit of the local community?

Michael Matheson: As Colin Smyth will appreciate, responsibility for the condition of the building lies with its private owner, who has clearly neglected it over a very extended period. I recognise that, earlier in the year, South Ayrshire Council took action to try to address those issues by engaging effectively with the owner of the building, but without success.

As I have just mentioned in replying to John Scott, the decision to apply an exclusion zone is the responsibility of the local authority. The plans that it then has for the use of the building, working with the owner and the wider town centre redevelopment are a matter for South Ayrshire Council. We are providing it with the support and assistance that it requires in order to make sure that we understand what action can be taken to reduce the exclusion zone, reopen the platforms, and have the train station back to operating at its normal capacity as soon as possible. Once South Ayrshire Council has the completed report and is able to share it with the task force, it will be provided with additional support to make sure that that action is taken as quickly as possible so that we can see the station return to its normal function.

National Health Service (Surgical Practices)

3. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how NHS boards ensure that patients' concerns regarding surgical practices are properly addressed. (S5T-01186)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): National health service boards have governance and appraisal mechanisms for their clinicians, which include boards being responsible for a system for appraisal and job planning for each consultant. In 2017-18, boards implemented the revised NHS complaints procedure, which provides a formal route for patients and their families to raise concerns. The organisational duty of candour legislation came into force in Scotland on 1 April 2018. It also requires organisations to provide an apology to those who have been harmed, and to involve them in identifying organisational learning and improvements where necessary.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response, and I welcome her to her new role.

This week, shocking details relating to the case of the NHS Tayside surgeon Professor Sam Eljamel were disclosed in a BBC investigation. Professor Eljamel is accused of making a series of mistakes while operating on patients at NHS Tayside. At the time, an external investigation concluded that he was injuring patients but, despite that, he was allowed to continue operating. It appears that NHS Tayside had in place neither

audit systems to pick up on his mistakes nor a decisive senior management team to prevent them from happening.

What assurance can the cabinet secretary give us that, in other Scottish health boards, we will not see similar incidents, in which surgeons are free to operate despite concerns being raised about their abilities?

Jeane Freeman: As I am sure that members will appreciate, there is a degree to which I am limited in what I can express here, but I make it clear to Mr Fraser and to the chamber that any instance of harm incurred by any patient in our health service is a matter that I take extremely seriously.

We have a number of measures in place that boards should be following. It is worth mentioning the globally recognised Scottish patient safety programme, which has had surgical safety as one of its workstreams since it began and which has led to a reduction of more than 20 per cent in surgical mortality across Scotland. Today, I have asked for a joint assurance from the chairs and chief executives of all our health boards that all the steps that the Scottish Government expects them to be following in terms of compliance with those measures and others are indeed being followed. Our chief medical officer and others will continue to pursue those matters to ensure that we have the best patient safety that we can have in this country.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for that full and very helpful response. I do not know whether she watched last night's BBC documentary. If she did, she will have felt angry and sad—as I did—for the patients who recounted their personal stories in that programme.

Today, we learned from *The Courier* newspaper that Professor Eljamel is still holding himself out as working at Ninewells hospital, despite the fact that his contract there has been severed. In the wake of all the new evidence that is coming out, does the Scottish Government accept that there is now a case for holding a fully independent investigation into the issue?

Jeane Freeman: What I accept, as I said before, is that any instance of harm to a patient in our national health service is a matter of considerable concern, which I take very seriously.

I am reviewing the situation with respect to the instance in question, as well as looking more widely across our boards. In that process, I will give due consideration to what further steps we might sensibly take to ensure that we have the level of patient safety across Scotland that we aim for and which our statistics currently indicate that we have overall across the NHS.

Programme for Government 2018-19

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on the Scottish Government's programme for government. As the First Minister's statement will be followed by a debate, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:27

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Last year's programme for government set us on a path to addressing the big challenges that are faced by Scotland and developed economies around the world. It set out bold plans to tackle inequality, adapt to an ageing population and move to a low-carbon society, and it presented a clear vision of the kind of country that we want to be: a nation that leads the world in technological innovation and stays true to enduring values of social justice; a country that is proud of its history and achievements but which is equipping itself to seize the opportunities of the future; and a society that is determined to remain open, inclusive and welcoming in the face of rising forces of intolerance, isolation and protectionism.

Today's programme for government flows from that vision and builds on the progress of the past year and, indeed, the past decade. It ensures that we remain focused on delivering for today and investing for tomorrow. It continues and accelerates the major reforms that are under way in our health, education and justice systems, which are underpinned by our new progressive system of income tax. It seeks to make further progress on tackling inequality and reducing poverty. It sets out the next steps in the operation of our new social security system, and it builds on our work to support Scotland's economy and encourage innovation.

The programme for government does all of that, of course, in the shadow of Brexit. We simply cannot ignore Brexit or the United Kingdom Government's shamefully shambolic handling of the negotiations. For our part, we will continue to make the case for European Union membership. Short of that, we will press the UK Government to remain in the single market and the customs union. As the terms of Brexit become clearer in the months ahead, we will consider and set out our view on how Scotland's interests can best be protected and advanced.

As was seen yesterday, it is clear that an increasing number of our fellow citizens believe, as we do, that the best future for Scotland lies in becoming an independent country. This programme for government will be impacted by

Brexit, but it is not defined by it. Instead, it sets out how we intend to deliver on our vision of a healthier, wealthier and fairer Scotland.

Let me turn first to the economy. Economic growth in Scotland over the past year has been higher than in the rest of the UK. Exports of goods have increased by 12 per cent, the fastest growth of any UK nation. Youth and women's unemployment is lower than in the UK as a whole. In the last decade, Scotland has significantly narrowed our productivity gap with the rest of the UK.

Those are strong foundations. But we must intensify our efforts now to build an economy fit for the future. Last year, we set out a range of bold measures. This year, we will continue to deliver. First, we will ensure that the business environment in Scotland remains competitive and that we are providing the support that business needs to thrive. We have already implemented key recommendations of the Barclay review of business rates, such as relief for new builds and property improvements, and for day nurseries. I can confirm today that we will introduce a non-domestic rates bill to implement its other recommendations, for example reforming rate reliefs and moving to a three-year valuation cycle.

In the past year, we established the Strategic Board for Enterprise and Skills. Drawing on its recommendations, we will publish a new economic action plan in October. We will again increase the number of modern apprenticeships in line with our commitment to 30,000 per year by 2020. We will work in partnership with industry and trade unions to produce, by early next year, a new skills action plan, ensuring a skilled and productive workforce for the short, medium and long term.

We will continue to support the south of Scotland economic partnership with £10 million funding. I can announce that, in the coming year, we will introduce legislation to establish a south of Scotland enterprise agency.

We will also continue to invest in the modern infrastructure that a strong economy depends on. Around this time last year, the Queensferry crossing opened and the M8 and central Scotland motorway improvements were completed. This weekend, one of the largest new sections of the Aberdeen western peripheral route will open to traffic. The road will be fully open by the end of the year. In the coming year, we will continue to make progress towards the dualling of the A9. We will take forward important projects, including the Maybole bypass, and we will continue our on-going road maintenance programme.

Last year, I announced that Scotland would aim to remove the need for new diesel and petrol cars by 2032. We will now make further progress

towards that goal. We will invest £15 million to add a further 1,500 electric charge points in homes, businesses and council premises across the country.

We are increasing our low-carbon transport loan fund from £8 million to £20 million, enabling more businesses and individuals to make the switch to electric and other ultra-low emission vehicles. Over the next year, we will add 500 ultra-low emission vehicles to public sector fleets.

In the coming year, the benefits of our massive investment in rail will come to fruition. By the end of next year, there will be a 20 per cent increase in seating capacity and 200 new services will operate in eastern and central Scotland. We will take forward plans to enable a public sector bid for the next ScotRail franchise.

Having doubled our investment in active travel last year, I can confirm that we will continue that level of investment in the year ahead.

Digital infrastructure is now as important as our transport links. We have exceeded our target of making fibre broadband available to 95 per cent of properties across Scotland. I can confirm today that the three main contracts for our reaching 100 per cent programme will be awarded in the coming year, ensuring that superfast broadband is available to every business and residential property in every part of Scotland. That is a £600 million pledge of truly universal coverage, unmatched elsewhere in the UK, and it will give Scotland a real competitive edge in the economy of tomorrow.

The infrastructure investments that I have talked about so far are important to the economy in the here and now. However, it is with an eye to the long term that I turn to two potentially transformational commitments. Last year, I confirmed our intention to set up a Scottish national investment bank, and earlier this year an implementation plan was published. I can confirm today that in the coming year we will introduce the legislation that will formally underpin the Scottish national investment bank. The bank will provide patient finance for ambitious companies and important infrastructure projects, and it will do so in line with defined national missions such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It will be a cornerstone of the high-innovation, low-carbon economy that we want to create here in Scotland, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work will set out more detail tomorrow.

But today, I also want to set a wider investment ambition for Scotland. Traditionally, the level of Government infrastructure investment in the UK has lagged behind other G7 countries. For Scotland to close that gap, we would need to increase annual investment by around 1 per cent

of gross domestic product, which is equivalent to an additional £1.5 billion a year. I can announce today that we will aim to close that gap by the end of the next session of Parliament. The pledge that I am making today is to increase capital investment year on year so that, by 2025-26, it is £1.5 billion higher than the 2019-20 baseline of around £5 billion. Between now and then, that commitment will mean that investment in our hospitals, schools, houses, transport, low-carbon technology and digital connections will be around £7 billion higher than our current spending projections.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity will set out in the coming months the detail of how we will deliver on that pledge and the priorities for investment, but I can confirm today that, in addition to traditional capital and borrowing, the Scottish Futures Trust will examine new profit-sharing finance schemes, such as the Welsh Government's mutual investment model, to help to secure both the investment that we need and best value for the taxpayer. I hope that the whole Parliament will get behind this national mission—a level of investment in our vital economic and social infrastructure that will protect and create jobs in the short term and support growth and productivity in the long term.

Finally on the economy, let me set out further action to protect and enhance Scotland's reputation as a trading nation. We have already taken steps to strengthen our presence in Europe and around the world, for example by doubling Scottish Development International representation on mainland Europe and establishing new Scottish Government offices in Dublin and Berlin. Our new Paris and Ottawa offices will be open this autumn.

In addition, I can announce today that we will launch a major new drive to increase exports. The value of our exports has grown strongly in the past year, but we need to do more. Right now, around 70 businesses account for approximately 50 per cent of our international exports. It is vital that we grow that base. The new national export plan will be published in full by next spring but, after consultation with business, I can announce today some of the key strands that we will start on immediately.

We will provide intensive support for 50 high-growth businesses each year to help them to grow their overseas activity. We will create 100 new business-to-business peer mentorships each year to help new exporters. We will expand the network of specialists working in key overseas markets to identify untapped potential, and we will increase export finance support for companies that are looking to enter new markets. I can confirm that that work will be backed by £20 million of new funding over the next three years, helping to

ensure that more of Scotland's world-class produce and innovations are enjoyed across the globe, with the benefits realised here at home.

We must also continue to retain and attract talent. We want to make clear that Scotland remains an open, inclusive and outward-looking nation, so let me make this clear again today: this Government will always make the positive case for immigration. As part of that, we must protect EU citizens who already live here. We will argue that they should not have to pay settled status fees post-Brexit. It is simply wrong that people who are already making a contribution to our country should have to pay to retain rights that they currently have to live and work here.

However, if the UK Government persists, I can confirm that the Scottish Government will meet the settled status fees for EU citizens who work in our devolved public services. I can also announce that, alongside an electoral reform bill, we will introduce an electoral franchise bill to ensure that current EU citizens who live in Scotland can continue to vote in Scottish Parliament and local government elections. Those actions will provide practical help. I hope that they will also send the important message that we highly value the contribution of EU citizens who have chosen to make Scotland their home, and we want them to stay.

Supporting growth in our economy is essential, but so is ensuring that growth is environmentally sustainable. Many of our actions will help us to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, which will progress through Parliament in the coming year.

Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions have almost halved since 1990. By 2050, they will have reduced by at least 90 per cent. Achieving that target will mean that Scotland will be a carbon-neutral country by 2050—we will have no net emissions of carbon dioxide. I can also confirm our intention to move towards net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide, as soon as we credibly can.

It is worth being clear about the scale of our ambition. The targets in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill for 2020, 2030 and 2040 are, without exception, the most stringent statutory targets anywhere in the world. Our 2050 target is the most ambitious anywhere in the world that is based solely on domestic actions rather than relying on paying other countries to reduce emissions for us.

We recognise that the transition to a low-carbon economy is, first and foremost, an overwhelming moral imperative, but it is also a huge economic opportunity. We are, by any reasonable

benchmark, a global leader in living up to our international obligations. This programme for government will build on that record.

As well as progressing the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, we will continue to invest in projects such as the central Scotland green network, and the water environment fund. I can confirm that, in the coming year, we will ban the manufacture and sale of plastic-stemmed cotton buds. Following recent consultation, we will design and implement a deposit return scheme for drinks containers. We will also ask the expert panel on environmental charges to recommend other actions to reduce plastic pollution.

We will establish a national deep sea marine reserve by the end of 2019.

We intend to establish an animal welfare commission to ensure that high standards of welfare are maintained for domesticated and wild animals. I can announce today that, by the end of the current parliamentary session, we will introduce what is commonly known as Finn's law to increase the available sentences for the worst forms of animal cruelty, including attacks on police dogs.

In addition to creating a wealthier and greener Scotland, we will create a fairer country. This year is Scotland's year of young people—a celebration of the contribution that children and young people make to our society. However, the most important thing that any Government can do is make sure that all our young people have a fair chance to succeed. We are striving to do that at all stages of young people's lives.

The baby box has been a huge success, with more than 56,000 already delivered. Our plan to almost double childcare will help to give every child the best possible start in life and save working families up to £4,500 a year for each child. Our work to deliver that commitment will continue in the year ahead, with almost 2,000 people starting on early learning and childcare apprenticeships, 1,500 additional college places, and 400 extra graduate level places. To ensure the quality of our early learning and childcare provision, a new standard for funded providers will be published before the end of this year.

Closing the attainment gap and raising standards in our schools remains the Government's overriding mission. Progress is being made, but our school reforms will accelerate in the coming year. I can confirm today that, by the end of this year, a new headteachers' charter, backed by new national guidance, will be published. It will put headteachers much more in control of the important decisions on curriculum,

staffing and budgets that are fundamental to the performance of their schools.

We will also continue to invest an additional £180 million a year, including money direct to schools through the pupil equity fund, to help close the attainment gap. In this academic year, we will commit £10 million to enhance the high-quality practical support and expertise that is available to teachers through the regional improvement collaboratives and Education Scotland.

In the year ahead, we will pilot and roll out a new national survey of parents and carers as part of our recently published parental engagement plan. We will also continue to protect free tuition for higher education.

However, as part of our work to widen access to university, we will also take the first steps to implement the recommendations of the independent review of student support. I can confirm that, next year, we will invest £16 million to increase college bursaries and university grants for students from the lowest-income families. We will also invest more than £5 million to increase bursaries and grants for care-experienced young people at college or university, to a level that is equivalent to the real living wage.

Extensive research shows that adverse childhood experiences directly affect outcomes later in life, so we will continue to embed, across all areas of our work, a greater focus on preventing ACEs and on supporting the resilience of children and adults to overcome childhood adversity.

Finally, I said last year that we would consider how to further embed the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law and policy, including the option of incorporation. Having now carefully considered that matter, I can announce today that we will incorporate the principles of the UN convention into Scots law. We will work with partners and the Parliament to do that in the most effective way possible, but in this year of young people there can be few more powerful symbols of this Government's commitment to our young people.

Children will also benefit from our actions to address poverty. The new Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets targets for 2030 that will reduce child poverty to the lowest level in Scotland's history. We are now investing in the actions needed to achieve those targets.

I can announce today that, by June next year, we will report on progress to develop a new income supplement. In the coming year, we will also invest £12 million in an intensive parental employment support programme to help parents on low incomes gain employment and get on in their careers. We will also step up our work to

eradicate holiday hunger, investing a further £2 million to tackle food insecurity among children.

The coming year will see our work to create a Scottish social security system based on dignity and respect step up a gear. Our new agency, Social Security Scotland, is already open for business and moving firmly into its delivery phase. It is with great pride, therefore, that I make these announcements today.

First, I can confirm that the first payments of the new carers allowance supplement will begin next week. The supplement will benefit more than 75,000 carers, increasing their allowance by more than £400 a year. I can also announce that the new young carer grant, worth £300 a year, will be paid from autumn next year. In the coming year, we will provide enhanced assistance for those on lower incomes who are struggling with funeral costs.

Finally, the year ahead will see us deliver the new best start grant. This will provide the most extensive support anywhere in the UK for new parents on low incomes: £600 on the birth of a first child, £300 on the birth of any subsequent child—with no two-child limit or abhorrent rape clause—and £250 for each child when they start nursery and again when they start school. The best start grant will benefit around 50,000 families each year.

I said last year that the best start grant would be paid from summer next year. I am delighted to announce today that, assuming we get the required Department for Work and Pensions co-operation, the first pregnancy and baby payments will be made before Christmas this year—six months ahead of schedule.

Our work to build a fairer Scotland will also include, in the year ahead, a new consumer protection bill to secure fairer outcomes for consumers. As part of our efforts to tackle fuel poverty, I can confirm that we will liaise with key stakeholders this year before formally consulting next year on our preferred model for a publicly owned, not-for-profit energy company.

We will also continue to take concerted action to address homelessness and to eradicate rough sleeping. Last year, we established the homelessness and rough sleeping action group. It has already made its recommendations, and some have already been implemented. We have committed £21 million of additional funding, and I can confirm that before the end of this year we will publish a comprehensive action plan that sets out how we will deliver all 70 of the action group's recommendations.

However, I can announce today that implementation of the housing first approach will be central to our plans, which will ensure that a

homeless individual or household is moved directly into their own settled accommodation rather than going through a variety of different housing options. In the first instance, from this autumn, we will work with Social Bite, the Glasgow Homelessness Network and the Corra Foundation to support housing first pathfinder projects in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Stirling and Dundee.

We will also continue to invest in the supply of affordable housing. In this financial year, we will increase our support for affordable homes by more than a quarter—from £590 million to more than £750 million. Over the current parliamentary session, we will ensure that more than 50,000 affordable homes are delivered, including at least 35,000 for social rent. Within that, we will work with councils and house builders to increase the supply of accessible housing for disabled people. We will also work with local government, communities and businesses on short-term lets. We want to ensure that councils have the appropriate powers to balance the needs of their communities with wider economic interests.

Of course, in order for investment in housing and infrastructure more generally to benefit communities fully, we need a fair and effective planning system. In the coming months we will progress the new Planning (Scotland) Bill through Parliament and ensure that people get a chance to have an early say in shaping developments in their area.

The voice of local communities is vital to our partnership with local government. The programme for government reaffirms our commitment to a strong partnership between national and local government. That is reflected in our work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on taking forward the local governance review to strengthen local decision making. I also confirm today that we will extend the community land fund until 2021 in order to enable more community land purchases, and that we will support the work of the Scottish Land Commission as it shapes land reform for the future, and steer the Scottish Crown Estate Bill through Parliament.

I want to mention three further initiatives that will contribute to the strength and wellbeing of local communities. In two weeks, the new Victoria and Albert museum in Dundee will open to the public. It is a stunning reminder of the potential of culture both to regenerate and to bring joy to communities across the country. Before the end of the year, we will publish a new national culture strategy that will demonstrate the intrinsic value that we attach to arts and culture, and our determination to ensure that everyone can participate in cultural activities.

Before the end of 2018, we will also publish a national strategy to tackle social isolation and

loneliness. It will draw on the results of our recent consultation, and will make Scotland one of the first countries in the world to develop a strategy to address an issue that is of growing importance around the world.

By March 2019, we will publish an older people's framework that will set out how we will achieve better outcomes in terms of services for older people, as well as in terms of their participation in the labour market and engagement in their local communities.

The two final areas that I want to talk about are justice and health. Recorded crime in Scotland is now at its lowest level since 1974. The reconviction rate is at its lowest level in almost 20 years, and 95 per cent of people in Scotland rate their own neighbourhood as being fairly good or very good. By any reasonable measure, that is a significant record of achievement, but we are determined to improve on it.

We will protect the Police Scotland revenue budget in real terms throughout the current parliamentary session. In addition, £31 million will be provided for police reform in this financial year, which will help the police to invest in new technology and to work more effectively with partners. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service budget is also being protected, with an additional £15 million of spending capacity this year to help with—among other things—the introduction of rapid-response vehicles and more full-time posts in rural areas.

As we reform the justice system, it remains vital that we improve the support that we give to the victims of crime. We are already taking important steps to do that through, for example, the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill, which we introduced last year. This year, we are determined to go even further. I announce today a major package of reforms that will better protect victims in the criminal justice system. First, we will work with Victim Support Scotland to reduce and, where possible, to eliminate the need for victims to retell their story to different organisations when they need help. We will also expand the range of serious offences for which the victim has the right to make an impact statement, in which they set out to the court how they have been affected physically, emotionally or financially. We will consult on the details early next year.

We will improve the information and support that are available to victims and families when prisoners are released from prison, and we will consult on proposals to increase the transparency of the parole system. We will also establish a new support service to provide more and better help to families who have been bereaved by murder or culpable homicide.

We will also continue to improve the support that is available to victims of rape and sexual assault. Over the summer, we announced additional funding of £1.1 million to enable sexual offence trials to be brought to court as quickly as possible. I announce that we will make available a further £2 million over three years to speed up access to support for people who are affected by rape or sexual assault. Of that additional funding, £1.5 million will go to rape crisis centres, starting next month, and the remainder will be available to meet particular local needs.

In the coming year, we will also consult on proposals to ensure that, in cases of rape or sexual assault, forensic medical examinations and access to healthcare more generally will be a priority for the national health service, and will be provided consistently across Scotland. We intend to introduce legislation on that later in this parliamentary session.

We will continue to work to reduce and eliminate domestic abuse. The legislation that Parliament has already passed to make coercive or controlling behaviours illegal will come into force this year. I confirm that we will consult on the introduction of new protective orders that would bar perpetrators of domestic abuse from their victims' homes. In addition, we will introduce a new family law bill to provide further protection for domestic abuse victims in contact or residence cases, and to ensure that children's best interests are central to consideration of such cases.

Finally, we will introduce a female genital mutilation bill to strengthen the protection that is provided to women and girls.

We will take a range of other important measures to improve the justice system. We will consult later this year on changes to modernise and improve the law on hate crime. We will extend the presumption against ineffective short sentences of three to 12 months once additional safeguards are in place for domestic abuse victims.

In addition, legislation for new drug-driving limits, which will cover 17 different drug types, will be introduced and come into force in 2019. Together with Scotland's lower drink-driving limit, that will ensure that we continue to lead the way in the UK when it comes to improving road safety.

A biometric data bill will provide for a code of practice for acquiring, using, retaining and disposing of data including fingerprints and DNA samples. It will take forward the recommendations of the independent advisory group and will modernise the law in a policy area that is of huge importance to the justice system.

We will also introduce a new disclosure bill to strike a better balance between helping people

with convictions to gain employment and providing strong safeguards for vulnerable people and the public. In the year ahead, we will also consult on reforms to the law of defamation with a view to introducing legislation later in this parliamentary session.

As a Parliament and, indeed, a country, we are proud of our reputation as one of the best places in the world for LGBTI+ people, and we want to make further progress in the months and years ahead. Therefore, I confirm that we will continue work to develop legislation to reform the law on gender recognition and, in the coming year, we will introduce a census bill that will permit National Records of Scotland to ask questions on sexual orientation and transgender status in future censuses.

The final area about which I want to talk is health. Last week's in-patient survey results show that satisfaction with our national health service remains at a high level. Our accident and emergency facilities have been the best performing in the UK for the past three years. Such outcomes are a tribute to the expertise, dedication and compassion of NHS staff across the country. Therefore, it is absolutely right that NHS staff will receive a minimum pay rise of 9 per cent over the next three years.

Last year, we introduced two important health bills that are due to come into force next year: the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill will implement an opt-out system for organ donation, and the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill will ensure that we have the right staff in the right places.

However, all of us know that our NHS—in common with health services across the UK and elsewhere—faces significant challenges. The key challenge involves adapting to an ageing population—which is, of course, a good thing—and the rising demand that flows from that.

We will continue to meet our pledge to invest record sums in the NHS. However, we will also progress important reforms to the way in which care is delivered, and we will take further action to improve population health. Over the next year, we will take forward work to implement the new general practitioner contract, support integration of healthcare and social care and invest a higher proportion of the health budget in primary, community and social care. From next year, we will implement Frank's law, thereby extending free personal care to eligible under-65-year-olds.

We will continue to champion a preventative approach to Scotland's public health challenges. In May, we became the first country in the world to introduce minimum alcohol pricing. This year, we will take forward plans to reduce childhood

obesity. Among other measures, we will consult on restricting promotion and marketing of food and drink that is high in fat, sugar or salt.

Preventing ill health and building up community services are essential to ensuring a health service that is fit for the future—but so, too, is ensuring that acute services can meet the demands that are placed on them. We know that rising demand has put significant pressure on waiting times, and we recognise that current performance is not good enough. I therefore announce today that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will, later this month, publish a waiting times improvement plan that will set out a range of short-term and medium-term actions to improve waiting times performance substantially and sustainably.

Part of the longer-term plan to meet waiting time targets on a sustainable basis is the creation, over this session of Parliament, of five new elective treatment centres. I therefore confirm that work on the new west of Scotland centre at the Golden Jubilee hospital will start in the early part of next year, and that work on the north of Scotland centre at Raigmore hospital in Inverness will be under way by the middle of next year. I also confirm that, as part of our work to create a specialist major trauma network, new major trauma centres will open in Aberdeen next month and in Dundee in November.

Finally, I want to turn to mental health. As the stigma around mental health reduces, demand for services is rising. We have a duty to meet that demand quickly and appropriately. That means doing more to support positive mental health and to prevent ill health. It means delivering greater provision of mental health support in communities, including schools, and it means ensuring that people who experience serious illness can access specialist services more quickly.

Today, I am announcing a package of measures that will complement our mental health strategy and will be backed by £0.25 billion of additional investment, starting this year and progressively increasing over the subsequent four years. The Minister for Mental Health will set out full details shortly, but I will cover some of the key elements now.

First, we will develop a stronger network of care and support for the one in five new mothers—around 11,000 a year—who experiences mental health problems during and after pregnancy. That will include greater access to counselling for those who experience mild symptoms, and an expansion of specialist services for those with moderate or more severe illness.

Secondly, we will use technology to extend access for adults to a range of support services. That will include improvements to the NHS24

breathing space service, extension of online access to cognitive behavioural therapy, improvement of access to psychological assessment and therapy in rural areas, and strengthening of the handling of mental health calls to the 111 service.

However, most of our additional investment will support improvements in provision of child and adolescent mental health services. The task force on children and young people's mental health will report in the autumn, but based on the early discussions that have been held by its chair, Dr Dame Denise Coia, we are committing to a range of actions now. We will invest £60 million in additional school nursing and counselling services, which will support 350 counsellors and 250 additional school nurses, and ensure that every secondary school has a counselling service. We will enhance support and professional learning materials for teachers and ensure that, by the end of academic year 2019-20, every local authority has access to mental health first-aid training for teachers. We will fund an additional 80 counsellors to work across further and higher education, and we will develop a community mental wellbeing service for five-year-olds to 24-year-olds, which will offer immediate access to counselling, self-care advice and family and peer support.

We will also put in place plans to fast-track young people with the most serious mental illness to specialist services, as well as taking targeted action in the short term to reduce the longest waits for services.

As I said a moment ago, more detail will be published shortly, but I hope that the package that I have announced today underlines the commitment of this Government to ensuring that our health services value and support mental wellbeing just as much as they do physical wellbeing.

The forthcoming budget bill will complete and, indeed, underpin our legislative programme for the coming year. The 12 bills that we will introduce in the coming years of the session are part of a much wider programme of work to tackle the major social and economic challenges of the day.

Over the next 12 months, this Government will also make progress towards doubling free childcare provision, further narrow the attainment gap in our schools and widen access to universities. We will pay the first benefits in Scotland's new social security system, and take further action to tackle poverty and inequality. We will help our NHS to adapt to an ageing population and begin a transformation of mental health services. We will tackle major public health challenges, legislate for a Scottish national investment bank, invest for the future and support more businesses to sell their goods across the

globe. We will support the transition to a low-carbon economy and do everything that we possibly can to protect our economy from Brexit, in order to put Scotland on the right track for the future.

I commend the programme for government to Parliament. [*Applause.*]

Programme for Government 2018-19

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We turn to the open debate. I ask all members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

15:06

Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): This is the 12th Scottish National Party programme for government and it is the third under the current First Minister. It comes a year after last year's programme for government when, following the general election, the First Minister declared a radical relaunch of her Administration.

Before turning to today's offering, let us briefly summarise how that relaunch has gone. Last year, 15 new bills were promised but, of those, just two have been passed. One was the critically important and overdue Historical Sexual Offences (Pardons and Disregards) (Scotland) Bill, which enjoyed unanimous support throughout the chamber. The other was the somewhat more technical bill making changes to property tax, which had no amendments at stages 2 and 3 and was so uncontroversial that even Murdo Fraser was forced to declare that he had "very little ... to say".

Of the remainder of the bills promised in last year's programme for government, only three have progressed past stage 1. Seven bills in Parliament's in-tray have not even had a deadline set for the completion of stage 1, and seven bills from last year's programme were not even published until the end of the summer term. It was the proverbial essay crisis. In fact, this programme for government has a total of 13 bills that are a hangover from last year. That is the highest that the figure has ever been under the SNP, even at the end of the previous session of Parliament or when major events such as the referendum crowded the public debate.

Those are the facts on last year's programme. The SNP had great ambitions but remarkably little legislation has happened—it was not so much a relaunch as a retreat. What did we have in the past year instead of that fresh new agenda? We had a fracking ban that was not a fracking ban; a new teach first system that excluded Teach First; and a new state-owned energy company that so far has not produced any energy. We had a railway police merger that was backed by almost no one and which has now finally been shelved. We had a new named person scheme that does not work and a new economic plan that is so streamlined it has 23 separate strategies. Of course, one thing that the Government managed

to publish last year was yet another new blueprint for independence, courtesy of a growth commission report.

However, all of those failures were dwarfed by the real letdown from last year's programme for government, and that was the climbdown on the education bill. This time last year, Nicola Sturgeon told us that the education bill would

"give headteachers significant new powers, influence and responsibilities, formally establishing them as leaders of learning and teaching. Our premise is simple but very powerful: the best people to make decisions about a child's education are the people who know them best—their teachers and their parents."

Just in case we were left in any doubt as to the significance of that bill, she said:

"A new education bill will deliver the biggest and most radical change to how our schools are run that we have seen in the lifetime of devolution."—[*Official Report*, 5 September 2017; c 13.]

She called it the centrepiece of her plan, but then what happened? A consultation was launched but, in June this year, John Swinney shelved the bill, and then said that he might think again. It is an unholy mess that is entirely of the Scottish National Party's making, and the education of a generation of our children is at stake.

When Nicola Sturgeon claimed that education was her top priority, we were pretty sceptical, but we said that we would work with the SNP if it meant the right thing for our schools. We are not even asking the SNP to bring forward proposals that it does not agree with; we are just asking it to bring forward those that it argued for last year and that it said needed to be underpinned by radical legislation. I ask the SNP to bring back to the Parliament the proposals that it drew up on raising attainment and giving headteachers more powers, and on measures that it outlined to give parents more say on school improvements and policies, as we have argued for such empowerment of teachers and parents for years. We have the votes to get those proposals through the Parliament, and we will gladly cast those votes to get a better deal for our pupils.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon) rose—

Ruth Davidson: I know that the First Minister's speaking time was protected, but I will gladly take a question from her.

The First Minister: I have just set out the fact that, by the end of this year, a new headteachers' charter will deliver all those powers to headteachers. Is Ruth Davidson saying that, instead of doing that by the end of this year, she wants us to bring forward legislation to delay it by 18 months to two years? Is that really her position? Is it not most important that headteachers have the powers that they need?

Ruth Davidson: I love the idea that the First Minister thinks that the people of Scotland are mugs enough to believe what she says. Having stood here 12 months ago saying that we needed a radical bill for the "most radical change" to our schools to make them better—when, under her watch, their standards have gone down—she now stands here saying that that bill will get in the way. The people of Scotland are not mugs. The First Minister binned the bill because the SNP could not get it through and because it listened to vested interests. We are offering the SNP our votes. Bring back the bill and we will get through Parliament the parts of it that we have supported for years. The First Minister should not have stood there and said that she cared about the children of Scotland so much that she needed a radical bill and then ditched the bill and said that it did not matter in the first place. She should not dare say that.

We want to know why the Government thinks that it is right, when there are only 1,000 days or fewer until the next election, to come back to more backtracking and inaction. Because we have heard how much was promised but not delivered last year, we will be forgiven for treating this year's programme for government with a gritter-load of salt. The Government has shown that it is very good on promises and consultations but a little bit less energetic when it comes to delivery and action.

Turning to this year's bills, I will first say which of them have our support, so that we can get on with the job of scrutinising, improving and passing some legislation in this chamber. We welcome the Government's adoption of Finn's law, to increase the available sentences for the worst forms of animal cruelty, including attacks on police dogs. I pay tribute to my colleague Liam Kerr, who worked tirelessly on that issue, mobilised the support of thousands of Scots and welcomed Finn to Parliament before the summer recess.

On the wider mental health programme, I know that, in recent years, the sector has voiced concern about a mental health strategy that lacked ambition and a suicide prevention plan that was disappointingly late. The programme is overdue and the Government has some catching-up to do. However, it will have our full support in ensuring that treatment and support are there for those who need them. We have all acted for constituents who have waited too long for vital services; we have all seen a growing understanding in our communities and across our society about the importance of mental health; and we all have a chance now to give mental health the attention that it deserves. I believe that all parties will support the plan. Similarly, I expect broad support, and pledge that of my party, for measures to combat female genital mutilation and domestic abuse.

On welfare, we will engage positively and responsibly, as we did during the passage of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. On the economy, it was the Scottish Conservatives who first introduced the policy of a separate enterprise agency for the south of Scotland in our 2016 manifesto. We were pleased when the Scottish Government picked up the ball and ran with it, and we support the proposed legislation that has been announced today that will underpin it. We also welcome the focus on increasing exports, including the establishment of two new Scottish Government hubs inside the British embassies in Dublin and Berlin. On electric vehicles, the new fund is welcome and necessary; roughly 1 per cent of our vehicles are electric, and at the current rate Scotland would not be all-electric for another 600 years.

The Scottish Government will receive £2 billion extra in funding through Barnett consequentials over the next four years, and we will wait to see a much fuller explanation of how that money will be spent. With regard to further information, there are measures here that either we cannot support or on which we and the Scottish public need a much greater level of detail.

Today's programme states that the electoral reform bill will involve a consultation on prisoner voting. We believe that people who commit crimes and who are sentenced to incarceration surrender not just their right to liberty but their voting rights too, and we will stand against any attempts to change that. On European Union nationals' voting rights, we support the First Minister's commitments today, which mirror the commitment that the UK Government set out in December last year.

On the investment bank, we welcome any measure to help small business and we will scrutinise the legislation in good faith. However, from what we have seen so far, there is nothing new or bold about rehashed plans for an investment bank that broadly already exists in the form of the Scottish Investment Bank and which the SNP has, in essence, promised to do before. Last year's programme promised a £36 million growth fund but, by the start of last summer, just £2 million had been distributed. The year before, the SNP promised a £500 million fund for loans and investment for businesses, but it turned out that that was mostly rebadging of existing funds and, last week, we found out that not a single penny had been given in loans. There is a pattern with SNP economic policy: big promises turn into small change. I hope that it will not be the same with the investment bank.

As for today's red meat for SNP activists, we Conservatives do not believe that we should answer the questions that are raised by leaving

one union by threatening to leave another that is worth more than four times more to Scotland in trade, and neither do the people of Scotland.

What is striking about this overall package is that SNP legislation seems to be finely tuned in terms of headlines but less honed when it comes to substance. It is a textbook example of knee-jerk, backside-covering just-in-time-ism. If we take the announcement on mental health that the First Minister has spent today loudly proclaiming, why has it taken until the day on which we have seen the worst-ever waits on record for children to receive treatment before the Government has acted? This morning's radio round-up from the First Minister promised the country that she will invest more in hospitals, but why have we gotten to crisis point before action is contemplated? Why have we seen today record numbers of NHS vacancies? More than 3,000 nursing and midwife posts lie empty, which is almost six times the rate of seven years ago. Who was the health minister seven years ago who presided over a 20 per cent cut in nurse training places? It was the First Minister—the same First Minister who stands here looking for applause for last-ditch attempts to fix problems of her own making.

We have here a batch of measures that are long on spin and short on substance. I will speak directly to the Opposition parties. It is clear with a minority Government that Parliament can act with greater power. There are issues on which even parties that come from opposite ends of the political spectrum can find common cause. Because much of the proposed legislation is so vague in intent, we have the chance to make real changes. With regard to the Planning (Scotland) Bill, for example, I am not sure whether anyone knows exactly what the Government is trying to achieve. That is why it is so wide open to amendment and why Opposition parties have been able to make a real impact on the shape of the bill. Where legislation has failed to keep up with the technology—on short-term lets, for example—we are ready to work with all to get a fair deal for Scottish householders.

On the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill, safe staffing is of course necessary, but the bill is a legal nonsense if it is not backed up by policy. The bill that has been published shows how flimsy the thinking is. Opposition parties have the chance not just to improve the legislation but to radically alter it. On those issues and others, I call for us to work together to do just that. I make clear that I will work with Greens, Liberal Democrats and Labour politicians who agree on an issue-by-issue basis to move things forward. Increasingly, we are running out of patience.

Since the last election, it has taken the SNP up to 700 days to get a bill passed, and we now have

fewer than 1,000 days until the next election. That means that, given the tortuously slow pace, there is not much time left. The record of past years is not much to look at, and the chances for this year seem little better. If the SNP is not going to get a move on, it is up to us to up the pace.

Although, for a wee while, I might not be here in person to push forward our agenda, the Scottish Conservative group will redouble efforts to campaign for change. We will seek greater rights for the families of victims who have been caught up in the justice system, so that they are no longer treated as an afterthought—we have warm words, but we want a commitment to introducing Michelle's law in full. We will argue for the extra investment that we know is coming to the NHS to be used to support and maintain local services across Scotland; make the case for real and radical action on housing; support more action on vocational and technical education for young people who choose not to go to university; and above all, demand that the reality of the Scottish Government's new thinking on economic growth matches today's rhetoric.

We know that the Scottish Government's own forecasts say that Scotland faces five years of subdued growth, which is the longest such period since the second world war. We believe that Scotland should be the most attractive place in the UK to live, work and do business in. We have the resources, the people and the industry—everything but the weather—but the Government has tarnished that ambition with its anti-business agenda. A Scottish growth rate that has been lower than that of the UK every calendar year since 2010 is not something for the Government to trumpet; it is something for it to remedy.

Come budget time, we will therefore campaign against the SNP Administration's high-tax agenda. We will call for its confused and cluttered economic strategy to be redrawn and we will argue for a renewed focus on our world-class capability in oil and gas, food and drink, sustainable energy, life sciences and financial services. There is a good-news story to tell about the Scottish economy, and we intend to tell it.

In conclusion, the start of a new term is not the time to be overly cynical but, given the sclerosis of the Government's record, it is wise to be sceptical when we see the SNP bearing legislative gifts. All too often in the past, gifts that have been promised have got lost in the post.

This year, the Scottish Conservatives will continue with the job that we were elected to carry out: to hold the SNP Government to account, to oppose vigorously where it goes wrong and to offer constructive opposition where we believe progress can be made. We wish old and new Government ministers well as they approach their

task this year, but they should know that time is not their friend. The session is at its mid-point, there is much still to do and too much time has already been squandered. The country cannot afford the SNP Government to be distracted by either noises off or an unwanted rush to yet more constitutional division. It is a time for action and deeds. It is a time to stop chasing headlines and to get on with delivery.

15:23

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the First Minister for the advance copy of her statement.

It is the job of my party to ask difficult questions of the First Minister and to hold the Government to account, and the Parliament and the people who sent us here can rest assured that we will do that week in and week out. However, let me strike a genuine note of unity at the very start of this new parliamentary term. I begin by expressing the Scottish Labour Party's full support to the First Minister in the fulfilment of her Government's duty to thoroughly investigate and act on all allegations of sexual harassment that arise. Equally, I say genuinely to the First Minister that she also has our total backing in ensuring that the Scottish Government fulfils its duty of care to the women involved in all such cases and in providing them with all the support that they need when they need it. She has our full backing, and I hope that I speak for every member on that.

I also record that we welcome today's announcement on mental health. It is something that the Labour Party has long campaigned for, and this morning's publication of the latest figures on child and adolescent mental health serve as a timely reminder of how potentially important the announcement is.

This year alone, more than 2,500 young people have waited more than 18 weeks for treatment. The review of CAMHS, which was published in June after years of pressure, exposed a system that is simply not fit for purpose, with young people being rejected from treatment because they were not deemed suicidal. The system needs to change, and I hope that today sees the first step towards doing that.

I am bound to say that I also welcome the toughening of the rules on regional selective assistance awards, but we look to the day when the living wage is a requirement for all companies bidding for all public procurement contracts, and not just those receiving grants.

The First Minister has raised the issue, so I say clearly that we on the Labour benches oppose a second independence referendum and we urge her to drop any plans for it once and for all. Brexit

throws into sharp relief the challenges of leaving one political and economic union. Let us be clear on this as well: leaving the United Kingdom would mean an unprecedented decade of austerity for the people of Scotland. That is not my analysis; it is the analysis of the SNP's own cuts commission, published in May, whose members included the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work.

In the end, the real division that we face is not between the people of the four nations of the United Kingdom; it is between the rich few and the rest of us. That is the divide that the First Minister should focus on, not dividing the people of Scotland with another referendum.

Some elements are missing from today's programme for government. In education, there is no mention of scrapping primary 1 standardised assessments. There is no mention either of the need to deliver a fair pay deal for Scotland's teachers, or to raise the upper limit on the number of home-based students entering higher education.

In health, there is no mention of the compelling case for imposing a cap on spiralling agency costs in the national health service.

The First Minister talks of wealth and wellbeing but is silent on the distribution of wealth and wellbeing. The Government knows that the inequality gap is getting wider. It knows that because its own report, which it published last year, showed that the richest 1 per cent in Scotland now have more personal wealth than the whole of the poorest 50 per cent put together. The Government must know that that results in not just a huge imbalance of wealth but a huge imbalance of power. Although the First Minister and the Scottish Government may choose a vocabulary of radicalism and ambition, in reality they have emptied both of their real meaning. Worse, it is a vocabulary that has been appropriated not for the sake of meaningfully changing the lives of the people of Scotland but for the sake of the political management and positioning of the Scottish National Party. We are 11 years into the SNP's time in office but where is the vitality? Where is the driving force? Where is the real radical vision in this programme for government?

Over those 11 years in office, the SNP's ambition has simply not kept up with the growth in this Parliament's powers. For our part, Labour will welcome the use of those powers and will always push for a more radical agenda. Although we welcome the commitment to pay the best start grant before Christmas, we will continue to campaign for an upgrading of child benefit for all the years that our children are growing up.

Over the summer recess, I visited communities and spoke to people across Scotland. I listened to the asylum seekers in Glasgow facing eviction and deportation and met the resilient community that is standing by them. I talked to tenants and residents in Alloa struggling with rising rents, witnessing a housing crisis and demanding new investment to bring about real change. I knocked on the doors of elderly people in Ayrshire, who told me that their GP service was cut back in spring this year. Those elderly people were in the village of Tarbolton, in the constituency of the new Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport.

I met business owners and trade unionists, all seeking certainty and firm economic planning and looking for a Scottish Government that not just promises a national investment bank in future but delivers a national industrial strategy now. Just last week, I listened to people in the fishing industry in Shetland, who are concerned that this Government does not have a plan for what happens if we crash out of the European Union next spring. I talked to club 365 food project workers in Coatbridge, where practical welfare action by the local Labour council is making a difference to the lives of bright kids who just want a chance in life. I listened to communities who have taken over the land where they live and work, from the Mull of Galloway to west Harris.

I met workers up and down the country who have had enough of their living standards falling year after year. Young workers who are exploited in the hospitality industry and workers of all ages are getting organised and getting unionised, because they know that the time has come to fight back. We are seeing a reinvention of citizenship, a new political engagement and a democratic renewal that is based not on national identity but on the universal values of solidarity and equality and a hunger for real and radical change.

In this next parliamentary year we will mark and celebrate the 20th anniversary of the first elections to this Parliament—an event that awakened hope. We want to reawaken that hope by showing that we can take a different path—a path that is radical and ambitious and that will bring about real change, and a path that the people of Scotland deserve.

15:32

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I thank the Government for the advance copy of the statement.

This year's programme for government takes place in perhaps the most difficult context of any since devolution. The Brexit crisis continues to play out, with no hint of realism coming from the

negotiations and the UK Government continuing to treat this Parliament with contempt.

Of course, this mess is not of Scotland's making, but in the face of it, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have a responsibility not only to defend Scotland's interests against the multiple threats of Brexit but to ensure that the crisis does not prevent an ambitious programme of policy and legislation to address the needs of the people whom we represent.

Let me give credit where it is due and pick out a few positives from the statement. Electoral reform might not be the biggest headline grabber, but I flag up the commitment to see EU citizens' right to vote protected and the commitment—which is not explicit in the statement but has been made clear in previous statements in Parliament and which I hope remains the position—that residence and not citizenship will be the test of voting right, so that non-EU citizens, including refugees and asylum seekers, should have the right to vote. I pick out electoral reform, not because it is the biggest headline grabber but because those commitments are strongly consistent with a Government that says that it wants to make a positive case for immigration and free movement. That is a principle that the Greens strongly share, and I was pleased to hear it.

I was also pleased to see progress on the young carers grant, which is something that the Greens pushed for in the 2016 election and which we have pushed for since. There were positive comments, too, about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but we will look closely at the detail of what is proposed in that regard. Will the convention itself be incorporated and become part of domestic law?

It is clear that the Government is more open than it has been in the past to commitments to the work that needs done to ensure that we have a public rail operator and a public energy company, but we will want to see more detail and a clear commitment on the timing of both measures.

Over recent years, the Greens have worked hard to do what we said in the last election that we would do, pushing the Government beyond its comfort zone and leading the change that Scotland needs. From community rail funding to protecting local services, and from safeguarding the marine environment to winning the case for a new and fairer system of income tax, our approach has got results.

However, it is clear that there remain parts of the programme for government on which we will need to step up the pressure for change. The First Minister is committing to increase capital investment year on year. I remind her that, in the

budget concession last year, the Government has already committed to increasing the proportion of Scotland's capital spending that goes to low-carbon projects. I hope that that will remain a consistent principle that will not be deflected by the wider increase in the capital budget.

The Scottish household survey that is just out today shows that, in 2017, 61 per cent of adults said that climate change was

“an immediate and urgent problem”.

That figure has gone up significantly since the previous year, and it is clear that the Government wants to be seen to be moving in that direction. However, in Scottish politics, it is still the case that although we are not dealing with the denial of the problem, we need to recognise that the scale of what is being proposed bears no relationship to the scale of the challenge. There is a missed opportunity to commit to a net-zero greenhouse gas target, but rather than focus on just the debate over the technical question of precisely which target to set, it is equally important to focus on the questions of how and what—what we will be doing to transform our transport system, for example.

Today, we have the statistics that the Government has just published, which state that bus use is down by 9.5 per cent and cycling is down by 7.5 per cent, while car use is up and two thirds of car journeys are made by single occupants. Installing more electric charging points will do nothing to change that. The increase in aviation remains entirely fossil fuel powered, and the everlasting growth that that industry seeks would leave our other efforts on climate change looking futile.

The problems are not just with transport. The wider transition to a post-oil age requires an acceptance that most of the world's fossil fuels must remain unburned. Scotland must play its part in that, too. There is an overwhelming case for divestment from fossil fuels and instead building an economy that can provide lasting jobs for the future in industries that do not depend on exploiting finite resources. I am sad to say that it remains entirely unclear whether the Scottish Government understands the scale of that task.

There are some positive measures, such as the deposit-return scheme and banning cotton buds that are made of plastic. Those are fine—they are all well and good on their own terms. However, such measures are based firmly on placing the responsibility on individuals and not on transforming the wider economic context within which we all live. For example, there is the Government's focus on support for business, on which the First Minister made clear some commitments today. The Government remains wedded to the idea of increasing gross domestic

product and exports. However, in that section of the First Minister's speech there was no word on ethics or on ensuring that public, taxpayer-funded support for the private sector is tied to commitments on the living wage, on ending tax avoidance or on divestment from the arms trade and the fossil fuel industries that the Scottish Government continues to support, just as the UK Government does.

When the SNP took office in its first term in government, parts of the national performance framework clearly suggested the beginnings of an understanding that GDP growth alone is the wrong basis for judging the health of our economy. That agenda appears to have stalled. The Greens will continue to make the case for a change.

The First Minister also asks us to welcome the idea of a headteachers' charter, because she wants to do some of what was going to be in her bill without actually bringing it to Parliament to seek support. She says that such a charter will put headteachers in control of decisions. However, will they also have the funds necessary to reverse previous years of decline in appointing teachers and other staff, or will headteachers be left in the lurch in being made personally responsible for ever more but without the resources and the back-up staff that they need to ensure that their schools can achieve what our society needs of them? The Government must accept that, in our education system, resources and not structural reforms should be the priority.

There are a number of other issues on which the Greens are keen to call on the Government to work with us. The Government has already indicated its intention to support my colleague John Finnie's bill on the equal protection of children from assault. I hope that that will also be true of Mark Ruskell's work on 20mph speed limits and Alison Johnstone's work on the need for a real ban on fox hunting.

However, it is on local government that we have our work cut out to push the Government beyond its comfort zone. The First Minister and the programme for government speak of a strong commitment to a strong partnership between central and local government. If that is the case, there is no reason in the world why we should not support COSLA's call for local authorities to have the power to decide for themselves on issues such as a transient visitor levy—a tourism tax—to raise the revenue that local government needs.

That is a huge agenda. We have a huge opportunity to ensure that we have strong local government—as is normal in so many other European countries—that has the financial powers available to it to enable it to raise revenue fairly instead of hiking fees and charges or making cuts to valuable services.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will Mr Harvie give way on that?

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

There is to be a bill on non-domestic rates, which will provide another opportunity to decentralise financial powers.

We will make it clear, as we have done since the most recent budget process, that we will begin to discuss the next budget only if the Government makes meaningful progress on the reform of local taxation and local fiscal powers. We will continue to push further for that, because we know that such powers and resources are urgently needed right across Scotland.

15:41

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Of course there are sections of the Government's programme for government that we can all support, and Liberal Democrat members will work constructively to deliver them. I welcome in particular the commitment to incorporation of the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, when I received an advance copy of the programme, I thought, "This can't possibly be it all." It is so light in content that I thought that I must have been missing volume 2. A particular highlight in the First Minister's statement was the point at which she said that she would liaise this year, consult next year and deliver who knows when. That typifies the whole programme for government, which is so light on substance.

I suppose that every Government runs its natural course. Based on this year's programme for government, the current Government's sell-by date has been well passed. After 11 years in power, it is showing all the signs of being at the end. It is searching around for new ideas. The old ideas are being found out, the performance of public services is on the slide and, although the ministerial team has changed, there are still the same old policies. In fact, the former minister for recycling has himself been recycled, but the whole Government needs to be upcycled and repurposed into something that is fit for the future.

Because the Government arrived at St Andrew's house with the single purpose of leaving the United Kingdom, there has been a special air of desperation since the independence referendum. Since then, the Government has struggled to discover any real purpose for its remaining time in office. The new programme for government tells us all that we need to know.

First, the First Minister grasped the topic of education, but although it was her overriding

priority and her first objective, the Government has come up only with a series of damaging managerial changes. There is nothing positive or new in today's programme for government, either.

Then, there was mental health. I stood on election platforms with the First Minister at three successive elections, when she told me that she really cared about mental health and that it was a priority for her, but today's figures reveal the worst waits for young people. Just 67.8 per cent of children were seen within the 18-week waiting time target. That is down from 71 per cent, and from 81 per cent the previous year. The situation is even worse in some parts of the country. The health boards in Forth Valley, Grampian and the Borders all failed to achieve a level of 50 per cent—way below the national average—against the target, and NHS Tayside's performance is disgraceful, with only 34 per cent of young people having been seen within the target period. How disgraceful is that?

No new announcement today, three years after the First Minister told me that mental health was her priority, can cover up for the failure of the Scottish Government on mental health. There was no recognition in the First Minister's statement of the terrible figures on mental health waiting times for young people. There was not even a mention of them, and there was no note of contrition for the Government's failure.

Then there is Brexit. Brexit was mentioned, but the only commitment was to consider what to do when the proposals come out. How bold and ambitious is that? The First Minister cannot even bring herself to back the one policy that could save us from Brexit's damaging effects—the people's vote. With unusual and curious modesty, she says that it is not for the SNP Government to lead the United Kingdom. What happened to the First Minister of 2015, who took the UK general election by storm, wowing the rest of the UK with her plans to change the whole United Kingdom.

The hunt for the new purpose goes on. Step forward Keith Brown, the new deputy leader. He told that oracle of integrity, *The National*:

"A fresh case for independence is more vital than ever—and that is what we are working on in the national assemblies."

The fresh new idea turns out to be the same old idea. It is the same Keith Brown who sold the dodgy Chinese deal to the First Minister. He sold so many bad ideas to the First Minister that maybe it is not a surprise that he has been told to sell the new case for independence to members of the SNP. It is independence first, last and always with the SNP. Nothing else matters.

Let me put forward in contrast some positive new plans. Instead of having damaging national

testing in schools, let us empower teachers to shed the burden of tests and explore how best to utilise their skills and training. Most countries in the world would not dream of starting their young people in formal education at four or five years old: six or seven is the norm. In line with global best practice, let us embrace that new approach.

Instead of damaging long waits for people who require mental health treatment, let us adopt a new mental health improvement act that would give mental health parity of esteem with physical health. It would be backed up with a requirement for all public bodies to provide mental wellbeing support across the range of their services, and would accelerate improvements to mental health services.

Instead of hunting for ways to leave the United Kingdom, let us offer up a new United Kingdom co-operation act that would agree new dispute-resolution procedures with the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. Instead of demanding a veto, it would offer the hand of friendship and co-operation to resolve disputes over issues.

Let us put down the offer of co-operation with the UK Government, so that we can rebuild the relationship that our two Governments have worked so hard to undermine in recent years. We have seen the Westminster select Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee endorse the idea of a more modern framework. That sounds like federalism to me.

It is right to ask the Scottish Government to be part of the growing call for a modernised United Kingdom. Instead of dithering over the people's vote, let us pledge our support for the United Kingdom legislation that is necessary to agree such a vote.

The First Minister should get out of her bunker and lead the charge on the campaign. With the weight of the Government behind her, it would give the campaign further momentum. Her current dithering is undermining the case for the people's vote. Nicola Sturgeon needs to sign up today.

Liberal Democrats want a local government funding act that would look at a new land value tax and a tourism infrastructure charge. It would provide the necessary reforms required to empower local councils to deliver the services that they are responsible for. Just like Holyrood, local councils should have the power to raise the majority of the money that they spend. That would empower them in a way that has been prevented in recent years. If you control the purse strings, you control your destiny on your areas of responsibility.

Those are the fresh new ideas that this Government should have brought forward in its programme—but all is not lost; there is still time to

change. The Government should stand up on education, on local government finance, on Brexit, on reforming the United Kingdom and on mental health.

Use the power. For goodness' sake, use the power of the Parliament for the wellbeing of the country.

The Presiding Officer: We turn to the open debate.

15:49

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Presiding Officer, if I may reflect briefly, I will say that this is the first time in more than seven years that I have had the chance to address Parliament from the back benches. As anyone who has had the privilege of being a minister will realise, the job in many ways restricts opportunities to speak in Parliament often. Although there may be disappointment ahead for anyone who is hoping that any new sense of freedom on my part means that I now intend to go quite so far as to embrace my inner Kenneth Gibson, I look forward to having a chance to raise a wider variety of issues.

Today, the First Minister has laid out an ambitious vision for Scotland in this year's programme for government. I want to say something about it from the perspective of Scotland's island communities, some of which I represent. In recent years, we have seen the appointment of an islands minister, the islands deal, the Islands (Scotland) Bill and legislation on matters as diverse as reform of the Crown Estate and island proofing of wider policies. Those have been very welcome measures.

Certain issues will always feature at the top of the islands' political agenda. The success of road equivalent tariff ferry fares and the doubling of the ferries budget since the SNP came to office have meant that there is now an ever-increasing demand for ferry services from both islanders and tourists.

Housing remains a complex problem in the islands although, happily, the recent offer from the Scottish Government of some £25 million for affordable houses in the Western Isles holds out the prospect of the largest house-building programme there in half a century.

Meanwhile, the multiple uncertainties of Brexit hold their own obvious risks for crofting communities and fishing communities. Perhaps most urgent of all is that we need to remind the rest of Scotland that good jobs are regularly advertised in the islands, that the islands are an outstanding place to live and that new people are needed.

The First Minister's very welcome announcements about rural broadband link together many of those distinctive issues for Scotland's island communities. In mentioning that, I hope that even the most atrophied Opposition heart will be able to acknowledge how far things have come. Only four years ago, my constituency had no superfast broadband at all and, what is more, there was no prospect whatsoever of its being supplied commercially. Today, after millions of pounds of investment by the Scottish Government, some 75 per cent of homes and businesses in the Western Isles have access to superfast broadband.

Before someone intervenes on that, I add that I am very conscious that that is, of course, no comfort at all to the other 25 per cent of islanders who have not yet benefited in that way. I can think of many communities and individuals who are in regular touch with me about this frustrating issue. I will not try your patience, Presiding Officer, by naming them, but I can think of people in Uig in Lewis, in many parts of South Uist and on the west side of North Uist, as well as on the west coast of Harris, among many others, who are keen to see where they now fit into the roll-out plan.

That is why the commitment from the First Minister to 100 per cent coverage by 2021 and to a new contract within the coming year for further work is very encouraging. We should all now work together to ensure the success of the R100 contract and to maximise the active involvement of communities in planning ahead to ensure that all islanders—indeed, all people across Scotland—enjoy the connectivity that most Scots increasingly take for granted.

It has been said before that the roll-out in our times of broadband in rural Scotland—particularly in the Highlands and Islands—will prove to be as transformative as the roll-out of telephone lines was in those parts of Scotland in the 1940s and 1950s. There is a new imperative that we should think about, which is that we are quickly coming to a point at which families will be as likely to move to a place without broadband as they would have been in past times to move to a place without telephones.

I believe that the programme for government is a commitment to a Scotland where all communities are included—not least our island communities—where all communities benefit economically, and where distinctive and differing needs are respected. I welcome the priority that the Government has given to ensuring that island broadband plays its role in doing all those things, and that our island communities are part of Scotland's economic success in the future. I commend the programme for government as the way to achieve that.

15:55

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): The summer recess is an opportunity for us to spend some quality time in the constituencies or regions that we represent. Naturally, I spent mine in Glasgow. From all the meetings and conversations that I had during the summer, two messages stand out. First, under the SNP, Scotland's economy is struggling, the nationalists are out of ideas and they even lack the commitment to drive economic growth in the first place. Secondly, voters are sick and tired of their politicians using Brexit for their own short-term political ends rather than getting on with the job of negotiating the best possible deal in the interests of the country.

Both those themes are wearily familiar in what we heard from the First Minister this afternoon. She could not even mention Brexit without banging the drum for independence yet again.

I will start with the economy. I make no apology for focusing my remarks on Glasgow, just as Alasdair Allan focused many of his remarks on the area of Scotland that he represents. Stewardship of the economy is one of the primary responsibilities of government at any level. We all know that, under the SNP, Glasgow's economy is struggling. Business start-up rates, business survival rates, the female employment rate and levels of economic activity all compare poorly when contrasted with those of cities in the north of England, such as Manchester.

It is a gloomy picture, not least for the once iconic Sauchiehall Street, which is one of the most important commercial streets anywhere in Scotland, and one of Glasgow's major retail arteries. It is no exaggeration to say that it is dying on the SNP's watch. It was hit by two major fires earlier this year, and the SNP stood idly by as businesses went under and residents were locked out of their properties for weeks on end.

The SNP's chronic mismanagement of the Glasgow city region deal is only making matters worse. In her statement this afternoon, the First Minister made great play of the importance of infrastructure investment, but in Glasgow infrastructure investment that was supposed to boost economic growth is having exactly the opposite effect. As Sauchiehall Street is turned into a building site, shoppers and consumers are given every reason to stay away and no reason to return.

Some businesses on that street are reporting takings this summer at one third of the level that they enjoyed 12 months ago. When Glasgow thrives, Scotland thrives. Glasgow is Scotland's economic powerhouse, and Sauchiehall Street is a major driver of Glasgow's retail and food and

leisure economy, as well as its night-time economy.

What engagement has the SNP had with businesses in and around Sauchiehall Street to ensure that the city region deal infrastructure investment is being directed appropriately? When asked just that question in the House of Commons in July, the SNP leader of Glasgow City Council said:

"we don't have yet in the Glasgow region a clear interaction with the business community."

Does that not just sum it up? The nationalist leader of Scotland's biggest city, a city that 18,000 businesses call home, proudly boasting that her SNP administration has no clear interaction with the business community.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Adam Tomkins: No programme for government can hope to grow the Scottish economy while the nationalist leader of Scotland's major city turns her back on business.

Perhaps Mr Doris would like to apologise for his leader's remarks.

Bob Doris: I apologise to anyone who has to listen to Mr Tomkins, because he is ill-informed about the Glasgow city region deal. It is worth putting on the record that the deal was not signed by Councillor Susan Aitken but by a previous Labour Administration. As the Local Government and Communities Committee found in its city region deal inquiry, the biggest problem was that the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council are trying with the city region deal to form inclusive growth projects to bring all society together, but that has been specifically rejected by the UK Government.

Adam Tomkins: I am not quite sure what the question was, but I certainly did not hear an apology for the abject refusal of the SNP leadership in the city that Mr Doris and I represent for refusing to engage at all with the business community.

I turn to Brexit. This time last year, we stood with the SNP in insisting that Brexit must be delivered compatibly with our devolution settlement. We agreed with the SNP that the withdrawal bill that was then before the House of Commons failed to do that and needed to be amended. In time, of course, that amendment came—although the Scottish Government stood alone among the Administrations of the United Kingdom in refusing to accept it. Twelve months on, Conservative members are still of the view that Brexit must be delivered compatibly with devolution, but the SNP has now changed its mind about that. Respecting the devolution settlement

means respecting that which is devolved and that which is reserved.

Among the matters that are reserved to Westminster is international trade, yet far from respecting that aspect of the devolution settlement, Scottish ministers propose to ignore it entirely. All new proposed trade deals should be subject to not one but five separate Scottish Government vetoes, according to the SNP: a veto at preparation stage, another if the negotiating mandate changes, a third at negotiation stage, another at ratification, and a final veto when the trade agreement is signed. Five vetoes for Scottish ministers on a reserved matter is not respecting the devolution settlement; it is taking a wrecking ball to the Scotland Act 1998. It is a naked nationalist power grab and it will be robustly opposed.

16:01

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

Starting back after recess is always a useful point at which to take stock of the year just gone and to compare last year's programme for government with what was actually passed by this Parliament.

This time last year, the spin was ferocious. "Bold and ambitious" was the mantra that was splashed across the headlines—the contrast is telling. This year, it feels much more like damage control. Whether it is about testing primary 1 pupils, the British Transport Police, the tourist tax, or John Swinney's flagship education bill, this summer has been punctuated by U-turns, knock-backs to council leaders and convoluted explanations for Government climbdowns.

The summer headlines should not have been a surprise, because last year's programme for government was meant to be bold but has been defined by what was ditched rather than what was delivered. This Government needs to provide clarity and purpose. For too much of the past year, it was a case of carry on regardless, resulting in halts and U-turns.

There was of course one U-turn over the summer that I welcomed: the U-turn on the British Transport Police. I repeat my commendation to the new Cabinet Secretary for Justice for listening. His predecessor's intransigence in the face of experts, staff, officers and academics, not to mention Opposition politicians and unions, was in a sense impressive; however, it was misguided and damaging. The dogmatic pursuit of full integration left him in a difficult position, especially as Police Scotland itself has now stated at the most recent Scottish Police Authority board meeting that the objective of full integration would not be possible for "years". That is a direct quote from the board papers.

We need to find a way forward for the devolution of transport policing. The cabinet secretary needs to follow up his announcement. There needs to be clarity that full integration is off the table. It is only by seeking dialogue and consensus and by listening to officers, unions and experts that the cabinet secretary will receive our backing for his plans. He also needs to end the uncertainty that the refusal to reject full integration outright has created for staff and the people who use the service.

I very much welcome the announcement that there will be a focus on victims, whether that is in relation to giving evidence or the impacts of pursuing issues through the criminal justice system. All too often, our justice system retraumatises victims and addressing those issues is important.

Likewise, I welcome the announcement that the Government will be introducing a biometric data bill, which follows up on John Scott QC's useful and instructive work. Likewise, on the disclosure bill and the defamation bill, it has been clear in the past year from the evidence that the Justice Committee has taken and from elsewhere that there is a need for reform, so we will look at the details of those proposals, we will engage constructively and we will seek to make sure that those bills deliver on the promises that have been set out.

However, there is business to be carried over from last year. The Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill looks at parole, electronic tagging and disclosure. It is fair to say that there has been disappointment about the bill's lack of ambition. We can see that lack of ambition no more clearly than in the fact that the First Minister had to reannounce that the Government will be looking at transparency around parole. That could have been addressed in the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill, which is already looking at the Parole Board for Scotland.

Likewise, the First Minister announced that there will be an examination of remand. Again, that could have been covered by the bill if it was not for the careless language in its very title, which has caused issues. The Scottish Government had stated that it was no longer going to use the term "offender", because the word stigmatises people who are going through the criminal justice system. That stigma can undermine attempts to break criminal behaviours and the chaotic lifestyles that lead to them.

When we look at the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill, we can see where the Government needs to improve. The Government must seek greater clarity and a greater sense of purpose if it is to improve its assessment this time next year.

I also want to mention hate crime. We welcome, from the First Minister's statement, that there will be a new bill on hate crime. However, I urge the Scottish Government to come forward with further details on the timing and the scope of what it seeks to achieve with the bill. Lord Bracadale's recommendations, which were published last year, are an excellent example of the clarity and purpose that I have spoken of in my speech.

Discrimination is appalling in all its forms, and hate crime continues to have long-lasting, hurtful and damaging effects for many people in Scotland. I understand that the new cabinet secretary wants to make tackling hate crime one of his top priorities, so we will closely scrutinise the bill and we look forward to seeing the detail. Where it takes on the recommendations of Lord Bracadale's review, we will support it.

I will close by saying something on consensus, and I make these comments to members across the chamber. As I have done, the cabinet secretary will have spoken to experts and people who work in the field of criminal justice across Scotland. One topic of conversation has come up time and time again: the determination to preserve the political and social consensus in Parliament on the criminal justice system that we have enjoyed in recent years. That consensus states that crime should fall, that violent crime can be prevented, that the number of reconvictions is falling, and that imprisonment—and short sentences in particular—is not always the most effective way of reducing crime because of its impact and the fact that it can lead to reoffending.

I gently say to members across the chamber that there seems to be a changing mood. Some parties seem to want to break that consensus for party political gain. My party will hold the Government to account, we will say when we disagree, we will offer new ideas and we will criticise plans when they are not coherent or not thought through.

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

Daniel Johnson: We need a justice system that works, and that can be done only on the basis of consensus.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are really pushed for time. If all requested speakers for today are to make their full contributions, we will have to be very strict on time.

16:08

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): A test of any Government's programme is the investment that it puts into infrastructure. As a result of real, tangible, visible building work, the

economy can be stimulated, services can be improved, communities can thrive and everyday lives can be made better. Infrastructure spend continues to be the backbone of successive programmes for government from this Government.

Last Wednesday, I welcomed the Deputy First Minister to Inverurie in my constituency, where he was able to see how one of the latest projects in the Scottish schools for the future programme is coming along. The Inverurie community campus will provide a state-of-the-art educational environment for the pupils of Inverurie academy and St Andrew's school. It will bring secondary school pupils together with pupils with additional support needs in a campus that is purpose built for all their educational, social and pastoral needs.

In the two years that I have been the MSP for Aberdeenshire East, I have seen the completion of three new school buildings: my former secondary school, Ellon academy; Markethill primary in Turriff; and Uryside school in Inverurie. By 2020, it will be four.

In my constituency, broadband has long been a major ask. Although that area is reserved to Westminster, the decision by the Scottish Government to intervene has been necessary to ensure that vast swathes of rural Scotland are not left behind. Without the intervention of the Scottish Government, most of my constituency would never have had access to superfast broadband. Before the Scottish Government's commitment, the percentage of premises that were connected to fibre broadband in Aberdeenshire through commercial deployment, as predicted in 2012, was at just a quarter. After the Government's intervention, the percentage stands at more than 91 per cent. By 2021, we will have 100 per cent access, and with the new contract it will not be the most remote who get access last.

Investment in transport infrastructure is crucial to any country's economic growth. In the decades before an SNP Government, successive Governments served my area of the north-east badly in that respect. A bypass that would connect the north and south of Aberdeenshire and keep traffic out of Aberdeen city was mooted in the late 1950s. I would have thought that the importance of the oil and gas industry to the Scottish and UK economy would have made such infrastructure spend in the north-east a priority of Thatcher's Government, but it did not. In the post-devolution situation, we all expected heaven and earth to be moved to make it a reality, but it took the SNP Government to take hold of the project and deliver it. All my colleagues know that the late Brian Adam MSP was instrumental in campaigning for it to happen.

The AWPR will make an enormous difference to my constituents. It will genuinely change our everyday lives. There will be less congestion, safer journeys and quicker commutes. Communities around Aberdeen will be vastly better connected to the city and to the rest of Scotland. The economic impact will be substantial.

The transport infrastructure spend does not end there. The first stage of the dualling of the rail track between Aberdeen and Inverurie is complete, with the Dyce to Aberdeen stretch now open. I tested it on my way down to Parliament. Next year, we will see a new station at Kintore and the doubling of the service between Inverurie and Aberdeen after investment in a new line.

With a new railway line, two new schools, the building of the country's largest health centre, 100 per cent broadband coverage and the dualling of the A96, could Inverurie be an even more attractive place to live? New opportunities for infrastructure investment are opened with the Government's announcement of the Scottish national investment bank.

Along with my north-east colleagues, I will continue to make the economic, environmental and social case for new rail lines to areas that do not have a rail option. I feel that a line from Dyce to Ellon would be a real benefit and my constituents agree. Of course, being in a rural constituency, we realise that cars will always be necessary for many of us who live away from public transport routes. Therefore, it is vital that we provide the infrastructure that is needed for the use of electric vehicles to be a realistic option. The announcement of the 1,500 new electric vehicle charging points makes my personal goal of making the jump from hybrid vehicle to a fully electric one in the next few years a real possibility.

However, I cannot sit down without mentioning the announcement that has made me happiest. At the end of May, in discussion with our back benchers, the Government asked for ideas to put in the programme for government. We asked for financial assistance in an area that is close to many of our hearts: more spend on early intervention for mental health for young people at school level. I am delighted to hear that the First Minister has taken our views on board and committed the Government to putting counsellors in every secondary school. That is one of the most significant educational and health developments under the Government. On behalf of the many parents, teachers and teenagers who have spoken to me about the matter, I thank the First Minister for listening to their views.

The programme for government is full of substance, realisable ambition and concrete delivery on manifesto commitments. It also has the flexibility to adapt to new policy. The Government

is ambitious for Scotland, is tackling the many challenges that we face and listens to the country. Year on year, it delivers for the whole of Scotland. I see that in my area every day in bricks and mortar, new broadband cabinets, road crews, cranes lifting bridge supports into place, newly laid rail track and every journey that I take around my constituency of Aberdeenshire East.

16:13

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The programme for government debate is always exciting and interesting and is one of the debates that many people look forward to. There is the anticipation and expectation of the SNP Scottish Government continuing to deliver for the people of Scotland. The fact that the Opposition parties have yet again moaned and groaned with little semblance of gratitude to the Scottish Government tells a tale of parties that are bereft of ideas and vision for this country. Instead of moaning, they should thank the Scottish Government for its many achievements and its consistent record of delivery. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Quieten down, please. Not you, Mr McMillan. You carry on.

Stuart McMillan: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

The Opposition parties should thank the Scottish Government for the major infrastructure projects that it has delivered and is delivering, such as the completion of the M8, the building of the Queensferry crossing, the building of the AWPR and the work that has started on dualling the A9, to name just four examples.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: No, the member can listen a wee bit more.

Those are projects that previous Scottish Executives and, before the creation of this Parliament, the Scottish Office did not deliver, because of the lack of foresight, vision and desire on the part of the politicians in charge over those decades.

The Opposition parties should be thanking the Scottish Government for its record of building more than 72,000 affordable homes, including, most recently, homes in Bay Street and Slaemuir Avenue in Port Glasgow in my constituency. They should be thanking the Scottish Government for keeping commercial shipbuilding alive on the lower Clyde through its continued support and awarding of contracts to Ferguson Marine in Port Glasgow. They should be thanking the Scottish Government for the investment of £120 million this year in the attainment challenge, with £9.3 million

going directly to schools in Inverclyde over the past three years—and we should not forget the additional investment in the schools for the future programme, which, among other things, paid for half of the cost of the newly built St Patrick's primary school in Greenock. They should be thanking the Scottish Government for the continued investment of more than £13 billion in the NHS as well as the £7.3 million that has been invested in the new Orchard View hospital, which is the Inverclyde adult and older persons continuing care hospital—that was yet another chapter in the long, drawn-out saga to replace the not-fit-for-purpose Ravenscraig hospital.

There are many more such examples, but time prevents me from continuing down that line.

On the issue of mental health, every member of this Parliament should welcome today's announcement of additional finance and resources to help with early intervention in our schools and colleges. We have investment in additional school nursing to create around 350 counsellors in school education across the nation and to ensure that every secondary school has counselling services, which should be welcomed and supported; investment in an additional 250 school nurses across the country, which will help provide the response to mild and moderate emotional and mental health difficulties experienced by young people; investment in 80 additional counsellors in further and higher education over the next four years, which will also greatly help our young people as they progress through their educational journey; and an expansion of the range of perinatal support that is available to women, which will be greatly beneficial to society. Almost 20 per cent of women will experience mental ill health during their pregnancy, so that latter point is another example of doing the right thing.

Many concerns have been raised about the delivery of child and adolescent mental health services, and I am sure that the proposals in the programme for government will assist many people across the country. In addition to the extra counsellors, the proposals will result in parents having a much clearer understanding of the kind of help that is available, and of where and how to access it; children and young people having a much wider range of help available to them; and schools being better supported to deal with wellbeing concerns and more able to direct children to counselling services. They will also result in the development of services for community mental wellbeing for five to 24-year-olds and their parents in order to provide direct and immediate access to counselling sessions. That new support and investment will have a hugely beneficial effect on the mental health of our young people, and it is fitting that this announcement is made in this year of young

people. It once again shows the commitment of the Scottish Government to the future generations of our nation.

I want to touch on the vision and direction of this Scottish Government, in comparison with the rudderless and chaotic nonsense coming from Whitehall.

When Jackson Carlaw stands up to try and lay the blame for his own party's total incompetence elsewhere and then has the brass neck to try to get the SNP to support his party—although which party, or faction of it, he wants us to support is unclear—I think that we can say that he will win *The Herald's* next annual brass neck of the year award. The Tory civil war that has been taking place for months now is proof of the old phrase we use in Inverclyde: never trust a Tory.

Theresa May's Chequers plan was slammed as the last person left the building. One side of her party is scrambling to cobble together some semblance of a narrative on the EU and the other side of her party wants the UK to go back to the Victorian era, with delusions that Britain is still a world power. All of that is in contrast to the united and growing SNP, which has now overtaken the Tories to become the second-largest party in the UK.

There is much to welcome in the programme for government, which builds on the social and business focus that the SNP Scottish Government has demonstrated, from the additional £2 million to tackle holiday hunger among children to the carers allowance supplement that the First Minister spoke about earlier. I commend the programme for government to the chamber.

16:19

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I should remind Mr McMillan that the Edinburgh festival has finished; that comedy speech would have been up for a great award.

It is quite telling that the First Minister made a 40-minute speech and it took her only two minutes and 20 seconds to say her favourite word. Guess what it is? Independence. It is the driver of every policy, every strategy and every programme that emits from her Government and she knows it. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Quieten down, please.

Jamie Greene: To be fair, there have been some welcome ideas in the programme for government and Conservative members have been happy to support them. Let us look at legislation that Parliament has passed that we have worked on together. The Historical Sexual Offences (Pardons and Disregards) (Scotland) Act

2018, the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 are meaningful pieces of legislation. We have worked in the past with this Government on sensible legislation and we will continue to do so. When it comes to tackling important issues such as FGM, family law, domestic abuse and consumer protection, we will have the same constructive attitude.

Last week, the First Minister said in *Holyrood* magazine:

“we must keep focused on moving forward with our domestic agenda”.

Those are warm words, First Minister, but words and actions are two very different things. This year's programme for government contains the highest number of bills carried forward from previous years. Over the past two years, a raft of bills have simply failed to materialise. In 2016, it was the air passenger duty bill. It makes another cameo appearance this year, but there is no commitment to see it through. We do not know when and how it will be delivered.

What about last year's programme for government? We made it through only two bills out of 15. Where are bills on criminal responsibility, warm homes, tissue donation or the management of offenders? Those are important issues that are still stuck in the machinations of this Parliament. What about the flagship education bill? It is lying in tatters, shelved and criticised, not just politically but by the sector itself.

The entire machinery of the Parliament was halted for nearly a month while MSPs were forced to debate, scrutinise and pass legislation that was not even within the competence of this Parliament. It is no huge surprise that there is a backlog of legislation that we are supposed to get through in the next two years.

This programme for government is like every other from the First Minister—full of jargon, action plans with no action, working groups, strategies and even the announcement of another new public body. A host of new bills will be left to collect dust on the tables of civil servants. Key pledges will be announced and then ignored, such as tackling drug driving, or Derek Mackay's £36 million digital growth fund, which has had just £2 million allocated to it. What about the £500 million growth scheme? Only 5 per cent of that sum has been invested.

Another of the Scottish Government's flagship projects, R100, was supposed to be completed by 2021; it will now be the end of 2021, and today we learn that contracts might be awarded some time in the next year, leaving little time to reach Scotland's hardest-to-connect properties. Every year, this Government produces glossy 100-page

programmes, but it is the everyday issues that matter to people.

Just yesterday, I received an email from a constituent in Saltcoats who had queued for 45 minutes outside her GP surgery in the rain trying to get an appointment. That is not a one-off; that is systemic long-term mismanagement of our NHS workforce planning. It is a shambles and it is shameful.

The unfortunate reality is that no matter what the Government says today—no matter what the First Minister promises—that will not change. This Government will still let down people in Scotland today, tomorrow and in the days that follow. People will still be told that they need to wait 17 months to see a specialist consultant. Why? Because there are record vacancies for them. Farmers will still be offered loans instead of the funding that is due to them. Why? Because of a botched information technology project, which is still not working. Commuters will still be left stranded because their ferry has been cancelled. Why? Because there are no vessels available and the new ones are a year late. Young Scots will still be denied a place at the Scottish university of their choice. Why? Because fee-paying students are preferred and pursued by universities. People will still hear the engaged tone at the end of the line when they try just to get an appointment to see their GP. Why is that? Have a guess. Where in today's jargon-filled promises of working groups and strategies is there any hint or clue as to how the Government will address those fundamental issues?

The problem is that we have heard it all before. The First Minister mentioned infrastructure projects such as the A9, the Queensferry crossing, the M8 and the AWPR, but those were policies that we already knew about. There was nothing new or radical and there were no ideas.

How on earth does the Scottish Government think that it will eliminate petrol and diesel cars by just introducing 1,500 charging ports to meet the needs of 6 million people? Will that really generate the modal shift that we need?

The big elephant in the room, which I want to touch on, is this: the First Minister announced £7 billion of additional spend. If I stood up in the chamber and announced billions of pounds of spend, the first thing that would be asked of me would be how I would pay for it. Would it be through more taxes, more borrowing or spending cuts elsewhere? I ask the First Minister which it is, because the public have the right to know. It is not coming from economic growth, because the only EU country with slower GDP growth than Scotland is Greece. The finance secretary should stand up tomorrow and enlighten us.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, Mr Greene is just coming to a close.

Jamie Greene: Does the First Minister put the interests of Scotland or her party first? She says that we should judge her by her record. I could not agree more.

16:26

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate the First Minister on this programme for government, not only for the 12 bills that it outlines and the new commitments that it contains, but because it builds on last year's ambitious programme for government, which was one of the most radical anywhere in the world.

It is a great contrast with the Government in Westminster, which has been so consumed by Brexit bickering that it often appears to have entirely abandoned the business of domestic governance. As Paul Johnson, director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies, observed yesterday:

"South of the border, the whole political class is fixated on dealing with the fallout from the Brexit referendum. It's taking up all available attention."

By contrast, this programme for government shows that the Scottish Government has a vision for the future. The UK Government's vision often appears to stop at Dover. Of the 191 divisions that were held in the House of Commons in the year following the 2017 Queen's speech, 80—or 42 per cent—were on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill alone.

We witness a tale of two Governments. The UK Government is crippled by internal division, while Scotland's Government gets on with the job of improving the lives of our citizens. Some examples of that from the past year include £120 million for the pupil equity fund; Scotland becoming the first country in the world to implement minimum unit pricing for alcohol; a comprehensive plan to eradicate child poverty; the £1 billion deal with councils to double early learning and childcare hours; the world-leading Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018; a plan for a national investment bank backed by £2 billion; the historic Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, which has dignity and respect at its heart; and the connection of 900,000 homes to fibre broadband. On the latter, Alasdair Allan eloquently illustrated the transformative effect of Scottish Government policies on his constituency when he talked about how broadband had changed the lives of people in just the past five years.

The Scottish Government has been busy. Those examples were from the past year alone, and this year's programme keeps up the pace. I particularly welcome the focus in the 2018-19 programme for government on mental health in general, and the provision for children and young people in particular. The focus on prevention and early intervention is absolutely correct, and the £60 million for 350 school counsellors and 250 additional school nurses is most welcome, as is the announcement of 80 counsellors across further and higher education. On top of that, the five to 25 community wellbeing service means that every young person will have access to the counselling and advice that they need, wherever they live.

The programme's other major focus is the economy and a commitment to invest in our infrastructure, which is an area in which the UK lags behind the G7, as the First Minister pointed out. The pledge to increase capital investment by £1.5 billion in 2025-26 is exactly the sort of transformational approach that is so absent in Westminster, which, let us not forget, still holds the majority of fiscal powers over Scotland and its economy.

Sadly, measures such as that are another example of the Scottish Government being forced to clean up Westminster's mess. We know that a no-deal Brexit will wipe £12.7 billion a year from Scotland's economy by 2030 and cost each man, woman and child £2,300 a year. That research comes not only from the Scottish Government; it reflects the UK Government's figures and independent analysis. Investment in infrastructure is the single most effective way to tackle recession—Mr Swinney used it effectively during the last recession, after the banking collapse in 2008—and, with a Brexit recession looming, it is an essential intervention.

Tearing us out of the single market and the customs union against our will means that, more than ever, we need to support Scotland's businesses in their exporting ambitions. This programme's export growth plan will see £20 million invested in a range of measures, including support for 150 businesses to increase overseas activity. I welcome the Scottish Government's paper on trade, which was published at the end of last week. It emphasised the urgent need for the Scottish Government and the Parliament to obtain an enhanced role in the development of future trade policy. We must be able to influence the preparation, negotiation, agreement, ratification and implementation of future trade deals if we are to protect our devolved public services, ensure the highest standards of environmental and consumer protection in Scotland and help our export businesses.

I welcome the news that the first of our new social security payments in Scotland will begin this month, earlier than planned, and that the first best start grant for low-income mothers and babies will be paid before Christmas. In some ways, that news is the greatest contrast in this tale of two Governments. Theresa May, the Prime Minister who promised on assuming office to help those who were just about managing, has consistently cut in-work benefits. In April this year, her Government cut £2.5 billion from 11 million families across the UK as a result of the cash freeze on working-age benefits, the two-child limit, the roll-out of universal credit and the cuts that include family support. Although it is true that the UK Government has been bogged down by Brexit, it has not allowed itself to be distracted from its absolute priority, which often seems to be punishing the poor.

The programme for government is both aspirational and compassionate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Joan McAlpine: It will deliver for all the people of Scotland and I commend it to the chamber.

16:32

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The First Minister opened today's debate by describing the programme for government as building

"on the progress of last year".

There is no doubt that it is more of the same: more cuts to our vital public services and more excuses for not using the full powers of this Parliament to implement real change.

Nowhere is the timidity of the Government clearer than in the measures for Scotland's broken transport system. We have a railway system in which fares are rising above wages, passengers stand on platforms not knowing whether their train will even stop and new trains are running late before they have even been built.

We have a bus network that is slowly being dismantled by the SNP, route by route. Passenger numbers continue to fall, but bus fares rise and rise—by 47 per cent over the past 10 years. The programme for government that was published today pledges "stability for bus services" on the very day when the Scottish Government published transport figures that show a 9.5 per cent decline in bus passengers in the past five years alone. It is not stability that we need for our buses, but real change to reverse the decline under this Government.

That will not be delivered by the timid Transport (Scotland) Bill that is before Parliament. It fails to

recognise that public transport has become detached from public service and public ownership and it reinforces a broken system—where profits, not passengers, are put first—by proposing a franchising model that is cut and pasted from the UK Tory Government and that will not allow the public sector to bid for franchises.

Whenever I challenge the Scottish Government to back public ownership of our railways, it refuses. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Yousaf, please stop shouting across the aisle. Carry on, please, Mr Smyth.

Colin Smyth: Whenever I challenge the Scottish Government—including Mr Yousaf—to back public ownership of our railways, it refuses to back that plan. It says that it supports a public-sector bid for the ScotRail franchise and the First Minister repeated that pledge today in her statement. That would not be full public ownership, but it would be a start. Why do the First Minister and the Scottish Government, in the programme for government, say that public sector bids for franchises are good enough for our railways but not for our buses? Why is the SNP so determined to let its big bus company-owning donors cherry pick the profitable bus services to run while leaving local councils to pick up the bill for loss-making services? That is a bill that they simply cannot afford.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will Mr Smyth mark the report card for the publicly owned Network Rail? It is how things are managed rather than who owns things that perhaps makes the difference. I do not think that many would give high marks to Network Rail.

Colin Smyth: That is another statement from an SNP politician who again refuses to back full public ownership. We should bring our rail and our track together under public ownership, not keep them apart.

In Edinburgh, we have the successful Lothian Buses model. Lothian Buses is the best bus operator in Scotland. Its levels of satisfaction are the highest in the industry, and that publicly owned company recently returned £5.5 million to the public purse. Why does a Government that sits in the same city not allow that successful model to happen anywhere else in Scotland?

It is often said that the SNP pretends to be left, but acts right. When it comes to transport, the programme for government shows that it does not even pretend.

When the Scottish Government brings forward the Transport (Scotland) Bill, Labour will set out our alternative for real change. We will lodge amendments to that bill to deliver radical

reregulation of our buses and proper municipal ownership so that the public sector can run services and not be banned from doing so. Our amendments will also propose that, when bus companies propose changes in bus routes, proper consultation with passengers and agreement by transport agencies will be required.

Our reregulation proposals will put a stop to rip-off fares, end the postcode lottery that exists, particularly when it comes to concessionary travel for young people, and drive forward multi-operator ticketing. Imagine the boost in bus passenger numbers if free bus travel was extended to young people, for example, starting with modern apprentices.

Labour's amendments will also halt the race to the bottom in the way that staff are treated by proposing measures to work towards a collective bargaining model that drives up—not down—bus workers' terms and conditions. The Government will then be left with a very clear choice: to work with Labour to end the dismantling of lifeline bus routes or to drive through its timid Transport (Scotland) Bill, with the help of the Tories, and continue to preside over not stability on our bus network, but its continued decline.

It is not just about our transport system. I hope that the Government will work with Labour to strengthen proposals in the timid programme for government in the areas that I shadow. As someone who has campaigned for 10 years for more support for the south of Scotland economy, I welcome the long-overdue legislation to establish the south of Scotland enterprise agency. Ironically, that is a decade after the Scottish Government abolished local enterprise agencies in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders. However, that legislation must ensure that the membership of the agency is rooted in the south of Scotland and that it has powers to deliver real change both in enterprise and skills with a budget to deliver that change. It must be backed with investment and a Borderlands growth deal in this year's budget.

In her statement, the First Minister pledged to eradicate holiday hunger. The sad reality is that children throughout Scotland go to bed hungry at night all year round. I am disappointed to see no mention in the programme for government of a good food nation bill and a commitment to introduce a legally binding right to food.

Finally, I will touch briefly on animal welfare. The proposal to create an animal welfare commission is a helpful step, action to strengthen the licensing and regulation of animal sanctuaries and breeding is long overdue, and the adoption of Finn's law is welcome, but I hope that the proposals will be backed with an increase in maximum sentences for animal cruelty to five years, as campaigned for by animal welfare charities such as Battersea

Dogs' and Cats' Home. Where is the commitment to a proper ban on hunting? Where is the pledge to end live animal exports? As Richard Leonard said earlier, where is the real, radical vision in the programme for government? It is more of the same, and that is a real missed opportunity.

16:38

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I very much welcome the programme for government that the First Minister has presented and will pick out areas of particular interest to me.

I commend the Scottish Government's infrastructure strategy with regard to housing. Let us place it in context. The Government has built 76,500 affordable homes since 2007, more than 52,700 of which are council or housing association homes. The current target is, of course, 50,000 within this parliamentary session, with a minimum of 35,000 for social rent. That has been a step change with a huge and, critically, multiyear budgeted financial commitment by the Scottish Government of around £1.7 billion over a three-year period.

In that context, I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to increase the annual infrastructure budget by 1 per cent of GDP by 2025. That could mean an additional £1.5 billion each year and an extra £7 billion over the period to 2025. I know that there have been many calls for that expenditure. Alasdair Allan gave a powerful reason for broadband infrastructure in his constituency: to allow it to connect better. However, it is important to maintain the strong high-level and multiyear budgets for housing, too. In Glasgow, the current affordable housing and multiyear budgets have given significant confidence to the local authority; I also see the difference in how the housing associations in the area that I represent carry themselves and act.

There is huge infrastructure development in the communities that I represent. Work is under way or about to commence in Hamiltonhill, Milton, Ruchill, Cadder, Summerston, Possilpark, Springburn and Germiston—and there are probably others that I have missed out. My call is that we find a way of maintaining that momentum because of the level of need. However, it is very welcome that action is being taken and the new infrastructure investment is an opportunity to go even further than the good work that has already been done. I ask the Government to consider that.

It is fair to say that mental health has been a challenging brief for the Scottish Government, so I very much welcome the announcement about 350 school counsellors and 250 school nurses, so that every school can have a proper, robust

counselling facility within it. There will be 80 additional counsellors for further and higher education. I also welcome the report by the task force on children and young people's mental health that is chaired by Dr Denise Coia. Although the full report has not been published yet—it comes out in the autumn—the First Minister has decided to take action. That is to be welcomed.

As well as the counselling service, the Scottish Government has announced the development of a community mental well-being service for five to 24-year-olds, among a variety of other things. I set that investment beside the £750 million attainment Scotland fund over the lifetime of this Parliament, and in this year alone the £120 million pupil equity fund, that are to be spent tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. There is clearly a direct correlation between the mental health, the wellbeing and the nurturing of our young people and their educational attainment.

It is in that context that I mention that I work closely with Home-Start Glasgow North, which focuses more on pre-five-year-olds. I commend the Scottish Government for its work on pre-fives, whether that is the baby box, the recent announcement of additional mental health support for new mums, the work on family nurse partnerships, the significant step change in childcare or the early roll-out of the best start grant.

There are lots of good news stories to tell, but there is a feeling that it is the five-plus age group that is getting the key attainment support. I know, however, that our Government is about early intervention, and always has been—I mentioned some of the work in that regard. I know that Home-Start is thinking about how the pupil equity fund could be used imaginatively to support pre-fives before they even get into primary 1. When we look at the superb progress that we will make on mental health in secondary schools, at the PEF monies in primary and secondary schools and at some of the other early interventions that there have been, there is a real opportunity to consider widening out PEF to pre-schools—not necessarily to nurseries, but to organisations such as Home-Start, which could carry out key initiatives in that area.

In my remaining time, I welcome the family law bill and I thank Annabel Ewing, the previous Minister for Community Safety. I raised concerns about family contact centres: they are unregulated and there is no quality control of how they perform the service that they provide to mums and dads. Some do superb jobs, but it is my experience that some simply do not and their recommendations hold powerful sway over sheriffs and courts. The Government must look at that area as part of the family law bill.

I welcome Ash Denham to her role as the new Minister for Community Safety. I know that she has a high degree of knowledge and interest in that area and I look forward to working in partnership with her. Progress has to be made.

I have picked out three things from an exciting programme for government where I think that we can deliver for Scotland.

16:44

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest, with respect to my work in the waste sector.

Tackling climate change is, rightly, at the heart of the decision-making process that influences all areas of policy. We welcome the Scottish Government's ambition, but we are concerned by the lack of progress in a number of key areas. My comments today should be taken in that light and as constructive criticism, to help us to build a sustainable future—a sustainable future that is at risk from the SNP Government's lack of action.

On waste, the only thing that the SNP is on track to do is to miss its household recycling target. Why is the SNP Government content to let Wales lead the UK on such an important issue?

The SNP Government's environmental transport policy is in disarray. Just 1 per cent of journeys are made by bike, which falls far short of the Government's target of one in 10 journeys. Indeed, the reverse is happening; almost one in 10 cyclists has switched to driving a car. The SNP Government's attempts to speed up electric-car adoption have also hit the brakes, the flagship loan scheme having had fewer than 100 applications a year since its inception. I welcome the additional investment in the area, but it must be transformational.

Targets are being missed in everything from woodland creation to air pollution and peatland restoration, and the SNP's environmental record looks increasingly poor. We must be ambitious if we are to realise Scotland's full potential, but all too often this SNP Government cynically sets targets with no real idea of how to meet them.

For example, on the SNP's goal of phasing out new petrol and diesel vehicles, there is no clear delivery path, the uptake incentive is stuttering and motorists and businesses will be under unnecessary pressure to adapt.

What about the SNP's ban on sending food waste to landfill by 2021? The proposed scenario is ridiculous. The SNP seems to have no idea what to do with food waste once the ban kicks in, and it is now saying that if the waste cannot be buried it must be burned. The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land

Reform confirmed that to me last week in a written response that was a far cry from her words last year, when she said that Scotland is

“pushing against historic approaches with innovative and creative solutions.”—[*Official Report*, 6 September 2017; c 20.]

Is overseeing a 600 per cent increase in incineration capacity the sort of “innovative and creative” solution that the environment secretary had in mind?

Here is a better solution. Let us create an infrastructure map utilising the bioresource mapping that I initiated more than two years ago to derive maximum value from all our biowaste, via solutions that really are innovative, such as converting vegetable waste to a high-value component in paint manufacturing and utilising anaerobic digestion as a backstop processing option.

The more the SNP’s environmental strategy is scrutinised, the further it falls apart. The circular economy investment fund—an £18 million funding pot—has given out less than £400,000 so far. If it is not used by December next year, match funding will be lost.

I say all that not to hector, but to offer to stand ready, where the SNP Government falls short, to help to drive Scotland towards a sustainable future.

However, let us be under no illusion: Parliament can act without this SNP Government. In last year’s programme for government, we heard about the SNP’s commitment to energy efficiency, but just eight months later the warm words had evaporated. It was then down to us—the Scottish Conservatives, not the SNP—to lead Parliament in bringing forward by 10 years the energy efficiency target.

There is the potential to see Parliament act as one in, for example, embedding the circular economy across Government departments, committing significant infrastructure funding to energy efficiency, finding alternatives to incineration, establishing urban transportation hubs and providing every school with air monitors. The opportunities are there. We just need to seize them.

Before I close, I must turn to the subject of animal welfare. I welcome the Government’s intention to establish an animal welfare commission, and I look forward to seeing the detail on that. I believe, after having led the campaign to ban electric shock collars, that we need to ensure that the guidance is transferred into an actual ban. I hope that the commission will review that at its earliest opportunity. There is support in Parliament for taking action, both on strengthening animal welfare and on delivering for our environment. I

urge the SNP not to ignore that support, but to harness it.

16:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): As the First Minister said in opening her statement, the context of the debate is Brexit. However, as she also said, although the programme for government will be impacted on by Brexit, it will not be defined by it.

Nonetheless, Brexit is already a drag on our economy and is already causing great uncertainty and is damaging our international reputation. It will also be a challenge to the legislative programme of this Parliament. We do not know precisely how many Brexit-related Westminster bills will be brought to us, and we are only now discovering how much secondary legislation there will be. It is perhaps sobering to think that the cut-off date for that secondary legislation—which is, regrettably, required in case of a no-deal outcome, and about which I will say more next week—and for the Scottish statutory instruments that are to be considered during the period, will be 25 January 2019, which is less than five months from today. We will all have to work hard to progress and pass that burden of secondary legislation. However, that should not blind us to the politics of the situation, which is very clear.

It was noticeable that Ruth Davidson did not mention Brexit. It was virtually a throwaway line, because the fault for the situation—[*Interruption.*] Even though they laugh about it, the fault for this situation is the Tories’, and Brexit is now almost exclusively a Tory project. In essence, it is a Tory leadership contest of which we are the observers. According to the polls, Brexit does not have majority support in any party but the Tory Party. It is favoured only by the majority in the south of England and the midlands. In Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, London and even the north of England, there is now a majority against Brexit. The Scottish Tories should recognise that, but such is their slavish devotion to their Westminster party that they have abandoned every principle and position that they took on Brexit just two years ago. Perhaps that explains why the Tories spend so much time trying to force the SNP to give up on its principles: they have abandoned all theirs.

However, here is the reality of the Tory position: the fight within the Tory Party is damaging Scotland and the rest of the UK. More than two years on from the referendum on leaving the EU, and with only six months to go until the day on which the UK Government intends to leave it, the terms of withdrawal and of our future relationship are unknown. That is the Tories’ fault. As each day passes, more and more evidence demonstrates

that leaving the EU will have a profound and damaging effect on our economic prosperity. That is also the Tories' fault.

The best thing that we can do is to be absolutely clear about that and about what would serve our interests. First of all, we remain clear that Scotland's interests—those of the Government that will delivering the programme for government and of the people of Scotland—would be best served by continued membership of the EU, in line with the overwhelming wishes of the people of Scotland.

However, we are also pragmatists, so in December 2016 we were the first Administration in the UK to set out in "Scotland's Place in Europe" a detailed policy blueprint that would minimise the damage of withdrawal. We set out how, short of remaining in the EU, continued membership of the single market and the customs union is the best solution for Scotland and the UK as a whole. We are determined to maintain a Scotland that is fair, prosperous, open and tolerant. We will go on insisting that Scotland be treated properly in the process.

During the summer recess, we saw the UK Government's no-deal technical notices, which presented an extraordinary picture of what Brexit could mean in practice for businesses and the people of Scotland. We have a duty to prepare for all possible scenarios, but we cannot disguise the outcomes of some of them.

The process of Brexit also has profound implications and threats for the Scottish Parliament. We have already seen those threats in recent events—the UK Government proceeded with the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, despite this Parliament's having refused it legislative consent. As enacted, it gives UK ministers the power to change the powers of the Scottish Parliament without our consent. During the bill's passage, we heard that the Scottish Parliament was against that happening, but it still happened. In July in the Supreme Court, the UK Government mounted an argument, which would, were it to be a success, extend the reservation of international relations.

Therefore, the threats are clear and obvious. We face centralisation in Whitehall and Westminster, the extension of readings of reservation, claims that are based on the widest reading of international responsibilities and, of course, the defence of the so-called UK single market. The Scottish Government will protect the Scottish Parliament and the devolution settlement that the people of Scotland voted for in 1997 from such threats.

There is a need to continue to change devolution. No one will be surprised to hear me

say that the best way forward would be independence, but there is a need to strengthen the current arrangements for the conduct of intergovernmental relations across the UK. Indeed, that has been recognised by the joint ministerial committee and the UK Government, although they are doing precious little about it. I will try to help them along a bit. The experience of Brexit has shown that there are strong arguments for extending the devolution settlement—not limiting it. In areas that are of acute concern for Scotland including immigration, protection of employment and other rights, and the development of future UK trade arrangements, there is a need for change, which we will argue for in this and future years.

Much has changed since 1974, but that has not been recognised by the Conservatives. We set out a comprehensive assessment of the constitutional implications of withdrawal in "Scotland's Place in Europe". We made proposals on, for example, the granting of legal personality to allow us to secure international arrangements. There is now an urgent need to return to serious consideration of the constitutional implications of Brexit and the powers that this Parliament needs to protect, and to advance the interests of the people of Scotland, whatever our eventual constitutional position.

This year's programme for government is impacted on, but not defined by Brexit, but the work of the Scottish Parliament over the next year will undoubtedly feel the effect of the Tories' Brexit—the Tories' internal dispute—which is damaging all of us.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government will continue tomorrow. I remind members that, if they have spoken in the debate, they should be present in the chamber for the closing speeches on Thursday.

Junior Minister

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-13703, in the name of the First Minister, on the appointment of a junior Scottish minister. Members should note that the question on the motion will be put immediately after the debate.

16:57

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Before I turn to the ministerial appointment, I take the opportunity to clarify a point from my programme for government statement, in which I referred to this weekend's opening of a major section of the Aberdeen western peripheral route. I want to make it clear that the opening event is this weekend and that it will open to traffic in the coming weeks. However, it remains the case that the whole road will be open to traffic in the autumn of this year.

I now seek Parliament's approval that Richard Lochhead be appointed as a junior Scottish minister. Of course, this will not be the first time that Richard has held ministerial office. During his previous time in Government, he had a number of notable achievements. He was a tireless champion of Scottish rural industries at home and abroad, as well as being instrumental in driving the growth of our food and drink sector, which continues to go from strength to strength. On the very day that the programme for government confirms plans to ban plastic cotton buds, we should remember that the first steps in tackling plastic waste were taken when Richard implemented the plastic bag levy, which has been a huge success, raising millions of pounds for good causes and causing plastic bag use to plummet.

In 2016, Richard took a step back from Government to support his family in an extremely difficult time, and all of us are very pleased that he now feels ready to return to the front bench. Of course, Richard being Richard, he remained a campaigning politician who never wavered in standing up for his constituents. On delivery charges in particular, he has led a highly effective campaign, in which he has highlighted the United Kingdom Government's continued failure to act on what is a significant injustice for not only his constituents but rural communities across Scotland and has forced action by companies, the Advertising Standards Authority and trading standards.

Subject to Parliament's approval later this afternoon, I have asked Richard Lochhead to take up the role of Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science. His new portfolio is one of the most important in the Government in

terms of building our long-term success. Among other things, he will be responsible for the key Scottish Government priority of widening access to university, where we are already seeing improvements in our journey towards 20 per cent of university students coming from the 20 per cent most deprived areas. He will also help to shape the future of our higher education institutions, which is a pivotal part of our economic future.

He is perfectly placed to work with both sectors, as he was first a graduate of college before returning to his studies at university later on. It will give me great pleasure to welcome Richard Lochhead back to the Government and I hope that MSPs from across the chamber will wish him well in what is a very important job.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that Richard Lochhead MSP be appointed as a junior Scottish Minister.

17:01

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Richard Lochhead is one of the few remaining 1999ers in the Scottish Parliament, a parliamentary veteran and no stranger to the Government benches.

Richard Lochhead is a native of Paisley in my region of West Scotland, but like many Scots before him he has travelled far from the place of his birth. He seemed determined to win a constituency in the north of Scotland or at least see as much of it as he possibly could, standing in Gordon in 1997 and Aberdeen Central in 1999 and 2003, before winning Moray in 2006. By that time he had already served as a regional MSP for North East Scotland for seven years.

Richard Lochhead previously served as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, and in that capacity I worked with him, promoting the sale of compost bins. Together, we sold more than 1 million compost bins to households throughout Scotland. There is a picture of each of us inside a compost bin, which was part of the promotional campaign. When I say that, I wonder how we managed to shift a million of them. I have the photograph, but I am not sure which one of us would lose the most political credibility were I to release it to social media.

Richard Lochhead is a champion of the circular economy, and in that regard we are kindred spirits. His new portfolio is a critical one, driving forward education and learning. I know that he will work hard, as he was named joint fourth hardest-working MSP this summer by Philip Sim.

We might be opponents, but, in this endeavour of improving education, I genuinely wish him well.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S5M-13703, in the name of the First Minister, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister may now invite Her Majesty to approve the appointment of Richard Lochhead as a junior Scottish minister. I offer my congratulations on his reappointment. [*Applause.*]

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:03

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau to move motion S5M-13735, on variation to business motion procedure; S5M-13736, on committee meeting times; and S5M-13737, on committee membership.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 5 September, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer".

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Justice Committee can meet, if necessary, at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament from 1.00pm to 2.30pm on Thursday 6 September 2018 for the purpose of taking evidence from the Secretary of State for Scotland on the implications for the Scottish justice system of the UK's exit from the European Union.

That the Parliament agrees that Mark Ruskell be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer: The question is that motions S5M-13735, S5M-13736 and S5M-13737, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 5 September, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer".

That the Parliament agrees that, under Rule 12.3.3B of Standing Orders, the Justice Committee can meet, if necessary, at the same time as a meeting of the Parliament from 1.00pm to 2.30pm on Thursday 6 September 2018 for the purpose of taking evidence from the Secretary of State for Scotland on the implications for the Scottish justice system of the UK's exit from the European Union.

That the Parliament agrees that Mark Ruskell be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. We will have a short suspension while the chamber clears.

17:03

Meeting suspended.

17:04

On resuming—

European Championships 2018

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-13532, in the name of Bill Kidd, on Glasgow and Berlin's successful European championships 2018. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the highly successful 2018 European Championships, held jointly during August by the host cities of Glasgow and Berlin; notes that this will be the first of a four-yearly cycle of these European Championships, which are expected to be a highlight of the global sporting calendar; is aware that Glasgow held the aquatics, golf, gymnastics, rowing, triathlon and cycling competitions, including the highly successful BMX cycling events held at the new facility, which is the first of its kind in Scotland, in Knightswood in the west of the city, and congratulates the winners, competitors and hundreds of volunteers who made these Championships so special and such a huge success for those attending and the hundreds of millions watching on TV across Europe.

17:05

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Today, I would like to bring forward the Glasgow 2018 European championships for debate in the Scottish Parliament. The inaugural championships were based between Glasgow and Berlin from 2 to 12 August this year.

First, I congratulate all the medallists from whichever country they came, but with particular note to Scottish gold medallists Laura Muir, Eilish McColgan, Grace Reid and Duncan Scott, and with further note to silver and bronze medallists James Wilby, Katie Archibald and Jack Carlin. They contributed to team Great Britain and Northern Ireland ranking in second place in the championships and winning the most medals overall.

I am sure that the inaugural championships will be followed by many more and I hope that they return to Scotland soon. The European championships saw some of our best home-grown sporting talent perform on the world stage from locations that we know, such as the SSE Hydro, Strathclyde country park, Gleneagles and Loch Lomond, as well as from newer debut locations such as the Glasgow BMX centre in Knightswood, which I will mention more than once. I just thought that I would throw that in.

I am proud that two of the venues that were used in the championships are based in my constituency of Glasgow Anniesland, and I take

this opportunity to thank all the volunteers—including Lorraine Harper, who bought me a pint of beer on the basis that I would mention her name—who were involved in making the sporting events operate so well and efficiently. Many of the volunteers were my constituents, and their enthusiasm lifted the events and showed international visitors true Scottish spirit and a welcome to our country.

I am speaking here today because I want to highlight why international sporting events are good for Scotland and to encourage the people of Scotland to engage in the active legacy of these events simply by participating in sport. From our sports to our natural environment and our rich culture, we have been able to showcase some of the best of Scotland to the world. At the same time, we have once again brought some of the best sporting talent to Scotland.

We are a nation with an international outlook. Sporting events such as the European championships and, looking back to 2014, the Commonwealth games evidence that. Such events are inherently good for Scotland. International sporting events build a legacy for our country in which we can all participate. They inspire us and make us want to go further. Even examples such as the open-water swimming in Loch Lomond can—maybe—make some of us want to explore the natural beauty of Scotland, which we all know and love, in a new and daring way. Although I would not necessarily take on Loch Lomond, I have been inspired by the events, and I hope that my colleagues in the Parliament and the people of Scotland have, too.

Looking at the facts, I can see that there is a shared response. Since the Commonwealth games, there has been an upward trend in sport participation, and the positive impact can still be seen today. The national governing body for athletics in Scotland, scottishathletics, which has approximately 150 athletics clubs across the country, recently reported a 10 per cent increase in athletics clubs membership. There has also been a surge in cycling. That has been highlighted by the 21 per cent rise in Scottish Cycling memberships. Sustrans, which was recently awarded £27 million in Scottish Government funding, has helped to pave the way for cycle-friendly cities and it provides route maps for exploring the whole of Scotland.

This country has a lot to offer. We are blessed with our natural landscape, which offers bountiful opportunities for mountain walking, biking, hiking, bouldering and shinty playing. If people cannot yet embrace swimming the length of Loch Lomond, they can at least try kayaking or sailing. Perhaps they could explore the hidden gems and beautiful

beaches that can be found across Scotland's 10,000km of coastline.

Because of major international sporting events leaving their footprints in new venues, there is a growing number of world-class sports centres available for our constituents to enjoy. We have not only Europe's largest climbing centre at the Edinburgh international climbing arena in Ratho outside Edinburgh, but the Glasgow BMX centre in Knightswood, which is part of my constituency. I have now mentioned it twice, so I think that that is due me a wee training run on the BMX bikes.

The Glasgow BMX centre in Knightswood—three times—is a good example of the active legacy that comes directly from last month's European championships. The creation of a facility for a budding sport, which was officially adopted by the Olympics in 2008 and is now extremely popular among young adults, provides essential space for the development of new skills. The Glasgow BMX centre was purpose built last year and it means that Glasgow is the only city in the world that has venues that are capable of hosting all four Olympic cycling disciplines—BMX, mountain biking, road and track. The centre will also be the new home for the Western Titans BMX Club as it relocates from Clydebank.

Another direct and active legacy of the European championships is the £0.5 million that was announced by the Scottish Government earlier this year for sportscotland to build on the momentum of Glasgow 2018. The funding will be invested in sportscotland's community sports hubs to offer easily accessible venues throughout the country.

As a final note, I suggest that people should be inspired and get involved. They should try a new sport, join a club or simply go for a walk in our beautiful countryside. Everything is open to us in Scotland; let us use it.

17:11

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I congratulate Bill Kidd on securing the debate, and I thank and congratulate the many people who worked so hard and tirelessly to deliver the events. I welcome the debate.

The European championships were held in Glasgow, and the city centre in particular was absolutely buzzing. I say that because Glasgow city centre has been through some major events recently, so it was great to have the championships so that Glaswegians and the rest of Scotland could celebrate and showcase our amazing talent and culture. My constituency of Glasgow Kelvin played a great part in that.

Bill Kidd talked about Berlin and Glasgow. The European championships include athletics, aquatics, cycling, gymnastics, rowing, triathlon and the new golf team championship. It is all quite breathtaking, and it would be good if some of us could enter into it. I went along to some of the events and they were fantastic: people were being welcomed with open arms. Our venues held the aquatic events, cycling, rowing and triathlon, while Berlin hosted the athletics. There were 4,500 athletes competing, which is quite a number.

Glasgow is currently ranked number 5 in the world in the SportBusiness ultimate sports city awards. It is also the number 1 city in the world in SBUSCA's legacy category, which reflects its outstanding and long-standing commitment to increasing participation, as Bill Kidd mentioned, and to creating new sporting opportunities for citizens. That started off during the lead up to the 2014 Commonwealth games. I will come back to talk about the legacy when I am finishing up.

We have mentioned the people who arranged the championships, but special mention must go to the thousands of volunteers, who were absolutely fantastic. The championship volunteers—team 2018—were described as “the welcoming smile”, “the selfie taker”, “the tourist guide”, “the comedian”, “the high-five expert” and the person to have a wee blether with. They were, above all, the heart and soul of our championships. I know many of them personally, and they did a fantastic job, especially when we realise that overall attendance was half a million, which is double what was projected before the championships began.

I come back to my point about legacy. Glasgow's iconic George Square was central to festival 2018, which ran alongside the 2018 European championships. That created a fantastic carnival atmosphere. I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs was also there. It was great—people came from all over to enjoy a fabulous big party in George Square, which was packed with spectacular line-ups and events. It was open to all and it was fantastic.

An issue that came up afterwards was the fact that George Square was closed to all traffic, which was fantastic. People started to wonder whether we could have it permanently closed to traffic. Glasgow City Council has gone out to consultation on that. Basically, if that were to come about, the legacy of the event would be a traffic-free George Square, if that is what the people want. I encourage all Glaswegians to take part in the consultation—it is on Glasgow City Council's website. Giving back to the city in that way would be absolutely fantastic.

17:15

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank Bill Kidd for securing time in the chamber to discuss the European championships that were held recently in Glasgow and Berlin.

This is the first time that the European championships have been multisport championships, which is a move that I very much welcome. Members will not be surprised to hear that I have a bit of a soft spot for the European championships. I would have appreciated the opportunity to have other sports included back in my day, when just the Olympics and the Commonwealth games were multisport. Bringing a lot of sports together is always going to be great for the athletes in the village as well as for the crowds of supporters who come along to watch.

It is difficult to find venues so that we can bring all the sports to one place. In this instance, track and field competitions being ended up in Berlin because to host track and field and all the other different sports, we need big stadiums, and stadiums with a capacity of 40,000-plus for track and field are few and far between.

Because track and field sports ended up in Berlin, I had the opportunity to go and watch other sports in Glasgow. I went to Tollcross to watch the swimming championships, which were absolutely phenomenal. I went to George Square to watch the cycling, which did not take long. Away they went past me; that was my experience of the cycling.

The city was incredibly vibrant and incredibly welcoming. One thing is for sure—we can quite easily say that we are world class at hosting and supporting sports events. We should take great pride as Scots about the way in which we welcome people to our country and the way in which—as Sandra White alluded to—volunteers flock to help and go about their business.

There is no doubt that we have world-class facilities. Also, we are building on the legacy of the Commonwealth games in 2014. It is not only the fact that the Euros were a multisport event this year that made them unique. We are only four years on from the last time we had a multisport event take place here in Scotland, which gives us an opportunity to look at legacy—to review the class of 2014 and see what has changed and what has developed.

Without question, we have world-class performers. We had 47 Scots in the Great Britain team across seven sports, and medals came in for the Scots. I say unashamedly that I am a massive fan of Laura Muir, who underlined her huge talent with her dominant performance when winning her first outdoor title. Now and again, I take my training squad along to the indoor facility in

Glasgow at the Emirates stadium, where she often trains, and she always takes time out after training to speak to the little group of 10-year-olds whom I work with. She is a model of how international sportspeople should be.

Eilish McColgan won a fantastic silver in the 5k, following in her mother's footsteps. She is very close to her mother's times—let us hope that she emulates her. A special mention goes to Eilidh Doyle, who once again made her way to the podium. I think that she is now sitting on 18 major medals, which is the most for any Scottish athlete. In the 4 x 400m relay team with her is young Zoey Clark, with whom I had the pleasure of working when she was an under-15 and under-17 athlete.

Duncan Scott got three gold medals and a silver in the pool, some of which I witnessed. I mentioned after the Commonwealth games that we should watch out for Jake Wightman. He has a fantastic future ahead of him, and took a bronze medal.

In the time that I have available—I have had four minutes already and am only halfway through my flipping speech—I want to highlight the journey that the world-class athletes have been on, and to thank the clubs, the national governing bodies and the coaches. I welcome the funding, from early funding at local level to the funding that goes through sportscotland until athletes reach elite funding at UK Sport level: £13.2 million is going into Scottish elite sport at the highest levels.

We have had fantastic successes. Long may they continue. May we continue to bring elite sporting events to Scotland. I hope that they inspire the next generation.

17:20

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): As the other speakers have done, I thank Bill Kidd for securing the debate. In the first week back, it is right that we spend some time reflecting on the success of the European championships. We had a couple of debates in the run-up to the championships in which we discussed a lot of the issues, and there was a lot of hope and optimism. There was also some discussion around legacy. Although this is a members' business debate, it is right to take the time to reflect on the recent championships.

I want to record my thanks to the organisers and all the volunteers. It would not have been possible for the championships to be held—never mind be such a success—if it had not been for so many volunteers. In the few days in the run-up to the events, there was quite a striking image as volunteers started to crop up around Glasgow, proudly wearing their tracksuits. When people met them in the street, they were delighted to say where they were volunteering. I met one woman in

a street near to me who was working at Tollcross. She told me all about her day and how much she had enjoyed it, and I could see how much that woman had got out of it. We can see how all the volunteers got a lot out of the championships. They put a lot into them, so we should be thankful for that.

I congratulate all the medal winners. The motion is right to highlight Berlin as well as Glasgow. I reiterate what Brian Whittle said about Laura Muir, who gave a fantastic performance. It was great to see her strike the front from so far out in her 1,500m race. Those races can be tactical in nature, with people waiting until the last couple of hundred metres. However, she gave a really gutsy performance and went right to the front from a long way out. She took it on and won comfortably in the end.

I also want to highlight Kirsty O'Brien, a member of Cambuslang Harriers, who got a silver medal in the triathlon in the over-35 group at Strathclyde park. That sets an example to those not just in Cambuslang Harriers but throughout the Cambuslang and Glasgow region.

Glasgow did itself proud. As Sandra White said, the crowds far exceeded what we expected. There was a fantastic atmosphere in the city at night and at the events.

Like Brian Whittle, I watched the cycling at Glasgow Green, and I was really stuck by the sheer endeavour of the athletes. I decided to enter into the spirit of it in terms of sporting participation. I always go out a run on a Sunday morning, so I watched the start of the cycling, which started at half past 10 on the Sunday morning, and then I ran from Cambuslang into Glasgow Green, which is about 4 miles. I watched a good bit of the cycling and then I ran back home at about half past 2 and watched the finish at half past 4. That cycle race was on for six hours on the final Sunday. The weather was good throughout the championships, but on that occasion it was pouring with rain, and it was astonishing to see the effort that the cyclists were putting in as they came round lap after lap. I could also see how much the crowds were getting out of that.

The championships have been a great event and a great success. It is very important that we look at the legacy, because there remain major health challenges in Glasgow with life expectancy and illnesses. However, hosting the European championships has given us a platform to try to get more people into sport, and we should all promote and unite around that opportunity.

17:25

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank Bill Kidd for bringing the subject to the chamber. No one

was more excited than me to hear that, this summer, Glasgow was once again hosting a major sporting event. Unfortunately, I was on holiday for the lot and did not get to see it.

Continuing the success of the 2014 Commonwealth games, the European championships caught the spirit of the city, showcasing Glasgow's famous hospitality and the warmth of its people. As the host of the first-ever European championships, Glasgow again opened its doors to sporting fans from around the world. Jointly hosted by Glasgow and Berlin between 2 and 12 August, the new multisport event was the amalgamation of several existing championships, with Glasgow leading the way in aquatics, cycling, gymnastics, rowing and the triathlon. Thousands of visitors came to the city during August and, with blanket coverage by the BBC and other major broadcasters in Europe, it is estimated that the television audience reach exceeded 1 billion viewers.

As I reflect on the success of the championships, it is clear that Glasgow was again the perfect host. With a buzz in the city and an atmosphere of friendliness and good will, the event provided the perfect opportunity for everyone to get involved. As well as 4,500 athletes from 52 countries who competed, thousands of volunteers from around the world helped out. They included representatives from every Scottish local authority. Music, art, dance, theatre and comedy events happened in conjunction with the championships. That added a carnival atmosphere to the occasion and provided the opportunity for Glasgow to showcase its creative culture and bring together communities. To top it all off, Britain came second overall behind Russia in the medal table, with Scottish athletes winning 20 out of team GB's 74 medals.

With Scottish tourism being worth more than £11 billion to the economy, the championships will no doubt give a boost to the country's visitor economy. VisitScotland spoke of the role that the event would play in providing a platform to showcase what Scotland has to offer and attracting tourists to visit Glasgow's "historical and contemporary cityscapes" and the "beautiful and dramatic landscapes" that surround it. As Scotland's largest city, Glasgow has much to offer and I am extremely pleased that, due to such events, it will, in time, rightly be recognised as one of Europe's most exciting destinations.

As with all sporting events, I hope that the championships will increase Scotland's worldwide sporting reputation and encourage people—including me—to take part in more physical activity. As I already mentioned, having won more than 25 per cent of team GB's total medal tally, Scotland is doing amazingly in the sports

concerned. We need to milk that for all that it is worth. There is no doubt that we are doing great in elite sport, but that needs to filter down to everyone in Scotland so that regular sporting activity at all levels becomes the societal norm. With regard to that, I ask the Scottish Government what fresh approaches it will take to tackling Scotland's obesity crisis and improving current rates of physical activity.

I again congratulate Glasgow on its impressive hosting of the inaugural European championships. It has been shown time and again that people can come together and celebrate in unity during such sporting events. Glasgow has much to offer, as we have seen. The championships have not only consolidated Scotland's and Glasgow's sporting reputation worldwide but, most important, showcased Glasgow's and Scotland's best asset: its people.

17:29

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I, too, thank Bill Kidd for securing the debate and giving us the opportunity to reflect on the fantastic achievement of the first ever multisport European championships event to be held, jointly hosted by Glasgow and Berlin this summer.

Members who have spoken have paid tribute to all those who made this happen. I add my voice to congratulate the athletes who took part in the thrilling competition and, in particular, to congratulate team GB and Northern Ireland on coming second in the medal table, with Scottish athletes securing an impressive 23 medals. My particular highlights were seeing the power of Duncan Scott in the pool and the great achievement of Laura Muir in the 1,500m track. I thank all the officers and the delivery team of the 2018 European championships, Glasgow City Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, Perth and Kinross Council, North Lanarkshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Stirling Council, the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Glasgow Life and our own Scottish Government officials. I also want to put on record my thanks to Aileen Campbell, the former Minister for Public Health and Sport, for her contribution to the event. Of course, as we have heard, we must also thank the amazing and committed 3,500 volunteers who brought energy, enthusiasm and a welcoming feeling to the event. Everyone remarked on what an impact they made to the professionalism of the event and the spirit of the championships.

We should not underestimate what an innovation the European championships were. This was the first ever multisport event on a European championship level, and it was far from

clear what the response would be. This was a bold and courageous step on the part of everyone involved. Glasgow saw 88 per cent ticketing and attendance; viewers in 10 major European markets saw a staggering 567 million hours of viewing; and the BBC alone reported 20 million viewers, with a peak of 6.4 million.

The Scottish Government agreed to be the main funder for this event, in partnership with Glasgow City Council, but we must congratulate those who are involved in the various European sporting federations and the European Broadcasting Union on their vision. We think that our politics is tough, but imagine trying to bring seven different governing bodies together to make sure that such an event happens. That was a major achievement in itself.

The concept was innovative. It was initially thought of some years ago and it has effectively broken the mould of international championships. The intention is that this new multisport European championship event will now take place every four years between the Olympic competitions. Aquatics, cycling, gymnastics, rowing and triathlon federations came together, with the addition of a golfing event. Representatives of the European federations to whom I spoke at the various events that I attended were all very positive about the hosting and the commitment shown by the Scottish Government ministers and city leaders in their attendance and support. We were able to build on our relations with Berlin following the opening of the Scottish hub in Berlin earlier this year, and the championships have helped facilitate chamber of commerce relationships between Glasgow and Berlin. The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, Ben Macpherson, attended events around the athletics in Berlin and I was delighted to welcome the Berlin delegation to Scotland.

This new event has proved to be a huge success and a celebration of quality sport, with an outstanding cultural programme—festival 2018—enjoyed across Europe and beyond. The event showcased our world-class venues and our ability to sustainably host sporting events, based on existing and appropriate new infrastructure. The only entirely new venue was for the BMX event at Knightswood. As Bill Kidd said, the new track is the only outdoor championship and Olympic-standard track in Scotland. It will be home to Glasgow's Western Titans BMX club, providing a lasting legacy for BMX in Scotland. It is truly world class, and I was told that it is one of the few venues in the world that meets the requirements of the latest competition regulations, so we should expect BMX champions from across the world to come and train in Scotland.

Investment in the rowing tower at Strathclyde country park also equips that as a world-class venue. Hosting the championships at venues across the country allowed us to spread the benefits to communities around Scotland.

Broadcasters believed in the concept from the start. Given the way in which the events were presented, some people said that they did not know which were in Berlin and which were in Glasgow. It was all done in a very slick way that enabled an efficient interchange that delivered effective and entertaining programming. Images were beamed across the world and up to 12 hours of coverage a day, on free-to-air channels, showcased Scotland's unique culture and attractions alongside the sport. We saw backdrops of George Square, Loch Lomond and Strathclyde country park, together with golf from Gleneagles and diving from Edinburgh. That highlighted the very best of Scotland and added immeasurably to the profile and reach of our new, and hugely exciting brand, Scotland is now.

The championships were not just about sport. Festival 2018 highlighted Scotland's reputation for cultural brilliance and creativity. The live orchestral link-up between the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and musicians from Berlin's renowned University of the Arts was a real highlight and a first for both institutions.

We should also pay tribute to those who were involved in transport. A successful transport operation is critical for any event. With 12 venues spread across Scotland, and more than 8,500 athletes and officials accommodated in more than 60 locations, Transport Scotland's knowledge and expertise was put to good effect. Good communications and planning were key.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring a sustainable, national legacy from hosting major events. Sustaining a flourishing, innovative and competitive events industry generates business, creates jobs and provides a legacy that benefits all of Scotland's communities.

I have covered a range of things that highlight that Scotland is a dynamic, outward looking and inclusive European nation.

The Scottish Government puts particular emphasis on using sporting legacy to increase physical activity levels. Whoever someone is and whatever their background, there should be no barriers to participating in sport or improving their health and lifestyle. To support that, with Glasgow City Council we have invested £1 million to harness the profile of the championships. From that, sportscotland distributed £500,000 to community sports hubs. Spread right across Scotland, the hubs play an essential role in delivering grass-roots sport and activity, which we

know provides the foundation for better health for all, as well as for future sporting success.

A sum of £500,000 was invested in GO LIVE! at the Green, which offered 11 days of free activity. More than 120,000 people visited the site and the venue was packed with sport, fitness and lifestyle education, opportunities and signposting in order to promote health and wellbeing.

We must build on the triumph of the championships and look to the future. Next year, Scotland will play host to the European short course swimming championships, the European athletics indoor championships and of course the Solheim cup.

The reputation that Scotland has developed as a host of world-class events brings opportunities for international promotion and business for our economy. We must not take that for granted. We constantly need to look for and plan for new events and opportunities. That is a key role for our very respected organisation EventScotland, and I pay tribute to its role in the European championships. Such events help us to promote our stunning landscapes, exciting cities and the contribution of our young people and our diverse communities.

Our future events will look to use the world-class skills and expertise that we have developed to build further. As Bill Kidd said, with the 2018 European championships, Glasgow and Berlin have set a high bar. I hope that everyone will join me in congratulating all those involved in developing and delivering that ground-breaking event.

Meeting closed at 17:38.

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