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Wednesday 7 November 2018

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 7 November 2018

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

Portfolio Question Time

Finance, Economy and Fair Work

Tourist Tax

1. **Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what consultation is taking place regarding providing local authorities with the power to introduce a tourist tax. (S5O-02509)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): As the First Minister announced on 1 October, we are taking forward an inclusive and transparent national discussion around issues related to a tourist tax, working in collaboration with local government partners and the tourism industry to support an informed discussion. We will be taking forward round-table discussions in the coming weeks, and we will make the evidence that is gathered through that available in due course.

Andy Wightman: I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer. Can he tell us when he expects those discussions to conclude? Also, will he confirm that at the heart of the debate there are actually two distinct questions: the first being whether councils should have this fiscal power; and the second being in what circumstances they should use any such power and what rates should be set? Does he accept that the first question is properly a matter for this legislature but the second is properly a matter for local authorities to determine as they see fit?

Derek Mackay: I think the second part of the question is a bit premature, because it relates to the outcome of the first part, which is about the issue in principle. It is important that we take that discussion forward over the next few weeks. To be helpful, I am very happy to write to Andy Wightman with the engagement programme that we have established.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Although Scottish tourism is doing well, in some quarters Scotland is still seen as a high-cost destination relative to other countries. Therefore, the Scottish tourism sector has raised a great deal of concern about the likely impact of a tourist tax in raising costs still further. As part of the work that the Scottish Government is doing—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Question, please.

Murdo Fraser: —will it do an economic assessment of the impact of a tourist tax?

Derek Mackay: The answer is yes. We will do as much analysis as we possibly can so that we can have informed discussion and engagement in that regard. It is right to look at all the evidence. That is why it is important to engage with local authorities as well as with the hospitality sector, to hear its concerns, because its view is contrary to that of those in local government on the proposition that has come from local government.

We are facilitating that national discussion. I understand the point that Murdo Fraser makes about the costs for the hospitality sector. One of those costs is VAT, which is higher than in most other parts of Europe in relation to hospitality. That is a matter for the UK Government, but non-domestic rates are in our gift, and that is why Kate Forbes's announcement on the on-going transitional relief for hospitality was so well received—it is an important intervention from the Scottish Government.

Scottish Taxpayers

2. **Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on taxpayers in Scotland retaining as much of their income as do those in the rest of the United Kingdom, in light of the proposals in the UK budget. (S5O-02510)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government has consistently taken decisions to ensure that Scottish income tax is progressive and raises the revenue that is required to support our vital public services and, indeed, the Scottish economy. We have ensured that Scotland has the fairest income tax system in the UK. We will take income tax policy decisions on the basis of what works best for Scottish taxpayers, Scottish public services and the Scottish economy, and we will set out the details of our tax plans for 2019-20 on the forthcoming budget on 12 December 2018.

Bill Bowman: As was reported in the press last week,

“Headteachers have warned the Scottish Government a looming tax gap will further cripple the education system by making it harder to recruit school leaders.”

They raised the matter directly with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, last week. There has already been a shortage of applicants due to a decline in salaries, rising workload and stress. When combined with the increase in the higher tax thresholds that we see south of the border but do not benefit from in

Scotland, is it any wonder that filling those roles is a struggle? Will the cabinet secretary confirm what fiscal action he will take to help to solve the shortage of headteachers in Scotland?

Derek Mackay: We propose to invest in schools and education and will, I hope, arrive at a satisfactory pay deal for teachers as well. To achieve those outcomes, we also need to have the right decisions on revenue raising, and we will take a fair and balanced approach.

Teaching should be an attractive profession, in order to bring people of quality and talent into it, and I think that teachers would prefer quality to a race to the bottom on tax cuts. Larry Flanagan of the Educational Institute of Scotland has said that there should be fair and progressive taxation—tax revenue that, of course, will contribute to the resources that we have available for education.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary advise us of the impact of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to increase national insurance contributions on low and middle-income earners? Is he concerned that at least some members of Parliament who represent Scottish constituencies are classed as English taxpayers, depriving Scotland of around £20,000 per MP in income tax revenue? Does he agree that all such MPs should register as Scotland-domiciled taxpayers?

Derek Mackay: I will come to the second matter after I make the substantial point, which is that the chancellor did, indeed, sneak the NICs change in under the radar last week, with no mention of it in his budget speech.

In contrast, the Scottish Government will take policy decisions on the basis of what works best for Scottish taxpayers, Scottish public services and the Scottish economy. Whatever choices we make, we will be clear and transparent, unlike the United Kingdom Government. Given the link between income tax and national insurance contributions, we believe that decisions on both should be taken by this Parliament, with the interests of Scotland in mind. For that to happen, the powers over national insurance contributions should be in Scotland's hands, not Westminster's.

As for the tax affairs and other interests of members of the House of Commons, I am sure that Kenny Gibson will be all over that and will give me the information that I require to take the matter forward.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary accept that, under the Scottish Government's current taxation scheme, it is unfair that a principal speech and language therapist, who earns £45,000 a year, pays the same rate of tax as the managing director of Scottish Enterprise, who earns £135,000? Will the cabinet

secretary bring forward proposals in his draft budget to ensure that top-rate earners, such as senior management at Scottish Enterprise, pay a fairer rate of tax and make a greater contribution to the funding of public services?

Derek Mackay: I will bring forward a fair, proportionate, balanced budget that is also progressive in relation to tax, and I have set out the principles that we will follow in that regard. I genuinely look forward to any proposition that might come from the Labour Party in relation to income tax. Whether from the UK Labour Party, the Scottish Labour Party or the future branch of the Scottish Labour Party—or whatever it happens to be—I look forward to a coherent alternative budget. Meanwhile, I will bring forward a competent, balanced budget.

On the top rate of tax, which we have debated a number of times, my objective is to raise tax in a responsible and proportionate way. If I had followed Labour's advice on the top rate of tax, I would have generated less money for Scotland's public services—what would have been the point of that? We will take an evidence-based approach to income tax.

Air Passenger Duty

3. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when air passenger duty will be fully devolved. (S50-02511)

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): As the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work informed Parliament on 1 June 2018, the introduction of air departure tax will be deferred beyond April 2019. The Scottish Government has been clear that a resolution to the Highlands and Islands exemption issue has to be found before ADT can be introduced in Scotland. We cannot simply continue the current air passenger duty provision while there is an unresolved issue of European Union law.

Alexander Stewart: Will the minister commit to fulfilling by the end of this parliamentary session the Government's manifesto pledge to reduce air passenger duty by 50 per cent when it is devolved?

Kate Forbes: We remain committed to reducing air departure tax and we want to abolish it altogether when resources allow. We will set out our plans on tax rates and bands once a solution to the Highlands and Islands exemption has been found. That is of paramount significance.

Alexander Stewart might want to note that it is up to the United Kingdom Government, which is the member state, to notify the EU on that issue.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Would it not be sensible to use the extra time that the delay has given us to go back to square 1 on the Government's policy and do the proper research, which has been lacking in the past, so that we no longer rely on the spurious, debunked figures that the Government has previously used and arrive at a policy that will reduce carbon emissions from aviation, instead of increasing them?

Kate Forbes: Patrick Harvie will know that our climate change plan accommodates projected changes in aviation emissions. The Committee on Climate Change advised in September 2017 that such an increase is likely to be manageable. As I said to Alexander Stewart, we will set out our plans once a solution to the Highlands and Islands exemption has been found. They will be informed by the independent report that we have commissioned, consultation and on-going stakeholder engagement.

City Deals

4. **Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how much of its budget it has allocated for city deals. (S50-02512)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): Cities and their regions are the engines of our economy. The Scottish Government is committed to working with all our cities to unlock investment, whether that is individually or collectively, and whether that is through a city region deal, one of the Scottish Government's devolved initiatives to stimulate growth and deliver infrastructure investment, or a combination of those measures.

The Scottish Government has consistently supported deals for all Scotland's cities and, indeed, all of Scotland, and is a full partner in all the city region deals that have been agreed in Scotland.

In the light of yesterday's events, I am continuing to look at the resources for city deals in-year, but details for the forthcoming financial year 2019-20 will be updated in due course, once the final budget has been determined.

Ruth Maguire: The United Kingdom Government's budget last week contained only a passing reference to the Ayrshire growth deal, with a commitment to "progress". Frankly, that is not good enough. Can the cabinet secretary reaffirm that the Scottish Government sees the Ayrshire growth deal as a priority and is committed and fully focused on investing in a full growth deal for Ayrshire that will bring benefits to the whole region?

Derek Mackay: I absolutely reaffirm to Ruth Maguire that the Scottish Government remains

committed to securing a growth deal for Ayrshire. The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity discussed the Ayrshire growth deal with the Secretary of State for Scotland when they met last month, and made clear the Scottish Government's intention to achieve a heads of terms agreement that clearly outlines the commitments of both Governments to the deal as soon as possible. I will meet the secretary of state this afternoon and will raise the issue with him again, as well as, of course, the Tayside cities deal, for which the UK Government should also step up to the plate to deliver more support for that region.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): When will the proposed islands deal be in place, and will it take account of the additional cost of providing goods and services in our island communities?

Derek Mackay: Michael Matheson, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, leads on city deals, notwithstanding the remarks that I have just made. Progress on the islands deal will be contingent on agreement with the UK Government and the islands authorities. We are working in partnership with those stakeholders and partners and—of course—we want to take the deal forward as quickly as possible. We are in the hands of others with regard to the ask that is made of that collective partnership, but I want to Parliament to be very clear that we are keen to get on with that growth deal.

Health Budget Consequentials

5. **Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will pass on any health budget consequentials resulting from the United Kingdom budget to Scotland's national health service. (S50-02513)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government will continue to deliver its commitment that all health resource consequentials will be passed on in full to the health portfolio budget. Every penny of health resource consequentials that arise from the UK autumn budget will be passed on to the Scottish Government's health budget.

Richard Lyle: We know that the Tories' promised uplift for Scotland's NHS has already been cut by £50 million, with the cumulative impact being that more than a quarter of a billion pounds will be withheld from Scotland's health service over the next five years. In its budget, the UK Government failed to set out that further consequentials over the years to come would not be cut further, thereby leaving open the risk of further cuts. Has the cabinet secretary had any

confirmation from the UK Government that further cuts will not happen?

Derek Mackay: I regret that no such confirmation has been given and, to add to the uncertainty, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has raised the prospect of a new budget in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport highlighted last week that that increases the significant uncertainty that is faced by our NHS staff, which is on top of the uncertainty among the very valuable members of our healthcare workforce who are European Union nationals. I continue to urge the UK Government to provide the level of clarity that I have been requesting since June this year.

Ayrshire Economy

6. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action is being taken to help to boost the Ayrshire economy. (S5O-02514)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government and its agencies are taking a wide range of actions to help to boost the Ayrshire economy. Central to our ambitions for Ayrshire is agreement on a growth deal. We continue to work with regional partners on their investment proposals, and hope to be able to announce a heads of terms agreement as soon as possible, following the conclusion of negotiations with the United Kingdom Government, which I referenced earlier.

Kenneth Gibson: When does the cabinet secretary anticipate the UK Tory Government finally signing off the Ayrshire growth deal? It has dragged its feet for the past two years. How much does the Scottish Government expect the UK Government to contribute, and will inclusive growth be delivered across Ayrshire, given the concerns to date that North Ayrshire Council has not included Garnock Valley in its proposals?

Derek Mackay: Unfortunately, the Scottish Government cannot control the pace at which the UK Government makes decisions. It seems to be somewhat preoccupied at the moment.

However, I am clear that the Scottish Government is ready to move towards signing a heads of terms agreement on the Ayrshire growth deal as soon as possible. Local partners want fresh and transformative investment in the Ayrshire economy, as does the Scottish Government.

Innovative Technology

7. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how

productivity and the economy can be supported through innovations in technology. (S5O-02515)

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): We are working to ensure that innovation and technology drive sustainable economic growth and have positive outcomes for Scotland's people, as was set out in our recent economic action plan. The plan covers key enabling technologies in which Scotland has strength, including quantum, digital and automation, to ensure that Scotland's industrial base is equipped to embrace new technologies, through investments such as in the national manufacturing institute for Scotland and the medicines manufacturing innovation centre. By investing in emerging technologies, Scotland will create new high-value jobs with increased productivity.

Clare Adamson: The minister will be aware of areas in which Scotland is leading in innovation and technology, such as vertical farming, at the James Hutton Institute. Is not it the case that that is important for Scotland's future economy, and that it has the potential to tackle food shortage and to help to work towards achieving the United Nations' global sustainable development goals?

Ivan McKee: Indeed. World-leading projects such as the vertical farming demonstrator building at the James Hutton Institute have the potential to contribute to global challenges such as food security. My colleague, the Deputy First Minister, was pleased to open the facility officially in August. The demonstrator, which was developed by Intelligent Growth Solutions Ltd, is arguably the world's most technically advanced indoor farm. It will assist with the research into, and development of, new crop varieties and technologies that are suited to vertical growth systems.

Supporting innovations in the bio-economy and addressing environmental and food security concerns through industrial biotechnology, agri-tech and animal health are opportunities that are highlighted in our life sciences strategy.

Green Economy (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises)

8. Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports small and medium-sized enterprises to contribute to the green economy. (S5O-02516)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): Through our resource efficient Scotland programme, the Scottish Government offers a full package of support to small and medium-sized enterprises. That helps them to implement energy, resource and water efficiency measures that cut their carbon emissions and running costs.

We also help businesses to understand the opportunities that are available to them in the green economy supply chain. Through the Energy Saving Trust, we help businesses to participate in the supply chain for energy efficiency and microgeneration by providing training, capacity building and networking events.

Linda Fabiani: Does the minister recognise that former new towns in Scotland, such as East Kilbride, are well placed to contribute to the green economy? They have many small and medium-sized enterprises at the heart of innovation in the field.

I also ask the minister to visit EK with me to meet and learn from many such relevant businesses, and to hear from them about how they can contribute to Scotland's green aspirations.

Jamie Hepburn: As a representative of a new town, I concur entirely with Ms Fabiani's point. New towns such as East Kilbride and Cumbernauld—Ruth Maguire is here, so I had better mention Irvine, too—are well placed to benefit from the measures that we put in place. We rightly think of the green economy in terms of the measures that we are taking on energy efficiency and climate change, but we should also think of it in terms of natural capital. New towns have a lot of green space in them, so they are well placed in that regard.

Also, I would be very happy to visit East Kilbride with Ms Fabiani.

United Kingdom Government Welfare Reforms (Mitigation)

9. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how much of its budget for social security is spent on mitigating United Kingdom Government welfare reforms. (S50-02517)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): We expect to spend more than £125 million in 2018-19 on welfare mitigation and measures to help protect those who are on low incomes.

Gil Paterson: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the bold statement that

"austerity is coming to an end."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 29 October 2018; Vol 648, c 656.]

Given the fact that analysis from the Resolution Foundation shows that more than three quarters of the Tories' planned £12 billion welfare cuts remain in Government policy, and that the budget failed to halt the roll-out of universal credit or to end the hated two-child cap, can the cabinet secretary confirm that that is not the case? Does he foresee the Scottish Government having to continue to set

aside money to correct the worst aspects of the cuts?

Derek Mackay: Clearly, the United Kingdom Government budget did not signal the end of austerity. The cuts to welfare will still be felt, despite the announcements that the Prime Minister made previously. The UK Government could have made a different choice. It is holding £15.4 billion in reserve for what the Chancellor of the Exchequer described as his post-Brexit deal "firepower". I would have suggested that that resource be put into protecting public services, stabilising the economy and protecting the most vulnerable people in our society.

I have mentioned the figure of £125 million on welfare mitigation in the current financial year. That includes spending to mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax, which will help more than 70,000 households in Scotland to keep roofs over their heads and sustain their tenancies, and the Scottish welfare fund, which provides a vital lifeline for people across Scotland.

However, there is only so much that this Parliament can do to protect the people of Scotland from a pernicious right-wing Tory Government. If we are to protect the people of Scotland fully from the ravages of the right-wing Government that is led by Theresa May, we need more powers around welfare.

Large Business Supplement

10. John Scott (Ayr) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has conducted regarding a timescale for reducing the large business supplement. (S50-02518)

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): We seek to ensure that Scotland is the best place to do business in the UK. All non-domestic rates decisions are made in light of that and of the budgetary context, reflecting budget allocations from the UK Government.

The Barclay review recommended that the large business supplement be reduced to 1.3p in 2020-21 to bring it in line with the English rate, and to do so sooner if that becomes affordable. We committed to reviewing the LBS at each future budget in the light of affordability.

John Scott: As the minister said, the Barclay review recommended that the large business supplement be reduced by 2020-21. That would significantly help the economy in my Ayr constituency, and would help the Scottish economy by £62 million. Can the Scottish Government give a timescale for the implementation of the reduction?

Kate Forbes: Any announcement on non-domestic rates will be set out in the Scottish

budget in December, but we have focused on supporting small businesses and ensuring that Scotland is a competitive place in which to do business. We have already taken forward some of the Barclay recommendations and have established measures that are unique in the United Kingdom, such as the growth accelerator, which applies to large and small businesses, to ensure that Scotland is a competitive place in which to do business.

Stockpiling (Economic Effect)

11. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what impact assessment it has undertaken of the long-term effect on the economy of stockpiling goods and commodities. (S5O-02519)

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): The latest Scottish Government “State of the Economy” report set out an analysis of the impact of businesses stockpiling in advance of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union in March 2019. That analysis shows that, between 2018-19 and 2021-22, that activity will have an overall negative impact on Scottish gross domestic product growth of around 0.2 percentage points.

The fact that businesses are having to consider stockpiling underlines the uncertainty that Brexit is placing on our economy. We will continue to argue that the only deal that will deliver for Scotland is to remain in the single market and customs union.

David Stewart: The British Retail Consortium, with a weather eye on Brexit, has condemned the idea of stockpiling, saying that it is not practical for two reasons: we do not have the spare capacity and it is impractical to store fresh produce. Does the minister agree?

Ivan McKee: The key point is the uncertainty that is caused by the UK Government’s actions on Brexit. I am sure that there will be situations in which stockpiling is required in order to ensure that essential supplies are in place to deal with uncertainty, but I agree with the member that, in general, excessive stockpiling is not good for the economy or for individual businesses.

Equalities Budget

12. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how the United Kingdom budget will affect Scotland’s equalities budget. (S5O-02520)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): Following the UK budget, the Scottish Government’s resource block grant from the UK Government—the money that we are able to invest in day-to-day public

services—will be almost £2 billion lower in real terms next year than it was in 2010-11.

For 2018-19, we have increased our budget for specific equalities activities by 12 per cent, to £22.7 million. That supports work to prevent discrimination, promote human rights and build more cohesive communities. Decisions on the budget allocation for equalities-related activity for next year will be taken as part of the process to develop the Scottish budget, which will be presented to Parliament on 12 December.

Mary Fee: This Parliament is a human rights guarantor and, as such, should be a bulwark against regressive, austerity-driven economic policies. What direct action will the cabinet secretary take to ensure a holistic approach to equalities, with focused, joint work across portfolios, to ensure the best outcomes for equality spend?

Derek Mackay: That is an important question, and Mary Fee makes an important point. It is appropriate that the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government leads on this work, considering that it is within an area of her responsibility, but the work will be absolutely aligned across Government, to make sure that there is a cohesive focus on the equalities agenda and on the resources being there to support that work.

Large Business Supplement

13. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how much has been raised by the large business supplement since 2016. (S5O-02521)

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): The large business supplement has raised a total of £381 million since 2016.

Dean Lockhart: According to a recent written answer from the Scottish Government, businesses in Scotland have paid £200 million more in rates as a result of the Scottish National Party’s decision to double the large business supplement in 2016. Figures released today show that there are now 9,000 fewer businesses in Scotland than there were last year. Does the minister recognise the damage that the SNP’s large business supplement is having on Scotland’s business base?

Kate Forbes: I do not recognise that at all, because Scotland is a very competitive place in which to do business, and we are seeking to ensure that it can be even more competitive. We have focused on supporting small businesses in particular, and the small business bonus scheme is significantly more competitive than reliefs for small businesses anywhere else in the United Kingdom. The average value of relief that is

received by businesses in Scotland is more than £4,500 in 2018-19, while the comparable figure in England is less than £4,000.

As I mentioned to the member's colleague, we also have unique initiatives, such as the growth accelerator, which supports businesses that want to grow and improve their premises. Just last week, I announced that I would extend transitional relief to the next revaluation, in 2022, capping annual rates increases at 12.5 per cent in real terms for offices in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and all but the largest rate payers in the hospitality sector. We have a very competitive rates regime.

United Kingdom Tax Changes

14. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the analysis of the United Kingdom budget, which states that the announced changes to tax overwhelmingly benefit the richest households. (S5O-02522)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): I covered this in some detail last week, but my response is that it tells people everything that they need to know about the Tory party. It is a strange proposition that the Labour Party in the Westminster Parliament is going to copy the Tories' tax plan, but the Scottish Government has set out the key tests and the principles that we will follow in approaching the income tax discussion. Any change should raise additional revenue to support our public services, protect lower-earning taxpayers, make the system more progressive and—when considered alongside our spending proposals—support the Scottish economy. Those are the key tests that I set out last year in relation to income tax, and they are tests that we will stand by.

Willie Coffey: Given that almost half the announced tax cuts will go to the top 10 per cent of households alone, does the cabinet secretary not think that it is disgraceful that the better off get tax cuts at a time when those on low incomes continue to face hardship and even more disgraceful that such a move would be supported by the Labour Party?

Derek Mackay: As I have said, it is strange that the Labour Party is supporting the Tories' tax plans in Westminster; maybe the branch office in Scotland will propose something different during the budget process as we work our way through it in Scotland.

It is true to say, as Willie Coffey has done, that on tax, it is the richest in society who will get the biggest benefits; the Tory tax plans disproportionately benefit those at the top end rather than basic rate taxpayers. On welfare, the

Tories continue to hammer the most vulnerable in society. The Tories are acting like Robin Hood in reverse and it is outrageous that through all this, the UK Government is sitting on reserves—£15.4 billion of fiscal headroom—that it could have used to support the most vulnerable in our society, stimulate the economy and take us more constructively through the difficulties that it has created by its economic mismanagement.

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): Given the cabinet secretary's concern for those on lower incomes, will he take this opportunity to welcome the latest rise in the personal allowance, which will benefit the typical basic rate taxpayers by at least £130 a year and which has, since 2010, taken millions of people out of paying income tax altogether?

Derek Mackay: Tom Mason should perhaps take a closer look at the whole package of tax cuts that the Tories are proposing and taking through Westminster. The richest in society—the top decile—benefit most as a consequence of the income tax changes. Of course I support actions that support low-income earners. Supporting that workforce and those income tax payers is exactly what we will do through our proposals. I cannot welcome the Tory tax plan, because it gives tax cuts to the richest in society while expecting everyone else to carry the burden of austerity. It is not fair, right or progressive.

United Kingdom Budget (Impact)

15. Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has carried out of the impact of the proposals in the United Kingdom budget on the lowest fifth of households in Scotland, in light of the comment by the Resolution Foundation that it will "overwhelmingly benefit richer households". (S5O-02523)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): That is accurate reporting from the Resolution Foundation. Its analysis of the 2018 budget shows that the UK Government's tax and benefit policies are strongly regressive. Looking at the overall effect of UK Government tax and benefit policies that have been put in place since May 2015, the Resolution Foundation estimates that the poorest fifth of households will be on average £400 a year worse off while the richest fifth are expected to gain on average £390 a year. It is outrageous.

Stewart Stevenson: Although I recognise that universal credit is not something for which the Scottish Government is responsible, will the cabinet secretary join me in welcoming the fact that people in Scotland on lower incomes pay less tax than is the case south of the border? Is that

something that he hopes, and is working, to continue into the future?

Derek Mackay: For a majority of people, Scotland is the lowest-taxed part of the UK. We have delivered an income tax policy that is far more progressive, which is what I continue to aspire to. The UK Government should have stepped back from the appalling implementation of universal credit, which is harming so many people in our society and pushing many families towards food banks.

Brexit (Investment Decisions)

17. Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has carried out of what impact uncertainty regarding Brexit is having on business investment decisions. (S5O-02525)

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): The Scottish Government's "State of the Economy" report, which was published in January this year, set out analysis of the impact on the Scottish economy of the uncertainty from Brexit. The results showed that the short-term impact is estimated to reduce or defer the level of business investment in Scotland by a potential £1 billion by 2019, to increase the level of unemployment by around 0.8 percentage points by 2019, which is equivalent to around 21,000 fewer jobs in Scotland, and to lead to lower gross domestic product growth of around 0.3 percentage points cumulatively over 2018-19, which is equivalent to around £200 per household in Scotland. Furthermore, negative consumer confidence adds another layer of uncertainty, which will potentially further weaken the economy.

Tom Arthur: In last weekend's *Sunday Times*, more than 70 business leaders, including former chairs of Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's and BT, signed a letter calling for a people's vote, and on Monday compelling polling evidence demonstrated that the entire United Kingdom population has turned against Brexit. Does the minister agree that now is the time for the UK Government to end its false choice between a bad Brexit and a catastrophic no-deal Brexit and commit to remaining in the single market and the customs union?

Ivan McKee: Yes, I agree. The Scottish Government makes it very clear that the outcome that makes the most sense for Scotland, if we are not able to stay in the European Union, is for Scotland—or, preferably, the UK as a whole—to stay in the single market and the customs union. That route minimises the damage and impact that the uncertainty and economic consequences of Brexit are having on Scotland.

Non-domestic Rates Poundage

18. Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on permanently linking the non-domestic rates poundage to the consumer prices index. (S5O-02526)

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): We are committed to maintaining a competitive and sustainable taxation environment while delivering sufficient resources to fund the public services upon which we all rely. The Scottish Government will outline the non-domestic rates poundage in the Scottish budget on 12 December.

Graham Simpson: The Scottish Retail Consortium has warned that not linking business rates to the CPI next year would cost businesses £21 million extra. For South and North Lanarkshire alone, it would mean businesses paying about £3.5 million more. Will the minister commit now to permanently linking rate increases to the CPI, as the United Kingdom Government has done?

Kate Forbes: As the member will know, the 2018-19 poundage was capped at the CPI level. That was requested by business and supported by the Barclay review. From memory, I do not recall the member voting for that in our budget.

We will continue to listen to business as we develop our draft budget 2019-20 proposals. We will confirm the non-domestic rates poundage rate when we announce the draft budget, as we have done in previous years, and I look forward to the member supporting whatever is in our draft budget.

Post Office (Banking Services)

19. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to encourage Post Office Ltd in Scotland to offer full banking facilities and services to businesses and private customers in all of its branches. (S5O-02527)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): The Scottish Government recognises the importance of post offices to consumers, businesses and communities across Scotland. The position is similar to the one that applies to the banking sector, in that post offices and postal services are reserved. We have made it clear to the United Kingdom Government and Post Office Ltd that they have a responsibility to ensure that the availability of existing services is maintained throughout Scotland. We continue to fund Citizens Advice Scotland's research into post office outreach services and how consumers can influence the provision of those outreach services.

Maurice Corry: It is interesting to note that 95 per cent of UK residents live within 1 mile of a post office and 99 per cent of UK residents live within 3 miles of a post office.

With the Allied Irish Bank being the banking partner of Post Office Ltd, according to Post Office senior management in Scotland, for Post Office Ltd to offer full banking facilities requires only that the other 27 banks in the British Bankers Association give their approval. Will the minister strongly encourage those banks to do so?

Jamie Hepburn: Yes, of course, although I reiterate the point that it is a reserved matter, which means that we are limited in our ability to influence it directly. I hear Mr Corry's call, and I reiterate it. I encourage banks to engage with the post office network to ensure that those services can be supplied.

Scottish Government Budget (South Lanarkshire Council)

20. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how its forthcoming budget will impact on South Lanarkshire Council. (S50-02528)

The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes): All 32 local authorities, including South Lanarkshire Council, will receive their needs-based formula share of the 2019-20 total local government settlement, which will be announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work next month. It will then be for South Lanarkshire Council to allocate the total resources that are available to it, which will determine the impact on the people of South Lanarkshire.

James Kelly: In a previous answer, the cabinet secretary stated that he would compose his budget based on evidence. Will the minister and the finance team give appropriate weight to the evidence that was published yesterday by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which is arguing for a fair funding settlement, and ensure that councils such as South Lanarkshire Council are not downgraded and penalised, as has happened in previous Scottish Government budgets?

Kate Forbes: COSLA's case for a fair deal has been noted. Indeed, the finance secretary and I met COSLA just last week. That was the latest in a series of meetings to discuss next year's local government finance settlement.

This year's finance settlement was a case of treating local authorities fairly, despite the cuts that the United Kingdom Government has made to Scotland's resource budget. This year, South Lanarkshire Council received £590 million from the Scottish Government. We want to ensure that

public services are supported, and our policy on local authority spending is to give local authorities the financial freedom to operate independently.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio question time.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. On behalf of the back-bench members of all the parties, I would like to congratulate you on getting through all 20 questions.

Members: Sook!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was not a point of order. I think that you have just given me a black spot.

Safeguarding Research Collaborations and Scientific Excellence

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-14638, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on safeguarding Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence from the threat of Brexit. That is a mouthful.

I call the minister, who has 13 minutes or thereabouts—we have a little time in hand for interventions and so on.

14:40

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): Yesterday, I visited Queen Margaret University, where I was given a tour by the wonderful principal, Petra Wend. She has been at the helm there for nine years and she recently announced that she will stand down next summer, so I pay tribute to her for the enormous contribution that she has made and continues to make to higher education in Scotland.

Petra Wend is German. During my tour, I was struck by Queen Margaret University's international character. In a laboratory, I met two academics who were there to show me around. The senior research fellow was from the Netherlands and the PhD student was Greek. Later, I had a presentation from the head of student services, who is Bulgarian. At Queen Margaret, 15 per cent of the students and about 9 per cent of the staff are European Union nationals.

Across Scotland's universities, colleges and research institutions, students and staff from the EU make an enormous contribution to Scotland and our global reputation for excellence. Many institutions benefit greatly from EU membership—for example, 19 per cent of students at the University of Aberdeen alone are EU nationals.

However, as a result of Brexit, I am hearing similar messages everywhere I go on my various visits. I hear about universities hiring immigration lawyers, about staff in tears and about staff and students feeling uncertain, insecure and less welcome. I hear about talented and valued staff contemplating leaving Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Following the UK's decision to leave the EU, I have heard everywhere about the short-term and long-term threat that Brexit poses to Scotland's research base, to funding, to our international standing and influence and to our reputation for science, research and innovation, and educational

excellence, which one principal rightly described to me as "beyond world class". All that damage is self-inflicted. It is no wonder that the principal of the University of Glasgow, Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, said that a hard Brexit would

"represent the most unhinged example of national self-sabotage in living memory".

Scotland's story, and especially that of our universities, has been shaped by our close relationship with Europe. Today, our research institutions increasingly work together to increase their impact, but we have always recognised that co-operation within Scotland or the UK alone is never enough for real success. World-leading success comes from reaching out beyond our borders across the globe—and, of course, across Europe—to add value to research endeavours in Scotland.

Scotland builds on a great history that goes back centuries to our early links to Europe. Our first universities were set up in the 15th century, when St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen were all founded through papal bulls, which gave them the seal of approval to award degrees. Until then, Scottish students had studied in continental Europe because of the wars of independence with England.

Europe influenced Scotland, and Scotland influenced Europe and the world. The Scottish enlightenment figures David Hume, Adam Smith and James Hutton changed our way of thinking about the world and our economy. The first industrial revolution would have been unthinkable without James Watt's steam engine, which brought science and invention together with industry and engineering.

Scientists and researchers in Scotland continue to shape society; they are leading on aspects of the fourth industrial revolution, which is focused on linking our cyber and physical worlds. That is not the only area of impact. Our excellent research base, which comprises universities, research institutes and public research bodies as well as third and private sector activity, is having a positive impact on many aspects of Scottish society. To give just a few examples, that ranges from improved health and social care—that is in the news today—to better access to digital communications, cleaner energy and transport, and improved safety and security.

We all know that science and research are extremely important activities in Scotland. The total investment in research and development in Scotland is £2.3 billion a year. More and more expert voices have been speaking out about the damage that Brexit is causing to that investment, because international collaboration is at the heart

of the success of science and research in this country.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The member will be aware of the tremendous record of Scottish scientists, and that the Bank of England is going to honour a scientist on the new £50 note. Will the minister support my campaign to have Professor John Macleod from Aberdeen, who discovered insulin, appear on the new £50 note?

Richard Lochhead: Of course—Professor Macleod would be an excellent candidate. Indeed, there are many candidates from Scotland who have given us an enormously successful track record in science and innovation down the centuries and who have made a difference to ordinary people's lives, not just in this country but across the world.

Scots-born Nobel laureate Sir Fraser Stoddart—to name another eminent scientist—said:

“What's most important is to be able to have at least 15 different nationalities in a large research group—that's the way we do science, we do it at a global level.”

Scotland is truly a global leader in science. We are an outward-looking country with valuable international collaborations that support high-quality research. The Scottish Government alone provides £500 million annually for science and research at Scotland's universities and at our research institutes and public bodies, including NHS Scotland.

In 2016, Scotland's higher education research and development spend as a percentage of gross domestic product was ranked top in all parts of the UK and fifth highest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. That is a phenomenal track record, which has led to results on research excellence. Three Scottish universities are in the *Times Higher Education* global top 200 for research volume, income and reputation, and four are in the global top 200 for research influence as measured by publication citations.

All of that underpins Scotland's economy and Scottish jobs. The latest figures show that, in 2016, private investment in research in Scotland surpassed the £1 billion mark for the first time. Of new UK spin-outs, 23 per cent are from Scottish universities. Again, that is more than in any other part of the UK.

Just last month, Nova Innovation was awarded the 2018 Enterprise Europe Network award for its work on renewable energy as part of a pan-European project. It is therefore ironic that our full participation in the European programme that supported that project, horizon 2020, is now being threatened because of Brexit. Scotland has thus

far secured almost €558 million from the horizon 2020 programme alone.

Our universities are well connected globally. Scottish universities have a higher percentage of EU students than those in other parts of the UK and more than a quarter of all full-time university research staff are from EU countries. We punch way above our weight. It is therefore no wonder that the 2019 *Times Higher Education* world university rankings show that nine of Scotland's universities are in the global top 200 for international outlook.

However, I do not want just to highlight our truly outstanding international research community in Scotland and its global connections; I want us to safeguard all of that for the future as well. Professor Lee Cronin of the University of Glasgow recently gave the clearest of warnings about the impact of Brexit on science and research in this country, saying:

“If I can't run a world-leading team of researchers here I'm not going to let the skills, knowledge and momentum we've built die because of a hard Brexit. Many of us will be forced to move our research abroad.”

I am shocked and dismayed, as I am sure many others are, at the casual attitude that the UK Government has been showing towards the threat that Brexit poses to Scotland's global reputation for world-leading research; to the freedom of movement of both Scottish and EU researchers; and to Scotland's ability to continue to compete and participate in key European research programmes. Years of building trust through co-operation and partnership are now being sacrificed thanks to infighting in the Conservative Party at Westminster.

The impact of that is starting to be felt. According to data in the science journal *Nature*, UK participation as a lead co-ordinator in EU multilateral projects through horizon 2020 has reduced significantly since 2016. There are many other impacts, too. The third sector invests significant amounts of money in Scottish research. One of the key research funding charities, the Wellcome Trust, has raised concerns about the impact of Brexit on its future potential investments. Its director, Jeremy Farrar, stated:

“We have invested in the UK for more than 80 years. It has provided an environment in which science and innovation can thrive, but if the conditions and the culture here are damaged, that will affect our support. It is not unconditional.”

If such damage can be done to our reputation and status even before Brexit, it is easy to see why so many are anxious about the situation after 29 March next year. The Scottish Government's paper, “Scotland's Place in Europe: Science and Research”, which was published earlier this week,

quotes the recent letter of 29 Nobel prize winners to the Prime Minister. It says:

“science needs to flourish and that requires the flow of people and ideas across borders”.

The UK Government’s hostile rhetoric and attitude are not helping to make our EU friends in this country feel welcome or at home. Polling by the trade union Prospect showed that nearly 70 per cent of EU scientists in the UK are thinking of leaving after Brexit.

In Scotland, a country that voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, we should be resolutely focused on attracting the best minds in Europe to work and study here to help us to build a successful and prosperous nation. Instead, thanks to the actions of others, we face the prospect of a Brexit brain drain. We need to stand together and prevent that from happening.

Like others, I have been actively encouraging the EU nationals whom I meet to continue to study and work at universities and other research organisations in Scotland. Amid the chaos of Brexit, it is important that we send out a message that Scotland is open for business and that we welcome with open arms people from EU countries to our universities and research institutions.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Does the minister think that his speech says that we are open for business or that we are focused entirely on the negatives?

Richard Lochhead: I am saying that Scotland is open for business. I only wish that the Conservatives would say that, too.

I support the work that our universities and colleges are doing to reassure and support EU staff and their families as far as possible.

In addition to the effect on people who are already here, the Home Office’s current approach to visiting scientists and researchers has already been damaging to our reputation and to our ability to welcome experts from around the world. Numerous esteemed scientists who were due to attend and speak at the recent world congress of psychiatric genetics, which was held in Glasgow, were denied entry to Scotland due to visa delays and refusals. That is unacceptable, and the situation threatens to get worse if researchers from Europe are going to be treated by the UK Government with the same relentless hostility.

It has become increasingly clear that the UK Government will offer, at best, a hugely damaging blindfold Brexit that would still leave us guessing about the long-term future of our valuable European research collaborations, which the UK Government has made very little progress on securing.

International collaboration is critical to maintaining and strengthening Scotland’s excellence in research as well as to meeting our economic policy goals and improving public services in this country. We should not allow Brexit and the hostile immigration policies of the UK Government to constrain Scotland’s scientific and economic progress. We should ensure that Scotland continues to be an outward-looking, open and welcoming country.

Compared with the rest of the UK, Scotland employs proportionally more EU academic staff in our universities and institutions; we have proportionally more EU students; we have proportionally more outgoing domestic students participating in Erasmus+; we punch way above our weight in securing EU research funding; and we have a higher rate of research staff from the EU working in Scottish institutions.

Scotland voted to remain in the EU but is facing Brexit with our further and higher education and research sectors having the most to lose. Our voice therefore deserves to be heard and heeded. Maintaining single market membership with freedom of movement, including for students, staff and researchers, is more important to Scotland than it is to the UK as a whole. Maintaining participation in EU research programmes is more important to Scotland than it is to the UK as a whole. We must do all that we can to protect this vital national sector from Brexit and the reckless actions of the UK Tory Government. I commend the motion to Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament notes with concern the growing number of voices within Scotland’s research and science communities warning of the substantial threat that Brexit poses to Scotland’s position as a leading nation in international science and research; understands the significant economic, social and cultural contributions that universities and other research institutions and their international collaborators bring to Scotland; believes that the UK Government’s approach to the Brexit negotiations, including its commitment to ending freedom of movement, is undermining Scotland’s worldwide reputation and threatening the mobility of students and researchers and full participation in European research programmes, and commits to exploring options to safeguard Scotland’s international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence globally.

14:54

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I begin by focusing on the positives. It is easy in the current political climate to jump straight to the negatives and to challenge and dispute what other people have said. However, sometimes it is also important to stop, take stock of the positives and realise that, despite the differences of opinion that exist, there is a great deal on which we can agree.

The chamber needs no reminding of the exceptional work that is done by our universities, research institutes and research departments. However, it remains vital that we do everything that we can to tell that incredible story both to a domestic audience and around the world. Indeed, the task of articulating and celebrating the outstanding economic and cultural contribution that those skilled and dedicated scientists, academics and researchers make to our nation will be, arguably, even more important post-Brexit.

As a leave voter, I remain absolutely sure that practically no one voted to diminish the role of universities or our international standards for excellence in research, or to reduce or decrease the strong international links that we enjoy with Europe and the rest of the world when it comes to being at the forefront of scientific advances.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will the member taken intervention?

Oliver Mundell: Not right now, thank you.

Indeed, I believe that, whatever our respective stances on Brexit, the vast majority of Scots want to see our university, research and scientific sectors survive, grow and thrive both in a European sense and in a truly global sense—in a world in which creating new connections and working together to solve the major challenges that we face, whether in relation to good healthcare or climate change, are vital not just to Scotland but to the whole of humanity.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): I wonder whether Mr Mundell can answer this question for me: does he believe that those laudable objectives, which I endorse, will be enhanced or diminished by the UK Government's opposition to freedom of movement for EU citizens?

Oliver Mundell: Challenges lie ahead—I will not stand here and deny that. The fundamental climate in which our country operates internationally will change. However, we have to remember that, at the end of the day, that is what the majority of British people voted for. The UK Government's job is to balance out the different priorities.

I stress to the Scottish Government that the UK Government is working very hard to ensure the continued settled status of EU nationals—I note that, so far, any mention of that has been completely absent from today's debate. Certainly, those on the Conservative benches want to send out a very strong message that all EU nationals are welcome in Scotland and that we very much value the contribution that they make not just to the education sector but across our society.

Gillian Martin: Will the member take an invention?

Oliver Mundell: I have already taken an intervention; I want to make a little progress.

It is in that positive spirit that I lodged today's Scottish Conservative amendment to the Government's motion.

It is important to highlight that the Scottish further education sector and, indeed, many of our research institutions, do not exist in isolation. That is true in a UK sense, in a European sense and in a global sense. Again, it is important to get the balance right. My reading of the Government's motion is that it lacks balance and nuance. Where possible, we have sought to strip some of the politics out of it. Although the concerns that many in the sector have outlined should give members cause to reflect, and they deserve careful consideration in the debate, it serves no one's purpose to politicise the sector or those concerns, or in any way suggest that the sector overall is at risk.

I remain confident, for the reasons that are outlined in our amendment, that the UK Government is doing everything that it can to achieve an orderly and negotiated Brexit—a Brexit that will allow many of those relationships to continue and flourish, while at the same time enabling new partnerships and relationships to grow.

I particularly welcome the chancellor's commitment to keep funding at existing levels up to 2020. I also welcome the new Government initiatives that have been announced since the British public voted to leave the EU, which some of my colleagues will talk more about. I believe that those initiatives will help to shore up the university sector and support new and innovative research across Scotland and the United Kingdom.

I am pleased that the UK will continue participating in the horizon programme. I am also pleased that the intention of the UK and the EU is that UK researchers and businesses will remain eligible to participate in horizon 2020 and that the position will remain unchanged for the duration of the programme. That has already been agreed as part of the financial settlement that was signed off by UK, EU and Commission negotiators in a draft withdrawal agreement and welcomed by the other 27 EU countries at the March European Council.

Moreover, the next horizon scheme could include the UK—that would be desirable—with the new funding scheme due to last from 2021 to 2027. As the EU's research commissioner has indicated, the legal text supporting the programme

“is done in a way so that we can include UK in the future as a third country. The doors are open for discussion.”

I believe that that flexibility is to be welcomed, which is why we are pleased to support Labour's amendment today. Scottish Conservatives will do all that we can to secure the UK's positive future involvement in the horizon 2020 programme, just as we have urged the UK Government

"to ensure that the visa system is structured to attract students and staff of the highest calibre to work in UK universities and research centres."

We believe that there is no impediment to that in post-Brexit Britain and will continue to strongly make that case, as outlined in our amendment.

Before concluding, I say to the Liberal Democrats that we will not be able to support their amendment at decision time. Although I commend them on their sometimes somewhat obsessive wish to hold another referendum, we believe that the matter has already been settled and that the best Brexit deal will be secured by ensuring co-operation across all the parties, with everyone doing what they can to support the Prime Minister as she seeks to build a consensus.

John Swinney: Mr Mundell sets out an argument for continuing to make the case for an appropriate approach to immigration—I think that those were the words that he used. However, this Parliament unanimously agreed to a proposition that we should reintroduce the fresh talent initiative—the post-study work visa initiative. We agreed that unanimously across the chamber but the UK Government said no. What are we supposed to do when the UK Government is oblivious to unanimity in this institution on an idea that we all think would be a sensible one? Having had that experience, how can we have confidence in Mr Mundell's argument that, somehow, a pragmatic approach to immigration will be taken when all the evidence flies in the face of that?

Oliver Mundell: I go back to what I said at the start of my speech. Clearly, I adopt a much more positive approach. We have to work towards the system that we want to see. We must take time to reflect on all the comments that have come in on the immigration system from the Confederation of British Industry and NFU Scotland because the issues do not exist in isolation.

I see that the cabinet secretary looks confused. My point is that immigration in the university sector is not an issue that exists in isolation and must be considered as part of a balanced package of measures that delivers not just for Scotland but for the whole of the UK. Rather than seek to make political hay out of slow progress—at times, frustratingly slow progress—it would be better if the cabinet secretary recognised that members on the Conservative benches are working hard to achieve the same goal.

That takes me nicely to my concluding remarks. At this time of national importance, I simply ask Scottish National Party members to consider their motivations and to ask themselves whether debates on important issues such as this one are brought to the Parliament to highlight those issues or to further the SNP's own interests. Given the challenges that lie ahead and the significance of our international research collaborations and our reputation for scientific excellence, surely the national interest must come first. If that is the case, this is the time to work together, putting politics aside, and to back the Prime Minister in securing the certainty that a deal with the EU would offer.

I move amendment S5M-14638.1, to leave out from "notes with concern" to "European research programmes" and insert:

"recognises the very significant economic, social and cultural value of research co-operation across the UK and with the international community, and the benefits of knowledge exchange; welcomes the assurance of UK Government research funding up to 2020; supports the UK Government's plans to include science and innovation among future co-operative accords with the EU; urges the UK Government to ensure that the visa system is structured to attract students and staff of the highest calibre to work in UK universities and research centres".

15:03

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I think that I am correct in saying that this is Mr Lochhead's first debate in his new role as Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, so let me welcome him to his place.

I am absolutely delighted that Mr Lochhead chose to start his tenure with a paean to my local university, Queen Margaret University, in East Lothian. He pointed out that for some 10 years the university has been led by its principal, Petra Wend, who is from Germany, and that the university's international connections and collaborations spread right through its operations, which include ground-breaking research in food science and healthcare technology, to mention just a couple of areas. I am delighted by Mr Lochhead's debut in his new role.

I welcome the opportunity to debate these issues, because they are important to Scotland. When it comes to debates on science, we can usually reach for a quote from Albert Einstein, and an apposite quote for today is this:

"Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former."

I tend to think that if Einstein were to come back he would probably still be unsure about the structure of the universe, even with all the work that has gone on since he carried out his own work, but I fear that the whole sorry saga of Brexit

would convince him that he had been right all along about human stupidity, because that process has been chaotic and catastrophic.

There is no doubt that Scotland's higher education sector is world leading. Many institutions are in the top rankings for teaching quality, and we excel even further in the research that we produce. The minister has already pointed out that, with regard to the world university rankings, three Scottish universities are in the global top 200 for volume, income and reputation associated with research, and four for the influence of that research. We also have among the most productive research institutions. Indeed, nine of them are among the best in the whole world for their international outlook in relation to staff, students and research.

That was brought home to me most directly a few years ago when I visited the large hadron collider at CERN as part of a delegation from the cross-party group on science and technology. I was astonished at the number of the young scientists working on that international collaboration who were from Scottish universities, particularly Glasgow, Strathclyde and Edinburgh, or who were Scots studying at other universities but working at CERN. They were playing a significant leading role in that quite remarkable piece of cutting-edge technology.

That visit also brought home another link. We were lucky enough to be visiting the site of the experiment that demonstrated the existence of the Higgs boson, and perhaps the most complex and elaborate piece of scientific kit in the world was being used to prove something that Professor Higgs had postulated using no more than his fountain pen while sitting in the University of Edinburgh some 50 years before. Science is a global and international operation and, unfortunately, the current mess and uncertainty of Brexit can only weaken Scotland's strong position in that respect.

Our research excellence is very much influenced by those European links, with £1 in every £10 of Scottish universities' research income—or around £105 million every year—coming from the EU. Of course, that relates only to universities; it does not include the European research funding that goes elsewhere. With regard to horizon 2020, which, as has already been mentioned, is the biggest EU research and innovation programme that there has ever been, Scotland has again been in the lead, with 13 per cent of UK funding for that programme coming to Scottish institutions. It is important that we continue to benefit from future horizon programmes, hence the amendment that we have lodged.

Of course, it goes without saying that research is only as good as those who conduct it, and EU citizens make a vast contribution to our research sector, comprising more than 12 per cent of our university staff and 16 per cent of our postgraduate population. In fact, 60 per cent of the UK's internationally co-authored research papers are put together with EU partners.

Our scientific excellence relates not only to life sciences and science, technology, engineering and mathematics—the STEM subjects—because Scotland and the wider UK are also leaders in social and humanities research. Significant amounts of research funding in those disciplines are also linked to EU collaboration. Indeed, 33 per cent of all European Research Council funding for social science research comes to the UK. For such strong bonds to continue, it is vital that our academic researchers can still travel to European countries with ease, and vice versa.

It is now two years since the referendum took place. I heard what Mr Mundell said, but the trouble is that our higher education, scientific and research communities still have no idea what the consequences of the result will be and no knowledge of the plans that they will have to work with in order to mitigate the impact.

Oliver Mundell: Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: I think that it is too late.

The truth is that Brexit is already damaging science and research. A recent *Nature* magazine editorial says:

“Regardless of whether or not a deal is done, many scientists are already seeing and feeling the impact of Brexit ... Researchers are less likely to get collaborators on projects, because academics in Europe view them as a risky bet ... Some are finding it harder to fill key positions. Others feel unable to apply for EU funding”.

The truth is that the impact is already here.

To protect science, research and the other sectors that we are debating, at the very least we must work towards a deal that ensures that we retain as close a relationship as possible with the European Union.

I move amendment S5M-14638.3, to insert at end:

“, including a focus from both the Scottish and UK governments on promoting the importance of Horizon Europe developing in a way that allows the UK to be involved.”

15:11

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I am sure that Mr Gray would recognise that, when the Presiding Officer dropped her bottle of water when he was speaking, she was merely testing one of

Einstein's theories rather than trying to interrupt his remarks.

I heard Oliver Mundell accusing some of us of being "obsessive". When I watch Jacob Rees-Mogg and one or two others on the television, I hear a whole new definition of obsession, which I invite Mr Mundell to consider carefully.

I, too, welcome Richard Lochhead to his place. I thought that he might have got fisheries research in. He spent eight years talking about that in the Parliament. I suppose that the point that he would have made—I will help him to make it—would have been that many people from every part of Europe, whom I can remember, worked at the marine laboratory in Torry doing fisheries research. That still applies now, and that is still certainly the case in the marine centre in Scalloway in Shetland.

When any country faces the uncertainties of the modern world, it makes sense to play to its strengths. Scotland's higher education institutions, the research that they do and the people whom they employ are a strength that has attracted academics from across the globe to the UK and Scotland. That strength has been a welcome mat for international students and it demonstrates that we are a connected part of the European universities and research infrastructure. We are simply part of that European family.

However, we are now in danger of losing that strength. That is why 35 Nobel laureates recently wrote to the Prime Minister to call for a deal on science and innovation that allowed the "closest possible cooperation" between the UK and the EU. That is a group of outstanding people. It includes the president of the Royal Society, Venki Ramakrishnan, and Dr Richard Henderson, who won the Nobel prize for chemistry in 2017 and who was born in Edinburgh and studied at the University of Edinburgh. That strength is why 23 senior figures from the University of Edinburgh, the University of Aberdeen and the University of St Andrews signed an open letter that warned of the consequences of Brexit and called for a people's vote, and it explains why the Francis Crick Institute in London, which is the biggest biomedical research laboratory in Europe, surveyed more than 1,000 staff in October and found that 97 per cent thought that a hard Brexit would be bad for UK science.

Gillian Martin: Oliver Mundell said that people who talked about the matter in a negative way and were warning, as Tavish Scott is doing now, were politicking. Would Tavish Scott say that the people from the Francis Crick Institute are politicking?

Tavish Scott: It is important to recognise that 1,000 of the staff at the Francis Crick Institute were surveyed. That is the reason why I want to

talk about UK science. Far from politicking, they are concerned about their jobs and their futures, and about the very essence of science and why we do it. Gillian Martin has drawn a fair implication about their motive in making the arguments.

Just 3 per cent think that the scientific community is being listened to and represented in discussions. The institute's director, Paul Nurse, said:

"A hard Brexit could cripple UK science and the government needs to sit up and listen."

Far from any member in the chamber being negative, we are simply pointing out and illustrating the depth of the concern that exists across the science community here in Scotland and right across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

How is it right and in the country's interests to turn our back on international people who have worked and lived here and furthered our knowledge and our learning; to turn our back on international students by taking a scandalous approach to immigration that basically says, "You're not welcome here"; to turn our back on the flowering of ideas that comes from international collaboration and exchange; and therefore to damage the international reach and attractiveness of a major Scottish success story—our strength in our universities and our world-leading research?

The Royal Society of Edinburgh sets that out with commendable accuracy in its briefing for today's debate. It says that 18 per cent of academic staff in Scotland are EU nationals and that 13 per cent come from further afield, which are higher proportions than in any other part of the UK. Some 25 per cent of staff in Scotland who only carry out research are EU nationals. In engineering and technology, that rises to nearly half of all the academics who are employed here. How do those who wish to take us out of the European Union propose to attract such talented Europeans to work in Scotland in the future? As we have all been told when we go to the universities or institutions in our own parts of Scotland, they might simply choose to work elsewhere.

Many Scottish institutions collaborate with European partners, although that has gone backwards since 2016. Now it will get worse. The RSE makes the crucial point that, notwithstanding UK Government reassurances that funding for UK research will not suffer as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, that cannot compensate for the potential loss of the added value that is gained from full UK participation in EU programmes. That strikes me as being the essence of the argument and it illustrates the dangers and what we are about to lose.

Horizon 2020 demonstrates that collaboration, as Iain Gray and others have mentioned, but few in academia, never mind in politics, believe that a Brexiteer-led UK Government will pay one penny more into the programme after 2020 than is being put into the current programme. I ask members to imagine trying to convince Prime Minister Dominic Raab to write a cheque to Brussels for anything, never mind for science in a programme that would support universities in the United Kingdom, yet the programme has brought all those advantages to Scotland and the UK.

As well as Scotland's universities, the James Hutton Institute and Scotland's Rural College will be directly affected by the lack of access to EU funds. Those land-based bodies have been ideally placed to benefit from collaborative funding projects. Compared with that of the rest of the UK, Scotland's land-based research is simply more joined up from producer to researcher, which makes Scotland internationally useful for collaboration and partnerships in the area. The UK research council does not do that and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has no funds in the area, so what chance is there of that essential work being replicated?

There appears to be no obvious upside to dragging the UK's and Scotland's higher education sector out of the EU. That is why so many in the sector want a right to vote on whatever cobbled-up negotiation appears out of London and Brussels. This Parliament should speak for our universities and research sector and all the people who work in it, and they should be given a right to a vote on their future.

I move amendment S5M-14638.2, to insert at end:

“, in addition to providing unequivocal support for a public vote on the final terms of the Brexit deal.”

15:18

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Like colleagues, I welcome the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science to his post.

It is now almost 20 months since article 50 was triggered and the UK Government has still failed to negotiate what its former Brexit secretary thought would be the easiest deal in history. It is clear that the Prime Minister is paralysed by the in-fighting in her party and is too scared to take on the hard-right ideologues on her benches and in her Cabinet. One of the many areas of our society that are already suffering the consequences of this bizarre mix of incompetence and malice is our university sector and the wider research and education sectors here in Scotland.

We know that membership of the EU brings benefits such as funding and support for international research collaborations, the Erasmus+ programme and the immense boost that the right to European freedom of movement gives to both individuals and the institutions that they work for or with. We cannot pick and choose our favourite bits of the EU and hope to retain their full benefits without being a member. That is not how the EU works, but that seems to have passed the UK Government by. We saw that when Switzerland sought to restrict freedom of movement in 2014 and its participation in EU research programmes was immediately restricted.

Funding can be replaced by the Government, although there is little trust in the UK Government's commitment to that, but the reputation and prestige that come with hosting huge EU-funded multinational research projects cannot be so easily replaced.

Switzerland never even implemented its restrictions on freedom of movement. It opted instead to negotiate a new agreement with the EU in return for restoring access to research programmes. Nonetheless, the vice-president for research at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology has said that it may take Swiss research institutes at least half a decade to recover the standing that they lost and to re-establish themselves globally. That was because of a two-year restriction, resulting from a decision that was not implemented. The UK faces full, complete, absolute and permanent—or at least long-term—removal from European freedom of movement. How can those parties—and it is more than just the Tories—that are committed to ending freedom of movement reconcile that commitment with their intention to retain access to EU research programmes?

Horizon 2020 funding is currently worth more than €200 million to Scottish research institutes. Research projects are also funded through European structural funds, of which we have received almost €1 billion in this funding cycle. EU citizens make up more than one in five of the research staff at our universities, and more than 20,000 students from the rest of the EU currently study in Scotland. I appreciate that the UK Government, after two years of unnecessary delay, has finally stated that EU citizens' rights to stay in the UK will be secure, even if there is no deal. That provides some relief to EU citizens who are here, but only to some. It does not resolve the understandable level of distrust towards the Home Office, given its hostile environment policies and its typically staggering levels of incompetence.

John Swinney: Does Mr Greer accept that there is a future threat from all of that? The Finance and Constitution Committee pointed out in

its report today that population growth in Scotland is a central aspect of how we meet our economic challenges. The hostility towards free movement of individuals—as a consequence of the process that we are currently going through—will be a significant obstacle to population growth.

Ross Greer: I am grateful to the Deputy First Minister for making that relevant point. I am sure that, like his colleagues, he heard the evidence that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee took last year. The chair of the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee said that if a sector of our economy was not of high priority, like the financial sector in the City of London, it might have to restrict itself after Brexit. The committee repeatedly cited areas of Scotland's economy that are not only essential to our wellbeing as a nation but very much dependent on freedom of movement and our ability to attract people. Those areas were, in essence, dismissed as being acceptable casualties of the Brexit process.

Edinburgh university's pilot scheme to register, in advance of Brexit, European citizens who are living here opens this month. A number of European citizens who work at Edinburgh university have told me that they do not intend to take part and that they do not know of any other EU nationals who are members of staff who intend to take part. The reason for that is complete mistrust of the Home Office. They appreciate their university's support but they fear that their documents will be lost or that they will be wrongly ordered to leave the country, as has already happened to others. They know the Home Office's reputation—through the racist deportation of citizens from the Windrush generation and the incompetence that has already seen some EU citizens being wrongly told to leave—and they rightly ask why they should be guinea pigs for the department's latest project.

I will take a moment to highlight some of the brilliant research and training benefits that we get through EU membership, which directly impact on communities in the west of Scotland. The University of the West of Scotland has certainly benefited from such opportunities. Working with Queen's University Belfast and Dundalk Institute of Technology in the Republic of Ireland, it has secured €7.7 million to research chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The funding has been used to create the border and regions airways training hub, which has the appropriate acronym of BREATH. It employs about 30 research and doctoral students in high-level advanced medical research jobs. Earlier this year, BREATH won a Northern Ireland healthcare award for its research on lung disease. The award-winning research project brings immense benefits to the west of Scotland, north and south Ireland

and anybody around the world who is affected by COPD.

The BREATH project that is jointly hosted by UWS is exactly the kind of cross-border advanced medical research that EU funding makes possible. Although I am grateful that the UK Government has guaranteed the current funding cycle—the BREATH project is not under immediate threat—that will last only for the next 18 months. Where will the next advanced medical research project come from? Will institutions be able to collaborate across borders and attract the most talented researchers to work on projects?

EU funding and programmes are not just for people with PhDs doing advanced medical research. West College Scotland benefits immensely from Erasmus+, which the Parliament recently debated after a committee inquiry. The college participates in the enhancing employability and skills through mobilities programme, partnered with the Aarhus business network in Denmark and the Vamia vocational institute in Finland. The college students get more opportunities to develop their skills abroad and benefit from experiences outside Scotland. Just this summer, students from the professional cookery course had placements in Aarhus, so next time members are in Paisley or Greenock and they experience Scandinavian cuisine—which I am sure is a regular occurrence for members across the chamber—they will know where those skills come from and that they are benefiting from an EU programme such as Erasmus+.

The scale and depth of opportunities that are available to our universities, colleges and other institutions through our research, collaboration, funding, exchanges and that fundamental right to freedom of movement is hard to overstate. It is immensely frustrating to see that it is at risk. We are fast running out of time, but there is a window in which we can avoid this nonsense and reverse the damage that is already done. I hope that we can seize that opportunity.

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

15:25

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): It is difficult to quantify exactly the impact of Brexit on scientific research in Scotland for a number of reasons. First, reports tend to concentrate on UK data, although we know that Scottish universities punch well above their weight, given our nation's size and population, in succeeding in garnering EU funding from horizon 2020, and they have been significant partners in EU collaborative research programmes, particularly in life sciences.

Also, we still do not know what kind of Brexit we are looking at, so we cannot quantify the effects of whatever migration and visa systems will be in place or what our customs arrangements will be.

Until we have answers to all those questions, the level of damage to Scottish scientific research is difficult to quantify, and being unrelentingly, blindly positive about things is quite offensive to academics who have warned of that damage, such as those whom Tavish Scott spoke about.

Let us look at what we do know: that €2 billion of the €4.8 billion that the United Kingdom has won from horizon 2020 since 2014 has gone to science; and that Scottish organisations have secured about €530 million of the funding from horizon 2020, of which three quarters has gone to our universities. Let me take one area of vital research. I went on to the Scottish EU funding portal and put in a search for “low carbon” to see what would come up. From that one narrow search, I found that 157 current projects are funded by the EU. Every member here will know that Scotland is committed to being a leader in reducing the causes of climate change. We have to decarbonise and be at the forefront of renewable energy and agricultural and transport innovation if we are going to achieve that and have an economy that thrives as a result of the innovation that is based here.

EU funding and collaboration are the bedrock of that innovation. Because of the lack of a deal with the EU, we do not know if we can expect to be a non-EU partner in framework 9, which is the successor to horizon 2020. That door is open to us, in the same way as it is open to Norway, Iceland and others that are not in the EU, if the UK Government negotiates access to it. I say to Mr Mundell that that is in the national interest, yet I have not heard anything from the Conservative side of the chamber about the UK looking at anything past 2020.

Oliver Mundell: I thank Gillian Martin for that comment, but she might want to reflect on the fact that those on the Conservative side of the chamber are looking way beyond 2020. We are trying to secure a comprehensive deal with the EU to make sure that we have a smooth and orderly Brexit. We see that as the priority, because that certainty will help our institutions here in Scotland.

Gillian Martin: I was happy to take the intervention, even though Mr Mundell never took any of mine. He may say that, but I cannot see many of the people from the scientific and research fraternity who are watching this debate having any confidence that any deal will do anything for them. I have just spoken about a way in which we can give them confidence, and if that deal is on the table—if that is what Mr Mundell is saying—that is fair enough, but I do not think that

that is what he is saying. “We are trying” is just not good enough. The Conservatives should get on with it.

We also know that research collaborations between EU partners have significantly more impact than standalone domestic ones. The latest United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization data show that 62 per cent of the UK’s research outputs are now international collaborations; the United States are on 39 per cent. As Ross Greer said, if someone is in collaboration with lots of other EU partners, they have a window into internationalisation, which has put us ahead of the US for science productivity. That is significant. Collaborations between universities often lead to opportunities for business collaborations across EU countries—that cannot be ignored. There is a big knock-on effect from universities and research partners working together, and it affects other sectors.

We also know that being in the EU not just has afforded the free and easy movement of students, researchers and leads on projects; it has made the flow of equipment and samples to facilitate their work seamless and tariff free. In autumn 2016, I was involved in a debate about the potential impacts of Brexit on research funding. During that debate, I read out a long letter from Samantha Le Sommer, a PhD research student who was working in the University of Aberdeen on groundbreaking cell research—members should remember that, at that time, the UK Government had two years left to negotiate a deal that would limit the potential negative impacts. For reference, the letter is in its entirety in the *Official Report* of 4 October 2016. I read it back before I wrote my speech for today’s debate. It is utterly depressing how many of the issues that Sam Le Sommer raised then are still unanswered. In fact, it is not just depressing; it is absolutely scandalous.

Samantha is now Dr Le Sommer, a postdoctoral research fellow working on the development of cell-based treatments for autoimmunity and cancer. She is doing research that will save lives in world-leading medical innovation. I got back in touch with her to ask her how things are now. I got another letter from her, and I would like to read out some of that now.

“Hi Gillian

A lot of damage has already been done—people are leaving. I’ve witnessed good bye party after good bye party as EU scientists on short contracts choose to go home rather than stay here through the uncertainty of Brexit. But UK scientists are also leaving.

I myself am currently applying for jobs in the USA and Canada because I cannot plan a career here if there is a hard Brexit or a deal that is bad for my sector”,

which means that they cannot collaborate. She continues:

“People don’t realise, we are not paid by universities, we’re paid from the grant money researchers get. And a huge amount of that is from the EU. The EU has funded over £2 Bn in UK science since 2014, this is equivalent to around another research council in its entirety.”

I would like to read more out but I do not have the time.

When I finished my speech in October 2016, I said:

“Sam needs answers, Sam’s colleagues need answers and Sam’s university needs answers. Will that funding be replaced? Will that collaboration be possible? Will talented EU citizens still be able to study and work in our universities?”—[*Official Report*, 4 October 2016; c 59.]

We are still asking the same questions two years on. It is a scandal. I do not think that any of the research fraternity who was listening to Oliver Mundell’s speech and its message that they should cheer up will have got any comfort whatsoever.

15:32

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I start by welcoming the minister to his role—it is good to see him back in Government. This is an interesting debate and I am glad that he has chosen such an important subject.

Scotland has an excellent track record that we should all be proud of, notwithstanding the environment in which we find ourselves. We have five universities in Scotland that rank in the global top 200, which is more per capita than any other country in the world. That is something that everyone should be proud of.

This is the country that first cloned a mammal and where the MRI scanner was invented. Our universities support more than 180,000 jobs. In that respect, I support the part of Mr Lochhead’s motion that says that we should appreciate the significance of the international collaboration that our universities and research institutions foster and the effect that they have on life in Scotland. However, it is important to point out that that scientific excellence will continue to operate beyond the realms of a post-Brexit UK.

I say that not to detract from the important point that the Scottish Government wants to make today about listening to voices from the science community, which I think is a fair one. However, to date, Scottish universities have shown little sign of slowing down since the EU referendum when it comes to their continued participation and involvement on the international stage.

Just this week, a group of Scottish universities announced the creation of a blue carbon forum to analyse the way in which Scotland’s marine life could help to mitigate global climate change.

Recently, Scottish universities came together to form the industrial centre for artificial intelligence research in digital diagnostics, which is currently working to improve patient care throughout the national health service and is generating jobs in the technology and healthcare sectors.

Another example comes from my region of West Scotland, where the University of the West of Scotland hosted local first responders for joint training exercises and announced a partnership with Kibble Education and Care Centre to support vulnerable youth. It is also working in a number of areas to help people to get into the STEM sector locally. Some of that work is associated with the university’s new Lanarkshire campus, which will create a vital boost to jobs in the local economy.

The further and higher education sectors are going full steam ahead, as best they can, to promote Scotland as a good place in which to study.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The principal of another university in the west of Scotland, Sir Anton Muscatelli of the University of Glasgow, said that a hard Brexit would represent

“the most unhinged example of national self-sabotage in living memory”

and that we politicians have a “moral obligation” to avoid it. How exactly is he wrong?

Jamie Greene: I am pleased that the member brought that up. On those grounds, I challenge her to ensure that her MP colleagues in Westminster do not vote down a deal, which would result in a no-deal outcome. I encourage her to take that to her colleagues, because a hard Brexit is a real possibility if they vote down a deal that the Prime Minister brings back from Europe. I ask her to reflect on that. It is an important point and I am glad that she made it.

Part of what has made Scotland a world leader in academia is the resilience of some of these institutions and our commitment to them. However, we cannot have this debate and ignore the fact that, right now, we are seeing fewer and fewer clearing spaces available to Scottish students. This year, by late August, there were 900 courses available for students from the rest of the UK and fewer than 150 available for Scottish students, due to Government quotas. We are regularly warned that universities are in need of funding in order to remain financially sustainable and continue the research, and we have heard that again today; but nearly half of all Scottish universities are already running a deficit. There is no mention of that in the minister’s motion, and he did not mention it in his speech. The Government talks about the geographic mobility of students, but there is no conversation around the social

mobility of students, especially those from Scotland. Let us have a debate about mobility, but let us not ignore the fact that domestic Government has a key role to play in ensuring that our higher education institutions are well placed and well funded to succeed, regardless of the constitutional or political environments in which they operate.

In the limited time that I have, I would also like to say that Scotland already participates in a number of programmes. Horizon 2020 and Erasmus are the most commonly cited, but there are many other multi-million pound partnerships between Scottish institutions and their European counterparts. Many of them ensure that Scotland is a leader in sectors and can fulfil its desire to be at the forefront of research and innovation. That desire will always remain.

Scottish universities play a pivotal role in our economy and our culture. Our amendment does not hide from the fact that we on these benches believe that future UK visa structures should continue to allow institutions to recruit the brightest and the best staff and students from wherever they may be. We need people, but those people also need courses, and they need well-funded universities to work and study in.

Let us have a sensible debate about the future of Scotland's higher education, but let us not single out one aspect and ignore others. The Scottish Government has a role to play in this devolved matter, and the lack of awareness of that in its motion today is quite telling—and entirely predictable.

15:39

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the minister to his new post. I apologise for missing the first couple of minutes of his speech, but I enjoyed what I did hear.

Within the Brexit debate, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture in the detail of the daily back and forth of negotiations. The future of all sectors in Scotland is at stake, but the future of our universities in particular will be determined in the months to come.

As others have said, Scotland has until now more than pulled its weight in cross-border research collaboration, and the success of our universities in securing research income and delivering groundbreaking research is testament to that. The figures for the past few years are impressive. As of July 2018, Scottish organisations had secured almost €533 million of funding from the EU's horizon 2020 research fund alone. That represents more than 11 per cent of the total UK funding, so we are punching above our weight. The University of Edinburgh, which is

within walking distance of where I stand, is the seventh largest individual recipient of horizon 2020 funds—a remarkable achievement that is under threat, as Brexit-backing Tories seem to think that we can simply keep calm and carry on. That is just not good enough.

Oliver Mundell and other Conservative members have accused the other parties of being too negative about this, but we are just repeating what higher education institutions tell us. The Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee is conducting an inquiry into the article 50 negotiations and preparedness, and we have received a number of submissions from higher education institutions, which I urge the Conservatives to read.

One of the most worrying submissions came from the University of the Highlands and Islands. It states:

“The university has worked closely with a wide range of EU higher education institutions, some over decades. Whilst many still state that their intention is to continue to work with us, irrespective of the final outcome of Article 50 negotiations, some are becoming hesitant about future collaboration. We have had one example of a research partnership where UHI had been the proposed lead applicant negotiations, however, in response to continuing Article 50 uncertainty, the partnership agreed that the chances of a successful application were greater with a non-UK lead ... This is understandable in the highly competitive process of many EU programme applications—but is a worry for future collaboration.”

The UHI submission goes on to express concerns about other funding streams, such as the Interreg VA cross-border programmes. It says:

“there is great uncertainty surrounding future access to such programmes”.

It also mentions structural funding, which it says has been “transformational” for the organisation.

The submission from Universities Scotland makes similar points. I mention in particular its concerns about EU nationals in the higher education sector, because it is clearly not convinced by any of the reassurances that are being given by the Tories. Universities Scotland says:

“We are seeking clarity on:

- What the residency, work and study rights would be of those EU nationals already working, studying or on Erasmus+”
- What ... immigration rules and requirements will be in place for EU nationals
- How the UK Government's intended underwrites would work in practice ...
- Whether Scottish HEIs could access replacements to parts of the Horizon 2020 programme ...
- Whether Scottish HEIs could access a replacement to Erasmus+”.

Therefore, Universities Scotland is certainly not reassured by any of the Conservatives' bland statements that it will be all right on the night.

I commend the Labour amendment, because we need to look to the future, and the future is horizon Europe. The current proposal for the new scheme is that it will have a 20 per cent bigger budget than its predecessor. As one Commission official wryly noted at its launch, the EU27 will gain at our expense because we will not be part of horizon Europe. The official was quoted as saying:

"It's not only that the cake is bigger than before, but that the guy that was eating more of that cake is not around the table anymore."

I suppose that we could find grim solace in the fact that at last we have found one example of having your cake and eating it. However, I assume that leave campaigners did not have the universities of the EU27 in mind when they used that phrase.

A key part of the new programme will be to foster collaboration, not only across nations but between industry and academia, to tackle the five big challenges that we face—health, security, digital, climate and food research.

As today's debate takes place, there is still a lively discussion in Brussels about what matters most and how we need to work together to ensure that horizon Europe delivers on its potential. The UK Government has asserted that Scottish universities will still be able to participate in the future, but I do not see the concrete steps towards delivering that.

Having no deal would, of course, be a disaster. After the performance of the immigration minister, Caroline Nokes, when discussing a no-deal scenario last week, does anybody seriously think that EU nationals would be safe to continue their work in Scotland? That means that nearly a quarter of the research-only staff in Scotland's universities face an uncertain future. Scotland deserves better than that.

15:45

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I, too, welcome Richard Lochhead to his post and thank him for agreeing to meet me at very early doors to discuss the University of the Highlands and Islands.

No Friday evening pub quiz is complete without questions about famous Scottish scientists and their inventions. All of us in the chamber today know the easy answers: we know that John Logie Baird invented the television, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin and Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. However, what happens if we move to the more challenging level? What about Williamina Fleming, John Napier and

Professor John Macleod? I do not see any hands raised, so I assume that ignorance is bliss. The answers are that they invented or discovered the designation system for stars, log tables and insulin, respectively.

We heard earlier, and I agree, that Scotland has a proud record of scientific excellence and that international collaboration has been a key factor. Let me give one example from history. Professor John Macleod, whom I mentioned, was an Aberdonian who emigrated to North America and shared the 1923 Nobel prize for medicine with a Canadian, Frederick Banting, for the discovery of insulin at the University of Toronto in 1921-22. Prior to that discovery, type 1 diabetes was a life-threatening condition; I speak as the convener of the cross-party group on diabetes.

I warmly welcome the Scottish Government's debate and support the motion in Richard Lochhead's name. In the brief time that I have, I will focus my remarks on the positive note that the EU has played in our universities over the past 45 years through two main areas. The first is the critically important access to research collaborations across the EU and beyond, facilitating what is in the jargon called curiosity-driven research and made easy by freedom of movement for our researchers and scientists. The second is the access to major research funding through the various framework funding models that we have heard about from other speakers.

We have heard a lot about the flagship horizon 2020 programme and I agree that it has been crucial in accelerating cutting-edge science across our university sector and beyond. However, on a note of caution, I read in *The Guardian* recently that there has been

"a downturn in both UK participation in, and funding from, the project."

Across the board, there have been concerns from university vice-chancellors that UK projects are losing out, even before Brexit has taken place. I make it clear that Scotland and the UK do extremely well out of the current system, but there are concerns about the situation since the Brexit vote.

Let me give some examples. In 2017, the proportion of UK participation in horizon 2020 was 15 per cent of the total, with just under a 16 per cent share of the funding. However, the Universities UK figures show that, this year, UK participation fell to 12 per cent and UK funding fell to 13 per cent. Do not take my word for it; Alistair Jarvis, the chief executive of Universities UK said:

"It highlights the urgent need for clarity on the UK's participation in Horizon 2020 beyond Brexit and, while the UK is still a member of the EU, the need to communicate that the UK universities and researchers are still eligible to

participate and apply for funding through EU research and innovation programmes.”

There has been another worrying development. *The Guardian* carried out a confidential survey of the Russell group universities, which, as members will know, include the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow. It found evidence of discrimination against UK researchers, with some such researchers being asked to leave EU-funded projects. In one case that was cited by *The Guardian*, an EU project officer recommended that a lead investigator drop all UK partners from a consortium because Britain’s share of the funding was not guaranteed.

Another key aspect is freedom of movement, which is fundamental to the EU. I believe that Scotland has benefited from the ability to attract world-leading scientists to embark on global research projects because of the UK’s membership of the EU. It has also given our early career researchers the opportunity to travel freely across the EU, to develop new ideas and products with their peers and to bring that knowledge back to Scotland. I think that it was Tavish Scott who mentioned the letter from leading academics across Scotland that was published *The Sunday Times*. They said:

“We cannot and must not allow Scotland and the UK to lose the leading role they have in these networks, as it is not easily replaced. Unfortunately, we are already seeing a loss of leadership in research collaboration since the Brexit vote.”

It is useful to look at the total funding that Scotland received from framework programme 7, which is the programme that preceded horizon 2020. It received €729.5 million, including €3 million for marine renewables research at the UHI in my region. Such projects make a real difference to innovation across the region. They often build on the platform of major structural fund investment over the past three decades, which has made such a difference to my region’s economy. There were plans to develop in key sectors, such as renewables and the health sciences, in the remainder of the horizon 2020 programme and as part of the future horizon Europe activity, but those plans have been limited as a result of Brexit.

Time is against me, so I will make a final key point. We probably need the predictive powers of the Brahan seer to be able to identify the next steps in the Brexit process. The challenge for Scotland in the future is twofold. We need to maintain the spend on research and use every technique to secure the best and brightest talent from across Europe and beyond. Brexit casts a dark shadow, but by using our history of innovation and scientific endeavour, we will continue to create new knowledge for generations yet unborn.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): So far, members have had a bit of leeway, but from now on we will need to be a bit tighter. I ask for speeches of up to six minutes.

15:52

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Most members of the Scottish Parliament will be aware of the world-acclaimed reputation of the Golden Jubilee national hospital in Clydebank. Although it provides a wide range of services, it is best known as the home of the regional and national heart and lung service, a flagship hospital for reducing waiting times and the Golden Jubilee research institute. On the research side of the hospital’s work, significant pharmaceutical research projects have been undertaken. Twenty-three such projects are under way, 10 per cent of the research funding for which comes directly from the EU, and 30 per cent of the staff at the hospital are non-UK citizens.

The Golden Jubilee national hospital is truly an international undertaking located in Scotland. Indeed, many overseas medical researchers are drawn there because of the superb facilities and the high reputation of the work that has been undertaken. The Golden Jubilee is also one of the biggest employers in my constituency. It employs more than 1,700 staff, and its plans to extend the building and its facilities and to increase staff levels to 2,900 are well advanced.

Unfortunately, Brexit has already had a negative effect on the hospital’s workload. Recently, trials of a new heart drug were halted by the Californian medical research group Recardio, which cited

“uncertainty due to EU withdrawal”.

While drug trial work in UK hospitals has been cancelled by Recardio, it has continued with such work at continental European facilities. The major problem seems to be medicines regulation post-Brexit. It is not certain that the European Medicines Agency will accept data that is generated in the UK post-Brexit, which means that all internationally funded medical research in the UK is under threat.

My constituent Dr Kevin Parsons, who is a biodiversity lecturer at the University of Glasgow, is preparing what is likely to be his final European research grant application. The grant amounts to €2 million, which is his research group’s biggest source of funding, and it has provided continuity for his research projects for several years. Members can imagine how damaging the loss of that funding will be.

European research networks, which foster collaborative work across the EU, are already dropping their UK partners because of Brexit-

related uncertainty. The fact that the UK pays in less for European research than it gets suggests that the UK's research industry will experience a significant loss after Brexit. Of course, foreign-born academics will follow the money.

The UK Home Office has been less than helpful to retaining in Scotland the high-quality foreign-born academics who we need to keep our research and development industry at the forefront of world achievement.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Along with other Health and Sport Committee members, I visited the Golden Jubilee hospital to see its excellent facilities. When we were there, we were told that recruitment of medical staff is as much of an issue, and that is his Government's responsibility. Does Gil Paterson have any comments on that and on the shortage of specialists?

Gil Paterson: Miles Briggs tries to conflate two different things. [*Interruption.*] If the member will let me finish, I will say that the impact that Brexit is already having on the Golden Jubilee is clear. By referring to the situation of one of my constituents, I will explain further the damage that is likely to happen.

Last year, my constituent Dr Kevin Parsons, who is a Canada-born academic at the University of Glasgow, came face to face with the mindless and insensitive bureaucracy of the Home Office. He came to Scotland under his wife's UK ancestry visa in 2012. When she applied for UK citizenship, he was advised to apply for indefinite leave to remain, which he required to continue his work. His application was refused on a technicality.

At Glasgow university, Dr Parsons managed a research group that employed two highly educated researchers and included three postgraduates who were working for their PhDs. He attracted external research funding that paid for the whole group. That enhanced the university's research reputation and assisted with the university's finances generally. To make things worse, a £1.3 million grant from the UK Government for Dr Parsons to continue his research, which he received a few weeks before the refusal, could have been lost, while that Government was at the same time threatening his right to stay in Scotland. Fortunately, after a substantial public outcry, Dr Parsons was granted indefinite leave to remain.

That Home Office incompetence could have resulted in the closure of the biodiversity research group at Glasgow university; the loss of substantial research funding to Scotland; the loss of three well paid and highly skilled research jobs; the loss of study opportunities for three postgraduate students; and the deportation of a young family who have much to offer Scotland. That example is from just one project.

All that would have harmed Scottish society, and that incompetence happened before Brexit. With a no-deal result from the Brexit negotiations, the prospects for international research collaboration and for the Scottish research industry will be sorely damaged. With no deal, Scotland will lose significant EU funding; international medical research funding; its worldwide reputation for excellent research and academic achievement; postgraduate opportunities; the ability to properly staff our hospitals and our research establishments; and much more.

It is therefore essential for the UK to remain in the customs union and the single market after Brexit. That is the only way in which Scotland's research industry will survive at its present level.

16:00

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to take part in this debate on the future of Scotland's international research collaborations. The sector has done much already and we should rightly be proud of what it has achieved to date and will continue to achieve in the future.

Scotland is renowned for its innovative scientific research, and much of its success has been the result of international collaborations between both individuals and institutions from across the EU and around the world. In my region, I see much that has been and is being achieved in those institutions and I pay tribute to many of them: they are world leading in their sectors and I am confident that that will continue once we leave the EU.

Although EU funding is important and very much welcome, we should note that the £105 million of EU funding received by Scottish universities in 2016-17 accounts for only 13.5 per cent of their total research income. The vast majority of research funding, totalling £630 million, came from UK sources. That is a massive contribution and it happens because our facilities are held in such high regard, and, as I said, that will continue. The UK Government has provided some welcome reassurances to research institutions by committing to guarantee research funding that has been promised until 2020.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the member accept that 2020 is not that far away?

Alexander Stewart: Yes, I am well aware that 2020 is not that far away, but it is the starting point and we will continue to move forward from then as we see the success that is gained.

Moreover, as part of the financial settlement that has been agreed between the UK and the European Commission, both the UK and the EU have agreed that the eligibility of UK researchers and businesses to participate in horizon 2020 will remain unchanged for the duration of the programme.

Although that is good news for the short term until 2020, we must continue to have strong working relationships with research institutions in the EU after that date. John Mason makes the very point that we will continue to do that. There is every possibility that we will continue to participate in the horizon programme as a third country in the same way as many non-EU countries are participating in the current horizon 2020 programme. That needs to become a reality; we need to ensure that we have that safeguard in place so that, after 2020, it becomes a reality.

Moreover, in the white paper on the future relationship between the EU and the UK, the Government proposed close co-operation between the UK and the EU on scientific research through co-operative accords, which seek to continue the UK's participation in EU research funding programmes, and to allow us to continue to co-operate through networks, institutions, infrastructure, agencies and regulators where there is mutual benefit to the UK and the EU in our doing so.

It is incredibly important that the best and brightest researchers from the EU and other parts of the world can be here. We can look at what we have achieved so far by having such individuals here; they make a massive contribution to our facilities and will continue to do so. Currently, 19 per cent of researchers in Scotland are from the EU and 16 per cent are from other parts of the world. There is an opportunity for that to continue to grow and blossom.

It is reassuring that the UK Government has confirmed that EU citizens' right of residency after Brexit will be guaranteed, as those citizens include many researchers who are already here. We are attempting to ensure that safeguards are in place before we get to that point to ensure that it happens, because that is what we require. I am confident that that will be the case as we go forward.

We need to look at the visa system that we have in order for universities to secure the highest calibre researchers. I call on the UK Government to keep that in mind as we shape a new immigration system following our departure from the EU.

Gillian Martin: Will the member take an intervention?

Alexander Stewart: I would like to make some progress.

The Scottish Conservatives recognise the incredible value of our scientific research sector; it is world leading and must continue to be a world-leading sector. We have heard that we punch above our weight in Scotland. That has very much been the case, and I know that that will continue, because we have individuals, organisations and institutions that want to ensure that we keep that reputation.

We understand the importance of getting a good deal with the European Union to ensure continued international research co-operation and collaboration. I am confident that the UK Government will achieve that. The economic, social and cultural benefits are considerable. I support the amendment in Oliver Mundell's name.

16:05

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): We seem to have been debating Brexit in the chamber and in committees for a fairly long time. However, like it or not, we still need to focus on the implications—the barriers that might spring up and the impact on reputation, which is also important.

Sadly, the impact on our universities and wider science and research communities was not carefully considered before the EU referendum vote. As in other areas, it has become increasingly clear from the work of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee—both of which I sit on—that many sectors, including the one that we are talking about today, are being seriously impacted on by Brexit. Whatever the intentions of people who voted for Brexit were, the message has gone out, and continues to go out, that the UK is isolationist and does not welcome foreigners.

Freedom of movement is probably the key factor in today's debate; several members have mentioned it. We want students to come here and study, and we want our students to be able to go to the best institutions around the world. We want top academics and researchers to make their homes here—or, at least, to be able freely to move around the world and around universities, including our own.

Miles Briggs: I think that we would all agree with what John Mason has said. However, how does he square that view with regard to Scottish medical students? As things stand under his Government, only 50 per cent of Scots applicants to medical school get to study at Scottish medical schools. That figure is down from 75 per cent when his party came to power.

John Mason: As I understand it, visas for medical students and any other students are still controlled by the Home Office. We certainly want more foreign students to come here, as well as wanting our students to be able to study overseas.

As other members have said, it is clear that Scotland's universities and their research are very much at the top end. For example, 77 per cent of Scotland's university research is deemed to be "world-leading" or "internationally excellent". Richard Lochhead and Iain Gray referred to figures, such as that nine of Scotland's universities rank in the top 200. Scotland is second in the world for top universities per head of population—only marginally behind Switzerland.

Many examples of funding have been given, including the horizon 2020 case study on the European prevention of Alzheimer's dementia. The University of Edinburgh is involved with public and private sector organisations across Europe. At UK level, too, there has been great benefit from EU research projects. From 2007 to 2013, the UK contributed €5.4 billion and got back €8.8 billion.

Comments from Scotland's five medical schools are telling. Chances to lead international collaborations and clinical trials could be lost, so our world-class reputation could suffer. The schools say that it is not just about funding; there are concerns about connectivity, and about the ability to address major healthcare questions because of multipopulations being lost to them. Networks and collaborations that have taken years to formulate could be put in jeopardy, and there has already been a loss of leadership in research collaborations since the Brexit vote, as other members have mentioned.

We can thank the Royal Society of Edinburgh for its briefing for today's debate. It argues along similar lines by talking about the complementarity of the UK and EU research funding systems having made the UK an excellent place to have a research career. The RSE emphasises that it is necessary for the UK to attract and retain the highest-quality staff from across the globe, as well as to continue to develop the domestic skills base. Tavish Scott cited RSE figures, such as 18 per cent of academic staff in Scotland being from the EU. The RSE also highlights that 31 per cent of such staff are non-UK citizens. That figure rises to 46 per cent for engineering and technology staff. In addition, 22 per cent of Scottish university students are international students.

The RSE makes the point that researchers and innovators want and need to work with the best in their fields. Therefore, even if the UK Government maintains funding for UK research, we would still lose full UK participation in EU programmes and lose the benefits of collaborative activity and the critical mass that the EU gives.

The RSE calls for full participation in horizon 2020 and horizon Europe, but warns that "associated status" for the UK may be the only option, and that that is

"very uncertain and unpredictable territory".

It seeks a proportionate and flexible immigration policy that takes into account the needs and circumstances of devolved nations. As, I think, we have discussed here before, the RSE considers that students should be removed from the net migration target, and that the post-study work visa should be available for international students at universities.

I want to mention a specific sector: the space industry, particularly Glasgow's satellite sector. Scotland's space industry is reckoned to generate about £1 billion for the economy and supports 20,000 jobs. Glasgow produces more satellites than any city outside the USA. Scotland's first satellite was launched only four years ago by Clyde Space Ltd. Alba Orbital and Spire Global also operate in the city. The Strathclyde space institute, which is based at the University of Strathclyde, has seven horizon 2020 projects that have a total value of €25 million.

The European Space Agency is distinct from the European Union, so the UK could leave the European Union and remain a member of the agency. However, my understanding is that it would not be eligible to participate in EU-funded programmes, which would be a problem.

Presiding Officer, if I have no leeway, I will finish here.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, Mr Mason.

16:11

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this afternoon's debate.

Many of us have universities in our constituencies and regions: the University of St Andrews and the University of Stirling are in my region. I graduated with a degree from the University of Edinburgh, before gaining a doctorate at the University of Glasgow. My undergraduate roommate was from America, and I studied for a PhD alongside a student from Turkey.

Despite our being a small country in population terms, we have an impressive number of excellent universities and research institutions that attract talent from overseas. We have seen Scotland lead on research and innovation and work collaboratively with other universities, especially in

the European Union. Scotland punches above its weight.

In December 2017, Universities UK highlighted the vital contribution that EU staff make to UK universities through its #brightestminds campaign. That included a collection of case studies highlighting the research and stories of leading EU academics who were working in UK universities, including in Scotland. It illustrated the world-class research that is carried out by European staff in the UK and how that could be hindered by further Brexit uncertainty.

Today's debate focuses on scientific excellence. In 2015-16, 59 per cent of European Economic Area staff worked in departments that were defined by the Higher Education Statistics Agency as science, engineering or technology, which are all positive growth areas in our economy.

I am sure that academics in members' regions have been raising concerns, and that members in the chamber this afternoon are well aware of the potential impact of Brexit on our higher and further education sector.

Many members who have spoken today took part in the debate that was held by the then Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations committee following our inquiry into Erasmus+. Despite the fact that the debate took place in May, and negotiations have been continuous, many of the concerns still apply today. The future of Erasmus+, along with horizon Europe, will have a significant impact on our further and higher institutions and our leading research institutions.

The committee's report into Erasmus+ found that many organisations and sectors are particularly reliant on the funding and opportunities that the programme provides, so losing their ability to participate could have a significant impact. The committee found that the Department for Exiting the European Union had failed to produce any analysis into the role and value of Erasmus+. In the light of the UK Government's lack of activity, we urged the Scottish Government to conduct such analysis for Scottish institutions, and to explore the possibility of using existing structures, such as Education Scotland and the British Council Scotland, to develop a framework for continued participation beyond 2020.

I note that the Conservative amendment highlights the Prime Minister's decision to commit to continued membership of Erasmus+ until 2020, but that is only a one-year extension. Our universities have to be able to commit to forward planning beyond that extension period, so I hope that the minister can outline in his closing remarks the work that the Government has undertaken to explore other options.

There is no doubt that just as Brexit risks the future of Erasmus+, so it risks the ability and ease with which collaborative research is carried out. Horizon 2020 funding accounts for hundreds of projects across 89 collaborating countries and more than 2,000 organisations. Scottish HEIs receive 13 per cent of the UK share of that funding, which accounts for 9 per cent of our total research funding. That funding is vital, so we must find ways to continue to contribute to and benefit from its successor programme, horizon Europe.

Universities Scotland makes it clear that

"if Scotland is to retain its outstanding reputation for delivering world-class research, with worldwide impact, then membership of Horizon Europe is essential."

It must go beyond simply being members; it must be about informing the programme's development and ensuring that our universities and researchers are able to take advantage of the grants, the networks and the data that are available. That will be difficult as we become a third partner. Until we have a deal or—at the very least—guarantees from Westminster and Brussels of the UK's continued involvement, as with Erasmus+, there is limited scope for our universities to forward plan.

We must also heed the warnings of leading academics who, last month, wrote an open letter referring to the "dire consequences" that are facing Scottish higher education as Brexit and, in particular, the ending of free movement risk the already well-established co-operation opportunities that are open to academics, students, researchers and scientists.

Moreover, as our students want to go to Milan or Barcelona to learn and work, so students from across Europe see Scotland as a popular destination of choice and want to come here to learn in our renowned and respected universities and research facilities. We should not be closing a door on the collaborative work that can drive research and benefit the country as a whole.

Last week, Professor Alan Manning, who is the chair of the UK Government Migration Advisory Committee, gave evidence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee. What he said did not fill me with confidence. The advisory committee's recent report on international students lays out, in no uncertain terms, the impact of Brexit on students and on our universities, stating:

"We do not, though, see any upside for the sector in leaving the EU: any barriers to student mobility are likely to have a negative impact".

It is therefore disappointing that, despite acknowledging this, the MAC explicitly called for the UK Government not to introduce a separate post-study work visa.

The fresh talent initiative, which was introduced by Jack McConnell and the then Labour-led Executive, had a clear positive impact on student recruitment and retention.

I was part of the cross-party steering group on post-study work that was brought together by the then Minister for Europe and International Development, Humza Yousaf, and which recently lobbied the UK Government for the post-study work visa's reintroduction. The group has been united in our approach. It was clear to us that, given Scotland's slower population growth, the need to expand our workforce and the existing skills shortages in certain sectors, the provision of opportunities for non-EU international graduates in Scotland is vital.

The ending of free movement for EU students will make the situation even more acute. According to Universities Scotland, more than 12 per cent of staff in Scotland's HEIs and 16 per cent of postgraduate researchers are from the EU. Scotland's EU workforce is young and is concentrated in academic roles, particularly in science.

At last week's meeting of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, the Migration Advisory Committee's chair talked about the UK Government's ambition for a high-skills, high-wage economy. If we are to achieve that, knowledge exchange and increasing intellectual capacity are key. Success in those areas relies on international engagement. The university and research sector must be listened to and its needs positively responded to if we are to avoid damaging that important sector.

16:19

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I welcome Richard Lochhead to his new role.

In July 2017, the London School of Economics and Political Science's cities centre published a report that contained the finding that Aberdeen could be the worst-hit city in the UK as a result of Brexit. The report's authors concluded that, under a hard Brexit, economic output in the city would go down by 3.7 per cent and that, under a soft Brexit, it would be reduced by 2.1 per cent.

That is the stark reality that faces my constituents because Scotland is being taken out of the EU against its will, even though just over 61 per cent of the people of Aberdeen voted to remain in the EU. Let me say to Mr Mundell that I know where my interests lie: with my constituents.

The University of Aberdeen, which over the years has built a strong reputation as a research-

intensive university with a strong international outlook, says that it is

“extremely concerned about the impact that Britain's exit from the European Union will have on our research, student recruitment and the learning experience we offer. Obviously the possibility of a no-deal Brexit heightens these risks further.”

In February 2018, the then principal and vice-chancellor Sir Ian Diamond stated at a Westminster reception that the UK Government needed to clarify the rights of EU citizens in higher education—not just lecturers, but other staff such as language assistants and technicians—and their families to live and work in the UK. Now we are in November and, with each day, we are edging closer to a no-deal outcome, but we still have no more of an idea about what the future will bring for EU nationals who live in our communities.

Of course, the issue of citizenship and the right to remain extends beyond people who study or work in higher education. I am sure that, like me, other MSPs have had EU nationals contacting their offices for advice about Brexit. My constituency office window is full of adverts for upcoming EU citizenship events and is regularly updated as new events are announced. Indeed, the marine laboratory in Torry, which Tavish Scott mentioned, is very near my constituency office and has many Europeans among its staff.

As a result of Brexit, higher education institutions stand to lose talented students, devoted staff and vital access to EU funding programmes such as horizon 2020, which is now known as horizon Europe. Retaining access and membership of horizon Europe was described as “essential” by Universities Scotland and, according to the Royal Society of Scotland, should be “a priority” for the UK Government.

Some years ago, I was involved in the GILDED—governance, infrastructure, lifestyle dynamics and energy demand—project through the James Hutton Institute, which Tavish Scott also mentioned and which has one of its sites in my constituency. As part of that pan-European project, there was collaboration with institutions in Poland and the Netherlands. Now we are all fearful of the uncertainty, which is already damaging things. I understand that Universities UK is continuing to lobby the UK Government to make contingency plans in the event that access to such funding is lost. Perhaps the UK Government will use some of the supposed £350 million a week in savings that were emblazoned on the leave buses to help with the situation, but I am not holding my breath.

We can be proud that nine of Scotland's universities are in the global top 200 for international outlook, as that demonstrates our appeal to students and academics from across the

world. However, with Brexit, our universities stand to lose the opportunity to collaborate with other European universities; they also stand to lose students, who are worried about their right to study here. According to Universities and Colleges Admissions Service statistics, EU students coming to Scotland fell by 10 per cent in 2017. Can we blame them for being worried about the implications of Brexit and what it might mean for their right to study at our universities? It sends out the wrong message—that they are unwelcome—when the truth is that Scotland has always welcomed citizens from the EU and beyond with open arms.

Ross Greer and others have mentioned the importance of the Erasmus programme, which was championed by Winnie Ewing when she was a member of the European Parliament. My daughter benefited hugely from her year abroad—she is now bilingual and working in Paris. I brought my children up to believe that the world was their oyster; little did I believe that I was telling them a lie.

Our loss is other European universities' gain. The centre for global higher education at University College London has reported that it became evident in February 2018 that European universities were using the uncertainty of Brexit to poach UK-based academics, with Germany in particular standing to benefit. The report notes that Germany sees Brexit as a "window of opportunity" to attract UK-based researchers, which is ironic considering the relentless promises about the opportunities of Brexit that we hear from the Conservative Government.

The real opportunities could be grasped by remaining in the European single market and the customs union. That would avert the need to consider any sort of contingency planning to protect our valued educational institutions from the damaging consequences of Brexit. Instead, not only is our higher education sector facing threats but, as we now know, the very being of the Scottish Parliament is being threatened by the shameful Tory Westminster Government.

16:25

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): We have heard much today about the vital work that our UK and Scottish research institutions carry out. That work is world leading. From the Fraunhofer centre for applied photonics at the University of Strathclyde to the first international Max Planck institute partnerships, we have heard from all members about Scotland's long history of and reputation for scientific prowess, with the potential for much more in the future.

The Conservatives welcome the recent news that Glasgow will be home to a £15.8 million artificial intelligence health research centre as part of the UK Government's plans to utilise artificial intelligence in the healthcare sector. That is a major boost for Scotland's life sciences sector. The industrial centre for artificial intelligence research in digital diagnostics, which is to be known as iCaird, will examine how AI can enable better patient diagnosis, treatment and outcomes. Anna Dominiczak, who is vice-principal and head of the college of medical, veterinary and life sciences at the University of Glasgow, said:

"The formation of iCaird is a great coup for Scotland and its people, and further positions Scotland's ability to be a global leader in precision medicine.

The iCaird epitomises our 'triple helix' approach to healthcare innovation and precision medicine by developing research and innovation concurrently in industry, the NHS and academia.

By locating at the Clinical Innovation Zone at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, alongside partners in industry and the NHS, iCaird will also drive open innovation and encourage further industry collaborations."

We have heard that we are all proud of the reputation of the research that Scotland's institutions conduct and produce. Some 77 per cent of Scotland's university research is deemed world leading or internationally excellent. In addition, 85.9 per cent of Scottish research is judged to have an outstanding or very considerable impact on the economy, society and culture beyond academia.

The motion highlights the challenges that we face, but it fails to acknowledge the great potential and positivity that we all must work towards as we move towards leaving the European Union. This has been mentioned before, but, as we all know, until the UK leaves the EU, we have the reassurance that we will remain a member state, with all the rights and obligations that that entails. That means that UK entities are eligible to participate in all aspects of the horizon 2020 programme until we leave the EU. I think that John Mason mentioned that it is not long until 2020. Moving forward, we need to support a deal specifically for the sector.

Looking forward, I think that it is significant that the UK Government has signalled a commitment to the future of our country and the world through our goal to increase UK research and development spending to 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product by 2027.

Alistair Jarvis, who is chief executive of Universities UK, has backed our commitment to horizon 2020 funding, saying:

"The extension of the UK government's underwrite until the end of the Horizon 2020 program is welcome news."

I think that we all welcome that news. He also mentioned that that is guaranteed even if there is a no-deal scenario, which, of course, we do not want. We want everyone to get behind a UK Government deal and behind the Prime Minister.

The UK Government has proposed post-Brexit co-operation in the sciences between the UK and the EU. The UK Government's white paper on our future relationship with the EU includes science and innovation among the areas that will be covered by the co-operative accords that will replace our current relationship with the EU. As we leave the EU, it is inevitable that freedom of movement will end, but the UK Government has made it clear that a flexible system will be put in place to attract the brightest and best research students and researchers.

No matter what members on the other side of the chamber try to spin or put a negative angle on, we know that EU citizens' right of residence after Brexit is guaranteed. Let us be really clear about that. The UK Government has introduced the settled status scheme, so EU citizens will have that right and can remain in the UK after 2020. The UK Government is also proposing the continuation of cultural exchange programmes for students and the creation of a UK and EU mobility scheme. John Swinney mentioned the post-study work visa scheme, which is something that Liz Smith has been championing. We have not had a definitive no, and we would like to continue to support that.

Joan McAlpine: The member has given assurances, as have her colleagues, on the status of EU citizens. Why, then, does Universities Scotland's submission to the Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee raise so many questions about the status of EU citizens? Universities Scotland is clearly not convinced by those reassurances.

Rachael Hamilton: Perhaps it has not actually read about the settled status scheme—*[Interruption.]* Honestly, we say time and time again that there is a settled status scheme, which is a reassurance for those people that they will be able to stay in the UK post-Brexit.

On that point, we have to be careful, because there are many people from the EU in scientific research roles here. They make up 19 per cent, with about 67 per cent coming from the rest of the UK. We need to ensure that we have lots and lots of excellent researchers—the brightest and the best—not only from the rest of the UK but from the EU and from non-EU countries. We need to get behind that, and we absolutely can do that. I think that Joan McAlpine should reassure Scottish universities about that.

I reiterate that Brexit is not the end point of great scientific research in the UK and Scotland, as the Government's motion suggests. The negativity and lack of co-operation from the Government on Brexit matters are stifling the progress of what Scotland and the UK can achieve. The constant interventions from back benchers are so negative. It is a grievance agenda and it is not a positive approach. We have such potential here. We have the brightest and the best, but we want to attract more. It is just a shame that the SNP cannot see that.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to the closing speeches. I call Tavish Scott, to be followed by Iain Gray.

16:32

Tavish Scott: I am not sure that too many members on the Conservative benches read in preparation for the debate the briefings from Universities Scotland or the Royal Society of Edinburgh or the evidence that the individual institutions that Joan McAlpine mentioned have given to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee. It would do them good to do so.

To help Miles Briggs, as I suspect that poor old Miles has to do the wind-up speech for the Conservatives, I have dug out the University of Edinburgh statistics, given that he is one of our Lothian members. The University of Edinburgh has participated in more than 300 European collaborative projects, and in the current year it has received something in the order of £403 million for new research—that is European Union research grants. Since 1987, the university has sent more than 12,000 students to Europe. I am sure that, in his wind-up speech, Mr Briggs will want to consider the impact on the University of Edinburgh, never mind the impacts on Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University or the other institutions in the capital city of Scotland.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): May I add to that list? Not only are those figures notable, but Edinburgh is one of the biggest recipients of European research funding not just in Scotland but in the whole of the UK.

Tavish Scott: With its endless modesty, the University of Edinburgh does not mention that in its briefing, but I entirely take Daniel Johnson's point.

I want to make two other points to members on the Conservative benches. There has been some mention of an ability to look way beyond 2020. To begin with, I thought that that was a wonderful new pitch for a new timescale for the transition period. However, the point about the horizon 2020 project is that nothing whatsoever is guaranteed post

2020. That project is the reason why the University of Edinburgh and others have been able to garner the extent of research funding that they have received over the years. It is not about a guarantee of funding until 2020. It is about what happens after that.

Anyone who asks questions of universities and finds out about the subject will hear about the time that it takes to put projects together, which can be from now until 2020. That is the danger that the academic institutions of Scotland and indeed the rest of the UK face. If Jamie Greene has an answer to that, I will happily give way.

Jamie Greene: Mr Scott is right. We need to look beyond 2020. I know that the UK minister for this area made an announcement recently that he is having a very active and positive discussion with the EU about it. In that context, it is valid to negotiate how much the UK should pay into the EU and what access the UK gets in return, but I am enthused that there is a positive conversation about what happens after 2020.

Tavish Scott: We will look forward to that conversation.

Of course, academics and the student body are a part of society that is in favour of a rational, evidence-based opportunity to explore and then test the merits of whatever deal emerges from the Brexit negotiations. Today, Parliament can support that position. Today could be a significant moment for the Scottish Parliament and the UK-wide campaign to stop a calamitous Brexit. On three previous occasions, only the Liberal Democrat members voted for a referendum on the terms of the Brexit deal. Today, that outcome could be very different. I welcome the support of the SNP and the Greens. There are more and more senior figures in other parties adding their voices—among the Conservatives, we have notable figures such as the former Prime Minister, John Major, Justine Greening, Heidi Allen and Sarah Wollaston. There are not many obsessives there, I suggest.

We also know that the overwhelming majority of Labour supporters in Scotland do not agree with a pro-Brexit policy. Senior figures such as Sadiq Khan, Chuka Umunna and Ian Murray have led the charge, and many reasonable Labour members here today also consider that that position needs to change. There is a real momentum now and a demonstrable shift in attitudes in every corner of the UK. Last month, we witnessed the second biggest public demonstration in Britain in the past century.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Tavish Scott: I will finish these points. Seven hundred thousand people took part, a number that was surpassed only by the number of people who protested against the Iraq war. Nobody voted for the current chaos. People are entitled to have the final say on that deal, whenever London and Brussels conclude it. That is what should happen and Parliament should vote for that today. Many academics think that their MSPs should be doing exactly that.

That brings me to the examples that were made today in a range of areas, particularly on the immigration system. Joan McAlpine, Ross Greer and a number of others mentioned the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee and its recommendations. With regard to Jamie Greene's point about trying to find a way forward, in its briefing for today's debate, the RSE made an important point that bears close examination. It said that, in support of many parliamentary committees in London and Edinburgh, it has strongly pushed the idea that the UK Government should remove student migration from the net migration target to make it clear that it wants talent to come to the UK. Coupled with that, it should reintroduce the post-study work visa for international students at all universities. Taking those actions together would alleviate the tension between the UK Government's commitment to reduce net migration and its ambition to ensure that the UK remains a hub for international talent.

We all await that outcome and many have been pushing for it for some considerable time. We are long overdue a sensible outcome to what is an unanswerable case, which will support academic institutions and student bodies here in Scotland and right around the UK.

I will reflect on two comments that were made in the Nobel laureates' letter to the Prime Minister, which I mentioned earlier. The first was that

"Europe was the home of the enlightenment and the birthplace of modern science, but partly as a result of two devastating ... wars in Europe ... it suffered a"

relative

"decline".

It went on to argue that that has changed and that, rather than inhibiting progress, the benefits that have come through EU-related collaboration have led to great advances in science and, therefore, an increase in the number of opportunities that are available to the economy and the public in the wider community.

Those are very strong arguments and, on that basis, it seems to me to be unanswerable that the case must continue to be made.

16:39

Iain Gray: This afternoon, as expected, we have heard many examples of Scotland's success in scientific research and of our universities' excellence. Indeed, Dr Claire Baker, with her stellar qualifications, demonstrated how she epitomises that excellence. She pointed out an important European project that is sometimes missed in these debates, which is Erasmus+. Other members have mentioned its importance. Ross Greer made it clear that colleges, as well as universities, participate in Europe-wide collaborations, and Gil Paterson made an important point about how such institutions as the Golden Jubilee hospital engage in international collaborative cutting-edge research. This debate is not just about our universities; it is much wider than that.

At one stage, we had quite an entertaining diversion into a debate about obsession. Mr Mundell posited Mr Scott's obsession with a people's vote and Mr Scott responded by pointing out the obsession of Jacob Rees-Mogg and other colleagues with Brexit. I spoke about social scientists as well as scientists, because one of our great social scientists was, of course, Adam Smith. He once said:

"Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition".

I hope that it is true that science can be part of the antidote to the rather poisonous enthusiasm for Brexit of the likes of Jacob Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson or to the superstition in the highly dubious claims that they and some of their colleagues have made about the benefits, which Maureen Watt spoke about.

Therein lies the problem with the Tories' contributions and their amendment. Mr Mundell spoke, in all sincerity I am sure, of his desire for

"a smooth and orderly Brexit",

which is the thrust of the Tory amendment. The trouble for Mr Mundell is that there appears to be no such thing. Alexander Stewart spoke about his confidence that there would be every possible continuation of participation and collaboration in research. However, I tell Mr Stewart that no one has any confidence in that continued participation.

Oliver Mundell: Does Mr Gray not recognise that, if the UK Labour Party in the House of Commons got seriously behind Theresa May's approach to build a consensus, we would be in a stronger position to deliver certainty?

Iain Gray: I absolutely do not, because Theresa May's approach to Brexit has been a catastrophe. I will say more about that later.

Rachael Hamilton complained to members on the Government benches about the negativity of

the Government's motion, which we will support. I bow to nobody in my scepticism of the Scottish Government, but even I cannot stretch that to say that the problem with Brexit is its negativity about the Brexit deal.

The problem is the lack of confidence among people in our scientific community about what is happening. Gillian Martin said that they do not know what kind of Brexit they are looking at and Mr Scott pointed out that only 3 per cent of the scientific community feel that they are being listened to in any way at all. Joan McAlpine and David Stewart gave us exact illustrations of damage that has already happened, through the experience of the UHI and a fall in funding. The problem for Mr Mundell is that nobody believes that this Tory Government can deliver or is delivering

"a smooth and orderly Brexit".

That is also our difficulty with the Liberal Democrat amendment. I personally find the idea of a people's vote very attractive, as do many colleagues—as Mr Scott has said. However, I find even more attractive the idea of a general election and the prospect of an opportunity to get rid of the shambolic Conservative Government. It is entirely responsible for the whole sorry mess of Brexit, and its utterly incompetent two years of so-called negotiation is damaging our science and research base in Scotland and so much else besides. A general election remains the Labour Party's preference to find our way out of the mess that has been created by the Conservative Government.

16:44

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to close today's debate for the Scottish Conservatives. On a positive note, I join colleagues from all parties who have commended the excellent work of Scotland's scientists and researchers and the massive contribution that science, innovation and research make to the Scottish economy.

That is especially so in Lothian, with its vibrant life sciences sector that underpins many local jobs. Earlier this year, I visited Edinburgh Genomics at the Roslin Institute and was able to see its clinical facility and gene sequencing labs. The work that is being undertaken by Professor Bruce Whitelaw and his team is truly inspiring and has massive potential for the future, which means that Scotland is today well placed to play a leading role in exploiting and showing the world the potential for genetic technologies to make significant impact on health provision.

We all need to get behind and champion the work of those pioneering scientists, and we have

heard that today from some members. Rachael Hamilton, Jamie Greene and Alexander Stewart specifically took the opportunity of the debate to do that in their own areas. Any new political deal with the EU—and I am confident that a comprehensive deal will emerge in the next few weeks—might provide some short-term challenges to the funding systems, as we have outlined today, but the UK Government is committed to working with industry and academia to resolve issues and to support those sectors. Indeed, as Oliver Mundell outlined, early in the withdrawal process, the UK Government guaranteed funding for UK research projects otherwise supported by the EU until 2020. It is continuing to look at how it will support research after 2020.

A number of members have spoken specifically about horizon 2020. It is an important point that we on these benches have been working on. I wondered what the SNP's white paper said on the subject when it was making the case for Scotland to leave the UK and the EU. There is a lovely picture of Dolly the sheep but not much detail. It is important for today's debate to know that the white paper says:

“Our universities are already active players on the world stage extending their world-class teaching offering and forming partnerships and research collaborations across the globe. We are keen to further develop these collaborations ... as a sovereign nation state, to promote Scottish higher education overseas”.

I see nothing in that that the UK Government is not doing today.

Instead of spreading the doom and gloom that we have heard today, the SNP and the Scottish Government should be making a similar commitment to back these important sectors, look at what they can do to help them, and send out the message globally that Scotland and our United Kingdom are open for business and want to see more research, development and innovation take place here.

The fundamentals of our research and science sectors remain strong, not least because we have a high concentration of world-class universities such as the University of Edinburgh, Napier University and Heriot-Watt University providing highly skilled graduates, if Scots can get into their universities, as a number of members have outlined when talking about our medical degrees.

Scotland's life sciences sector is a key part of our international reputation for scientific excellence and our pharmaceutical industry is an important element of that. I welcome the recently published Fraser of Allander institute report on the economic contribution of the pharmaceutical industry in Scotland. It showed that the industry supports a total of £2.5 billion of industrial output in Scotland and that exports of manufactured pharmaceutical

products contribute £462 million to the Scottish economy and underpin 5,000 jobs across our country. Every 100 jobs in the wider pharmaceutical sector supports an additional 240 jobs elsewhere in the Scottish economy.

Concerns are being expressed, however, about falling levels of business spending on research and development in Scotland. SNP ministers have already fudged previous targets that they set themselves to grow the life sciences sector, so more needs to be done to encourage more investment, and we have ideas about how to achieve that.

SNP ministers could and should take action to ensure that data capturing capabilities do not slip back further than they already have. That means linking primary and secondary care data so that clinical trials can take place here in Scotland on a similar basis to trials such as GSK's Salford lung study in England. That is a major issue for pharma companies across Scotland and I would like to see the minister, whom I welcome to his new position, take it seriously so that Scotland does not fall behind the rest of the UK in some of these areas.

Scotland's research and scientific base is a success story, and I hope that today was about celebrating that. Scottish Conservatives value hugely the contribution of our scientists and researchers. Although we accept that Brexit might, in future, change some of the funding streams, we are confident that the UK Government and, if it steps up to the plate, the Scottish Government can work positively with industry and academia to put in place the new schemes that will grow the value of the sector and further boost our international reputation. We on these benches believe that the best days of Scotland's researchers and scientists lie ahead of them and Scotland.

On the points that were made by Tavish Scott, it is odd that someone who represents Shetland fishing interests forgot to mention the fact that, last week, we learned of the support to Scotland's fishing industry that is represented by the UK Government's announcement of an extra £12 million to develop and support cutting-edge fishing technologies and safety measures, with £10 million to establish an innovation fund. UK Research and Innovation will establish that fund to ensure that the UK is a world leader in safe, sustainable and productive fishing. Scotland can and must be a world leader in fisheries research, and we on these benches are committed to ensuring that it is.

The debate has demonstrated the fact that, at some point, SNP ministers are going to have to get behind Scotland and the United Kingdom in what is the most difficult political negotiation in a generation. The more the SNP talks down Scotland's science and innovation and research

sectors, the greater the impact there will be on international companies that are today looking to invest in our country.

Great countries come together to turn challenges into opportunities, and all of us in the chamber should be working to realise the potential of Scotland's research and scientific sectors in our Scottish economy.

I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Oliver Mundell.

16:51

Richard Lochhead: I welcome the debate and all the contributions from across the chamber, many of which I may well comment on. It reminds me that we want to pay tribute to our research community and our higher education and other institutions that make such an immense contribution to our economy and to developing knowledge and curiosity.

I was just thinking about a company in Forres in my constituency called Aurora Sustainability, which is developing sustainable materials for fish boxes, which are, of course, a big issue with regard to the world's oceans. One of the two people in the company is Scottish and the other is Italian. We have to remember that aspect of the impact of Brexit on research in this country. The issue is not only about research in our higher and research institutions; it affects people right across Scotland's economy.

There has been a lot of consensus in the debate around that contribution. There has even been a lot of consensus about the need to protect that contribution from the effects of Brexit. We must all rally round that consensus in the challenging months—potentially years—ahead. It is important that we maintain the ability of our researchers and staff to move back and forth between Scotland and Europe and that we maintain full participation in the European funding programmes.

The SNP and the Scottish Government will today support the Liberal Democrat amendment in the name of Tavish Scott, on the issue of the people's vote. It is, of course, a democratic outrage that Scotland faces being dragged out of the EU against our will, particularly given what we were told by the no campaign during the independence referendum in 2014. The people of Scotland voted to remain, and another EU referendum would be another opportunity to ensure that the wishes of the people of this country are respected, which is why we will support that amendment. Of course, it would be only an opportunity, not a guarantee, and it would not necessarily protect Scotland from the same outcome as that of the 2016 referendum.

We will also support the Labour Party amendment, which raises the issue of maintaining our participation in horizon 2020. Scotland has punched above its weight and secured €550 million during the current programme. It is important that we have full participation in the success of the horizon Europe programme.

The Conservative Party is being complacent over EU funding. If the withdrawal agreement is signed, the UK will continue to participate fully in EU programmes—and, therefore, Scottish organisations will be eligible to participate in all aspects of horizon 2020—but only until Brexit day. The big question is what happens thereafter. Even in terms of the deal that will be signed, there is a lack of clarity around our participation up to the end of the horizon 2020 programme. Those funds are valuable to Scotland, as they sustain jobs and enable people from Scotland to take part in collaborative research projects across Europe.

The Scottish Government will continue to do a lot of work to highlight the impact of Brexit on the sector and on Scottish research, science and innovation. We have a Brexit forum with the higher education research sector. I will take a delegation to London to meet the UK Government, to highlight the importance of protecting the sector. I will also soon take a delegation from across the sector to Brussels to make a case for continued participation in many of the programmes.

It is a bit rich for Rachael Hamilton to say that the only reason the SNP is discussing this issue is our "grievance agenda". It is a bit rich for the party that is taking Scotland out of Europe against its will to talk to us about a grievance agenda. The Conservative Party has a brass neck in putting forward its hard Brexiteer Oliver Mundell to champion and lead for the Conservative Party in a debate about a sector that will take one of the biggest hits from Brexit, which he voted for and supports.

Oliver Mundell: It is pretty rich for the cabinet secretary to call me a hard Brexiteer when his colleagues at Westminster refuse to say whether they will back a deal that will prevent a hard Brexit. The SNP is determined to undermine the United Kingdom and to set us back, and now it tells us that it wants to delay Brexit by another year, in order to have a rerun of an argument and a debate whose result it does not respect.

Richard Lochhead: Oliver Mundell accuses the SNP and the Scottish Government of being negative by highlighting this issue in the Scottish Parliament when it is having a negative impact. There is not one student, researcher, lecturer or member of the business community who thinks that we are going to be anything other than worse off with Brexit. Therefore, it is going to have a negative impact and the Scottish Conservative

Party should be telling the UK Government about that negative impact to prevent it from happening in the first place.

We need clarity over the settled status of EU nationals in Scotland—that is a big issue in campuses around Scotland. The Brexit secretary, Michael Russell, told us that he visited the University of Stirling and spoke to students there this morning about a report that it has carried out on the impact of Brexit on EU nationals who are studying at the university. The international students there feel anxious over the uncertainty that is being generated by Brexit. They feel that there has been a lack of information, which is a barrier to their plans to stay in Scotland and the UK. They highlighted the value of learning in a multicultural environment and expressed worry that Brexit might threaten that. That is what is happening out there and what the Conservative Party is being complacent about. We have to give certainty as soon as possible to EU students and to researchers and their staff who are from Europe and who are working and contributing to Scotland, because the Conservative Party and the UK Government are not doing that.

Indeed, how can the Conservative Party say that everything will be all right when, in October, the UK Prime Minister said that her proposals will end freedom of movement once and for all in the UK?

The development of new scientific approaches in Scotland has always depended on the free exchange of ideas between researchers regardless of geographical or political boundaries. That international collaboration is extremely important for Scotland and it delivers for our economy.

I met Dame Anne Glover, the President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, just a couple of days ago. She handed me issue 22 of *Science Scotland*—the summer 2018 issue—which is published by the RSE. This issue highlights nine of the most promising young companies in Scotland—nine entrepreneurs who have emerged from Scotland's higher education sector, in the main, and who are now starting up companies that we have high hopes will deliver jobs, innovation and research breakthroughs for the people of Scotland. Out of the nine entrepreneurs, three are people who have moved from other EU countries to live and work in Scotland and contribute to our country. They are among the people who will face barriers in the future, and that is why the UK Government's Brexit proposals will cause so much damage to our country. We need mobility and we need to be able to continue to be in these research programmes.

I will finish by reiterating some of the remarks that I made in my opening speech about why this

issue is so important to Scotland. I remind members that, compared with the rest of the UK, we employ proportionally more EU academic staff in our universities and institutions; we have proportionally more EU students; we have proportionally more outgoing domestic students participating in Erasmus+; we punch way above our weight in securing EU research funding; and we have a higher rate of full-time research staff from the EU working in our universities. That is why this issue is so important.

To finish, Iain Gray quoted Einstein on stupidity. At this time of year, that reminds me that, in 1910, a general who was asked whether there would be a war in Europe said that it would be “inconceivable stupidity” on the part of statesmen if such a scenario was to arise, and we know what happened in 1914. We will be remembering that this Sunday.

We have a situation now in which the stupidity of politicians in the Conservative Party and the UK Government has taken us to the brink of leaving the European Union, inflicting massive damage on our international reputation, Scottish jobs, research, funding and, potentially, the quality of life of the people of Scotland. We have to stop that from happening, which is why I ask Parliament to back the motion today.

Business Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-14657, 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 13 November 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 1: Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution - Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Committee Announcements

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 14 November 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 15 November 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 Debate: Physical Activity, Diet and Healthy Weight

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 20 November 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

followed by Committee Announcements

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 21 November 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Justice and the Law Officers;
Transport, Infrastructure and
Connectivity

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Scottish Crown Estate Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 22 November 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 Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

followed by Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee Debate: Scotland's Economic Performance

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 14 November 2018, 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"

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 15 November 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"

and

(d) that the Parliament agrees, for the purposes of its consideration of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill, under Rule 9.6.3A of the Standing Orders, that the Parliament shall consider the general principles of the Bill on the fourth sitting day after publication of the lead committee report.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S5M-14658 and S5M-14659, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on stage 1 timetables for two bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 31 May 2019.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 22 February 2019.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I call Graeme Dey to move motion S5M-14660, on designation of a lead committee, and motions S5M-14661 and S5M-14662, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill (UK Legislation).

That the Parliament agrees that the Renewables Obligation (Scotland) Amendment Order 2018 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland Social Security Chamber and Upper Tribunal for Scotland (Composition) Regulations 2018 [draft] be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-14638.1, in the name of Oliver Mundell, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14638, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on safeguarding Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence from the threat of Brexit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)

Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-14638.3, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Richard Lochhead, on safeguarding Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence from the threat of Brexit, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-14638.2, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Richard Lochhead, on safeguarding Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence from the threat of Brexit, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 30, Abstentions 20.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-14638, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on safeguarding Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence from the threat of Brexit, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
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 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
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 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
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 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
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 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 66, Against 28, Abstentions 21.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes with concern the growing number of voices within Scotland's research and science communities warning of the substantial threat that Brexit poses to Scotland's position as a leading nation in international science and research; understands the significant economic, social and cultural contributions that universities and other research institutions and their international collaborators bring to Scotland; believes that the UK Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations, including its commitment to ending freedom of movement, is undermining Scotland's worldwide reputation and threatening the mobility of students and researchers and full participation in European research programmes, and commits to exploring options to safeguard Scotland's international research collaborations and reputation for scientific excellence globally, including a focus from both the Scottish and UK governments on promoting the importance of Horizon Europe developing in a way that allows the UK to be involved, in addition to providing unequivocal support for a public vote on the final terms of the Brexit deal.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the three Parliamentary Bureau motions. Does anyone object?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: That is good. The question is, that motions S5M-14660, S5M-14661 and S5M-14662, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill (UK Legislation).

That the Parliament agrees that the Renewables Obligation (Scotland) Amendment Order 2018 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland Social Security Chamber and Upper Tribunal for Scotland (Composition) Regulations 2018 [draft] be approved.

Emergency Workers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14497, in the name of Liam Kerr, on emergency service workers. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commends the bravery and dedication of emergency service workers in the north east and across the country; recognises what it sees as their extraordinary efforts to keep everyone safe, working long hours in often difficult circumstances; acknowledges that this can include heading towards danger when others are running away; understands that, in 2016-17, over 3,000 offences were committed against these workers, with attacks often carried out by the very people that they were trying to help; condemns such assaults; regards an attack on any emergency worker as an attack on society itself, and thanks all emergency workers with the police, fire, ambulance, search and rescue, prison and other services for all the work that they do.

17:08

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank all the members who signed my motion and have allowed the debate to take place.

It is important to commend the emergency services for the work that they do in the north-east and throughout Scotland. It is particularly fitting that this evening's debate takes place so soon after bonfire night, which is one of the busiest and most challenging nights of the year for fire crews, paramedics and police officers.

I learned a great deal on 5 November. First, I joined north-east division police in Aberdeen to see at first hand their work in tackling a range of issues, including cybercrime, roads policing and motorbike and pushbike crime, as well as its partnership working in communities including Northfield and Mastrick. That evening, I was delighted also to be given the opportunity to see Dundee fire control room in action, as it dealt with bonfire night.

I record my apologies to the Scottish Ambulance Service for not being able to make it three emergency services on the same day, but members should not fear because, just this week, I accepted an invitation to visit the Scottish Ambulance Service regional headquarters in Aberdeen early next month.

A few things struck me from what I saw on the 5th. First, I was struck by the courage of officers on the ground. They go out there every day on our behalf, and often put themselves in difficult and dangerous situations. When a call comes in, out they go. That is the job.

Secondly, I was struck by the professionalism of officers and staff. In the control room, for example, I learned that staff there have shifts of up to 14 hours that mirror those of officers. That is 14 hours of high pressure and extreme intensity—especially on bonfire night.

As was made clear to me, at times of crisis, we require cool heads and a steady voice on the end of the line. That was, unfailingly, what I saw. I also picked up a willingness to stand together and send one single message—that those people are there to help us and that any attack on them must not be tolerated.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been running a campaign called #DoNotAttackMe, which aims to deter attacks on emergency personnel. Is not it shocking that there has to be a campaign to stop attacks on emergency personnel? I am afraid to report that the campaign is needed. I can reveal today new figures that the Lord Advocate provided in a written answer to me. Nearly 6,000 attacks on emergency workers were reported in 2017-18, which is an increase on the previous year. That is just the tip of the iceberg, because many assaults go unrecorded.

Perhaps of more concern is that while the number of reports has risen, the number of convictions has fallen. There were more than 3,300 convictions in 2016-17, but the figure fell to fewer than 2,800 in 2017-18. We must sustain the message beyond bonfire night. I know that members will stand together to condemn all violence that is directed at emergency workers.

We need to make sure that the people who attack and abuse our emergency workers—for the avoidance of doubt, I make it clear that those workers include the likes of prison officers and national health service professionals—face the full force of the law. As I make clear in my motion, an attack on them is “an attack on society”, on all of us and on the values that we hold.

For that reason, the Scottish Conservatives have outlined measures that we can take to protect our dedicated public servants. I will be pleased to hear other members’ thoughts on those measures and, in particular, whether the minister is on board.

There are two strands to our thinking. First, we must reduce the risk of violence in the first place. Prevention is always better than cure. I know that one of the best ways of reducing risk is through community engagement by the emergency services. Anecdotally, it seems that young people are the people who are most likely to get involved in such behaviour. If we talk to them before they start such conduct, there is a chance that we can prevent it altogether.

On Monday, I heard lots from both services about the good work that is being done. It happens in classrooms, in challenging neighbourhoods and even over a game of five-a-side through the likes of the streetsport programme in Aberdeen.

Another key to stopping the violence is intelligent use of stop and search. The review of the appalling attacks that took place against emergency crews on bonfire night last year identified a gap in police powers in respect of searching over-18s for fireworks. Unfortunately, again a number of serious incidents occurred this year, including youths firing fireworks directly at the police. The Scottish National Party must close the gap and stop such incidents happening again.

We must equip our services with the tools that they need to de-escalate situations. That means training, but it also means equipment. Body-worn cameras are worth serious consideration. We must be alive to their potential privacy implications, but their wider use could make attackers think twice and have the added benefit of capturing evidence that could be crucial to securing convictions.

When I mention kit and equipment, it almost goes without saying that all our emergency services should have what they need to protect themselves. I suggest proactive engagement with the services and the unions in order to establish deficiencies and needs.

I said that there are two strands to my party’s thinking. The second is that we should come down like a ton of bricks on individuals who think that it is acceptable to assault our emergency workers. We must make sure that every instance of violence is comprehensively reported and investigated, and that every perpetrator is charged and convicted. The sentence must mirror society’s disgust for such acts. The Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005 must be used, but we must also ensure that other offences attract tougher sentences, too.

Sexual assaults, assaults to severe injury and death threats are all real risks for emergency personnel. A statutory aggravator would guarantee that when such crimes were having sentence passed, the fact would be taken into account that they had been perpetrated against someone who works on society’s behalf. In the extreme case that a police officer is murdered in the course of their duty, there should be only one answer—a whole-life sentence.

Emergency workers are there when we most need help, when we find ourselves in danger, when time is critical and when accidents happen—and they are there when nobody else answers. It is not enough simply to thank them; we must protect them.

17:15

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank Liam Kerr for bringing this important matter to the chamber and apologise that I have to leave early for a meeting, as I notified to the Deputy Presiding Officer earlier today.

I echo the commendations given to our emergency service workers, who often work in very challenging circumstances right across Scotland.

Emergency service workers, the vast majority of whom are directly employed in the public sector, are essential to our society. As such, their safety and security is our responsibility. The rise in the number of assaults against emergency workers is unacceptable.

Emergency service workers live and work in our communities—they are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and grandparents. Injuries that are sustained at work affect the whole family, and such injuries can and must be reduced.

As Liam Kerr noted, bonfire night, on 5 November, unfortunately highlights the pressure on emergency services. The Fire Brigades Union Scotland confirmed that there were several attacks on firefighters on Monday night. Operational fire control handled more than 720 calls that night and crews responded to more than 330 bonfires across the country. We can all commend their bravery and dedication—and we should do so—but we must also take account of the concerns that have been raised by the people who work in those essential services.

In evidence submitted to the Justice Committee for its post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 in May, the FBU highlighted the loss of more than 1,000 jobs since the creation of the single service. That has consequences for the remaining workforce.

Proposals to reduce crewing levels on appliances have been challenged by the FBU. Concerns about low morale, increased stress and higher sickness levels were also identified in the Scottish Government's evaluation of police and fire reform in its year 2 report. As well as commending our fire service workers, the minister could perhaps give an indication of how the concerns that were raised earlier in the year are being addressed.

I also welcome the opportunity to highlight the important and skilled work that is done by members of staff in the Scottish Prison Service—again, however, fine words are not enough. I am sure that members will share my concerns about statistics from the Scottish Prison Service that show that the number of staff assaults increased by a third over the past year. That follows on from

the point that Liam Kerr made at the end of his speech.

In 2016-17, 189 assaults on prison staff were recorded. In the following year, 2017-18, 261 assaults on prison staff were recorded. That needs much closer examination. Could there be unintended consequences of other policy decisions, such as changes in the way in which the NHS services interact with the Prison Service? I hope that the minister will give the chamber an assurance that the significant rise in assaults on prison staff will be thoroughly investigated.

Finally, I ask members to reflect on the risks and pressures that many of those who work in the emergency services face. A number of trade unions that represent those workers have supported the 68 is too late campaign on the state pension age because of those risks and pressures. The more that we hear about the challenges faced in those jobs and the commitment given by the workforce to delivering such a high standard of service, the more we should question the steady increases in the retirement age. That is not in the hands of the Scottish Government but, as well as recognising the skills of emergency service workers and condemning assaults, we should add our voice to the representations that are being made on the retirement age—which, in my opinion, is too high and should be reviewed, as Labour has committed to do.

Once again, I thank Liam Kerr for bringing this important motion for debate and I apologise to members for leaving early.

17:19

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this timely debate and I congratulate Liam Kerr on securing it as we move into the festive season, which is the most challenging time of year for our emergency services.

For many people, Guy Fawkes night marks the beginning of the festive period of celebration and revelry. This time last year, Police Scotland officers and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service crew members were injured by projectile fireworks as they responded to 330 bonfires across Scotland between 5pm and 10pm on bonfire night.

The Scottish Government worked in partnership with Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and two of Her Majesty's inspectorates to ensure that services were well prepared and could respond robustly to any antisocial behaviour this year. The launch of the #DoNotAttackMe campaign ahead of bonfire night shone a spotlight on the impact that attacks can have on the people behind the uniform who respond to emergencies.

On each of the three busiest days of the year—23 and 31 December and 1 January—our emergency services receive, on average, about 15,000 calls. Particularly over Christmas, all emergency services report an increase in calls as a result of excessive alcohol consumption. Some calls can be especially difficult to deal with when, for example, the caller is heavily intoxicated and their speech is unclear. That can lead to staff in control centres being verbally abused—and those on the streets even being physically abused—by people who are under the influence.

The emergency services convey messages to ensure that everyone stays safe during that time of year and that resources are used efficiently. For example, revellers are encouraged to plan for their Christmas night out by charging their mobile phone and remembering to take it with them, drinking responsibly and not leaving drinks unattended, sticking with friends, planning journeys home and letting people know where they are. Those seemingly small steps help to keep us all safe and ultimately relieve some of the strain on our hard-pressed emergency services.

Liam Kerr's motion highlights some of the struggles that our emergency service workers face year round. The figures on common and serious assaults on police, fire and ambulance workers for 2016-17 are, indeed, shocking. For most of us, the assault of, or the threatening behaviour towards, any emergency service worker would be unconscionable, but the problem is very real. Given that there are as many as 17 assaults each day, violence is a tangible risk that such workers confront routinely, often when they arrive specifically to help the very people who end up assaulting them.

The protection of workers who do so much for us all should be paramount, and there are specific punishments for those who carry out such assaults. The Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005 includes a penalty of up to 12 months' imprisonment, a £10,000 fine or both. Such provision was extended in 2008 to include general practitioners, doctors, nurses and midwives who work in the community and also provide vital services. The act also extends protection to social workers who enforce child protection orders or carry out mental health assessments, which makes Scotland the only United Kingdom nation to include protections for workers who are on the front line, protecting the most vulnerable people in our society. Social workers intervene in the most intimate and sensitive aspects of people's lives, and their contribution to our safety and wellbeing cannot be overstated.

Of course, the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005 was opposed tooth and nail by the Tories, who now pose as the saviours of our

emergency workers. I welcome their Damascene conversion.

Our focus must be on improving working conditions and reducing risk. Investing in our emergency services and ensuring that they have the staff, training and resources that are needed to carry out their work is essential.

The successful lobbying by SNP MPs and MSPs for VAT exemption since the merger of Scotland's fire services and regional constabularies has allowed more money to go directly into front-line services. We continue to pursue a rebate of the £175 million that was charged by the UK Tory Government up to March 2018, so that more money can be invested in Scotland's emergency services.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Kenneth Gibson: I am in my last minute, but I will take an intervention if the Presiding Officer allows me to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am feeling quite relaxed.

Kenneth Gibson: Good. I am 10 seconds away from finishing my speech, but I am happy to take an intervention from Liam Kerr, given that it is his debate.

Liam Kerr: I am very grateful to the member for taking the intervention. I have called for a statutory aggravator, as there is in England and Wales, to be attached to the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005, so that there would be the 2005 act and an aggravator. Does the member agree with that approach?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you your time back, Mr Gibson.

Kenneth Gibson: We should do all that we can to protect Scotland's emergency workers. I am absolutely delighted that the Tories have now realised that such workers need protecting, many years after they decided that workers did not need such protection. Their hypocrisy on the issue is, frankly, breathtaking.

The message that I wish to end on is that emergency service workers are someone's father, mother, brother, sister or friend. They deserve our gratitude and respect, never the physical or verbal abuse that prevents crews from bringing emergencies to a swift and safe conclusion and which delays crews from attending other people who are in need.

17:24

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): I was hoping to be able to stand here and welcome

reports of a peaceful bonfire night on Monday that was enjoyed by families and friends and overseen in a spirit of goodwill by the very emergency service workers whose job it is to put themselves in danger in order to keep everyone else safe. Instead, reports once again point to an evening of relative chaos, with members of the public describing scenes apparently akin to what they thought a war zone would look like. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service even sent a tweet warning people not to attack firefighters.

Almost all of us, directly or indirectly through a family member or friend, have been assisted by at least one of the emergency services at some point in our lives, which makes attacks against those workers, particularly on nights such as bonfire night, all the more mindless. Yesterday, there were reports of incidents in which emergency workers had been targeted, including firefighters being verbally abused and having objects thrown at them in Colinton Mains park in Edinburgh. That is a reminder of events last year, when a female police officer suffered serious burns after she was hit by a rocket. In the wider context, figures show that 61 firefighters in 2016-17 were involved in incidents in which they were verbally or physically abused, or had objects thrown at their engines.

Firefighters—indeed, all emergency service workers—do incredible work to protect us all from harm. I had the pleasure of visiting volunteer firefighters at the Scottish Emergency Rescue Association in Granton. The professionalism, expertise and commitment of SERA's members to what they do is such that they help to train firefighters from other parts of the world.

This year's unruly scenes have taken place against a backdrop of police utilising unprecedented additional powers on bonfire night, including dispersal zones across parts of Edinburgh. The Scottish Conservatives believe that our emergency workers need further protection in these circumstances. My colleague Liam Kerr has already set out a package of additional measures, so I will not repeat what he said in that regard. I hope that the minister will today commit to working with us in a spirit of co-operation on those serious suggestions so that we can end this phenomenon and allow emergency workers to do their jobs in peace.

I finish by sending a message to those committing such senseless acts: cut it out. It is those people who need the Damascene conversion that Kenny Gibson referred to—in their attitudes, their actions and their behaviour towards our emergency service workers. They need to recognise that bonfire night or not, emergency service workers have a job to do, which is keeping people safe and looking after us all. They need to understand that, one day, they may have to call on

the help of some of those services in their greatest hour of need. It is time to end attacks against emergency service workers.

17:28

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I, too, thank Liam Kerr for bringing this debate to the chamber, and not just because of its timely nature or because of the recent issues that the fire service, among others, has raised about bonfire night. I thank him for bringing the debate because a consequence of having a national fire service and a national police service is that, all too often, those of us who speak on justice issues have to criticise those services. At least, it might sound like criticism, but it is not. The work that our emergency service workers do is invaluable, and we must all thank them in all sincerity for their work. This debate gives us the opportunity to thank them for having the courage to run towards, not from, danger; for keeping us safe; and, above all, for their strong ethos. That ethos is best exemplified by the police's commitment to policing by consent. That strong sense of working with the public to keep them safe, but not by instruction or decree, is very important.

This is also a time when our emergency services are under huge pressure. I know from talking to and spending time with the police that they spend a lot of time dealing with mental health issues, missing persons and, often, older people who have locked themselves out of their house. At times, our emergency services become the public services of last resort. When all other options have failed, people dial 999. I pay tribute to the commitment of the emergency services to step in when there are shortcomings.

The debate is timely. As Elaine Smith said, the Fire and Rescue Service responded to 723 calls and 338 fires on bonfire night. That number of call-outs must be overwhelming when compared with the normal workload, so I pay tribute to and thank the service for responding so diligently.

It is in that context that we must consider the dreadful attacks that seem to happen year after year. To a degree, I am encouraged by the minister's confirmation on Tuesday that early reports suggest that the number of such incidents is down. However, they still happen. The reports from Monday night included one of 40 masked youths firing fireworks at the police in Glasgow; riot police had to respond to that incident. That is no way to celebrate bonfire night, which should be an evening of fun.

To abuse the commitment of our police and firefighters to doing their duty and responding when called on by luring emergency workers into a

trap in which they are attacked is abhorrent. Let us be clear about that.

The very fact that the Fire and Rescue Service needed to launch its #DoNotAttackMe campaign is appalling. The service has my absolute support. I commit to working with it and the other emergency services. We will listen to what they say and make the changes that they need if emergency workers are to stay safe.

That brings me to the law. I am proud of the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005, which the Labour-Lib Dem coalition introduced when we were in power. It is important in principle, in detail and in effect. The principle that those who uphold the law should be protected by the law is fundamental and should be communicated to the people who seek to abuse it. The detail of the 2005 act is also important, because it protects emergency workers not just from assault but from obstruction. The effect is important, because we have had more than 8,000 convictions under the law—around 800 per year. The law works and is used, and I am pleased to hear members of parties across the chamber support it.

We must thank the emergency services. We must think about all people in public-facing roles, from retail workers to firefighters, who are asked to uphold the law. Everyone whom we ask to uphold the law to keep the public safe should be protected by the law.

17:32

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I thank Liam Kerr for lodging the motion and securing the debate.

As members rightly said, in Scotland we should consider ourselves lucky to have the wealth of dedication and professionalism that exists in our emergency services. Attacks on emergency workers are not merely unacceptable; they are criminal matters, which we all rightly condemn.

Whether we are talking about the paramedics who save countless lives every day, the fire personnel who rush towards blazing buildings while others run to safety, or the police officers who often face down dangerous and difficult situations, the people who enter the emergency services in Scotland do an incredibly challenging job. It is worth recording that it takes a special kind of person to work in such a role.

As the MSP for the constituency that has the second-lowest rate of recorded crime in Scotland, I thank Police Scotland and its officers in the islands. The low crime rate in the islands does not happen by itself but is a result of sustained and dedicated community-based policing.

The people who work in the Ambulance Service in the Highlands and Islands co-ordinate with Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance to save countless lives a year by bringing people urgently to hospitals on the mainland.

In the islands, the Fire and Rescue Service requires people who are prepared to do the job for very little financial reward, on top of their paid jobs. We often fail fully to see or recognise that commitment of time to public service.

All the emergency services in the islands have to cope with the need to cover vast areas and prioritise resources when incidents happen simultaneously but far apart from one another.

I pay tribute to a branch of the emergency services that has a particularly strong connection with my constituency: the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Given our location and our seafaring tradition, the coastguard does hugely varied work around the islands. It co-ordinates responses to everything from dealing with someone stranded and injured on a cliff, as happened in the past day or two, to coping very memorably with the sudden and unexpected arrival of a massive oil rig on a beach on the west side of Lewis. Moreover, it works closely with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, whose volunteer crews save lives around our coasts throughout the year.

A few years ago, the staff of the coastguard station in Stornoway had to fight long and hard to keep the station open in the face of a concerted effort by the UK Government to close it. Those closure plans were eventually abandoned after it became clear that no possible case could be made for them. Nonetheless, in the face of all that evidence, the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency removed the emergency towing vessel that used to be based on the west coast of Scotland. That is a whole other story; suffice it to say that the situation has caused very real anxiety in the community that I represent, and the next time that there is a major incident on the west coast of Scotland—which would not appear unlikely, as such incidents have happened in the past—the nearest tug that might be able to assist could easily be 12 or 15 hours away. These issues have also provoked some debate both locally and nationally about why, of all the emergency services that we are rightly celebrating today, only one of them remains reserved to Westminster.

I very much welcome the emphasis that has been placed in the debate that Mr Kerr has allowed us to have this evening—even if, as Mr Gibson has pointed out, it is somewhat ironic that, although we are all quite rightly condemning attacks on emergency service workers, Mr Kerr's party voted against the legislation that actually made such offences criminal.

That said, I take this opportunity to add my thanks to all our emergency services not only in my own constituency—which I am conscious of having spoken a great deal about—but across Scotland, and I welcome the chance to put Scotland's thanks on the parliamentary record.

17:37

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to have this opportunity to commend to the Parliament the amazing work of Scotland's emergency workers, and I thank my colleague Liam Kerr for bringing the debate to the chamber and for giving us the time to pause and to recognise the importance of and the thanks that are owed to those in our emergency services.

Those who work in the emergency services, who include police officers, ambulance workers, firefighters and all the search-and-rescue teams and prison officers, place others first every single day. They are selfless in placing others' safety above their own, and they carry out their duties with inspiring professionalism in what can be the most traumatic and nerve-wracking situations. Working what are often unenviable shift patterns, emergency service workers show their dedication in the help and support that they provide. Indeed, I recall how, some years ago in my region, military firefighters and police were shot at when green goddesses had to be put into use, and I remember some of the appalling results of that.

We should not forget that many of Scotland's emergency workers are volunteers serving in charities. One such example is Scottish Mountain Rescue, which comprises more than 800 volunteers working in 24 teams across Scotland and offers a search-and-rescue service that operates every hour of the day, every day of the year, no matter the weather. Given that they cover vast and challenging mountain terrain in dealing with these situations, their service is more than commendable, and their volunteer work is made even more inspiring by the fact that the organisation is funded solely by contributions.

In a similar vein, Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, which has already been mentioned, offers life-saving flights in response to emergency calls. In its first five years, the charity service has received almost 2,000 calls to deal with medical emergencies in some of the most remote areas of Scotland. Again, it relies on public donations and fundraising efforts to keep its service moving.

Another shining example is the RNLi. Its workers specialise in lifeboat search and rescue and educate others on water safety in the hope of preventing emergency situations from happening in the future, and it, too, is reliant on charitable donations to keep its momentum going. Indeed, I

saw evidence of that very momentum on my recent visit to its Troon base. In my region, I am keenly aware of the hours that are put in in answering emergencies by people at my local lifeboat station in Rhu, by Helensburgh. The fundraising team behind that group is certainly not always recognised for the hard work that it puts in to ensure that lives continue to be saved at sea.

My community safety role has renewed my understanding of the lengths that all emergency service workers go to and of how integral their service is to our local communities. If we face a fire in our home or are the victim of a crime, or if we need immediate hospital care, it is massively reassuring to know that those in the emergency services will instantly respond. They will help, however they can, and their dedication is evident across Scotland. An example of that was their dedication at the massive fire last year in Cameron house hotel by Loch Lomond, which is in my area.

How, therefore, can we not be concerned when we hear that those workers are at risk of being assaulted while carrying out their service? As my colleague Liam Kerr has mentioned, those attacks can be caused by the very people whom they are trying to help. The fact that that has been a worsening problem in Scotland is hard to comprehend.

We know that crime in our communities is an on-going problem. Recently, we have seen situations in which firefighters have been targeted yet again with unwarranted abuse for simply answering an emergency call. It goes without saying that emergency service workers should be treated with the same respect that they offer to those whom they help. Ensuring their safety, wellbeing and protection must be our top necessity and requirement. I hope that that can be secured by dealing with the problem and the perpetrators head on.

To conclude, I once again offer my sincere thanks to all those in our emergency services. Their contributions in the greatest times of need are integral to our safety and are certainly worthy of the Parliament's recognition.

17:41

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I thank Liam Kerr MSP for lodging the motion on emergency service workers for debate.

The motion commends

"the bravery and dedication of emergency service workers", which are required in protecting the public. We all agree that emergency service workers are courageous people who frequently put themselves in dangerous circumstances for the protection of all of us. As has been stated, for firefighters, that is

especially true on bonfire night, which is their busiest night of the year. As was mentioned earlier—by Daniel Johnson, I think—this bonfire night, firefighters received 723 calls from members of the public and attended 338 bonfires.

In the midst of emergency services working to protect the public, there have been occasions when front-line workers have been subject to verbal and physical abuse from the very people whom they have been trying to help. That is totally unacceptable. On Monday, the police and fire services in the west service delivery area alone had upwards of eight abusive attacks. That is not what front-line emergency service workers signed up for, and the attacks do not reflect the rest of the general public's deep appreciation and recognition of the dedicated work that is done by each individual who works in the emergency services. I am very pleased that that topic is to the fore. That means that members can unequivocally condemn abusive behaviour towards emergency service workers.

Although the Parliament has used its legislative capacity to provide legal protections to emergency workers, a wider collaborative effort is needed to ensure that such antisocial behaviour is minimised and called to account.

It was mentioned earlier that, in the lead-up to this year's bonfire night, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service launched the #DoNotAttackMe Twitter campaign, which showed brave members, such as watch manager Glynn McAffer and firefighter Lyndsay Hopper, speaking out about a rise in attacks from groups of youths. The campaign has movingly shown families asking that their father, mother, husband or wife is not attacked in the line of service. Although 5 November may be the busiest evening of the year for the fire service, that appeal applies to every day of the year.

The workers in the other emergency service providers also suffer from abusive behaviour from members of the public. The Institute of Alcohol Studies has produced a report that showed that, across the UK, three quarters of police respondents and half of ambulance respondents have been injured in alcohol-related incidents and that between a third and a half of all service people have suffered from sexual harassment or abuse at the hands of intoxicated members of the public. The report, which is shocking, evidences that abuse needs to be tackled all year round, with all emergency service workers in mind.

As a community, we need to make a collective effort to ensure that we are following the guidance that has been issued by the emergency services. If people witness harassment or abuse of emergency services workers, they should, as soon as it is safely possible, make a note of what they

have seen and the time of the incident and then report it to their local police station. It may well help to bring offenders to account.

Fundamentally, however, there is an individual responsibility that falls on the people in the groups of offenders. Abusive behaviour is always unacceptable and it gets in the way of emergency services attending real emergencies and saving people's lives. Let us together advocate for the safety of our emergency services workers so that they can continue to do their life-saving work and protect our communities without fear of violence, harassment or abuse.

17:45

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): I add my thanks to Liam Kerr for bringing this debate to the chamber and providing the Parliament with an opportunity to come together, as we have done this evening, to appreciate and commend our emergency services workforce and front-line staff in our prisons.

This morning, I had the pleasure of attending Marionville fire station in Edinburgh, where I met police, fire and ambulance service personnel to hear directly from them about their experience and to thank them for all their hard work. I have also had an informative debrief by Police Scotland on activities over recent days.

In echoing the comments that members have made this evening, I pass on my gratitude to each and every member of our emergency services as well as those who volunteer their spare time to help those in need, no matter what the circumstances. It is clear that many of us will at some time in our lives rely on their skill and dedication, and I thank them all.

Having recognised the bravery of our emergency services, I find it incomprehensible that a minority of individuals would attack them while they carry out their work. I very much welcome the unanimous condemnation of that behaviour in the debate, and I extend the assurance that the Scottish Government does not and will not tolerate any such attacks on emergency services staff.

Liam Kerr: Will the minister take an intervention?

Ash Denham: Yes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I could see that you were poised, Mr Kerr.

Liam Kerr: I thank the minister for taking the intervention. As I said in my speech, I believe that someone who murders a police officer in the course of their duties should be sentenced to prison for life. Surely the minister agrees.

Ash Denham: I think that it is hypocritical of the Tories to come to the chamber and say that, considering that they voted against the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Bill in 2005. That legislation has led to many convictions that would not have occurred had the Conservatives had their way on the issue. I am very glad that they have now seen the light on it.

I am happy to discuss the matters that Mr Kerr raised during his speech at any time. My door is open, and if he wants to come and speak to me about any of them, I will be happy to take that meeting and discuss them further.

Scotland's justice system provides protection to everyone, including emergency workers, under our laws of assault and breach of the peace, and it was this Government that introduced the threatening or abusive behaviour offence in 2010. There are also specific protections in the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005. That act—which, as we have heard this evening, was opposed by the Conservatives—is an important piece of legislation that offers specific criminal law protections for our emergency services. Official statistics show that the conviction rate for offences against emergency workers was 90 per cent in 2016-17.

I move on to the specific matter of fireworks. Those who were involved in the worst offences in Edinburgh on bonfire night last year have been caught and punished, and anyone who offended this year will also be severely dealt with. I am aware that arrests have already been made and Police Scotland has made it clear that others who were involved will be pursued.

The Scottish Government has taken action over the past year to review the legislative position and powers relating to fireworks. As most of the legislation on firework sales is reserved, I wrote to the UK Government on the matter. I received a response that states that the UK Government is not considering legislation to further restrict firework sales at this time. Mr Kerr may wish to reflect on that response with his Westminster colleagues. I will, of course, be happy to meet him to discuss the response from the UK Government and to inform him about any further work that is under way in the area.

As Mr Kerr acknowledges, we have worked with HM inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland and Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate in Scotland to review changing trends. As a result, both the police service and the fire service have put in place an improved process for recording assaults, to allow the picture to be better understood and to inform any future action that is required.

Of course, prevention is better than cure. The Scottish Government supports the vital education

and prevention work of local authorities, Police Scotland, the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies, to ensure that people can enjoy this time of year responsibly and safely.

When I visited Pilton in north Edinburgh at the beginning of October, I saw an excellent example of national and local agencies working together. In Mr Kerr's region, operation Fawkes took a holistic, multi-agency approach that was layered and co-ordinated through Aberdeen community safety partnership. In hotspot areas around the country, intelligence-led patrols were carried out over the past weekend, with police and fire officers working together to provide triage services to assist in the early identification of youths involved in any criminal activity.

At the national level, for the first time, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service collated a list of organised events across the country and made that publicly available on its website. I am sure that members across the Parliament have observed the social media activity around firework safety and the safety of our emergency service workers. The level of activity has been very high, including the #DoNotAttackMe campaign, which has already been mentioned this evening.

Of course, fireworks are not the only issue when it comes to violence against our emergency service workers. Unfortunately, they are just another tool for attack. Police Scotland has the experience and the intelligence to make a judgment on what response is required at the time of any incident, always with a focus on keeping officers and our communities safe. Our ambulance staff do an incredible job every day, saving lives throughout the country, and they deserve to be able to carry out their work without any threat to their safety. The Ambulance Service has a range of measures in place to protect staff, which includes flagging certain addresses where there is a history of violence or threatening behaviour, which allows staff to assess whether they require additional support from Police Scotland before attending those addresses.

No one should be the victim of abuse or violence while they are at work, and we continue to encourage all NHS organisations to support criminal proceedings against anyone who assaults our staff.

I thank Mr Kerr again for providing the Parliament with the opportunity to come together to support our emergency services workforce and to firmly condemn the deplorable behaviour of the small minority of people who choose to act violently towards them.

Meeting closed at 17:52.

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