



OFFICIAL REPORT
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Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 19 December 2018

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 19 December 2018

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:00]

Iolaire Disaster

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14614, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on the centenary of the Iolaire disaster. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

Some members have indicated that they will speak in Gaelic, so interpretation facilities are available. Members may listen to the interpretation by inserting their headphones into the socket on the right-hand side of the console, towards the front. If any member experiences a problem, they should try using the audio button and selecting channel 1 to hear the English interpretation.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commemorates with great sadness the Iolaire disaster of 1 January 1919, when at least 201 men, mainly those returning home to the islands of Lewis and Harris after active service in the Royal Navy, lost their lives; remembers this terrible event, which took place when HMY Iolaire struck the Beasts of Holm, a group of rocks only around three miles from where the men's families were waiting for them at Stornoway Harbour; notes the series of commemorations that will take place in the islands around the centenary, and commends the efforts that are being made in the community and nationally to give due recognition to a disaster that, for many decades afterwards, had a devastating impact on the people of the Western Isles.

The member has provided the following translation:

Gu bheil a' Phàrlamaid a' comharrachadh le bròn call na h-Iolaire air 1 Faoilleach 1919, nuair a chaidh co-dhiù 201 neach a chall, a' chuid as motha dhiubh a' tilleadh dhachaigh gu Leòdhas agus na Hearadh às dèidh seirbheis-chogaidh leis a' Chabhlach Rìoghail; gu bheil i a' cuimneachadh na tubaist uamhasach seo, a thachair nuair a bhuail HMY Iolaire air Biastan Thuilm, creagan a tha dìreach trì mìle bho Chidhe Steòrnabhaigh, far an robh na teaghlach a' feitheamh riutha; gu bheil i a' toirt fa-near na comharrachaidhean a bhios a' tachairt anns na h-eileanan ceud bliadhna às dèidh na tubaist; agus gu bheil i a' moladh nan oidhearpan a thathar a' dèanamh anns a' choimhearsnachd agus gu nàiseanta gus aithne a thoirt dhan tubaist seo, agus air a' bhuaidh chruaidh a bh' aice airson bliadhnaichean mòra às a dhèidh air muinntir nan Eilean Siar.

13:00

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Air iomadach càrn-chogaidh air feadh na rìoghachd, tha 1914 gu 1919 sgrìobhte. Tha an dàrna bhliadhna sin a' cuimhneachadh a' chùmhnaidh ann an Versailles a chuir crìoch air a' chogadh gu foirmeil. Ach bha sin seachd mìosan às dèidh do na gunnaichean fàs sàmhach anns an t-Samhain 1918, agus do thòrr dhaoine a-nis, tha 1919 a' coimhead caran neònach mar cheann-latha airson crìoch a' chogaidh. Ach ann an aon àite co-dhiù, tha a' bhliadhna sin a' dèanamh ciall anns an dòigh bhrùideil aige fhèin fhathast.

Ann an Leòdhas agus anns na Hearadh cha tàinig call a' chogaidh mhòir gu crìch ach air a' chiad latha den bhliadhna ùir. Agus bha buaidh mhòr aig an rud a thachair air an latha sin, buaidh air bailtean agus teaghlach anns na h-eileanan airson bhliadhnaichean mòra, gus an latha an-diugh.

"An rud a thachair". Tha e a' tighinn a-steach orm mar a tha mi a' cleachdadh nam facal sin nach do dh'ainmich mi an rud a thachair fhathast. 'S dòcha gu bheil rudeigin freagarrach mun an sin, air sgàth 's gun robh an gnothach cho gort nach tuirt muinntir nan eilean mòran mu dheidhinn airson 60 bliadhna co-dhiù. Bha an Iolaire na cuspair ro phianail a thogail ann an còmhradh modhail ann an taigh sam bith.

Ach, tha e ceart gu bheil sinn ga chuimhneachadh a-nis, 100 bliadhna às a dhèidh. Agus tha mi taingeil dha-rìribh gu bheil daoine bho gach taobh den Phàrlamaid ann an-diugh, gus sin a dhèanamh.

Seo an rud a thachair, ma-thà: sgeul na h-Iolaire.

Air oidhche challainn 1918, bha His Majesty's Yacht Iolaire a' fàgail Caol Loch Aillse. Gu h-iorònach, bha ainm Gàidhlig oirre—An Iolaire—ach cha robh càil a dh'fhios aig a' Chabhlach Rìoghail ciamar a chanadh iad an t-ainm sin, agus bha an t-ainm "I-o-laire" air a chleachdadh.

Bha an Iolaire loma-làn sheòladairean. Bha a' chuid as motha dhiubh a' tighinn dhachaigh às dèidh seirbheis-chogaidh leis a' Chabhlach Rìoghail, leis an Nèibhidh.

Bha tòrr às na teaghlach aig na daoine a bha air bòrd na h-Iolaire a' cruinneachadh air a' chidhe an oidhche sin ann an Steòrnabhagh. Bha iad uile dòchasach gum biodh na gillean a' tighinn air ais dhan eilean ann an deagh thìde gus am biodh iad a' toirt a-steach na bliadhna ùire còmhla ri chèile, agus a' comharrachadh deireadh a' chogaidh aig an aon àm. Tha na puingean seo, am measg nithean eile, a' dèanamh sgeul na h-Iolaire nas duilghe buileach.

Is e oidhche fhiadhaich a bha ann. Dìreach dà mhìle air falbh às a' chidhe, faisg air 1.55 anns a' mhadainn air latha na bliadhn' ùire, bhuail an lolaire air creagan leis an ainm Biastan Thuilm, agus chaidh i fodha am broinn dà uair a thide. Tha sinn a' creidsinn gun robh 280 duine air bòrd agus tha sinn a' creidsinn gun do bhàsaich 201 duine.

Agus fad na tìde, nuair a bha na rudan uabhasach seo a' tachairt, bha iomadach teaghlach air a' chidhe, fhathast, dìreach dà mhìle air falbh, a' feitheamh gu foighidneach, mar a bha iad air a bhith foighidneach airson ceithir bliadhna fhada. Mar a tha aon òran Leòdhasach a' dol:

Mo chreach, mo chreach 's a thàinig;
Chaidh an gàirdeachas gu tùrs.
Mun d' dh'èirich grian na màireach,
's iomadh gàirdean bha gun lùths.
Chaidh fios air feadh gach àite
gun robh 'n t-àrmann ris robh 'n dùil
air cladach tìr an àraich,
air am bàthadh anns a' ghrund.

Airson làithean às dèidh sin, bha muinntir Leòdhais a' coimhead a-mach air an tràigh, agus lorg mòran dhiubh cuirp. Cha robh aon chorp am measg gach trì air an lorg agus bha tòrr air an glacadh am broinn na h-lolaire fhèin. Às dèidh mìos, chuir an Cabhlach Rìoghail sanas a-mach gun robh iad a' reic na h-lolaire airson scrap.

Aig an toiseach, cha robh fios aig duine sam bith gu cinnteach cò bha air a dhol air bòrd na h-lolaire aig a' Chaol, agus cò eile a bha a' feitheamh air a' bhàt'-aiseig às a dèidh, an Sheila. Bha aig tòrr de na daoine air bòrd an Sheila ri coiseachd 50 mìle bho Steòrnabhagh mus do ràinig iad dhachaigh. Chuala mi aon sgeul mu fhèar a bha anns an t-suidheachadh seo. Ràinig e dhachaigh mu dheireadh thall agus fhuair e a-mach aig doras an taighe aige gun robh an teaghlach aige a' deasachadh gus tiodhlachadh a chumail dha fhèin. Tha sgeulachdan gu leòr eile ann mun àm sin, agus tha e math gu bheil muinntir Leòdhais agus na Hearadh gan innse a-nis. Chan eil fios aig a h-uile duine ann an Alba mun lolaire agus bu chòir.

Tha taisbeanaidhean agus tachartasan air a bhith ann am-bliadhna ann an Caisteal Leòdhais agus ann an diofair bhailtean. Chunnaic tòrr dhaoine cuirm chiùil agus dràma mun an lolaire air an ard-ùrlar agus cuideachd na dealbhan a rinn Mairead Nicfhearhais. Tha mi an dòchas gum bi tachartas eile a' gabhail pàirt anns a' Phàrlamaid fhèin anns a' Mhàrt, nuair a bhios leabhar ùr "The Darkest Dawn" air a chur air bhog.

Is e tubaist uabhasach a bhiodh ann do choimhearsnachd sam bith 201 neach a chall. Ach airson eilean, tha e doirbh a mhìneachadh dìreach cho mòr 's a bha e. Dè bhiodh a leithid de tubaist a' ciallachadh ann an Glaschu, mar eisimpleir? Is dòcha gum biodh sinn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn

5,000 teaghlach ann an Glaschu a' call mac air an aon latha. Sin an seòrsa buaidh a bha aig an lolaire air a' choimhearsnachd ann an Leòdhas agus na Hearadh. Agus, cuimhnich, thàinig an lolaire às dèidh cogadh anns an robh an aon choimhearsnachd air 1,300 neach eile a chall.

Anns na 10 bliadhna às dèidh na h-lolaire, bha tòrr anns an eilean a' call an cuid dòchais. Chaidh mòran gu Canada, Astràilia, na Stàitean agus New Zealand tro na 1920an.

Uaireannan, bidh sinn a' cuimhneachadh a' chogaidh mhòir ann an dòigh a tha caran abstract. Ach chan eil rud sam bith abstract mu dheidhinn na h-lolaire.

Bidh sinn a' comharrachadh 100 bliadhna le seirbheisean ann an Steòrnabhagh agus faisg air Biastan Thuilm air oidhche challainn agus air Latha na Bliadhn' Ùire.

Is dòcha gu bheil cuid a' smaoinneachadh nach eil e ceart a bhith a' cuimhneachadh air rudeigin cho brònach aig an àm seo anns a' bhliadhna. Ach is ann aig an àm-sa den bhliadhna a thachair e. Chan ann air 11 den t-Samhain a thàinig an cogadh mòr gu crìch, far a bheil mise a' fuireach.

Agus tha e ceart, às dèidh 100 bliadhna, mu dheireadh thall, gu bheil a' Phàrlamaid againn agus an dùthaich againn ga chuimhneachadh cuideachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

On many war memorials around the country are written the dates 1914 to 1919. The second of those years recalls the treaty, signed at Versailles, that formally brought the war to an end. However, that was some seven months after the guns fell silent in November 1918. To many now, 1919 looks an odd date to mark the end of the war, but in at least one place it still makes its own brutal sense. In Lewis and Harris, the losses of the great war did not come to an end until new year's day, and what happened that day has left a lasting impression on villages and families throughout the islands, right up to our own time.

As I say the words "what happened that day", I am conscious that I have not yet actually said what it was that happened. However, perhaps there is something appropriate about that, as the matter was so raw that the people of the islands scarcely spoke about it for at least 60 years anyway. The lolaire was a subject that was simply too painful to raise in polite conversation in any house. However, it is right that we are remembering it now, 100 years on, and I am very grateful that people from all sides of the Parliament are here today to do so.

This is what happened—the story of the lolaire. On hogmanay 1918, His Majesty's yacht lolaire was leaving Kyle of Lochalsh. Ironically, she had a

Gaelic name—"lolaire" means "eagle"—but the Royal Navy had no idea how to pronounce that, so "l-o-laire" stuck. She was full of sailors, most of them returning home after war service with the Royal Navy. That night, many of the families of the men who were on board were soon gathering on the pier in Stornoway. They were all hopeful that the young men would return home in time to bring in the new year with them and mark the end of the war in one go. Among many other reasons, those very aspects make the story of the lolaire all the sadder.

It was a night of wild weather. Just a couple of miles away from the pier, at around 1.55 on new year's morning, the lolaire struck a group of rocks called the Beasts of Holm and sank within the course of two hours. It is thought that there were 280 people on board and that 201 of them died. All the while, just a couple of miles away, many of their families were still on the pier, waiting patiently. They had been patient for four long years. As one Lewis song goes,

"Alas, alas,
Their joy turned to mourning.
Before the morning sun rose
many an arm was without strength.
The word went about the place
that the warriors they awaited
were on their native shores,
lying drowned on the sands."

For many days after that, the people of Lewis went out looking for remains on the shore and many of them found bodies. However, one in three of the bodies were never found and many were trapped in the lolaire. By the end of January, the Royal Navy had advertised that the lolaire was for sale for scrap.

Initially, nobody was completely sure who had boarded the lolaire in Kyle and who had waited for the steamer, the Sheila, after the lolaire. Many of those who got the Sheila walked as far as 50 miles from Stornoway to get home. I heard a story about one man who was in that situation. He eventually got home only to discover at the door of his house that his family were making preparations for his funeral. There are many other stories about that time, and it is good that the people of Lewis and Harris are telling them now. Not everyone in Scotland knows about the lolaire, but they should.

There have been exhibitions and events this year, in Lews castle and in different villages, and many people saw the music and drama production about the lolaire in Stornoway, as well as the paintings by Margaret Ferguson. I hope that there will be another event in the Parliament in March at which a new book, "The Darkest Dawn", will be launched.

The loss of 201 people is a heavy one for any community to bear, but it is difficult to explain the

scale of that for an island. What might the equivalent disaster represent in Glasgow, for example? We are probably talking about the equivalent of 5,000 families in Glasgow all losing a son on one day, as that was the scale of the impact that the lolaire had on Lewis and Harris. Bear in mind, too, that the lolaire came after a war in which that same community had already lost 1,300 people.

In the 10 years after the lolaire, many in the islands lost hope. Throughout the 1920s, many went to Canada, Australia, the States and New Zealand.

At times, we tend to remember the great war in a slightly abstract way, but there is nothing abstract about the lolaire. We will mark the centenary with services in Stornoway and near the Beasts of Holm on hogmanay and on new year's day. Perhaps some will think that it is not right to remember something so sorrowful at this time of year, but this is the time of year that it happened.

Where I live, the great war did not come to an end on 11 November, so it is right that, after 100 years, at last our Parliament and our country remember it, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. We are quite tight for time, so I ask everyone to speak for no more than four minutes.

13:08

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Alasdair Allan for bringing this timely debate to the chamber.

The lolaire disaster was an unequivocal tragedy of returning servicemen lost in sight of their homes. Commemorations are always sobering. I am particularly aware of that having commemorated the disaster of the Otranto and Tuscania on the north coast of Islay as part of the world war one commemorations that I was involved in earlier this year. The sinking of the lolaire, with the death of at least 201 men so close to their own shores, strikes an especially poignant chord.

Over the course of the first world war, more than 6,000 Lewismen joined the war effort, which was about 20 per cent of the island's population. More than 1,000 of those servicemen died during the war, which was a high toll for such a small community. Every family had a father, brother, uncle or son who died. We can imagine the relief to be heading homeward of those who were fortunate enough to have reached the end of the conflict. They could look to the new year facing the comforts of home and familiarity of the loved ones who were eagerly awaiting their arrival.

However, on the eve of new year's day in 1919, HMY *Iolaire*—the Gaelic for “eagle”—left Kyle of Lochalsh bound for Stornoway harbour on the Isle of Lewis. The yacht was overloaded with Royal Navy men, mostly from rural Lewis, and lifebelts were few and far between. In the small hours of the morning and in clear view of the lights of home—at one point, only 20 yards from the harbour—the *Iolaire* struck the rocks of the Beasts of Holm.

Families who were waiting by the shore for their loved ones could only watch in shock. With heavy uniforms weighing the men down, swimming to safety proved too difficult for many. Many islanders grew up without the ability to swim, having been warned to stay away from the cliffs at an early age.

One man, John F Macleod, managed to reach shore pulling a line of rope, which helped to save more than 40 lives. Another man clung to the mast of the *Iolaire* for hours until he could be rescued. One hundred and seventy-five natives of the island were claimed by the sea. Some men were found with rings and letters in their pockets; some men were never found.

The impact of that catastrophic loss on the Western Isles was devastating. In essence, it seemed that a generation of young men was gone. In those island communities, the loss was stark. Families who had believed that their loved ones had escaped the threat of war were confronted with a disaster that they could not have imagined. Their mourning was redoubled; as *The Scotsman* wrote in the aftermath,

“Many have had sorrow heaped upon sorrow.”

The *Iolaire* disaster witnessed life's end for more than 200 men, and it sourced a vast depth of grief for many more, which should not be underestimated. For men who had battled enemy fire, survived torpedoes and suffered the extremes of war, this was a bitter end in view of their homes. For the islanders of Lewis, Harris and the surrounding isles, the inquiry into the disaster failed to find a solid conclusion as to how it had been allowed to happen.

With the centenary of the *Iolaire* disaster approaching this new year, I recognise the commemorations that have been created in honour of those who were lost. Islanders have long known of the moments of disaster; it is time for wider Scotland to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the extent of its impact. Indeed, marking this remembrance has led to increased vocalisation of the grief that has passed through the generations in the Western Isles.

The commemorations have been a fitting and collective act of remembrance. Although the war memorial on Lewis was officially opened in 1924,

a monument was not placed at the Beasts of Holm until 1958; I am pleased to see the tributes of today. For example, portraits of 100 sailors who died in the *Iolaire* have been created by Margaret Ferguson, an award-winning artist whose great-uncle was among the death toll on the night. The portraits have brought the men to life and have touched home for many families. The exhibition will open on 29 December on Lewis. Last month, locals planted trees along the road that leads to the war memorial, and on the anniversary, the Prince of Wales and the First Minister will jointly mark the centenary with a visit. These acts of remembrance are incredibly important; they allow us to respectfully acknowledge the disaster and the heavy toll that it has had on the island community.

I join my colleagues in commemorating the *Iolaire* disaster. For the islanders, it opened a new year that they could not have imagined and it saw the death of those who thought that they had escaped its hold. As one of the United Kingdom's worst maritime disasters, it was a significant loss of life that we need to be conscious of. I commend us all to remember it today.

13:12

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I thank Alasdair Allan for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I am sure that each and every resident of Lewis and Harris appreciates such a traumatic event receiving the recognition of a chamber debate just two weeks away from the centenary.

As I am a Leòdhasach, or Lewisman, this is probably the most difficult speech that I have ever had to write or, indeed, to deliver in the chamber. As I was born and bred not just on Lewis but on the farm where the tragedy happened, the *Iolaire* disaster has been deeply ingrained in me since I could be aware of it as a toddler.

The Beasts of Holm, where the *Iolaire* ran aground, are technically just a few yards off the cliffs and rocks at Stoneyfield farm. At the time of the tragedy, my great-grandfather had not yet taken over Stoneyfield. The farmer at the time was Anderson Young, who opened the Stoneyfield farmhouse doors to many of the 79 survivors who made it ashore on that horrendous night, giving shelter and warmth to them. However, soon after the tragedy, he moved with his family to Canada, presumably in large part because of the trauma that the tragedy had caused to him, his wife and children.

My great-grandfather took on the tenancy of Stoneyfield just a few months after the tragedy, and my grandfather took on the tenancy of neighbouring Holm farm a few years later. At the

time of the tragedy, my grandfather and my three great-uncles were in their late teens and early 20s, living in the village of Sandwick, next to the farms, and they would have been involved in the retrieval of the bodies from the shores of Sandwick beach and around the farm shoreline on that fateful day. I do not know for sure that that was the case, because they never talked about it. That has been the case on the island since the tragedy—nobody, or very few people, spoke of the disaster. Even when I was growing up in the 1960s, some 40 to 50 years after the disaster, it was still not discussed, so the many events and commemorations that are taking place on the island are acting in a cathartic way, allowing people to come to terms, at long last, with the grief and hurt that still exist and are still tangible on the island to this day.

It took just over 40 years for an official memorial to be erected at the site. My grandfather donated the land for the memorial, and I am pleased to see that it has been renovated for the centenary and that the path down to the memorial from the former coastguard station road end has been greatly improved in advance of the commemorations.

As someone who was born and brought up at Stoneyfield and Holm farms, I have experienced the impact of storm-force gales there. On the night of the tragedy, the ship ran aground during what was up to a force 10 gale—possibly stronger. I have walked around the headland at Holm point in force 10 gales, and stronger, a number of times—once, I lost my footing and nearly slipped into the rough sea—and I have seen walls of water lifting up from Stornoway bay and crashing into the Stoneyfield farmhouse, so what those poor souls endured is beyond my comprehension, and it is beyond my understanding how there were even 79 survivors on such an horrendously stormy night.

As the award-winning blogger Katie Laing puts it in her excellent *Hebrides Writer* blog,

“The lolaire is in our DNA”.

I have found it difficult to put my feelings into words, so, if it is all right, Presiding Officer, I will quote the current minister of St Columba’s church in Stornoway, the Rev William Heenan. At the opening of the exhibition at Sandwick hall, he said:

“As we approach the 100 year anniversary of the lolaire disaster, the memories of the inconsolable loss of life still evokes deep emotions in our island population—emotions that have been inherited from previous generations who lived through that fateful Hogmanay night and who had personally experienced the ‘darkest dawn’ of New Year’s Day 1919.

The cloud of silence which then enveloped this island and her people and which has pervaded this community in every generation since, is only now beginning to lift.

These last four years of rolling commemorations for the First World War and the various major battles fought during it, have in some respect helped to prepare us, for this the hardest and final of these commemorations—the loss of the lolaire.

However, the silent grief, borne by the people of Lewis and Harris; the excruciating pain of the sorrow which has permeated every fibre in the warp and weft of the fabric of this society; and the lack of both information and answers as to why and how the disaster occurred; have to a large extent inhibited the island from processing and working through their loss, and coming to terms with their heartache.

Time has helped to heal some of the wounds inflicted by the events of that terrible night, enabling people to at last begin to speak about it and to process its harrowing legacy, but the scars of the tragedy still remain. They are indelibly ingrained on the psyche of islanders and their diaspora, just as the peat-banks and lazy-beds now no longer worked still mark and scar the landscape of our island topography.”

13:17

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I thank Alasdair Allan for securing the debate.

In a year that has marked the centenary of the end of world war 1, we are fast approaching the last commemoration of that conflict—the sinking of the lolaire. The islands had provided many men to fight in the services for the world war and had already suffered great losses. We can only imagine the relief of families, hearing that their loved ones were on their way home, believing them to be safe and making preparations to welcome them. There must have been an air of excitement, or maybe it was just relief.

For the men, their arrival at Kyle of Lochalsh must itself have been a sort of homecoming. Those who had previously been fishermen would have been in familiar surroundings, because they would have often berthed or landed their catches in Kyle. They knew the crossing well, because it was close to home, and they were seeing it for what was possibly the first time in years. They would also have been meeting old friends and catching up on news. Home was within touching distance.

As more men arrived at Kyle, the boat that was supposed to take them—the Sheila—was already close to capacity, so the lolaire was sent to fetch them home. The lolaire was not equipped with enough safety equipment for the number of men that were likely to sail on her. However, it was hogmanay, and it would have been cold—too cold for people to stay outside for the night, and it was unlikely that there would have been enough accommodation in Kyle for all of the men. It appears that there was some discussion about the issue, but with more and more men arriving in Kyle, the decision was made to sail, with devastating consequences.

As Angus MacDonald said, many people believe that the tragedy was the cause of mass emigration from the islands in the 1920s. It certainly contributed to poverty, and the islands' economy has yet to recover from the loss of those men.

As we near the centenary of the loss of the *lolaire*, I have been surprised to hear that, as Alasdair Allan noted, many islanders say that they have only recently become aware of it because it was never spoken about in their homes or villages, so deep was the sense of loss.

I was very young when I first heard about the sinking of the *lolaire*—so young that it feels that I have known about it all my life. My grandfather fought in both world wars, as did his father. My grandfather never spoke to me about his wartime experiences, but I knew of them because of his medals and because he had an old demob union flag that he flew every time there was a wedding in the village. However, he did speak about the *lolaire*. He told us of the tragedy and of the loss that was experienced by the whole island of Lewis and Harris. The communities have come together, and will continue to come together over the following weeks, to mark the centenary. We must stand together and we must do so with them.

I hope that the site where the *lolaire* sank will be recognised as a war grave, although I understand that there is very little left of the boat. However, the Beasts of Holm will mark the spot where the men fell. Chris Murray, whose work with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency has been recognised by the Queen's gallantry medal, has offered to dive to lay a wreath at the site on new year's day. That will be another fitting tribute to those who were lost so close to home 100 years ago.

As people begin to speak more widely about the tragedy, we can see how the events impacted on so many lives. My Gaelic tutor told me that his grandfather had been on the *lolaire* but had, for some reason, transferred to the *Sheila*—a decision that saved his life. I found out only recently that John Macleod, who bravely swam ashore with a rope and saved many lives, was the great-grand-uncle of Chris Bryant MP. Thus, the personal stories come to life: we must preserve those stories and remember the lives that were lost.

13:21

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Mòran taing, Presiding Officer. Gabhaibh mo leisgeul. Chan eil ach beagan Gàidhlig agam. Mar as àbhaist, feumaidh mi Beurla a bhruidhinn.

“Bidh dùil ro fear-fairge, ach cha bhi ri fear-reilige.”

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Thank you, Presiding Officer. Excuse me, I just have a little Gaelic. As usual, I will need to speak in English.

“There is hope of the man at sea, but none of the man in the churchyard.”

The member continued in English.

I thank Alasdair Allan for bringing the debate to Parliament and I hope that the little Gaelic that I have was sufficient to convey the Gaelic proverb:

“There is hope of the man at sea, but none of the man in the churchyard.”

I think that hope is what underpins the thoughts of many people at this time.

Men had escaped the ravages of war, and their loved ones were waiting for them to return unscathed. Of course, the likelihood is that they would not be returning unscathed: they would have been damaged by a brutal war. As long as they were at sea, however, hope remained intact for all those people. I wonder how we will show respect. Will we show respect to the 174 men from Lewis—the *Leòdhasachs*—and the seven from Harris, by speaking as we are today, to show that we value the 205 men who died?

The first world war was driven by people who did not value lives: many of those people had contempt for life. It is a terrible tragedy that sailors survived a war, only to die yards from their own shore. It has already been said that many of their families were waiting for them on the quayside with the bunting out.

Members have mentioned the impact on the islands: Lewis and Harris lost one fifth of their population in the first world war, and 6,000-plus men served their country, which had a significant impact on the Gàidhealtachd of Scotland and, as we have heard, it affected whole communities.

There is collective mourning, but there is also almost collective denial. We understand the significant impact that the event has had on generations. That their lives were not valued was reflected by the fact that the men perished on an overloaded boat that had insufficient lifeboats and lifejackets. I will not go into the detail of the tragedy—anyone who has travelled over the Minch in January will know how dangerous the waters can be—but others have alluded to the very brave and humane acts that took place, and the great efforts that were put into saving people.

The sinking of the *lolaire* was the United Kingdom's worst maritime disaster, with the largest loss of life in UK waters since 1904, and was the worst peacetime disaster involving a British ship since the Titanic. Maurice Corry referred to *The Scotsman* coverage that said that

“Many have had sorrow heaped upon a sorrow.”

That is the terrible reality.

A public inquiry was held in Stornoway on 10th February 1919. The local community provided seven men for the jury, and it reached the verdict that the Royal Navy was responsible.

A naval inquiry was held in private on 8 January 1919. As has been said, the Admiralty put the wreck up for sale just 15 days after the disaster. Because no officers who had been on board the *lolaire* survived, the Royal Navy ruled that

“No opinion can be given as to whether blame is attributable to anyone in the matter.”

That is indicative of the fact that survival of ordinary ratings was clearly not valued.

The *lolaire* inquiry gathered dust in the Admiralty vaults for more than 50 years and its findings were not released into the public domain until 1970, which is a disgrace. The Admiralty was insensitive in putting the vessel up for sale 15 days after the disaster, when 80 bodies were still unaccounted for. That appalled the community.

Skipinnish is a group that includes guys from Tiree who are Gaelic speakers. The group has a song that says:

“New Year of peace would dawn tomorrow
Sing to me the Island Ocean
From hope and joy to wrenching sorrow
Far to the west and worlds away
From the futile fields of war.”

We can best commemorate those who died by not allowing a repetition of war.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that we are very tight for time.

13:26

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): The sinking of the *lolaire* with its loss of life on that night in 1919 must be one of the cruellest events in Scottish history. I thank the constituency MSP for Lewis and Harris, Alasdair Allan, for giving us a chance to reflect on it today, and to remember the men who survived the horrors of the first world war but never made it home to their families.

Unlike many members who are speaking in today's debate, I do not have a personal connection to Lewis or to those who were affected by the *lolaire* tragedy, but it has been emotional listening to members who have such connections—especially Angus MacDonald, who made a powerful speech.

I wanted to speak because I remember hearing of the *lolaire* when I was at school. I had a very good O grade history teacher, and I remember him going into a lot of detail about the impact that the war had on people at home in Scotland. It was not part of the curriculum, but he added that extra bit

to it. He wanted us, as fairly cushioned 15-year-olds in the 1980s, to try to grasp in some small way the devastating legacy that war had had on Scottish society. The *lolaire* disaster was one of the events that he told us about, as he tried to bring home the myriad of ways in which the war had hollowed out a generation. His telling of the disaster really made an impression on me.

The terrible event is said to have set in train an exodus of young people from the island in years to come—in particular, of young women who had lost their loves. One of the most heartbreaking accounts that I read said that an engagement ring was found in the pocket of one young man who drowned. Even 100 years on it is heartbreakingly difficult to read the accounts of toys being washed up on the beach that had been bought by young fathers as they looked forward to seeing their kids after so much time apart.

The young women of Lewis now lived in a community in which the male population of the island had been decimated. Hopes of future marriages and raising families were lost to a generation of Lewis women. Thoughts of a future raising a new generation of Lewis children were lost to many families. Many families were robbed of their sons, husbands, brothers and fathers in communities that had already lost more than 1,000 young men in battle.

After reading more this week, I was struck by this comment from local Lewis historian Roddy Murray. He said:

“We can speculate on its contribution to the mass emigrations of the twenties, its effect on the Lewis character, the rebirth of an inherent fatalism. Its effect was like the Passover of the Old Testament.”

It is fair to say that the war and the loss of young men possibly set in train mass emigration to Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Australia, as people tried to leave the tragedy behind. We can read accounts of those who were left behind in Lewis, with the shock of the disaster leaving many of them unable ever to speak of what had happened, or to vocalise the unfairness of the hand that the island had been dealt.

As many members have said, the *lolaire* is second only to the sinking of the *Titanic* in lives lost through an accident at sea in peacetime. However, there are no Hollywood film epics and no minute-by-minute drama documentaries on repeat on the History Channel about the disaster. Perhaps the reason is that the grief was so concentrated in one community and, therefore, was too painful ever to be dramatised or retold in anything other than a quiet and contemplative way—if at all.

I have tried to compare the sinking with other tragedies that I could relate to. It was similar to the

feeling after the Piper Alpha disaster, which many people in my area found hard to speak of. As Alasdair Allan said, the effect of that scale of loss of life on an island community is something that people who do not live in an island community—like me—cannot really get their heads around.

This year, which is the centenary of the first world war's end, we have rightly talked often of the sacrifice that was made by so many in the war. I thank Alasdair Allan for allowing us, once again, to pay our respects to the returning servicemen of Lewis, their families and the community that was so deeply scarred by that tragic accident.

13:30

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am conscious that we have heard a lot this afternoon from people who are very closely related to this incident, and I do not want to add very much more, except to thank Alasdair Allan for bringing the debate to the chamber. It is right that, as we think about returning home for Christmas, we think about this event from 100 years ago, because it is made all the more poignant by the fact that it involved 280 sailors travelling home for new year.

I was interested to hear about the overloaded boat, the navy not responding as it should have done and the sailors being weighed down with kit. We have also heard about the great heroism of John Finlay Macleod, who swam ashore with his rope and rescued 40 men, and it is right that he is being immortalised for his efforts in the sculpture that Prince Charles will unveil in the new year.

It is also right that, at Christmas—a joyous time that we should be spending with our families—we remember that, in the new year of 1919, there were many who would not spend any time at all with their own. People lost brothers, husbands, uncles and cousins, and I struggle to understand and comprehend how difficult that would be, given how every family was connected.

I am keeping my contribution short, purely because I want to hear the contributions of other people. However, it is right that we think about what is the worst maritime disaster in Britain's history, an event made even more tragic by the fact that the sailors involved had survived the great war and were returning home.

Finally, I commend all those organising the national commemorative services at new year. I know that a huge amount of energy has gone into the preparations, and I am sure that the events will be a fitting act of remembrance of this national disaster.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Mountain, for giving us some time back.

13:32

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, pay tribute to Alasdair Allan for securing this debate. It is fitting that, almost a century after a disaster that took 201 lives, our Parliament gives time for reflection and commemoration.

I say that it is fitting, because, as others have pointed out, the disaster was for a long time seldom mentioned in public discourse. It was so enormous in scale that it was almost something unspeakable. These young men survived the slaughter of world war one only to perish within sight of home, and their loss cast a dark and silent shadow over the islands, which had lost so many more young men in the war. Others have already talked about the significant demographic effect of the disaster. Those men would have been coming home to start families with their sweethearts, but, as it was, depopulation accelerated rapidly in the Gàidhealtachd in the 1920s.

There is another Iolaire legacy. The years of silence have lifted, and the tragedy is now being properly explored and features extensively in the oral, social and cultural history of the Outer Hebrides. In that respect, I pay particular tribute to the dedicated web resource in Gaelic and English that has been created by the National Library of Scotland. A wealth of the original documents and oral history from the time has been digitised, including facsimiles of news reports. One such report, from *The Scotsman* of 6 January 1919, says:

“Carts in little processions of twos and threes, each bearing its coffin from the mortuary, pass through the streets of Stornoway on their way to some rural village, and all heads are bared as they pass.”

The digital resource draws on the work of the journalist John MacLeod, whose highly praised book “When I Heard The Bell: The Loss of the Iolaire” documents the loss of the Iolaire and its aftermath, and there are also interviews with islanders such as 17-year-old Freya Macleod, the great-granddaughter of Iolaire survivor John Finlay Macleod, who saved upwards of 40 people on the stricken ship by swimming ashore with a life rope.

The resource also links to some of the many artistic responses to the Iolaire disaster, such as recordings made in the 1970s by musicians and poets who were alive at the time of the sinking.

Contemporary artists have responded to the centenary. An Lanntair is currently showing “Dawn till Dark”, an exhibition featuring the work of glass artist Alec Galloway and photographer Mhairi Law. Although, unfortunately, I have been unable to see the exhibition, I have been impressed by some of the images that I have been able to view. My partner, who is a writer, assisted Mr Galloway with a piece called “Harbour Full of Words”. It is a

beautiful large glass bowl, filled with seawater from the harbour and lit from beneath. It contains 201 pieces of sea glass, collected from beaches where victims were found. Each piece of glass is etched with a word connected to the lolaire, and the piece includes the names of all those who died.

The new year sees another exhibition—"lolaire 100"—by Margaret Ferguson, featuring portraits of the sailors who died as well as those who survived. That is fitting because, although the tragedy of the lolaire is all about loss, it is also about survival. A community that suffered so much loss, death and emigration did survive. Its Gaelic culture continues to inspire people around the world. Lives were stolen that night, but hope was not extinguished. The lolaire has become a symbol of sorrow, certainly, but also a symbol of resilience.

13:36

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I was a child in Stornoway in the 1960s, years after the lolaire disaster. Many women of the lolaire generation were still alive when I was a boy. I saw them simply as cailleachs—old women, dressed in black. I did not know then how many had lost their husbands or fiancés on a single day, so many years before, and mourned them still.

The cailleachs dressed in black reflected the pain of the whole town—of the whole island. Many young men had perished in the great war; many younger women and men were to leave for North America in the hungry 1920s. In between came this terrible, gut-wrenching, soul-searing loss of so many who had survived the war and had so nearly won home. Fifty years later, the despair of that dark and stormy night still dominated the life of the island. Yet, so painful was it then that people in Lewis hardly talked of it at all, as Alasdair Allan and others have said.

As Alasdair Allan also said, the loss was not in Lewis alone. My grandfather, Donald John Macdonald, was of the same generation. When the great war ended, he was 28 years old and a member of the royal naval reserve—like most of those who drowned on the lolaire—and he had served in the Mediterranean since 1915. He had grown up on the Isle of Berneray: a little island of a few hundred souls, off Harris. His own father had died at sea, and his widowed mother had raised her children in a cottage by the quay.

Home leave for Donald John involved a voyage to Stornoway from the mainland, then a 60 mile walk to Rodel or Obbe on Harris, or a run home on a fishing boat from wherever he could find one going in the right direction. Mercifully, Donald John

was not travelling home on leave that new year. He was not on board the lolaire. He went on to sail the seven seas as a merchant seaman in the 1920s, to marry Mary Macdonald from North Uist, and together they would raise a family of their own.

Other young men from Berneray were not so lucky. Norman MacKillop was 19 years old and Donald Paterson was only 18 when they died on the lolaire. Those were boys my grandfather knew. The loss of even two such young men was a heavy blow for a small place like Berneray.

It was a personal tragedy, too, for the families of those who crewed the lolaire, who hailed from ports all round Britain. David McDonald, from Virginia Street, by the harbour in Aberdeen, was a signal boy aged 17 and the youngest to die that day. School students at Aberdeen grammar school have helped remember him this year, adding a granite stone in his name to the new commemorative cairn in Stornoway. Even in Lewis, a hundred years on, the shadow has retreated, and a new generation of islanders are able to commemorate the lolaire in a way that previous generations could not.

Iain S MacDonald wrote many fine songs, and one of the finest is "The lolaire". Like me and my sister Deirdre, whom he married, Iain was a child in 1960s Stornoway, still in shadow and in silence, but to hear him sing his song of "The lolaire" was almost to hear the storm itself, so dark with rage and loss. That song is his memorial, too, as he has died, too young, in this centenary year.

"To the families of Lewis the chilly winds moaned
Your sons they have perished and they'll never come
home ...
It seemed each pebble on the shore
It bore a sailor's name"

Gu dearbh, cuimhnichidh sinn iad: We will indeed remember them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: In order to hear contributions from the final two speakers and the cabinet secretary, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3 of the standing orders, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Alasdair Allan to move a motion without notice.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by 30 minutes.—[*Alasdair Allan*]

Motion agreed to.

13:40

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I thank my colleague Alasdair Allan for bringing this important debate to the chamber.

For those who are listening from outwith the Western Isles, this might be the first time that they have heard of the lolaire tragedy, despite its being the worst peacetime British sea disaster since the Titanic and its devastating impact on the population and morale of those islands. Today, we are bringing that tragic new year's day 100 years ago to the fore and highlighting the moving remembrance that is taking place.

Two months after the end of the great war, leave was granted for many to return home. On hogmanay 1918, the lolaire set off from Kyle of Lochalsh at 7.30 pm. At 1 am, the ship was sailing too far east for reasons that we still do not fully understand. Lights on the beafts of Holm warned of danger, but the ship failed to turn. Her momentum pushed her forward and, as a gale took hold, she failed to change course. Instead, she carried on full steam ahead into the pitch-black night and struck the beafts of Holm at 2 am on new year's morning. More than 200 men died, including 174 from Lewis and seven from Harris. Seventy-nine survived and 40 were saved by the heroism of John Findlay Macleod, as we have heard.

The islands' contribution to the great war was considerable, with 6,172 men from Lewis serving in the armed forces. That is a source of pride for an island of just 29,603 souls in 1911. However, losses were heavy. From the 51 houses in the village of Leurbost alone, 32 men were killed or badly wounded in the great war. Eleven more would be lost on the lolaire, which sank less than one mile from safe harbour.

What is most upsetting about the disaster is that, having survived the horrors of war, those young men drowned as their families gathered to welcome them home to communities that had missed them sorely. A third of those who were lost on the lolaire would never be recovered, but many bodies that were given up by the sea were washed up on Sandwick shore. That sight haunted those who saw it for the rest of their lives.

The tragedy impacted on islanders for decades. Morale was shattered and mass emigration followed.

John MacLeod, the author of "When I Heard the Bell: The Loss of the lolaire", which is a comprehensive account of the disaster, said:

"My grandfather ... who was a boy of eight at the time never forgot standing outside his door ... in the village of Cross and seeing the carts coming over the brae with coffins. Carts passing the house. Carts with one coffin, carts with two coffins, carts with four coffins. Coffins after coffins."

Lewis ran out of coffins, and they had to be brought from Kyle. That detail encapsulates the

scale of the tragedy on such small, close-knit communities.

A hundred years on, the disaster is now entirely out of human memory, but people talk about the lolaire. A new generation of islanders wants to understand the pain that the tragedy inflicted and to know the men whom they lost and the grief that was felt by those who were left behind. Perhaps with the last survivor and the last child who lost a father now gone, people are finally free to revisit the tragedy and give it the commemoration due.

One particularly moving contribution to the centennial remembrance is Catriona Black's animated film "You are at the Bottom of my Mind", which builds from stories told in Gaelic from decades past by survivors and witnesses, and adds a traditional music score specially written for the creation. There are 25 hand-drawn frames for every second of the five-minute film. It becomes a moving painting of 7,500 drawings that was 10 months in the making. It is layered with photographs and films, such as the seaweed-covered surface of the deadly beafts of Holm and the gravestones of men who were lost to the sea. Those poignant details bring the artwork to life and remind us of the brutal reality of what happened that night. I encourage everyone to watch that film when it is broadcast on hogmanay.

We have recounted stories of bravery, grief and the sheer waste of human life. Now, a century later, we have a chance to remember and allow for the sharing of grief decades in the making.

13:44

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I feel greatly privileged—if a little hesitant—to participate in this debate, in which we are remembering a tragedy the cruelty and impact of which are almost beyond comprehension. I congratulate Alasdair Allan on his beautiful speech. Sadly, I cannot speak Gaelic, but it is the language of my soul and I love to hear it whenever I can. I thank all those who have spoken of their own direct relationship with the terrible tragedy.

I am the child of island parents who came from Tiree rather than Lewis. My father was at sea for his whole life, and, from an early age, my mother made us aware of the risks that his job brought and the joy and relief that everyone at sea experienced on reaching safe haven. Islanders understood then—as they understand now—the power of the elements to shape their lives, their opportunities and their futures.

The Isle of Lewis is an island of great warmth, generosity, humour and sense of community, even if it has—as other places do—a sad history. It was only when I began to visit Lewis as a young woman that I learned of the terrible tragedy of the

lolaire, despite its immensity and despite my great interest in the history of the Highlands and Islands. Those who suffered did so within their families and communities, and that part of our history has been left largely unreported. That is why this afternoon's debate and the events surrounding the centenary are so important.

When we look at tragedy, we sometimes say that it is hard to imagine what it felt like or what its impact was, but, when we start to imagine, the horrors become overwhelming. It is not just that young men were lost at sea; they were returning safe at the end of a war during which they must have suffered terribly and seen the brutality of war at first hand. We are talking not only about the loss at sea of young men but about the loss of 201 souls who were returning to small communities, where their loss wiped out a whole generation from individual villages. They were not just coming home; they were coming home on 1 January to celebrate the new year, which, in those days, was the only day of celebration in the whole year on the island. That day—new year's day—signified the importance of family and community and of mutual support. As well as being a time for reflection on the past, it was a time to look at prospects for the future.

The fact that those young men were lost not on a foreign field but within reach of safe haven and within sight of home as families gathered on Stornoway harbour to meet them makes the tragedy one that is almost beyond words. For many, its consequences and impact went unspoken for generations. It is important not just to remember the event but to understand the importance of renewal, to do what we can to support fragile remote rural communities and to maintain optimism for the future, remembering that migration from parts of Lewis reflected the pessimism that followed the tragedy. Events that might seem small on a national scale can have a catastrophic effect on small communities.

I congratulate all those people who have been involved in marking the centenary on the sensitive, creative, thought-provoking and challenging events that they have produced. A moving example of those events and a good symbol of the work that has been done is the shinty match that is to be held on Lewis on 1 January between the Lewis shinty team and a team from Kinlochshiel Shinty Club from Kyle of Lochalsh, from where the returning sailors departed for the last part of their journey. I have particular pride in that event because of a family connection to it, but it is a powerful symbol of what was lost. Young men—some of whom were shinty players—lost their potential and were denied their futures. Two young teams will play the game that the men who lost their lives were denied. Given the renaissance of shinty on the island in recent years, that act of

remembrance should also be one of renewal whereby the new generation of young islanders will offer their respect for the past and their determination to play a part in securing the cultural, sporting and economic future of the island they love.

This is a time to remember a time of immense sadness, but it is also a time to recognise the strength of the human spirit in the darkest of times, which was evident in the communities affected. Given the strength of those communities in renewing themselves, it should be a time of hope for the future, too.

13:49

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I, too, thank Dr Alasdair Allan for lodging his motion and giving the Parliament the opportunity to record our recognition ahead of the commemoration of the terrible tragedy of the lolaire. The fact that so many MSPs wanted to speak in the debate is testimony to the strength of feeling that exists. The speeches of each and every one of them were very fine indeed. I was particularly touched by Angus MacDonald's very personal story and Lewis Macdonald's personal reflections. They gave us an insight into the sense of that continuing grief—a grief silent for so long.

Only last month, we marked the centenary of the first armistice, on 11 November 1918, and reflected on the emotions that would have been felt at the time: joy that war was over, grief for those who would never return, recognition that the world would never be the same and uncertainty for the future. The people of the Western Isles would have felt all of those things. Their losses had been among the heaviest in any community, with one in six of those who joined up never returning. However, by Hogmanay 1918, the armistice had been signed and some of the men from the Western Isles were on their way home. We can imagine the people at home keeping an eye on the clock and mentally following the journey while preparing to welcome the homecomers.

Poet Murdo Macfarlane, in "Last Night the lolaire was Wrecked", beautifully describes the joy of a young woman in Lewis as she bakes in preparation for her sweetheart's return. Let me share the first verse with you, in Gaelic:

“S binn sheinn i, a’ chailin,
A raoir ann an Leòdhas,
I fuineadh an arain
Le cridhe làn sòlais,
Air choinneamh a leanainn
Tha tighinn air fòrlach:
Tighinn dhachaigh thuic tèaraint’,
Fear a gràidh.”

That scene would have been taking place across the islands. How cruel that, for so many, the welcome home was denied. How could those who did survive celebrate a return when so many had that celebration snatched away within sight of their homes? It is small wonder that it was too painful to discuss, but life had to go on, and it did, although for many that life was far away in Australia, Canada and New Zealand—yet more loss for the islands.

The story of what happened to the *lolaire* has never been widely known outside the islands. For that reason, when I set up the Scottish first world war commemorations panel, in 2013, and it set about the task of recommending which events should inform the Scottish commemorative programme, there was a determination from the start to include the tragic loss of the *lolaire*. From the beginning of the commemorative period, the *lolaire* commemoration was established as Scotland's last act of remembrance in the official first world war commemoration programme. That would not be the armistice, because Scotland still had the anniversary of the *lolaire* to come.

I have quoted from a poem by Murdo Macfarlane, and, over the years, a number of other poems and books have highlighted the deep impacts that the tragedy had on the tight-knit island community. The land of the Gaels has always been renowned for its poetry and song. However, as the centenary has drawn closer and the full story has emerged, innovative arts organisations have been telling the story of what happened in moving and engaging ways.

As part of the year of young people, schools across the islands have been working on the Dileab project, which culminated in an evening of music, dance, drama and song dedicated to the *lolaire* at the Nicholson institute in Stornoway last week.

The arts centre An Lanntair is delivering a range of events, from talks to an exhibition of 100 portraits, created over the past two years, of sailors lost and saved from the *lolaire*, and even an animated film, as we have heard.

14-18 NOW, the United Kingdom's official arts programme for the centenary of the first world war, commissioned two new suites of Gaelic music: "Cumha An *lolaire*"—"lolaire Elegy"—by Lewis-born piper and composer Iain Morrison, and "An Treas Suaile"—"The Third Wave"—by Duncan Chisholm. Duncan worked with Julie Fowles to create a piece that pays homage to John Finlay Macleod, who, as we have heard, swam ashore with a rope to create, literally, a lifeline that saved 40 men. That is a truly remarkable story.

BBC Scotland and BBC ALBA are producing a wide and varied range of programmes on

television and radio around the centenary, and the stunning new sculpture at the site of the memorial will be unveiled at the national commemorative event on 1 January. Situated within a few metres of the spot where the ship floundered, its simple design provides a fitting addition to the existing memorial and a moving spot at which to take a moment to contemplate the tragedy that unfolded on the rocks below.

Prince Charles, who bears the ancient title of Lord of the Isles, will attend the service of commemoration on 1 January 2019, accompanied by the First Minister, and they will have the opportunity to speak to descendants of those people who were lost or saved. Also on that day, a CalMac ferry with around 500 local people on board will sail out to the spot where the *lolaire* turned towards the rocks. A short service will be held on board before 201 schoolchildren each drop a single carnation overboard—one for each man who died.

There can be few stories more tragic than that of the *lolaire*. The men on board would have been rousing themselves from sleep, closing books and pulling their belongings together—the things that we all do as we come to the end of a journey. Those who were waiting for them would have been noting the time and possibly heading for the harbour if they lived in Stornoway. The end of that journey should have been a joyous occasion. One hundred years on, it is right that the last act of remembrance in the Scottish commemorative programme is the *lolaire* commemoration, as the impact on the tight-knit island community was beyond measure.

As we have heard in the debate, the story and the impact will continue for the people of the islands for a long time to come. We have had the privilege of honouring and paying tribute to the men during the debate, but it is incumbent on us to make sure that their memory lives on and that we have the renewal that has been spoken about. I hope that, on 1 January 2019, we will all take a moment to reflect on the events that took place 100 years ago, which have left such a poignant legacy. Mòran taing.

13:55

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Social Security and Older People

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is portfolio questions. As usual, I ask for nice, short, succinct questions, with answers to match. I live in hope.

Social Security Scotland

1. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the development of Social Security Scotland. (S5O-02709)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Social Security Scotland's development has been a series of firsts. Since the agency's establishment on 1 September, more than 75,000 carers have received their first and second payments of the first devolved Scottish benefit: the carers allowance supplement. As members heard from the First Minister last week, the first applications for the new best start grant were taken on 10 December, and more than 4,000 claims had been made by the end of the first day. The first payments have now been made, giving £600 to families for the birth of their first child.

Clare Adamson: Will the cabinet secretary update the Parliament on the progress of carers allowance supplement and say how many carers are expected to benefit from it before the festive period?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I confirm that the second payment of the carers allowance supplement has been made. The vast majority of payments were made on 14 December. In complex cases that require special handling, payments will be made by 21 December. In a small number of cases—for example, cases in which the payment was rejected by a bank and we are relying on the client to provide updated bank details—payments might be made after that date. This is the second payment of carers allowance supplement; further payments are scheduled for June and December 2019.

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): In light of the Scottish Government asking the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver carers allowance for two more years, at a cost of £2.4 million, and delaying the devolution of disability benefits until 2021, will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government will not request further delays, past 2021, before it

assumes executive competence for those benefits?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I appreciate that there have been recent discussions about the agency agreement for carers allowance. The first statement on that was made by my predecessor, Angela Constance, in April 2017, when we said that there would be an agency agreement with the DWP. The reason for that was made clear: it was to allow the early payment of the carers allowance supplement, which is the quickest way of getting payments to those carers on the lowest incomes, showing our gratitude and respect for the work that they do. The decision was taken in a very transparent way and was talked about in 2017; it is the best and quickest way for us to get money to carers.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Earlier this month, *The Times* reported that the cabinet secretary and her predecessor had contracted out the Scottish Government's responsibility for carers allowance for two years, to the end of 2020, at a cost of £10 million. Responses to freedom of information requests show that officials are working to an assumption that disability benefit rules and structures are to remain broadly the same.

Carers and disabled people want change; they do not want to continue to be the victims of Tory-designed social security. Will the cabinet secretary rule out DWP delivery of disability benefits and end the agency agreement contract for carers allowance as soon as possible?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I simply reiterate to Mark Griffin the point that I have just made. The matter was first raised, quite rightly, by Angela Constance, in April 2017, when it was made clear that the agency agreement would be put in place to allow Social Security Scotland to make payments to carers quickly. That is exactly what has been done. Throughout the process, we have made it abundantly clear that the top priority is the safe and secure transition of payments, whether of carers allowance or disability benefits. We will continue to ensure that that is our top priority.

The delivery of Social Security Scotland, the payment of carers allowance supplement—twice—and the successful launch of the best start grant represent remarkable progress in the first year of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. I will update the Parliament on our timetable for the wave 2 benefits in the new year.

Universal Credit (Impact)

2. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what impact the introduction of

universal credit has had on people in Scotland. (S5O-02710)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Universal credit has had a devastating impact on people in Scotland, and there is a catalogue of evidence that it is pushing people into poverty, rent arrears and hardship. Trussell Trust analysis shows that food bank use has increased in universal credit areas by an average of 52 per cent, while evidence from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities shows that the average rent arrears are 2.5 times higher for those on universal credit. We have repeatedly called on the United Kingdom Government to fix the fundamental flaws in this catastrophic benefit, and will continue to do so.

Fulton MacGregor: Every one of us in this chamber is dealing with heartbreaking cases of constituents who have been sanctioned or moved on to universal credit in the run-up to Christmas, in many cases leaving them with little or no money over the festive period. Will the cabinet secretary outline what representations have been made by the Scottish Government to the UK Government, to request that this despicable system be ended?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Scottish Government has written to the UK Government a number of times, asking it to fix the fundamental flaws in universal credit. I have written to the different secretaries of state who have presided over the system; I wrote again when the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Amber Rudd, was appointed; and I raised our deep concerns with her directly when I had a telephone conversation with her yesterday. Most recently, I wrote to Ms Rudd last week, urging the UK Government to make hardship payments available to people who will be waiting for their first universal credit payment over Christmas, because the current DWP approach of offering advances puts people into debt from the start of their claim.

Benefit Processing (Case Management System)

3. **John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether the case management system that was procured from IBM in 2017 will process post wave 1 benefits. (S5O-02711)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): A strategic decision was made in May 2018 to adopt IBM's social program management software as the core case management and benefit calculation platform for all phases of the programme.

John Scott: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I did not even get a chance to call you, but you have got in again.

John Scott: Thank you, Presiding Officer. Audit Scotland was quite clear that if the case management system cannot process benefits after those in the first wave of devolution, another solution will be needed, and there may be delays. Can the cabinet secretary give Parliament a cast-iron guarantee that there will not be delays?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Yes, I can, because we are ensuring that the platform that is in place for wave 1 can be built upon to deliver wave 2. That is to avoid the landscape that exists for the DWP, with many benefits being managed through different and separate technological solutions that do not speak to one another and do not operate effectively. We are trying to learn from that about simplification, reuse and having a loosely coupled architecture that will allow us to build the different benefits on top of each other. We are trying to gain from the learning in wave 1 to successfully deliver wave 2.

Cold Weather Payments

4. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to change the system for cold weather payments. (S5O-02712)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): In developing the devolved cold weather payments benefit, we are engaging with households who have claimed the existing benefit and a wide range of expert opinion. We will seek the views of households who have applied for and benefited from cold weather payments as part of our research plan for 2019-20. We will continue to listen to views and consider ways to better meet the needs of vulnerable households in Scotland.

Willie Rennie: It has been two years since the Scottish Government consulted on the future of cold weather payments, yet no firm changes have been announced. Many would like the payments to be paid in advance, by default, wind chill to be factored in, and more local weather stations to be used, so that low-income and older vulnerable people know that they can use the heating when they need it most.

There are reports that the Government wants to abolish the payments altogether. Will the cabinet secretary tell us whether she is considering that?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am not considering that at all. We have stated the benefits that we will be introducing as part of wave 1 of our timetable for Social Security Scotland. As I said in response to an earlier question from Mark Griffin, we will be discussing the publication of our timetable for

wave 2 in the new year, and that will look at the other benefit payments, including cold weather and winter fuel payments.

I am very aware of the different challenges with the current system and the asks on wind chill and localised weather stations. We will be asking for the views of households and individuals who have experience of the current payments in our next research plan, so that we can build on that lived experience and get the policy right.

Social Security and Older People (Glasgow)

5. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it expects the impact to be on social security and older people in Glasgow of its draft spending and tax plans for 2019-20. (S5O-02713)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): The people of Glasgow, along with people across Scotland, will benefit from this year's budget support for the programme of work to deliver social security powers—we heard about many of those in response to the previous questions.

In 2019-20, our investment in social security will be more than £560 million, with £435 million going directly into the pockets of people living across the country.

Our spending plans are ambitious and clearly set out this Government's commitment to creating a social security system that is based on dignity and respect, delivering benefits, tackling poverty and mitigating the worst impacts of the UK Government's welfare cuts. Across Scotland, people will feel the benefit of that.

John Mason: In relation to older people, can the minister comment on how we can achieve the right balance between preventive spend and more reactive spend—in other words, stopping things going wrong and reacting when things do go wrong?

Christina McKelvie: Yes, I can. Next year, I will publish an older people's framework. That will pull together a number of programmes in the Scottish budget 2019-20 that benefit older people. The programmes, which are preventive and reactive, will impact positively on the health and wellbeing of older people. They include increasing the investment in the chronic medicine service; a new scheme to improve access to dental care among people living in care homes; and a careers information advice and guidance strategy encompassing the all-age careers sector. There is also a commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the concessionary travel scheme.

Universal Credit (In-work Conditionality)

6. Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the in-work conditionality aspect of universal credit. (S5O-02714)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): This Government is opposed to conditionality and sanctions as delivered by the Westminster Government's Department for Work and Pensions. We are delivering a new approach for Scotland, as signalled by our new social security agency and our devolved employment service, fair start Scotland. Our approach has fairness, dignity and respect at the heart of services to help those who are out of work, who are looking for work, who are in work or who are looking to progress into a new job role.

Dr Allan: I welcome the cabinet secretary's response. The extension of conditionality to claimants who are already in paid employment is just one of the many controversial elements of the UK Government's universal credit. Many are concerned about how that will affect UC claimants in rural communities, where additional employment opportunities will be few and far between. What representations can the Scottish Government make to the UK Government about that concern?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Dr Allan—quite rightly—raises that concern about the impacts of such a scheme in rural and remote island communities. We have raised concerns with the UK Government, and I will ensure that we continue to do so with that specific aspect in mind.

It is clear that the current benefit sanctions and the conditionality regime is punitive and causes further hardship. There is no evidence that it helps people into work or ensures that their life chances progress. In the Scottish social security system and our employability services, we will continue to say that there is no role for sanctions. The in-work conditionality aspect of universal credit is extremely concerning for people and puts more stress on an already very difficult situation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I appreciate that this is a very serious topic, but I remind you all that we should have short answers and questions, please.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): On the question of conditionality, Pete Searle, from the DWP, said that there is no

"evidence at the moment about ... the best way of interacting with people in work, who have got jobs to go to and do not need to be popping down to the jobcentre every five minutes.—[*Official Report, Social Security Committee*, 8 November 2018; c 6.]

Does the cabinet secretary agree that that exposes the proposals to transfer people who are in work to conditionality? That undermines the whole concept of universal credit by penalising low-paid workers who are already in work and suggests that the proposals are half baked.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Pauline McNeill is quite right to point out the sheer practical difficulties that the in-work sanction regime will give people. That is why I talked particularly about the stress and anxiety that it will cause people. Nothing in the evidence that has been taken shows that benefit sanctions actually enhance a person's motivation to work or increase their ability to find better-paid employment; they cause stress and anxiety, and they will have great practical implications for the individuals involved. The committee has been quite right to look at the very important issue of in-work poverty.

Carers Allowance (Recovery of Overpayments)

7. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has asked the Department for Work and Pensions to cease recovery action against recipients of carers allowance who have been overpaid. (S5O-02715)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I wrote to the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on 20 September to highlight my concerns and seek reassurance that, in the event of any overpayment recovery action, the DWP treats people fairly, ensuring that individual circumstances are taken into account and people are not placed in undue hardship.

It is vital that people are not prosecuted when they have made a genuine error, and that is the approach that Social Security Scotland will take.

David Stewart: Not only will the Scottish Government send millions to the DWP by the end of 2019-20, but 6,000 who have overpayments will have to face the Tories' brutal DWP recovery system. Will the cabinet secretary ditch this terrible idea, use our powers to halt the recoveries and deliver dignity and respect to carers in Scotland, who rightly deserve that?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I said in my original answer, I have raised with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions my concerns about the way that the DWP will deal with overpayments in order to ensure that people who have made genuine errors are not punished.

I refer to previous answers: we made it clear in April 2017 that there would be an agency agreement in place, what the implications of that were and, importantly, why we were taking that decision. I say respectfully to David Stewart that

we cannot simply change the agency agreement and expect Social Security Scotland to take on carers allowance in the short term; it takes time for a system to be built. That is why we made the case in April 2017 for why we were putting in place the agency agreement and it is why the timetable has been set out for wave 1 benefits in the way that it has. We made clear years ago that we would use the agency agreement and the reasons for that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Richard Lyle can ask a brief question.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary confirm how many carers are in receipt of the carers allowance supplement and by how much they are set to benefit ahead of this festive period?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Mr Lyle is quite right to point out the carers who will benefit from the carers allowance supplement. More than 75,000 will receive two payments this financial year and two payments next financial year. They are receiving that payment because we took the decision to ensure that the first action of Social Security Scotland was the quick delivery of the carers allowance supplement, putting money directly into carers' pockets.

Funeral Costs (Glasgow)

8. Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to make funeral costs more affordable for people in Scotland. (S5O-02716)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question that was lodged says "in Glasgow", but never mind.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Our "Funeral Costs Plan" sets out 10 actions that the Scottish Government will take to tackle funeral poverty across Scotland, including Glasgow. We are preparing guidance on funeral costs, we have published a leaflet to help people plan their funeral, and we will pilot an incentivised savings product to help people save for a funeral.

We will start the delivery of funeral expense assistance by summer 2019, improving the support available to bereaved families at a very difficult time by widening eligibility and investing £2 million above current Department for Work and Pensions spending to help people who are struggling with funeral costs who would receive nothing at present.

Johann Lamont: Is the cabinet secretary aware that Glasgow City Council has increased the cost of interment by 12 per cent since 2010-11 from £792 to £890? Does she understand the impact of

that increase on families and does she accept that, in order to address that problem, the Scottish Government needs to reconsider its decision to cut disproportionately funding to Glasgow, given the impact of such increases on families who are already suffering loss and grief?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary—briefly, please.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Decisions about charges for services are taken at local level. I believe that that is the right way to do that, because there is an understanding of the circumstances and needs of the people who are served by local authorities. The Scottish Government is aware that there are variations in burial and cremation charges among local authorities. That is why we have recently consulted on draft guidance on funeral costs, which will include a number of steps that local authorities can take on setting charges.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise to Tom Arthur and Liz Smith for failing to reach their questions. We must move on to the next set of questions.

Communities and Local Government

Social Enterprise Strategy (Public Procurement)

1. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that its social enterprise strategy makes use of public procurement policy to promote social enterprise. (S5O-02719)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Our social enterprise strategy recognises the purchasing power of the public sector, and associated opportunities from our sustainable public procurement policy, to increase the involvement of social enterprises in service delivery.

The strategy specifically commits to increasing access to all our markets, and key actions since its launch include our investing £2 million for technical tendering support via the just enterprise business support programme, more than £400,000 in partnership for procurement to support collaboration between social enterprises bidding for public sector contracts, and £875,000 in strategic public social partnerships.

Dean Lockhart: Figures published recently by the Improvement Service reveal that the number of local suppliers, including social enterprises, that are engaged by local authorities has declined by 42 per cent over the past decade. As a result of changes to European Union procurement laws, we

now have the opportunity to change the way in which the public sector engages with local social enterprise organisations. Will the cabinet secretary therefore update the procurement element of the social enterprise strategy to better support local economies and social enterprises?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that I would like questions to be short. I have been tolerant so far, but that is waning.

Aileen Campbell: I point again to the fact that we have in place a considerable package of measures to support social enterprises in engaging with the procurement processes and to enable procurers to access that spend for the benefit of social enterprises, which, of course, invest their money for social good.

Since 2017, more than half of social enterprises now trade with the public sector. In that year, 15 per cent of all social enterprises won new public sector contracts. Therefore, there have been changes. I also ask Dean Lockhart to reflect that there was an increase in social enterprises trading directly with consumers in the same period—from 68 per cent in 2015 to 79 per cent. That is a positive sign that social enterprise income streams are diversifying and are not over-reliant on public sector contracts. We need to look at the totality of where social enterprises get their resources from and how they are bidding for contracts. Of course, where we can, we will always do more to support social enterprises in public procurement processes, but we need to look at the approach in the round and also engage thoroughly with such enterprises to ensure that we can respond to their needs.

North Ayrshire Council (Meetings)

2. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met North Ayrshire Council, and what was discussed. (S5O-02720)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including North Ayrshire Council, to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

Jamie Greene: The last time that I spoke to North Ayrshire Council, it said that the most important thing that it is worried about at the moment is its financial settlement. The cabinet secretary will be aware of the comments made in the past week by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, to the effect that the current budget settlement is bad news for communities such as North Ayrshire. It said:

“Without a rethink from Scottish Government ... these budget proposals could put the final nail into many communities and services we deliver.”

Does the cabinet secretary agree or disagree with those comments?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Greene, I am not sure whether you heard me. Your supplementary question was too long—you could have cut it down even more.

Aileen Campbell: I remind Jamie Greene that our block grant for 2019-20 will be almost £2 billion lower in real terms compared with that for 2010-11. In that context, we have treated local government fairly in the budget proposals that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work announced last week, despite the cut that Mr Greene needs to understand is coming from his colleagues down in Westminster.

North Ayrshire Council will receive £301.1 million in funding from the Scottish Government in 2019-20. Taken together with a potential to increase council tax by 3 per cent, that could mean £23.1 million more than in 2018-19 to support services. I again make the point that we are working in a financial context that has been constrained by Jamie Greene’s colleagues in the United Kingdom Government.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The minister will share my astonishment at the Tories moaning about the local government settlement when their own UK Government has cut local authority funding in England by 60 per cent in eight years. [*Interruption.*] Will the minister confirm that North Ayrshire Council’s funding boost next year of more than £23 million represents an 8.3 per cent increase, which is the biggest in Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am getting cross—I could not hear that question. I hope that you heard it, cabinet secretary.

Aileen Campbell: I share Kenneth Gibson’s astonishment that the Conservatives continue to articulate the financial constraints that this Government faces, given that it is their colleagues who are causing it. He is right to point out the situation for local authorities in the rest of the UK.

North Ayrshire Council will receive £301.1 million in funding from the Scottish Government in 2019-20. Taken together with the potential for the council to raise its council tax, that could mean £23.1 million more than in 2018-19 to support services.

Kenneth Gibson is absolutely right to underline the fact that this Government is treating local government fairly. We will do what we can to support North Ayrshire Council.

Social Isolation (Housing Policy)

3. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what part it believes housing policy should play in tackling social isolation. (S50-02721)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): On Tuesday, we published our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections in Scotland. I am proud that Scotland is leading the way in that area.

Housing has a vital role in our efforts to combat those issues. As part of our strategy, we will work with partners to improve social connectivity, pilot innovative housing options and improve accessibility.

Lewis Macdonald: That is all very welcome, particularly the commitment as part of the strategy to pilot innovative housing solutions for older people. The minister will know that, over the years, Aberdeen has produced many innovative solutions to housing for older people and that sheltered and very sheltered housing in Aberdeen have a national reputation. Does the minister agree that Aberdeen would be a good place for such a pilot, and will he undertake to talk to housing providers in the city about taking that forward?

Kevin Stewart: I will not make a commitment to a pilot in a particular place at this time, as we have to make an assessment about what is required in that regard. I certainly agree that, in some regard, Aberdeen has been at the forefront of providing the right services for people in sheltered and very sheltered housing. We also need to look beyond sheltered and very sheltered housing, because we know that many people do not want to live in such complexes, although many do.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The Equal Opportunities Committee report “Age and Social Isolation” recommended that the Government

“promotes innovation in future housing development in ... Planning and location”

Will the minister tell us how he is doing that?

Kevin Stewart: As Mr Simpson is well aware, there was much discussion of that during the course of stage 2 of the Planning (Scotland) Bill. We will continue to look at what is required to ensure that people are not socially isolated, as it is a very important issue.

As Mr Simpson also knows, the Government is carrying out a discussion with all stakeholders about housing beyond 2021. I encourage all members to get as many people as possible involved in that discussion so that we move

forward together to get it right for the people of Scotland.

Public Services (Accountability Frameworks)

4. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to remove different accountability frameworks in the delivery of public services, as recommended by the Christie commission, in order to improve local authority integration. (S5O-02722)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): The Christie report did not recommend that the Scottish Government remove accountability frameworks. It found fragmentation and complexity in the design of public services, and concluded that that must be tackled by improving coherence, collaboration and integrated service provision between agencies.

In keeping with that conclusion, and as part of our commitment to public service reform, we have led several major reform programmes and taken other action to strengthen the integration of public services to improve outcomes and to ensure that accountability frameworks for public services reflect those ambitions.

Michelle Ballantyne: Although the Accounts Commission uses Audit Scotland to carry out some of its work, I am sure that the minister agrees that they are different bodies. In areas such as the integration of health and social care, does the minister think that more holistic accountability frameworks would allow for better analysis of integration efforts?

Aileen Campbell: The integration of health and social care is to provide high-quality care and support that is shaped around the needs of individuals, their carers and family members. It is now bound by the national performance framework, as are all public agencies. The integration is designed to have person-centred care to enable that holistic support to be provided. That is the benefit of integration and why we have power to deliver on it.

Dumfries and Galloway Council (Meetings)

5. Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Dumfries and Galloway Council and what was discussed. (S5O-02723)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including Dumfries and Galloway Council, to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in

partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

Colin Smyth: In a report to Dumfries and Galloway Council yesterday, councillors—including councillors from the Scottish National Party who form part of the administration—noted that the council will need to find £17 million of savings next year in order to deliver a balanced budget, even with a 3 per cent council tax rise. That will take the amount of savings that have been made in the region since 2010 to almost £100 million. Where does the cabinet secretary think those new cuts should come from? Which services does she think should be axed?

Aileen Campbell: I say—again—that we have treated local government fairly, against the backdrop of our budget having been cut. It will be almost £2 billion lower in real terms for 2019-20, compared with 2010-11, which is the point that I made to Jamie Greene.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will receive £313.6 million of funding from the Scottish Government. With the potential increase in council tax, that will mean an £5.7 million more than it had in 2018-19 to support services.

We understand that there are challenges for local government in ensuring that it can deliver the services that they are required to deliver. However, I point out that Colin Smyth's question to me is exactly the question that his party continues to ignore in the process of reaching agreement on the budget. His party has asked the Government to make additional funding promises in other areas, but has never pointed to where funding can come from or savings made. As the budget negotiation goes on, Colin Smyth and his colleagues will need to figure out in what areas they will make savings, or what they would cut, in order for another part of the budget to be lifted.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Finlay Carson. Be brief, please.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The truth is that because money is already committed and ring fenced, core capital and revenue budgets have been cut in the local government settlement. In the real world, that settlement will mean substantial job losses in constituencies such as Galloway and West Dumfries, where local government is the main employer. When will the SNP Government stop its spin and its smoke and mirrors and admit that the settlement is a real-terms cut in funding?

Aileen Campbell: To get back in the real world, I remind Finlay Carson that his party and his United Kingdom Government—[*Interruption.*—]—has cut our budget by almost £2 billion in real terms. Once Finlay Carson manages to project himself back into the real world of constraints that the SNP

Government is having to face, we will start to listen to him, but until then avoid his hypocrisy on the matter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 6 from Adam Tomkins, please. [*Interruption.*]

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I am sorry, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: See what happens when there is a minor rammie, Mr Tomkins. You could not hear me, could you?

Adam Tomkins: No, I could not.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Blame the rest. Thank you, Mr Tomkins.

Planning (Scotland) Bill and Land Value Capture

6. **Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its policy with regard to the Planning (Scotland) Bill and land value capture. (S5O-02724)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): The Government remains interested in the concept of land value capture and in maintaining the enabling provisions for an infrastructure levy within the planning bill. We have separately requested that the Scottish Land Commission examine a range of issues, including fiscal and tax matters that relate to land. The Government does not propose to progress further policy change in the area of land value capture until the commission has reported.

Adam Tomkins: Will the minister ensure that the Scottish Land Commission's work on land value capture is completed and published in full before Parliament considers the Planning (Scotland) Bill at stage 3?

Kevin Stewart: I cannot give that undertaking because it is up to the Scottish Land Commission when it will report and produce its recommendations for the Government. We have to wait and allow the Scottish Land Commission to do the work that it needs to do, so that we can move forward on the issue in full knowledge of every aspect of what land value capture will mean for Scotland. The Government is, and remains, very interested in the concept of land value capture.

Local Development Plans

7. **Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to enable local authorities to have the power to review local development plans. (S5O-02725)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): Local authorities already have the power to review local development plans.

Sandra White: Having spoken to colleagues not only in Glasgow City Council but in other councils, I am aware, as the minister will be, that situations arise in which council administrations inherit the previous administration's local development plans. I have been informed that it is extremely difficult to change those local development plans midstream. Does the minister have any advice to administrations that find themselves in that position?

Kevin Stewart: Local development plans are not just about changes in political administrations. As I said to Sandra White, local authorities have the power to review local development plans.

The Scottish Government is committed to there being a plan-led system, so the Planning (Scotland) Bill aims to strengthen local development plans. It is important that all authorities have sound plans in place to provide certainty for communities and investors in their area.

The matter of when and how a plan is reviewed is for local authorities to decide.

Affordable Homes

8. **James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making towards meeting its target of building 50,000 affordable homes. (S5O-02726)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): I am delighted that we are making excellent progress on our affordable homes target for Scotland during the current parliamentary session. The latest quarterly housing statistics show that between April 2016 and the end of September 2018, we delivered 19,400 affordable homes, 11,825 of which are for social rent. That keeps us well on track to deliver our ambitious target of delivering 50,000 affordable homes, with 70 per cent being for social rent.

The Scottish Government can be proud of its record on affordable housing, having now delivered more than 80,000 affordable homes since 2007.

James Dornan: It is great that the Government made housing such a major issue and that it is on track to deliver its commitments for this parliamentary session. What work is being undertaken to assess housing need in the next parliamentary session and beyond?

Kevin Stewart: As we set out in our programme for government, we have begun work on a vision

for how our homes and communities should look and feel in 2040, and on the options and choices to get us there. We want to deliver more of the right houses in the right places in order to meet the housing needs and aspirations of the people of Scotland. We want that to be a lasting legacy that is not just about new homes, but is about making the best use of our existing buildings.

We have been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in housing, and we are now considering the wealth of material that has been generated, with a view to preparing for further engagement on specific themes and outline options in 2019.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): In last week's budget speech, Derek Mackay claimed that the Scottish Government had built 80,000 affordable homes since 2007. However, this week, the Scottish Parliament information centre has told me that the Government has completed only 58,427 affordable homes. Who is right?

Kevin Stewart: The Government has delivered more than 80,000 affordable homes since 2007.

Vulnerable People (High-quality Services)

9. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it assists local authorities in providing quality services for the most vulnerable people in society. (S5O-02727)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government works in partnership with local government on a wide range of issues to ensure that we are delivering quality services for the most vulnerable people in society. We are committed to continuing those efforts. That commitment is shown in the draft Scottish budget that we published on 12 December, which increased the total funding that local authorities can use to provide front-line services to the most vulnerable in our society by £485 million in 2019-20.

James Kelly: Given that the draft budget contains cuts to the local government budget—South Lanarkshire Council is facing cuts of £16 million—can the cabinet secretary and her colleagues on the ministerial team who represent South Lanarkshire take a stand on behalf of communities in the South Lanarkshire Council area and oppose a budget that contains cuts to local services and jobs?

Aileen Campbell: Again, I point out that local authorities have been treated fairly against the backdrop of fiscal constraints that have been imposed on us by the United Kingdom Government. I am looking at figures for South Lanarkshire Council that suggest that there is a 2.83 per cent increase in its budget.

We will continue to work with members who wish to amend the budget. If James Kelly wishes to make a change and comes to us with a worked-up proposition and an idea of where he will take the money from, of course we will listen to him. However, I think that we will wait a long time to see the Labour Party coming up with any plan, any coherence or anything constructive to add to the budget process.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. I apologise to Willie Coffey for failing to reach his question.

Mental Health Services

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a ministerial statement by Clare Haughey on reforming mental health services. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:40

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

We all have mental health. That is a simple truth, but it has not shaped the services that support our health and wellbeing. For generations, mental ill health has been misunderstood and stigmatised. It has not been treated as being as important, nor has it been treated as comprehensively, as physical health. I know that there is consensus across the chamber that that needs to change.

The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to bringing change to people's lives. We made Scotland the first nation in the world to introduce a waiting times target for child and adolescent mental health services and the first in the United Kingdom to have a target for psychological therapies. In 2017, we declared our ambition with a 10-year mental health strategy. We are now raising the bar higher. We have an unprecedented opportunity to build a world-class mental health system that works for everyone: today I will set out how we will do that.

We have already committed £0.25 billion of additional investment through our programme for government. Through a comprehensive package, we will take action to reform children and young people's mental health services; improve specialist services for everyone who needs them; take a 21st century approach to adult mental health; respect, protect and fulfil rights; and make suicide prevention everybody's business.

I start with the services that support our children and young people. Although specialist services see more people than ever before, waiting times are unacceptable and there are gaps in the community support that is available for children and young people who have less acute issues. Also, there is poor out-of-hours help available at times of crisis.

We have not shied away from open and honest discussions about those challenges: indeed, we commissioned an audit of rejected referrals. When the audit report was published in June, the Government accepted all its recommendations. That is why we established a joint task force with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities,

chaired by Dr Dame Denise Coia, to look at children and young people's mental health. Dame Denise published her initial recommendations in September and I am pleased that the task force has published its delivery plan today. It is an ambitious programme of work that will inform what can be done by the whole of the public sector, and beyond, to realise our shared ambitions. In support of that work, I announced today that we will invest £4 million, which will be distributed through NHS Education for Scotland, to recruit additional CAMHS staff across Scotland. The staff will be instrumental in supporting the new services that were announced in the programme for government and reducing pressure on the existing system.

It is right that we take immediate action to support the workforce, because it is the heart of our efforts for achieving better mental health in Scotland. I give my thanks to the people who work with children, young people and adults who have mental health issues for their essential work and inspiring commitment.

The programme for government makes clear our commitment to rapid significant change, and mental health is at its heart. I want to ensure that we progress that work quickly and effectively. For that reason, I am pleased to publish today a delivery plan that sets out how we will use the resources and commitment in the programme for government to reform and improve mental health services in Scotland. The delivery plan sets out comprehensive reform of support for children and young people.

We will substantially expand the range of perinatal support that is available to women. From next year, we will provide the educational tools to meet workforce needs, recruit and train primary care psychological therapists and roll out more effective models of supporting perinatal and infant health.

We will ensure that early intervention to support children and young people is embedded in our schools. We will invest more than £60 million in additional school counselling services across Scotland, and create about 350 counsellors in school education. We will have an additional 250 school nurses in place by 2022, and we will enhance support and professional learning materials for teachers on good mental health. By the end of the 2019-20 academic year, every local authority will be offered training for teachers in mental health first aid.

In further and higher education, we will provide more than 80 additional counsellors over the next four years, through investment of about £20 million.

We will improve services for community mental wellbeing for five to 24-year-olds and their families. We want them to have direct and immediate access to counselling sessions, self-care advice and family and peer-to-peer support. During 2019, we will expand the successful distress brief intervention programme to include people under the age of 18. We will make mental health and suicide prevention training mandatory for all national health service staff who receive mandatory physical health training.

I turn to waiting times. In recent years, performance has varied across Scotland. Some NHS boards have regularly met, or have been close to meeting, the 18-week waiting times standard. Others have struggled to deliver over a sustained period. The Scottish Government is already investing £54 million over four years to improve access to mental health services. However, we are not yet seeing the improvement that we need, so we will intensify our actions.

All NHS boards will have in place plans to drive rapid improvement by spring next year. NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland will work with all NHS boards to support those plans. That will ensure that people get the right help at the right time, without being subject to unnecessarily long waits. That work will be overseen by a new mental health delivery board, which I will chair, that will ensure that progress is tracked regularly and that any obstacles are addressed quickly. The board will drive the actions that are set out in the programme for government delivery plan. I will report on progress to Parliament in the autumn.

It is equally vital that adult mental health services are considered in a coherent and complementary way. We need to put in place a much broader range of services to ensure that our approach is preventive and provides the right treatment at the right time. Our broader healthcare services, community services and wider society need to help people across Scotland to maximise good mental health. We all need to promote what good mental health means in the same way that we promote what it means to be physically healthy. We will drive that change through investment in changing primary care, our work on distress brief interventions, better access to mental health professionals, and our commitment to seeing the delivery of the access waiting times standards.

Alongside that work, we will help people across Scotland to benefit from digital services, such as the NHS inform service, the breathing space service and online cognitive behaviour therapy. The programme for government delivery plan sets out clear actions and timescales for doing the work.

We are also working to protect and realise our commitments to a rights-based approach. Two major reviews are under way: one on the reform of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, and one on how the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 meets the needs of those with learning disability and autism. We will continue to support stakeholders who are working to ensure that people can fully enjoy their rights, free from stigma and discrimination.

In August, we published “Scotland’s Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters”, which sets out our vision of a Scotland where suicide is preventable and where help and support are available to anyone who is contemplating suicide, as well as to those who have lost a loved one. As the plan makes clear, I want to build on our good work by reducing the suicide rate by a further 20 per cent by 2022. Collaborative leadership must be at the heart of our approach, which is why we established a national suicide prevention leadership group, under the chair of former Deputy Chief Constable Rose Fitzpatrick. The group will set out its plans to make that vision happen shortly, and its work will be backed by £3 million in funding over the course of this parliamentary session.

We need bold, dynamic thinking to ensure that our mental health and wellbeing is supported as well as our physical health. I am determined to accelerate the pace of change. I have used the word “reform” several times during my statement, and that is what we will see. Achieving that will depend on delivering change across the whole system. We will work in partnership with local government and others, because we must all recognise the role that we have to play and the importance of getting this right together.

We must do that in a way that ensures that the rights of individuals are always placed at the centre of decision making. It is about not just what we do, but how we do it. That is essential to making lives better, to fostering recovery and hope and to bringing the real and decisive change that Scotland wants to see.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will take questions on her statement. I will allow 20 minutes for that, and I ask members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for sight of her statement. I welcome the report; indeed, there is no one in the chamber who would not want mental health to be given the commitment that it needs. However, there are still questions to be asked.

At the moment, almost a third of children who need it are not being seen for mental health

treatment within 18 weeks. That is completely unacceptable, and the task force has recommended a reduction to 12 weeks. That is still an extremely long time to wait, but there was no mention of it in the minister's statement. Does the Scottish Government intend to reduce waiting times to 12 weeks, and will the minister make a personal commitment to solving the CAMHS crisis by this time next year?

Moreover, despite a whole section of the draft budget being dedicated to workforce priorities, there was absolutely no mention of the commitment to recruiting an additional 800 mental health workers. I note that only three community link workers were recruited between July and September, even though the Scottish Government had committed to recruiting 250 by the end of the session. What progress has been made in that respect?

Clare Haughey: I thank Annie Wells for her questions and I am grateful for her support in improving mental health care across our country.

This morning, the children and young people's mental health task force launched the delivery plan that Ms Wells alluded to. The group, which is co-chaired by Dr Dame Denise Coia and a member of the youth commission on mental health services, was commissioned by the Scottish Government in partnership with COSLA and reports to both of us.

In addition, I announced this morning an additional £4 million for CAMHS to increase staffing levels, which are already at a record high. The additional staff will help increase capacity in the system and help drive some of the changes that we need to increase early intervention and promote mental health and wellbeing. That, in turn, will help us to reduce demand for specialist services, allowing them to see and treat more quickly those children and young people who require more specialist treatment. Getting children and young people the appropriate help and support that they need, when they need them, is a Scottish Government priority.

I am quite happy to update Annie Wells on the 800 additional workers that she asked about. As responsibility for health and social care has been devolved to integration authorities for their areas, it is vital that they plan for and take into account local needs in collaboration with the relevant partners, to ensure best use of the additional resource. That is why the Scottish Government is currently working with integration authorities on this commitment and on how, in consultation with their partners, they are deciding on the allocation of the additional workers to the key settings that are set out in action 15 of the mental health strategy.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Can we get in?

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): This is ridiculous.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Are we going to get in?

Clare Haughey: As part of our discussions with the chief officers, we are also working on putting in place a reporting framework to capture information on workforce allocation, the location of the workforce and details of the trajectory towards the total of 800 by 2021-22. Part of the delivery board that I will chair will oversee some of that work.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members do not have to make complaints offstage—I am handling the matter. In response to Ms Lennon's question, I allow slightly longer answers at the beginning of the questioning, but afterwards I expect short questions and succinct answers.

Continuing with front benchers, I call Monica Lennon.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for her statement. Scottish Labour welcomes the additional investments in mental health services and a commitment to raising the bar further. We share the same ambition for Scotland to have world-class mental health services.

It was a chilling moment when the Scottish Youth Parliament published its 2016 report "Our generation's epidemic: Young people's awareness and experience of mental health information, support, and services". I am proud that fighting for access to school-based counselling has been a Labour priority in recent years, and I am grateful that the Government is committed to delivering it.

However, it is not just in children and young people's services that real change is needed, and today I pay tribute to campaigners such as Gillian Murray and Karen McKeown, who have lost loved ones to suicide. It is because of people like them, who have kept pressure on people like me and on this Parliament, that real action is being taken.

We have to keep listening to people like them and go further still. Gillian Murray says that there are problems not just in Tayside, but all over Scotland. That is why she is calling for a national inquiry. Karen McKeown says that she wants not sympathy but action, and she still wants answers. If we look at Dame Denise Coia—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I need a question. You have gone over your minute.

Monica Lennon: In conclusion, Dame Denise Coia has reinforced the point that there is still a lack of good data. We need to fill the data gaps to complete our understanding. Does the minister

agree, and will she address those concerns? Is she taking forward a full review of services through the announcements that she has made today?

Clare Haughey: I thank Monica Lennon for her question and again welcome the cross-party support for improving mental health services. That work should be done outwith party politics.

As I mentioned in my statement, the suicide prevention leadership group will publish its delivery plan shortly. People who have been personally affected by bereavement by suicide have been on that group. Those who have been affected by suicide have provided a lot of input to the group. Rose Fitzpatrick has met many families who have unfortunately been affected. As I said in my statement, we will work towards reducing the rate of suicide by a further 20 per cent.

I agree with Monica Lennon that data is an issue, and it is one that we have come up against. Dame Denise Coia identified it as an issue. One of the workstreams that she is looking at is on the development of better data. We will look at that right across mental health services. I am sure that the issue will be raised at the mental health group that I will chair.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have 14 minutes available and 11 questions. Let us get through them in an orderly fashion. Ms Ewing, please set the bar.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I very much welcome the announcement of £4 million to fund much-needed additional CAMHS staff across Scotland. In my Cowdenbeath constituency, I have been contacted on a number of occasions by worried parents of young people who are not getting the timely CAMHS autism assessment that they need to flourish at school. Can the minister clarify what will change in Fife as a result of her announcement today?

Clare Haughey: As is outlined in the task force delivery plan, which was published this morning, we will take forward a specific workstream covering neurodevelopmental services. Young people with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder may require specific support with a neurodevelopmental focus. They may also benefit from specialist clinical CAMHS. Additionally, NHS Fife has recently undertaken an autism spectrum disorder service redesign of its child diagnostic pathway, and the new ASD pathway will ease the waiting times in NHS Fife.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): The latest data shows that 26 young people in Lothian waited over a year to be seen by mental health professionals, which is totally unacceptable. Minister, those are Scotland's young people—our future. Is the

Scottish Government committed to a 12-week target for young people getting CAMHS?

Clare Haughey: I agree with Mr Briggs that having to wait over a year is not acceptable. That is why, this morning, I announced £4 million of additional funding for CAMHS to free up capacity so that we can address longer waits and develop the early intervention services that we need if we are to prevent people from developing a more severe illness and help them at an earlier stage.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): We know that there is a link between exercise, leisure, relaxation techniques and mental health. How is the Government working with leisure and fitness providers such as leisure trusts, particularly in disadvantaged communities where access to such facilities may be more limited, to provide opportunities for everyone, including young people, to access those services as part of a comprehensive package to meet mental health needs?

Clare Haughey: I thank Mr MacGregor for that question. We must consider the barriers to participation in sport and physical activity, which are often complex and varied. We need to help people to overcome those issues and enjoy the clear benefits that sport and physical activity can bring for their physical and mental health.

By adopting a person-centred approach in delivering services and activities consistently across the sport and physical activity community, we can create services and activities that meet the needs of communities and target groups. In partnership with sportsScotland, the Robertson Trust and the Spirit of 2012, we have already invested £1 million in community-based sport and physical activity projects in Scotland in a new changing lives through sport and physical activity fund that is managed by Spirit of 2012, which is aimed at changing lives and creating a more inclusive and healthier nation.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): What specific support will the Scottish Government provide—or what support has the task force recommended that the Scottish Government provide—to families when a person with poor mental health has taken their own life?

Clare Haughey: I am a bit confused as to whether Mary Fee is referring to the children and young people's task force or the suicide prevention task force. The suicide prevention leadership group is about to produce its delivery plan, and one of the actions in that plan is to look at providing consistent support for people who have been bereaved by suicide. That issue has been raised with me personally, and I am sure that it has been raised with many members. Families have found themselves feeling cast adrift at a time

of absolute crisis and unbelievable difficulties in their lives. The provision of consistent support for families and people who have lost a loved one is one of the actions that that group will look at.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Is the minister confident that the pledge to create 80 to 90 additional counsellors in further and higher education over the next four years is sufficient to tackle what the National Union of Students Scotland describes as “a mental health crisis” in our universities?

Clare Haughey: We are currently carrying out a scoping exercise to see where we have counsellors in higher and further education so that we can better plan the provision of those services to meet the needs of young people in higher and further education.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The minister knows that she enjoys the support of Liberal Democrat members for her work. I am very happy to see the investment to create 350 new counsellors in Scotland’s schools. However, given that there are 700,000 pupils in Scotland’s schools, 43 per cent of whom may require mental health support at any one time, that is 2,000 students or pupils per counsellor. Will the minister signal to members that that is just the start of a package of investment in counsellors? Does she share my view that we should see something of the order of a quadrupling of the number of counsellors to serve every child in Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Cole-Hamilton. That was a long question.

Clare Haughey: I am always happy to receive support on mental health from the Liberal Democrats.

School counsellors are not the only resource that will be available to children and young people. We will roll out training for trainers in mental health issues and in mental health first aid to each local authority by the end of the 2019-20 academic year, so that teachers will feel better equipped to assist children. The task force has recommended that we also look at community wellbeing centres. I was at one of those this morning, when I visited the Junction—Mr Cole-Hamilton may be aware of that centre. That is a fantastic resource that children and young people can drop into to receive counselling and support, including peer support, without an appointment.

School counsellors are part of a package of layered support that includes the additional 250 school nurses, who will focus on physical and mental health wellbeing, and we envisage that there will be fewer referrals to CAMHS because people will have alternatives. Therefore, children

who require specialist services will have much more rapid access to the services that they need.

I hope that that reassures Alex Cole-Hamilton.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): Will the minister outline what the Scottish Government is doing to reduce sickness absence from work on the ground of poor mental health and how the increased funding of £27 million in the draft budget will improve employees’ mental health so that they can remain at work?

Clare Haughey: We all know that work is good for mental health, and we want to support employers to assist people to stay in work and to support any employees who are experiencing poor mental health. The Scottish Government funds NHS Health Scotland to provide a range of programmes to improve mental health in the workplace, including Scottish mental health first aid training. We are committed to continuing our support for that work.

In our engagement paper on suicide prevention, which we published on 8 March 2018, we outlined a draft action of the development of a new mental health and suicide prevention training programme. The Scottish Government provides £1 million a year for See Me Scotland’s work to end mental health stigma and discrimination, and a new programme—see me in work—has been developed to support employers to create mentally healthy workplaces.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): In questions on previous mental health statements, I have made the point that the Scottish Government’s solutions deal with people who are already in crisis. The Mental Health Foundation highlights the importance of nutrition, and the Scottish Association for Mental Health focuses on physical activity as a route to good mental health, as Fulton MacGregor mentioned. How does the minister intend to prevent people from falling into poor mental health in the first place? Perhaps we should start with our healthcare professionals and teachers, given how crucial they are to delivery of the Government’s plan.

Clare Haughey: People fall into mental ill health for complex reasons. I agree that early intervention is needed and that, as I said in my answer to Mr MacGregor, physical activity can be a good way of relieving mental distress and stress. I encourage people to keep physically active, as that helps their mental health. As I said in my answer to Mr MacGregor, we have invested in supporting people to access physical activity and sport, as that is very important.

One of the main drivers of mental illness and mental ill health in this country is poverty, and the party that Mr Whittle belongs to actively supports austerity, benefit sanctions and the roll-out of

universal credit, which is promoting rent arrears and homelessness and driving people to food banks. Mr Whittle might like to think about that before telling the Scottish Government how it should treat people with mental illness.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): More people than ever are spending a large amount of time on computers and personal devices, which we know can, in some cases, have a detrimental impact on an individual's mental health. What work is the Scottish Government doing to determine the scale of the issue? What plans, if any, is it making to lessen the impact?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I did not see that issue mentioned in the statement.

Clare Haughey: It is important to point out that technology has the potential to be used in a hugely positive way. It can connect and empower people, especially young people. The same can be said of specific uses of technology—I am thinking, in particular, of social media. In today's world, technology can be crucial in helping young people to find the right help and support for any issues that they might face and to talk about how they feel. Technology can be especially powerful in the case of mental health, given that many people find it easier to describe how they feel online than in person.

It is important that we promote the healthy use of technology and, in particular, the healthy use of social media, as we are aware of the links between unhealthy social media use and poorer mental wellbeing in children and young people. We recently commissioned a study on the reported worsening mental wellbeing of teenage girls and the reasons for that. The results of that study, which will be published shortly, will include analysis of the role of technology and social media.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): On the welcome £4 million cash commitment to CAMHS, how will the minister find the doctors and deploy them to the areas that are most in need? This summer, NHS Tayside's CAMH service had three full-time consultant vacancies out of seven. Although it had the money to pay for those posts to be filled, it could not find the doctors. Only 41 per cent of children in Tayside who need to access CAMHS are seen within 18 weeks. That is the worst statistic in Scotland. How will the minister make sure that doctors go to Tayside to turn around that scandalous statistic?

Clare Haughey: We anticipate that the workforce that will be funded by the additional £4 million will be drawn mainly from psychology, nursing and the allied health professions and that it will receive a small amount of administrative support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have time for a brief question from Emma Harper.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the minister's statement, and I note the implementation date of 2022 for school nurses. When will the minister be able to give us some information about the provision of mental health counsellors in schools across Dumfries and Galloway? When can we expect to see mental health counsellors in schools in the south-west of Scotland?

Clare Haughey: We are working to strengthen child and adolescent mental health in schools and higher education, and we know that prevention and early intervention make a big difference in reducing the risk of people developing mental health problems. We have developed a suite of aims and principles for meeting the commitment to have mental health counsellors in schools, and we are having discussions with key partners to ensure that the commitment is met in full by September 2020.

Additionally, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and the Scottish Government are considering a financial allocation from the funding that has been committed to both sectors as part of the academic year 2019-20 funding in the programme for government, to enable a first tranche of counsellors to be in place by the start of the term commencing in September 2019.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. I also thank all members, because we reached all the questions.

Early Learning and Childcare Expansion

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a statement by Maree Todd on early learning and childcare expansion. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:11

The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd): We have made an ambitious commitment to offer every child in Scotland the opportunity to grow up in a country where they feel loved, safe and respected. Every one of them deserves the chance to reach their potential and this Government is dedicated to achieving that aim. That is why we have committed to almost doubling the funded early learning and childcare entitlement for all three and four-year-olds, and for eligible two-year-olds, from August 2020.

At the heart of the expansion is a focus on quality. The earliest years of life are crucial for every child. Evidence tells us that if our early learning and childcare offer is to give children the best start in life and to contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, it has to be of high quality.

Yesterday, we launched the funding follows the child approach, which is underpinned by a national standard that is clearly focused on driving high-quality ELC for our children and their families. Our approach is provider neutral. That means that all providers who deliver the funded hours, regardless of whether they are in the public, private or third sector, including childminders, will have to meet the same national standard.

That provides reassurance to parents and carers that any setting offering the funded hours can offer their child a high-quality ELC experience. The funding follows the child approach places the choice in parents' hands, enabling them to access their child's funded entitlement from any provider that meets the national standard, has a place available and is willing to enter a contract with the local authority.

High-quality experiences for our children are underpinned by strong, positive and trusting relationships with the staff with whom they spend time in early learning and childcare. The national standard underlines our commitment to ensuring that the workforce is professional, dedicated and skilled, and to ensuring that practitioners receive the support that they deserve and are empowered to develop their practice in innovative ways.

We have engaged extensively with the sector, particularly with providers, to finalise the details of the funding follows the child approach. I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation or to attend one of our engagement events.

The national standard has the full backing of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—both central and local government are fully committed to the new approach. ELC provision must be financially sustainable, so that providers across all sectors are willing and able to deliver the funded hours. The Scottish Government and COSLA agreed a multiyear funding package that enables the payment of sustainable rates to funded providers and ensures that each child's funded entitlement is free at the point of access.

The package includes funding to enable providers to pay all the childcare workers who deliver the funded entitlement at least the real living wage. That commitment represents the first step from our Government to ensure that our contracts and agreements reflect our fair work first principles in practice. The hourly funding rates that are received by private and third sector providers will significantly increase as a result of the funding deal.

The expansion of funded ELC also offers us an opportunity to ensure that no child in ELC goes hungry because of their background, and it supports the development of healthy eating habits at a crucial stage. That is why, from August 2020, every child who attends a funded ELC session will be provided with a free meal. The funding to deliver that commitment is additional to the sustainable rate for funded providers. Local authorities will ensure that there is transparency for funded providers as to the funding being provided to deliver the free meals.

The expansion provides an opportunity to transform the way that we deliver early learning and childcare. Playing, learning and having fun outdoors help to improve wellbeing and resilience, increase health through physical activity and provide children with the opportunity to develop a lifelong appreciation of the natural world. The national standard ensures that all children who receive funded early learning and childcare, whether they are in rural settings or right in the heart of our cities, will have access to outdoor play during the session.

In collaboration with the Care Inspectorate and Inspiring Scotland, we will publish "Out to Play"—an online resource with practical guidance on creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare and advice on how to access and create safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences. I commend its publication to Parliament as an important step towards

increasing outdoor play and learning in early learning and childcare.

Although quality is at the heart of our approach, we know that flexibility for families is a welcome element of the expansion. We intend to introduce ahead of August 2020 legislative changes to increase the maximum length of a funded ELC session to 10 hours. We are confident that we can demonstrate that providers are able to offer a high-quality experience over longer sessions, and the national standard will offer opportunities for us to measure that over time through Care Inspectorate quality evaluations. However, we will monitor the impact of that change to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on children's wellbeing and outcomes.

Providers from all parts of the sector will be vital to the delivery of our ambitions. Our new funding follows the child approach will ensure that local authorities assess the potential impacts of their policy and investment decisions on the sustainability of other ELC providers in their area, including in relation to the recruitment of high-quality staff. We are also working closely with Scotland Excel to ensure that the processes for becoming a funded provider are simplified and to reduce the burden on settings and commissioners.

Today, I announce a comprehensive delivery support plan for providers, which will support the financial sustainability of providers, strengthen partnership working, support workforce recruitment and training and improve communication with parents and carers. As part of that, we will work with the Care Inspectorate to recruit additional improvement advisors. They will identify settings that are already offering funded hours and support them to meet the quality evaluation criteria in the national standard if they are not currently meeting them.

In order to encourage meaningful and genuine partnership working, we will build on the work of the ELC partnership forum with a summit for providers and local authorities to showcase good practice and partnership working. That will further support the delivery of high-quality ELC for all our children.

The plan will play a key role in ensuring that everyone who is included in the expansion to 1,140 hours feels valued, respected and included in the ambitions that we have for the youngest children in our society.

Local delivery of the expansion is now well under way in communities across Scotland. Local authorities reported in September that more than 11,000 children are benefiting from access to more than 600 hours of early learning and childcare, including 1,100 eligible two-year-olds. I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of

settings that already provide 1,140 hours and I have been thrilled to hear of the positive benefits that children and their parents are experiencing.

This is an ambitious and challenging transformation programme. We need robust and transparent governance arrangements to ensure that the expansion is delivered on time. As I said to the Parliament in October, we have established a joint delivery board to oversee progress towards delivery of the expanded entitlement, which I co-chair with Councillor Stephen McCabe, my counterpart at COSLA. The board received its first update on local authority progress when it met in Greenock on 31 October.

The Improvement Service is working with local authorities to collate, twice a year, data on workforce recruitment, creation of new capacity and uptake. I confirm to the Parliament today that the first report is now available on the Scottish Government website. The report shows that we are on track to deliver the expansion.

However, there are no grounds for complacency. We must continue to work together to ensure that the capacity and capability that we need to deliver the expansion are in place across Scotland.

Our funding follows the child approach and the national standard that underpins it present us with a fantastic opportunity to show the importance of early learning and childcare in improving outcomes for our children and families. We have ambitious aspirations to ensure that our children can realise their full potential and we hope that, by prioritising high-quality early learning and childcare and unlocking choice, we will ensure that all our children have opportunities to learn, play and flourish.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I will allow around 20 minutes for questions.

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement. We welcome the national standard and the adoption of the Scottish Conservatives' provider neutral principle.

Anyone listening to the minister's statement might think that all is going well. In truth, the roll-out of the policy is in trouble. The goalposts are constantly shifting and the policy needs better governance.

As the minister said, the roll-out is well under way in communities across Scotland. In the light of what many providers have told us, will she say why it has taken until now to provide a delivery support plan for providers?

Also, the operating guidance that the Government published yesterday says that if private providers are to receive funding for provision, they must adhere to the national standard while making

“a commitment to work within the parameters of the local authority’s model of delivery”.

That translates to one national standard and 32 local standards—or total inconsistency. What concrete reassurance can the minister give to private providers that by adhering to the national standard they will not continue to be excluded and their businesses will not suffer?

Maree Todd: I welcome the Conservative Party’s support for the expansion; indeed, I am delighted to receive it.

I assure the member that there is strong governance around the expansion. We published information on the website today that shows progress on delivery. As she mentioned in her question, 11,000 children are already benefiting from the expansion, and everywhere I go where a child is receiving 1,140 hours I hear stories and see for myself the benefits. There is undoubtedly a profound impact on the ability of such children to fulfil their potential.

On adherence to the national standard, let me be absolutely clear: by 2020, when the expanded entitlement is fully rolled out, the only standard to which funded providers will have to adhere will be the national standard, which was developed with the support of partner providers and with full commitment from COSLA. That is the only standard; there will be no extras.

As I said at the meeting that we held with partner providers at which concern was expressed that extra standards might be applied, I will be grateful if partner providers and members of all parties contact me and give me information if they hear that that is occurring.

We recognise the scale of the challenge ahead in building the actions in the programme that we have committed to, and it is undoubtedly an ambitious programme that will be challenging to deliver. That is why, with today’s publication of the delivery support plan for providers, we have put in place a number of measures to support the financial sustainability of providers—100 percent business rate relief is already in place. Through the multiyear funding, I expect the contribution that goes to partner providers to increase over the next year, and again in 2020.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I thank the minister for early sight of her statement. The national standards are generally welcome, but the key concern about the policy has always been about how it will be delivered in practice, and, in

particular, how enough qualified staff will be recruited.

I have two questions. The standards for childminders who provide funded hours say that they must begin training, or at least have unsuccessfully applied for training, within five years. Surely that means that some childminders could be providing funded hours for anywhere between five and 10 years without actually having qualified. Is that really acceptable?

Yesterday, Unison published figures for early years workers in training, which clearly show that we will not achieve the required numbers in time, and the minister’s own document, far from showing that delivery is on track, revealed that recruitment is already 17 per cent behind target after only five months. What new and additional measures does she plan to take in order to recruit the workforce that we need?

Maree Todd: The requirement for training for childminders is proportionate, given the number of children with whom they work. It is very reasonable. Childminders and all partner providers worked very closely with the Government to develop the national standard, and I believe that it will deliver quality. I can assure the member of that.

In terms of the workforce, we recognise the challenges of recruiting the additional required staff. It is difficult, but it is achievable. As I said, the delivery board meetings have assured us that we are on track to deliver what we need to.

Iain Gray: You are not on track.

Maree Todd: I can assure the member that we absolutely are on track. Let me reiterate the many things that we have put in place to ensure that we are on track with workforce. In 2017, we funded the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to deliver 650 extra higher national certificate courses and we have 400 additional graduate-level places, although we expect most practitioners to become qualified through vocational on-the-job training routes such as Scottish vocational qualifications. In addition, the uptake of early learning and childcare modern apprenticeships has increased significantly in 2017-18—the figure is up 21 per cent on the previous year’s figure, which is more than double what we anticipated.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to open questions. Could we have concise questions and answers please?

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): When will providers know what the increase in the hourly funding rates will be?

Maree Todd: The agreement on the hourly funding rates will be agreed between the local

authorities and the partner providers, so the local authorities will announce the funding rates. A huge amount of work is going on nationally to establish what is required to provide sustainable and transparent funding. The funding rates will increase over the course of this expansion to a fully sustainable rate in 2020.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In light of the comments that the minister made in her statement about extending parental choice, what discussions has she had with the independent schools sector about how many partnership places will be available in such schools in session 2019-20.

Maree Todd: The member will be aware that this expansion was targeted to happen first in the areas that need it most. I will check with my officials what communication there has been with the independent schools sector. Generally, the expansion has been in areas of high deprivation first and has favoured local authority expansion initially. I assure the member that independent schools can apply to become funded partners—all they need to do to become one is meet the national standard.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I have had contact with partner nurseries in my constituency, such as Lochview children's nursery in Gartcosh, about the roll-out of 1,140 hours and their difficulties in dealing with the council. Will the minister explain the importance of strong communication with partner nurseries in order to achieve that bold and ambitious target? What actions is the Government taking to ensure that local authorities engage fully with them throughout the process?

Maree Todd: I am aware that there are challenges in relationships between partner providers and local authorities in a number of areas of the country. I make it absolutely clear that we expect local authorities and providers to work together meaningfully and in genuine partnership to deliver the expansion in early learning and childcare. In August, the Scottish Government wrote to local authority directors of education to highlight the key role for local authority leaders in promoting meaningful and genuine partnership working and building trust, strengthening the communication with providers and encouraging the development of networks for sharing good practice.

Jenny Marra: In her statement, the minister said:

"The package includes funding to enable providers to ... deliver ... at least the real living wage."

Presumably, many staff will be paid more, as commensurate with their qualifications. What ratio

of nursery teachers to other qualified staff does her funding package allow for?

Maree Todd: Sorry, but could you give me the question again?

Jenny Marra: Basically, how many nursery teachers does your funding package allow for?

Maree Todd: That will depend on local circumstances; it will depend on what is required in the local area.

I am glad that the member welcomes the living wage accreditation. The living wage commitment is one of the best parts of the entire expansion. In 2016, when we did the groundwork on how many people would benefit from the living wage, we estimated that up to 8,000 staff currently working in partner provider settings would benefit from the commitment.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I welcome the minister's assurances that high-quality childcare is underpinned by professional, dedicated and skilled staff, but some providers in Lothian have expressed concern that there is a lack of funding available for training staff who are over 25. They say that the funding to put people in that age group through training is a lot less than the funding for those under 25. What is the minister doing to attract those who might change career and move into early learning and childcare? Clearly, given the challenges that we face in delivering the policy, that area requires specific focus.

Maree Todd: I assure the member that there is ample capacity in the education system for everyone who wants to enter during the expansion.

We have changed the amount of money that we pay to older entrants to modern apprenticeships; we are also working to remove the barriers for older entrants. We are well aware that attracting career changers is a very important part of achieving the workforce that we want. Many parents who have experienced the joy of raising their own children want to contribute to the sector afterwards.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The Scottish Government figures that were published today show that local authority nurseries have hired 18 per cent fewer additional staff than forecast and that there were 4 per cent fewer childminders between 2017 and 2018. How does the Government plan to address that, particularly given that there is now evidence that, because of the wage rates, local authority nurseries are gaining staff from expensive private nurseries?

Maree Todd: Our early data shows that we are on target to deliver the required workforce. Interestingly, the data shows that there are more

children in placements than we had anticipated there would be at this point. Therefore, despite the workforce being slightly under the expected levels, the number of children receiving 1,140 hours of childcare is higher than we had anticipated.

The reduction in the number of childminders was largely down to a drop in the number of inactive childminders. There are more childminders registered in order to deliver the policy.

On the third point, which was about local authorities attracting staff from partner providers, we and COSLA have made it clear to local authorities that they must aim to recruit internally first. In assessing the capacity that is available in their entire local authority area, they have to be careful not to cause disruption by taking staff for one area and causing a shortage in another. They are working carefully to ensure that they can recruit internally the staff that they need to deliver the expansion.

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): The summary statistics for schools in Scotland, which were published last week, showed an impressive near-universal uptake of funded early learning and childcare among three and four-year-olds but only a slightly increase in uptake from last year among eligible two-year-olds. What action will the Scottish Government take to increase the uptake among eligible two-year-olds in the coming year?

Maree Todd: The member asks a very important question. Ensuring that those who will benefit most get early access to high-quality, funded ELC is key to realising the full benefits of this expansion. The joint agreement with local authorities gave them an ambitious target of 64 per cent for two-year-olds. We have a way to go with that. The delivery board data that we looked at showed that we were ahead of what we anticipated in the recruitment of two-year-olds, but the member is right that there is more work to be done. The children and young people improvement collaborative is working with nine local authority areas in multi-agency teams to address those barriers. We will share the outputs from that improvement practicum right across Scotland and consider other ways to support local authorities in their work on the entitlement for two-year-olds.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I am a bit confused. Nursery businesses in my constituency are being asked to deliver 1,140 hours in the new year and have been told that they will receive a rate of £4.08, while the local authority's own independent review of fair funding found that the sustainable rate was £5.35. How can the minister expect those businesses to survive until 2020 with such a discrepancy?

Maree Todd: I am aware of that situation and I can confirm that we are substantially increasing the level of investment across the sector through the multiyear funding deal that we agreed with COSLA in April, including supporting the payment of sustainable rates to funded providers. I expect to see hourly rates increase significantly across the country.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): My question relates to Oliver Mundell's question. I have raised with the minister the issue of Sparklers nursery, which is still waiting to hear from Dumfries and Galloway Council what rate it will be paid once the 1,140 hours provision is rolled out in the town of Annan. Can she give us any more detail about that specific local authority? If local authorities are properly funded but fail to pass on sustainable rates to partner providers, will the Government intervene to force them to pay such rates?

Maree Todd: My officials have been in contact with that local authority. Many local authorities are already using the additional resource available in 2018-19 to increase the rates that are paid to funded providers and further increases are expected next year as the transition towards the full sustainable rates for roll-out of 1,140 hours from August 2020 continues. Scotland Excel is working closely with providers and local authorities to develop technical guidance to support local authorities to set sustainable rates for providers from 2020 and, in the period from 2020, funded providers in the private or third sector offering this as part of the local phasing programme. Let me be absolutely clear: we expect local authorities to set rates locally that reflect their current assessment of a sustainable rate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have time for the final two questions if the first one is not overly long.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I will not take that personally, Presiding Officer. The national standard states that the real living wage will be paid to all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement. Would ensuring that all providers are living wage accredited not be a more robust means of upholding the fair work principles?

Maree Todd: As Johann Lamont knows, the Scottish Government absolutely supports and encourages all employers to become living wage accredited. I would not disagree.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): How important are childminders to the delivery process and how will the joint delivery board ensure that childminding communities will be fully engaged in that process as we move forward? *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Ms Adamson. Will members please stop having cross-bench conversations? Ms Adamson, please ask your question again, because I certainly did not hear it.

Clare Adamson: Thank you, Presiding Officer. How will childminders be involved in the delivery process as we move forward, and how will the joint delivery board ensure that they will be fully engaged in the consultation process?

Maree Todd: The Scottish Government has very good relationships with the Scottish Childminding Association, and I am delighted that our parental survey indicates considerable demand from parents. We have seen an increase in the number of childminders who are registered to deliver the funded entitlement. I expect them to play a vital part in its delivery—particularly for eligible two-year-olds.

European Union Citizens (Contribution to Scotland)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-15184, in the name of Ben Macpherson, on the contribution of European Union citizens to Scotland.

15:42

The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development (Ben Macpherson): It is a great privilege to begin this important debate and, in doing so, to recognise and emphasise, on behalf of the Scottish Government and many others, the huge contribution that European Union citizens have made to Scotland and continue to make today.

As it comes on the day after international migrants day, and just hours after the United Kingdom Government has finally published its highly concerning and wrong-headed immigration white paper, today's debate is an opportunity for us, as a Parliament, to reaffirm our support for our friends, neighbours, colleagues and loved ones who have chosen to make Scotland their home, and for us to focus on their wellbeing and recognise the huge contribution that they make to modern Scotland.

I hope that every member will want to say something to people who have come to study at and enhance our world-class colleges and universities, or who have worked hard in businesses and public services right across the country, supporting their families and their communities, or who have been brought up here—or even been born here—and who speak with a Scottish accent but have a passport from another European country. Let us say to them, for it cannot be said often enough: Scotland is your home; you are welcome here; we want you to stay; together, we are stronger in diversity.

European migration has been good for Scots, and for Scotland. The Parliament knows the challenges that Scotland faces from long-term demographic trends, with an ageing population and not enough working-age people coming through to replace those leaving the labour market, despite more people coming to Scotland from the rest of the UK in recent years. EU migration has helped to sustain the working-age population and has boosted our economic growth. That is why today's debate is important. It is also why the UK Government's white paper that was published this afternoon is so concerning and wrong-headed and is deeply worrying for businesses and many others.

Even the UK Government's key advisers on migration are clear that the positive impact of EU citizens has been immense. The UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee states that there is

"no evidence that EEA migration has reduced employment opportunities"

for UK citizens,

"no evidence that EEA migration has reduced wages for UK-born workers"

and

"no evidence that migration has reduced the training opportunities"

that are available to British people. It is important that we tackle and address any misunderstanding on those points.

On the other hand, the key advisers to the UK Government emphasise that

"EEA migrants ... pay more in taxes than they receive in welfare benefits and consume in public services"

and

"EEA migrants contribute much more to the health service and the provision of social care in financial resources and through work than they consume in services."

The positive impact of migration is clear—in evidence and in principle—according to even the UK Government's Migration Advisory Committee.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Today, the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, commented that there was no reason to think that cutting down immigration would harm the economy. What is the minister's response to that?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, did you hear all of that question? Ms Dugdale's mic was not on, initially.

Ben Macpherson: I heard that important intervention. I was going to say later—but I will make the point now—that Mr Javid's comments are erroneous and inaccurate. Taking account of what is proposed in the white paper for Scotland, our modelling estimates that it would cost Scotland's gross domestic product around 6.2 per cent by 2040, which is equivalent to a fall in GDP of almost £6.8 billion a year. It would have a significantly detrimental impact.

That leads me to this point. Scottish Government analysis shows—as many members will know—that each EU citizen contributes £34,400 in GDP a year and £10,400 in tax, so the contribution is massive.

Scottish Government analysis also shows that, because of the important part that EU citizens have played in our population turnaround, EU migration is relatively more important to Scotland than it is to other parts of the UK. I see that in my

constituency, Edinburgh Northern and Leith, which is one of the most multicultural and vibrant places in Scotland; and we see it around Scotland, in our cities, towns and rural communities.

That is why it is so important for Scotland that, in the face of the current turmoil at Westminster and the two and a half years of uncertainty and anxiety that the UK Government has caused for EU citizens, we support EU citizens in Scotland and make sure that they feel, and know that they are, welcome. I was pleased to announce yesterday—as many members will be aware—that, as part of our responsibility for that, the Scottish Government will deliver an advice service for EU citizens in Scotland in partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland and its network of citizens advice bureaux around the country. That will be over and above anything that the UK Government has planned—which has not been forthcoming. To be frank, the UK Government is not doing enough.

There is an urgent need for clear and trusted information about how people will be affected by changes in the immigration rules as a result of Brexit. The geographical footprint of Citizens Advice Scotland, together with its trusted status and existing network of advisers, will allow the service that we fund to be delivered quickly around Scotland. The service is a practical step that we can take to ensure that EU and EEA citizens in Scotland feel welcomed, supported and valued. I am sure that members will agree that it is the right thing to do.

I wish that it was not necessary, and that the people who have done us the honour of making Scotland their home did not need to apply to retain rights that they already have. However, faced with the situation as a result of Brexit, I hope that our commitment to provide support gives some comfort and surety amid the uncertainty.

Since 2016, the Scottish Government has been clear that it will do all that it can to help EU citizens through the process of obtaining settled status. That is why we have also made a clear commitment to pay the fees for that for EU citizens working in our devolved public services, including doctors, nurses and other public sector workers on whom we all rely.

However, this Government is also clear that EU citizens certainly should not be being asked to apply to retain the rights that they already enjoy—and have had for some time—and should not be charged a fee for the application. Parliament should be aware that I have raised the issue with the UK Government, most recently this morning with the UK Minister of State for Immigration, and I will continue to argue that there should be no fee. To be frank, it is insulting for the UK Government to ask EU citizens, relatives, friends, neighbours

and colleagues to pay a fee to keep making such a huge contribution to Scotland.

It is not just the Scottish Government that is calling for the fee to be scrapped. The overwhelming message from those to whom I have spoken, whether in businesses, in third sector organisations or EU citizens, is that it is unfair that people are having to apply and to pay simply to keep their existing rights to live, work and study in Scotland. The fee applies not just to adults but to children.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): Does the minister accept that the fee to be charged is less than the fee that either he or I would have to pay to renew our passports?

Ben Macpherson: I thought that Adam Tomkins would raise that example. The comparison is completely inappropriate and wrong-headed. When we buy a passport, we are not paying for our rights; to ask people who contribute huge amounts in GDP and taxation, as those individuals do, is insulting and wrong-headed. The Conservatives should think hard about their proposition because they are losing this argument.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Come to a close, please, minister.

Ben Macpherson: In my concluding remarks, I will talk more about the fee and the disastrous white paper that has been put forward. The people of Scotland should be at the heart of this issue, and the people of Scotland of course include EU citizens who have done us the compliment of making their homes here. I hope—maybe I am being too hopeful—that Parliament will say today with one voice to our friends, neighbours, colleagues and loved ones: Scotland is your home; you are welcome here; we really want you to stay.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the significant economic, social and cultural contributions made by EU citizens to Scotland; acknowledges that they are a welcome and integral part of communities across the country; notes that EU citizens are important contributors to key sectors such as health and social care, education, construction, tourism and hospitality, culture, rural industries and financial services; recognises that EU citizens who have settled in Scotland have done so under freedom of movement; however, notes that the UK Government's policy is for EU citizens, including children, to enter an application process to obtain settled status and pay a fee to retain their existing rights to live, work and study in Scotland; recognises the risk that this charge could create a barrier for families and for individuals on low incomes; notes the Scottish Government commitment to meet the settled status fee for EU citizens working in devolved public services and to provide an information and advice service to support them; however, believes that EU citizens should not have to pay to retain rights that they already hold, and therefore calls on the UK Government to scrap its fee for settled status applications.

15:52

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): With those closing remarks, I am sure that the whole of the Parliament will speak with one voice. Tens of thousands of European citizens live in Glasgow, the city which I represent, and more than 220,000 live across Scotland. The minister is absolutely right to say—and I agree with him—that they are our friends, colleagues, partners and neighbours; they work in education, health, banking, finance, manufacturing, hospitality and construction; and they enrich our universities, our workplaces and our communities.

Ever since the June 2016 referendum, the United Kingdom Government has been clear about how important it is to secure the rights of EU citizens in the United Kingdom and of UK nationals in EU member states. It has been the first priority in bilateral negotiations between the UK and the EU, and a priority that has been repeatedly stated by the Prime Minister. For example, in her Lancaster house speech in January 2017, Theresa May said:

“We will continue to attract the brightest and the best to work or study in Britain – indeed openness to international talent must remain one of this country's most distinctive assets – but that process must be managed properly so that our immigration system serves the national interest.”

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will Adam Tomkins give way?

Adam Tomkins: Let me finish the quotation and then I will happily give way. The Prime Minister went on to say:

“Britain is an open and tolerant country. We will always want immigration, especially high-skilled immigration, we will always want immigration from Europe, and we will always welcome individual migrants as friends.”

On that issue, I think and I hope that every member of the Parliament will agree.

Gillian Martin: Adam Tomkins has spoken about attracting talent. Does he believe that you have talent only if you earn more than £30,000 a year, which has been mooted as the threshold?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Always speak through the chair, please.

Adam Tomkins: No, I do not think that talent begins only at £30,000 a year. That proposition has been put out to public consultation today—as I understand it—and I urge every member of the Parliament, and indeed the Scottish Government, to take part in the public consultation and to express their views forthrightly and robustly.

In her Florence speech of September 2017, the Prime Minister said:

“I want to repeat to all EU citizens who have made their lives in our country—we want you to stay; we value you; and we thank you for your contribution to our national life.”

Mr Macpherson did not say this in his speech but, when he used those words, he was, of course, quoting the United Kingdom Prime Minister.

More recently, in November—just last month—the UK Government said:

“EU citizens are valued members of their communities and play an integral part in the economic, cultural and social fabric of the UK, as do UK nationals living in the EU, who are equally valued by their host countries and communities.”

Ben Macpherson: On those points, which are important, does Mr Tomkins regret the fact that the Prime Minister stated that EU citizens had been “skipping the queue” in coming to the UK to make the contribution that they do?

Adam Tomkins: I think that the Prime Minister herself has distanced herself from those remarks and has apologised for them.

The withdrawal agreement—successfully negotiated by the Prime Minister and her team with the European Union—provides that all EU citizens lawfully residing in the UK at the end of the implementation period will be able to stay in the UK. It also makes extensive, detailed and welcome provision for family members, children and dependants. Of course, that is what Scottish National Party ministers called for. Therefore, the question is, why are SNP MPs now set to vote against the deal?

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Adam Tomkins: I have already given way twice.

The withdrawal agreement provides that EU citizens who have been living lawfully in the UK for five years at the end of the implementation period will have the right permanently to reside in the UK. Again, that is what the SNP demanded—rightly, in my view—so why is the SNP now minded to vote against it?

Tom Arthur: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Adam Tomkins: Perhaps the minister will respond to those points when he winds up the debate.

The withdrawal agreement protects existing rights to equal treatment and non-discrimination for EU citizens residing or working in the UK and their family members. Broadly speaking, they will have the same entitlements to work, study and access public services and benefits as they do now, subject only to any future domestic policy changes that would apply equally to UK nationals. Therefore, I ask again, and perhaps the minister will respond to this when he winds up: given that that is what the SNP, rightly, called for, why is the

SNP now minded to vote against the withdrawal agreement? It delivers exactly what the SNP said that it wanted.

We agree with the first half of the Scottish Government’s motion, but we do not agree with the portion that I must describe—with all due respect to the minister—as rather empty virtue signalling about fees. EU nationals with indefinite leave to remain will not have to pay a fee, and those who need to pay will pay £65 if they are over 16 and £32.50 if they are under 16, which is significantly less than a British citizen would pay for a passport. Nor do we agree that the United Kingdom needs a differentiated or devolved immigration system. Experts have warned that increased deviation is not helpful to the economy. For example, a report that was published by the migration observatory at the University of Oxford said that it is

“not clear that significant regional variation would lead to a better match between policy and regional economic needs.”

It also said that

“regionalisation has an economic drawback, which is that a more complex immigration system would increase administrative burdens for its users”—

that is, not just employers but migrant labourers, too. The director of the Confederation of British Industry Scotland has said the same thing, as have the Food and Drink Federation Scotland, Scottish Chambers of Commerce and NFU Scotland.

Whether we voted for it or not, Brexit has facilitated the biggest change in our immigration system in more than four decades. The new system will be based on the skills that an individual can bring to this country, not on their nationality or where they were born or come from. That means that, as we continue to grow the UK economy, we can seek out people with the correct skills and ask them to make Britain their home.

I move amendment S5M-15184.2, to leave out from “however, notes that the UK Government’s policy” to end and insert:

“, and notes and welcomes that the first priority of the UK Government in the process of leaving the EU has always been to secure the status of EU citizens living in the UK, and UK nationals living in the EU.”

15:59

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome this afternoon’s debate, which recognises the value of EU citizens to Scotland and makes it clear that they are welcome here. At this time of continuing indecision, uncertainty and even chaos and conflict in British politics, we must not lose sight of the impact of the political debate on people—people who were born and raised in the UK and those who choose to come here to

contribute to our society, invest in our economy and enrich our culture.

The debate is often framed in terms of economic growth, which is an essential part of the contribution that is made by EU citizens. However, we cannot ignore the importance of the diversity that they bring to our culture and our society, and its ability to enrich and enliven our everyday lives.

It is depressing to look back over recent years at some of the reasons why we find ourselves in this fairly desperate situation—facing the possibility of leaving a union in such a way as to make us poorer, less diverse and more isolated in international trade and relationships.

The negative portrayal of migrants in the right-wing media is deplorable, but goes some way towards explaining the support for leaving the EU in areas to which there have been low levels of migration. We have all had conversations on the doorsteps of constituents who are concerned about their jobs and their housing needs, and who tell us that migrants are causing those problems. I always explain as politely as possible that that is not the case—that migrants put more into our society than they take out, and that the problems that they identify are more about the need for investment in our public services and our economy. However, those views still exist.

Tom Arthur: Will the member give way?

Claire Baker: Yes—but I am very short of time.

Tom Arthur: I welcome Claire Baker's remarks. Will she confirm that the Scottish Labour Party supports free movement of EU nationals and UK citizens across the European Union?

Claire Baker: As Tom Arthur will hear in my speech, I recognise the value of freedom of movement. I was hoping that today's debate would be consensual. We will also respond to the white paper on the UK's future skills-based immigration system that has been published today.

Last week, I was at the launch of the forthcoming report on Brexit and EU citizens living in Scotland. The report focuses on their experiences, concerns and support needs since the EU referendum. I am co-convener of the cross-party group on Poland, at which we discussed the early stages of the research earlier this year. The final report of the EU citizens' rights project Scotland, which has support from the Scottish Government, is due to be published soon. It is a detailed piece of work that draws on conversations held with EU citizens living throughout Scotland after the EU referendum. My amendment acknowledges that work.

People reported feeling stressed by the lack of reliable and sufficiently detailed information on the EU settlement scheme, and reported lack of

awareness of how to apply for settled status, particularly among vulnerable groups—perhaps people who are isolated and/or have a poor knowledge of English. Challenges including completion of applications for people who have little understanding of English, low computer skills and limited access, and lack of ability to pay the application fee were also identified. The minister's announcement yesterday, which addressed some of those concerns, along with those of Citizen's Advice, was welcome.

The decision to leave the EU will remove the existing rights of EU citizens who live in Scotland, many of whom have lived here for a number of years. They have children at school, they have jobs and they run businesses. They are on community councils and they have been elected to local councils. Their connections to this country run deep. Through no decision of their own, their status is changing: surely we want them to stay and continue to contribute to our society. Making them pay to retain their rights is unjustifiable. The fee is significant when a family needs to apply, and it is difficult to meet the cost from a minimum-wage salary or when one is on a zero-hours contract.

Professor Alan Manning, who is the chair of the Migration Advisory Committee, gave evidence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee recently. Members were astonished by his analysis of the Scottish economy. I support his expressed desire for a high-skill and high-wage economy, but I cannot support his analysis that the result of free movement of EU citizens is that their jobs are unskilled and are therefore redundant to our economy. We do not know where the Brexit negotiations will end up or what the outcome will be, but under the white paper that has been published today, we will have a very different immigration policy. Unless we see a policy that recognises the needs of the different parts of the UK, there will be greater and greater calls for flexibility.

Scotland will face significant demographic challenges in the coming years: our population is ageing and our birth rate is not meeting predicted demands from our economy and our society. We face skills shortages in specific areas. At the moment, we have EU citizens working in many sectors across Scotland. They are working in education and in our health service, and they are creating businesses and providing employment. As citizens of the European Union, they are free to do that, so the UK will feel like an extension of their home countries.

That is all about to change, so we must redouble our efforts to make migrants feel welcome in Scotland. We must make it clear that they are a valuable part of our society and that we

recognise and value the contribution that they make, and we must be clear that they are welcome to settle here. They are not welcome just in order to meet an economic need and then be required to go when that need has been fulfilled, but to live here, to raise a family here and to be part of our community. Their contribution is valued and we want it to continue.

I move amendment S5M-15184.1, to insert after “freedom of movement;”:

“commends the work of organisations such as EU Citizens Rights Project, in partnership with stakeholders, to address the needs and concerns of EU citizens, ensuring that their voice is heard throughout the negotiation period;”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The three opening speeches have all gone over time, which will have a knock-on effect on colleagues who will participate in the open debate. I ask members to stick tightly to timings, please.

16:04

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The Greens join our colleagues from the SNP and Labour in paying respect to the contributions of EU citizens and, indeed, of all people who choose to make Scotland their home. They have made Scotland a better place—culturally, socially and economically.

We have had cause to debate the issues that face European citizens repeatedly in recent months. Each time, I have talked about the benefits that free movement has brought to our education sector, in particular. I have highlighted how West College Scotland takes part in Erasmus+, which allows students from Scotland to develop their skills in Denmark and Finland, and vice versa. I have talked about how the University of the West of Scotland works with Dundalk Institute of Technology and Queen’s University Belfast to conduct award-winning research.

It is not just EU funding and the Erasmus+ scheme that have driven those opportunities: free movement has also done so. Free movement has allowed our universities, colleges, schools and research centres to benefit from thousands of talented staff from across Europe. Almost a quarter of research staff at our world-class universities, and 20,000 university students, are EU citizens from other countries. If we want to enjoy the full benefits of that talent, we need a system that is welcoming and attractive—one that attracts and retains workers and which allows students to stay here after their studies. I believe that that is the instinctive desire of the majority of people in Scotland and, certainly, of the majority in Parliament.

Across our society, we see the benefits that EU citizens have brought to education, to health and

social care, to hospitality and tourism, to construction and to every other sector of our economy. All those benefits are being endangered by the crude racism of the UK’s Conservative Government. EU citizens who want to come here after Brexit—if we do not stop it—will be subjected to the same degrading and inhumane hostile environment that people from the rest of the world currently face.

Despite scandal after scandal—from the Windrush generation to EU citizens being sent letters ordering them to leave the country—the situation is only getting worse. The Tories’ Home Secretary might prefer a new term—the “compliant environment”, as if that does not sound sinister enough to have come from the pages of “Nineteen Eighty-Four”—but the same policies and practices of humiliation and callousness remain. Employers, landlords, the national health service, charities, banks and other services are expected to act like border force officials, by carrying out immigration checks. The Tories’ priority is to deport first and let appeals happen later, as we saw with the Windrush scandal and elsewhere.

Not that long ago, a woman who is originally from Singapore but who has been married for 27 years to a British citizen whose primary carer she is, who is a grandmother and who is the mother of two British children, was torn from her home and put on a flight. That woman has finally been granted a UK visa—more than £55,000 later. She was fortunate to have raised the money through public funding, but no amount of money can undo the trauma of being forced from one’s home and deported. We cannot crowdfund everyone’s basic rights.

The immigration system is cruel by design, but it also has a shocking level of incompetence almost baked into it. The UK Government’s new procedure for offering settled status to EU citizens is meant to allow applications via smartphone, but it works on only one operating system—so, no luck for people who have an iPhone, which is the most popular handset in the country. People who cannot use the smartphone app can go to one of the Government’s locations that offer identification document scanning. However, there is only one office in Scotland—in Edinburgh. That is not much use to an EU citizen in Ullapool, Stromness or Stranraer.

They will also need to pay for the privilege, as Adam Tomkins said. Even children will be charged. The UK Government will not let EU citizens in our public sector have their employer—the Scottish Government—pay for them. That is an ideology of hostility. No wonder there is no faith in the Home Office to administer the settled-status regime.

It is no surprise to see the latest decision to impose a £30,000 minimum income threshold for migrants, including EU citizens, after Brexit, and to restrict lower-skilled migration to single-year visas, which will only compound the problem of precarious work. That is the kind of crass and cack-handed intervention that tears people's lives apart, undermines our culture and society, and hammers our economy.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: He is just closing.

Ross Greer: Many EU citizens in Scotland today will have first earned far less than £30,000 when they arrived, or have had no job at all. I earned far less than £30,000 before I had this job. The policy will cause a decline in our working-age population and will undermine our economy for absolutely no good reason. It is clear that this Parliament must have the powers to set our own migration policy—one that is humane and meets the needs of this country.

16:09

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I listened carefully to what Adam Tomkins said. It is rare for me to listen to him, but it happened this afternoon. I am sure that he is sincere when he talks about immigration and being a welcoming country, but it would be better if he had more influence over his colleagues in Westminster.

Adam Tomkins: I agree with that.

Willie Rennie: Adam Tomkins says from a sedentary position that he wishes to have more influence, too. I agree with him, because if he did, we might not have the immigration white paper that was published today.

There is no doubt that the white paper will be damaging to our country. Earlier today, CBI Scotland called it

“a sucker punch for many firms”.

The Federation of Small Businesses has said that the proposals do not meet its needs and that it will be nigh on impossible to access non-UK labour with the required skills. The British Retail Consortium has said that the policy will put pressure on the price of goods and services. Today's white paper is going to have a significant impact on our economy.

Charging EU citizens to keep the rights that they already have is rather an insult to them and their contribution to our country. Even to qualify for settled status, people will need to have lived here for 5 years in a row. Surely people who have

contributed to the country for that long, and who have paid their taxes, contributed to their communities and undertaken important roles in public services and businesses, should not be thanked with an invoice for £65. Of course, the simplest way to abolish the charge would be to abolish Brexit. I am sure that many members will agree that that would get rid of the problem in one fell swoop: that is what I am determined to continue to pursue.

As we know—it has been pointed out by members this afternoon—immigration can be good for the country. It helps to address the demographic challenges of an ageing population and a workforce that is shrinking relative to it, which is making it more difficult for us to raise the taxes that we need in order to pay for services that are being subjected to ever-growing demands.

We also know that many workers from Europe provide a fantastic service to many local firms, including the fruit and vegetable firms in my constituency, which are part of a growing food and drink sector that hopes to double in value by 2030. With new technology, we can extend the growing season, which means that we need more workers. However, because of changes in the exchange rate and the impact of Brexit, fewer such workers are coming to this country, so we are left with rotting vegetables and fruit in our fields. The new seasonal scheme for non-EU workers is a step in the right direction, but it fails to make up for losses of EU workers.

It is true that we were always going to have to look beyond the EU for more workers, but the Brexit scenario has crushed things into a very short period, so we will have to deal with the consequences by bringing in even more people to make up for the loss of people from the EU. The Conservative Government shows no sign of understanding the real needs of businesses—which is another thing that Adam Tomkins should be saying to his colleagues at Westminster.

Of course, this issue applies not only to seasonal workers. Processing plants such as Kettle Produce and Marine Harvest in Fife require large numbers of people all year round. One thing that we can be sure of is that insisting that people have assets of £30,000 will repel an awful lot more EU people. It will be much easier for them to go to France and Germany, where there are no such requirements. Many such workers come here from Europe. We should be welcoming them to this country instead of repelling them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. As I have said, time is tight, so I must ask for speeches of no more than four minutes.

16:13

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

According to a recent report, the local authority area with the highest proportion of its EU nationals in employment is Aberdeenshire. I cannot overstate the contribution that people from across the EU make to my home in the north-east, and the life that they have injected back into sectors including nursery care, fish processing, healthcare, public administration, higher education, transport, hospitality and the various skilled trades in construction, all of which have struggled to compete with the oil industry in recruiting people.

The message needs to be emphasised continually, loudly and clearly that more than 95 per cent of EU nationals of working age are in employment, and their tax revenue helps us to fund the services that care for us, for our ageing population and for our children. The EU nationals who have made the north-east their home are our colleagues, our friends, our children's teachers, our nurses and our doctors. Councillor Anouk Kloppert, who is a Dutch national and adopted Scot, and former MSP and now Aberdeen City councillor Christian Allard, who is a French national and adopted Scot, are serving as elected representatives. I am sure that my colleagues in Glasgow would proudly namecheck Provost Eva Bollander, who is a Swedish national, and Ayrshire Councillor Joy Brahim, who is originally from the Netherlands.

I pay tribute to the many students from other EU countries whom I have taught as a college lecturer. Our classrooms and lecture halls have been all made richer by their presence.

A great many of the people whom we call neighbours, colleagues and friends who have come to Scotland from other EU countries would have found it impossible under the proposed immigration system that the UK Government is set to adopt post-Brexit, which includes a proposed £30,000 income minimum for skilled migrants. I genuinely do not know what is proposed for students and people who want to stay, work and contribute here post-study. Also, £30,000 might be a pittance to the likes of Theresa May or Sajid Javid, but it is not for most of our citizens.

I have spoken many times in the chamber about the detrimental impact that Brexit will have on university research. Most postgraduate and doctoral researchers are not on salaries above £30,000, but their research work has led to breakthroughs in many fields.

The Scottish Government has made it clear that we want EU and EEA citizens and their families to continue to make their lives in Scotland but, as we know only too well, our Government does not have

powers over immigration. I agree with Ross Greer that we desperately need those powers, particularly after what has been published today.

This time last year, Navin Aziz, who is a dentist with a practice in my constituency and a number of others around the north-east and the Highlands, expressed to me concern about how he will fill vacancies. He told me that, since the Brexit vote, interest in vacancies from EU-trained candidates has completely fallen away, and that the problem is made worse by changes to the visa rules that limit the number of visas that are available for dentists from outside the EU. At that time, we checked with the Home Office about the number of visas that were available for dentists. It was the same number as are available for ballet dancers. I am not making that up.

Changes in NHS dentistry by the Scottish Government have meant an end to people queuing along the street for precious NHS places, and have ensured easy access to oral health. However, we cannot staff the vacancies with Scotland-born graduates alone. Replicate that story across all areas of healthcare and we have a looming crisis.

None of this is of our making. The last sentence that I want to say in the chamber in this year of particular Brexit mismanagement is this: Scotland did not vote to leave the EU, yet we are paying the highest price.

16:17

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to be able to take part in today's debate on the contribution of EU citizens to Scotland.

That contribution has indeed been extremely beneficial and positive, economically, socially and culturally. The UK Government has always recognised this as an important fact. It has been quite clear from the very start of the negotiations on our withdrawal from the European Union that securing the status of EU nationals currently living in the UK is a priority.

At the same time, the UK Government wanted to ensure protection of rights for those UK nationals currently living in other parts of the EU. Indeed, the rights of EU citizens are protected by the proposed withdrawal agreement that has been negotiated. The agreement demonstrates that there is a clear willingness and commitment on both sides to guarantee the rights of EU and UK citizens and their families who make their current contribution and have been doing that through freedom of movement prior to our withdrawal from the European Union.

Willie Rennie: I commend the member for his words, but is he therefore not just a tad embarrassed by the UK immigration paper published today?

Alexander Stewart: The paper sets out many priorities and we will have plenty of time to discuss them in the future, I have no doubt.

People voted to leave for many reasons. For some it was a question of sovereignty. For others, it was about the economic opportunities and, yes, for some, it was about greater control over immigration. However, it was not about rejecting immigration altogether. A vote to leave the European Union has often been mischaracterised in that regard; it simply was not the case. In fact, public polling has consistently shown that the majority of people in the UK are in favour of no restrictions on skilled migration, but want to see elements of controls over unskilled migration. That is a reasonable, considered and mainstream position.

Kezia Dugdale: Will the member give way?

Alexander Stewart: I would like to make some progress. Time is tight.

Having the ability to reconsider approaches to immigration in the United Kingdom will allow us to make systems fairer for those who wish to stay.

The UK Government has set out a sensible approach that takes the needs of all sectors of the economy into account. There remains a demand for unskilled labour from outside the UK for work in particular sectors and at particular times of the year—in fruit and vegetable farming, for example. That has already been discussed. The UK Government has recognised that and is trialling a scheme that will allow farmers to employ migrant workers for seasonal work for up to six months, to alleviate labour shortages during peak production periods.

However, we must remember the significance of migration to Scotland from the rest of the UK. That is very important. In 2016-17, 33,000 people moved to Scotland from overseas, but 48,000 people came to Scotland from the rest of the UK. Just as with trade—we trade four times as much with the rest of the UK as we do with the EU—the United Kingdom is the most important single market for labour to Scotland.

That is why those who call for a distinct migration system for Scotland are mistaken. Concerns have been raised by representatives of important organisations in our economy, including CBI Scotland, the Food and Drink Federation Scotland, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and NFU Scotland. Such a system would create unnecessary additional bureaucracy, particularly for firms that operate both in Scotland and the rest

of the UK, and it is unlikely that it would address the wider problem of Scotland's poor economic performance.

In conclusion, we all value the important contribution that is made to life in Scotland by those who have moved here from the rest of the EU, and we look forward to the contributions that will be made by future migrants who will come here. The UK Government is tackling future migration in a sensible and proportionate way, and we should all welcome the opportunity to shape a new, fairer immigration system.

I support the amendment in Adam Tomkins's name.

16:21

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): It is a great honour to speak in this debate.

The minister and other colleagues, including Gillian Martin, have articulated well the benefits of EU citizens to our economy, our population levels, our businesses, our public sector, our culture and our sense of identity. They are our family and our friends, and we should do everything in our power to ensure that their rights are respected.

It will not surprise members that I will focus on the impact in my constituency.

Just two weeks ago, I held a surgery for EU nationals who live in Coatbridge and Chryston. I sent a letter to every EU national in the constituency to let them know the date of the surgery and that I am here to support them. I took those steps because it became very clear to me through case work that the Brexit vote and the current discussions—if we can call them that—have caused a lot of concern among EU nationals who call Scotland their home.

The event was very well attended. Normally, that would be something for an MSP to boast about, but it was very well attended because people are simply very worried. There were citizens from throughout the EU—from Spain, France, Greece, Poland, Romania, Portugal and Germany. All are valued members of our society who are frightened that they will not be able to stay where they have made their home.

It is very clear that there is a lot of confusion. I was asked by people who were there that day how much it would cost for them to stay, what would happen to the homes that they had bought, what rights their children who were born here had, where they stood with the permanent jobs that they were committed to and the pensions that they had contributed to, what access they would have to healthcare, and much more. Sadly, as others have said, there is not a straight answer to those

questions because Theresa May's Tory Government cannot come to any kind of agreement about how we will move forward through the mess. This is not just about party politics; it is about real people's lives. What has happened is an insult to the hard-working, indispensable and skilled EU nationals who call Scotland their home.

That is why I have been glad to see some of the steps that the Scottish Government has taken, which Ben Macpherson outlined. They include the £800,000 released yesterday to citizens advice bureaux to help EU citizens.

I thank Maria from my constituency, who supported the event two weeks ago. She is a Polish EU national who provided a translation service, and she was absolutely invaluable. If the minister could use her advice and services at any point, I would be happy to pass on her contact details.

I want to finish by talking about the proposed EU settled status fee of £60. The more that I think about that, the more I think that it is some sort of joke. Sixty quid might not sound like a lot to the Tories, but to some folk at the EU surgery a couple of weeks ago, it is one barrier too many. People are struggling to find secure employment, or they have to negotiate the welfare system, including universal credit, and they are struggling to bring up their families and make ends meet.

As others have said, there is another issue here—the principle of the matter. We are asking people who in some cases have lived here for a long time to pay for the right to do so. I ask members to think about how inhumane that is. I spoke to two people who have been here for many decades and have made Scotland their home, brought up their families here and paid taxes through their employment. I hear the Tories huffing, but they might want to listen. One of them told me that although, through her work, she could afford the settlement fee, she no longer felt welcome. As someone who has been here since the 1990s, she was really upset by that. The other individual felt the same way.

For me, that is the issue. The rhetoric around Brexit has led to an uncaring and cold UK Government trying to appease the far right of its ranks. On the ground, the effect is that people are breaking down in tears at MSPs' surgeries because they do not feel welcome in their own homes. That is not on. As other members have done, I ask for the immediate scrapping of settlement fees. If the UK Government will not do that, it must allow Scotland to take a different path. I echo the minister's message to EU nationals in my constituency and across Scotland: this is your home, you are valued and I will support you and fight for your rights.

16:26

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I commend Fulton MacGregor for his initiative of holding a surgery for EU nationals in his constituency. That is a hugely positive step, and I am sure that constituency members across the chamber might replicate that work, now that they have heard about it.

I fully support the motion, although I have a bone to pick with the minister over its title: the "Contribution of EU Citizens to Scotland". I am an EU citizen—we are all EU citizens—and it is to my great regret that I will lose that part of my identity come next March. I still think that there is a glimmer of a possibility that we might stay in the EU but, as things stand, the reality is that, from March next year, there will be two types of people in Scotland. EU migrants will become something other—something secondary—because of what the UK Government is about to do to them, and I deeply regret that.

The Labour Party that I joined was passionately pro-European. It did not just support the concept of the European Union; it defended it and all four of the freedoms that came with it. The fact that the Labour Party no longer supports the free movement of people is also something that I deeply regret, and I find it very hard to reconcile it with not only my principles, but the economic and social needs of this country. I have said previously that I cannot believe that we now have a Labour Party that is more comfortable talking about the free movement of widgets than it is talking about the free movement of people, and I encourage more of my colleagues to speak up about that.

I want to talk about the remarks of Sajid Javid and the policy that has been announced by the UK Government, but before I do so, I want to thank the 39,000 EU nationals who live and work in the city that I am proud to represent. I thank them not just for their work, but for choosing to make their life in the city of Edinburgh. I do not think that that gets recognised enough. It enriches the city, and it enriches the lives of all the citizens in it and our collective culture. The last time that I spoke in the chamber, I spoke about the social care crisis in the city and how I feel about that, and I know that that will be compounded by the impact of the UK leaving the EU, because so many of the care workers in Edinburgh are EU nationals. We are talking about self-inflicted pain.

Today, Sajid Javid said that there was "no reason" to think that his plans to reduce immigration would harm the economy. I find that astonishing, because every bit of evidence that I have seen points to the exact opposite being true. It got worse. When Sajid Javid was asked about what level he thought that immigration should be set at, he said that it should be set at a level that

“meets first our economic need but at the same time is not too high a burden on our communities or infrastructure”.

Let us call that out for what it is—dog-whistle anti-immigration sentiment. The idea that immigrants are somehow a burden on our communities or our infrastructure is what got us here in the first place. It is not immigration that is a burden—austerity is the burden. That is what is compounding the problems that we face with housing and our NHS.

In the past few hours, some trade union leaders have talked about “metropolitan moralising” in an effort to discount the reasons for people being pro-immigration. I do not accept that—I think that, for decades, there has been a failure by all of us to defend the benefits of immigration. I take my share of the responsibility for that, but I am damn sure that I will defend them now.

In my final 20 seconds, I commend the minister for the stance that he is taking in trying to ensure that no public sector workers have to pay a fee in order to stay in work here after we leave the European Union. I ask him to say in his closing remarks whether such a commitment perhaps extends as far as operating a grant system to EU nationals working in the public sector, so that they get that money in advance and choose how to use it if they want to stay. I very much hope that they will stay and continue to contribute to our economy and our country.

16:30

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I am pleased to be speaking in the debate today, but I am also frustrated that the debate needs to take place. Surely, every member in this chamber can understand and appreciate how important immigration is to Scotland's economy and society, and welcome the contribution of EU nationals to our country. Unfortunately not, is the clear answer that we have heard this afternoon. As is their wont, the Tories set out once again on a crusade to defend the indefensible.

I find the settled status fee that is being implemented by the UK Government to be nothing short of appalling. I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to meet the fee for EU citizens who are working in devolved public services as well as providing them with information and advice. I also welcome the £800,000 project that the minister spoke about earlier. However, it is unfortunate that those EU citizens need to pay to retain the rights that they already hold. If only there was a way to fix this problem.

Economic modelling shows that, on average, every additional EU citizen working in Scotland contributes some £34,400 in GDP, which is £10,400 in Government revenue. With a total contribution by EU citizens working in Scotland of

approximately £4.42 billion per annum, I, for one, know that our economy—and our society—will be much the poorer as Westminster drives people away.

Today's white paper published by the UK Government is clearly a pathway for the rich, but a closed door for the public sector. The deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, Saffron Cordery, is quoted as saying:

“We are deeply concerned about what is going to happen. High skills does not equal high pay. ... It is not just health workers, it is social care as well.”

Claire Baker mentioned the Migration Advisory Committee and the session that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee had with Professor Manning a few weeks ago. In that session, I asked questions about the social care sector. To say that I was unimpressed by Professor Manning's contribution is an understatement, particularly his comments regarding care providers.

Professor Manning suggested that care providers should simply pay more wages to their staff. I think that everyone would accept that paying more wages is a good thing, but that is not always feasible. A lack of appreciation of the contribution of Scotland's tourism sector was also fully on show by Professor Manning, and certain issues raised by my colleagues Kenneth Gibson and Tavish Scott highlighted the fact that the Migration Advisory Committee has done no economic modelling for Scotland.

Migration and immigration are normal. The contribution by EU citizens to our economy and society is rich beyond any financial analysis, as Scotland's tartan is rich in colour and vibrant in its culture. It is not just white with a bit of ginger on the fringes; it is white, black, yellow, blue, red, green, orange and brown. It is every colour and every creed. Growing up in Port Glasgow, I knew people from many different backgrounds, including Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, China, Kenya and Pakistan. Every person I have met has made my life, my community and our country the richer.

I want Scotland to continue to welcome more Fabianis, Allards and Ahmeds. They are all welcome, but unfortunately the rhetoric from the UK Government has not lived up to that. Let us not forget the UK Government's comments from a number of months ago on the Brexit agreement:

“Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.”

EU citizens are scared about what is going on, and what was said in London today will not make the situation any better for them.

16:34

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): We know that EU workers make a fantastic contribution to Scotland's economy, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry. We must continue to make the Scottish hospitality and tourism industry a welcoming and attractive sector in which to work for both EU nationals and those born and bred here. On that note, I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

There are two main points that I must address in this debate. First, the Prime Minister has made it clear that EU citizens' rights will be protected post-Brexit. Secondly, immigration policy divergence in Scotland would not be beneficial to our economy. That has been agreed by both Scotland Food & Drink and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce.

I hope to raise some points of accord in the chamber today. In that regard, I turn to the findings in the UK Hospitality workforce commission's 2030 report, which eloquently sets out recommendations that are aimed at ensuring that our hospitality industry is fit for the future. It highlights that

"Immigration policy must be evidenced-based, tailored to hospitality workforce needs",

that the industry should

"achieve greater workforce diversity",

both EU and non-EU, and that there should be

"Government support for workforce upskilling to encourage older ... workers into the sector, or back into employment".

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Rachael Hamilton: I do not think that I can, as I have a lot of points to make. I apologise to the member.

UK Hospitality notes that

"MPs and witnesses suggested developing temporary visas"

for seasonal work

"similar to those called for by the agriculture industry, to support the industry post-Brexit."

As we all know, there is a large demand for hospitality staff in the summer months, especially in the Highlands and Islands, with a dip over the winter months. That is the case across the UK, including in Pembrokeshire, Cornwall and London in particular. Industry has already welcomed that idea. For example, the boss of Costa Coffee owner Whitbread has welcomed so-called barista visas.

We now have an opportunity to inform a 12-month consultation on the white paper. We need to look closely at the current immigration tier

system, as the MAC report suggests, and make reforms accordingly. It argues that we need to make changes to the tier 2 visa system, scrapping the cap for high-skilled workers, widening the range of jobs that are permitted and reducing bureaucracy. There needs to be a better understanding of what are low and medium-skilled jobs, particularly when it comes to chefs and sommeliers. The white paper is not final and we have the opportunity to contribute to the consultation. I hope that each and every one of us will do that.

One important fact remains. For too long, we have rested on our laurels with a plentiful supply of labour. The Scottish Tourism Alliance has warned for years that we will have a skills shortage in the hospitality industry. This has been going on for a decade, since long before Brexit. I do not want to take away from the debate today, but there has been a failure by this Government to ensure that we tackle the skills gap effectively. Marc Crothall of the STA has reiterated the concerns, yet it took until September for the First Minister to announce in Arran that she would commit to developing a specific campaign to promote tourism as a career choice.

It is vital that we recognise the contribution that EU workers make in Scotland and, in doing so, we must recognise that we need action to ensure that we have an immigration system that reflects the needs of the economy, and particularly the tourism and hospitality sector. I remind members that about 27,000 EU workers currently work in that sector. We absolutely welcome EU workers. Despite what the SNP likes to spin, the number of EU migrants in Scotland has continued to increase in the wake of Brexit, with 4,000 more moving to Scotland compared with the position in 2017. Again, that does not take away from the debate today.

We must realise that the UK Government's first priority in the process of leaving the EU has always been to secure the status of EU citizens living here and UK nationals living in the EU.

16:38

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The motion highlights the valuable contribution that our European friends have made to Scotland over so many years and rightly calls out the UK Government for its disgraceful treatment of people who call this place home.

Can members imagine how it must feel for someone to live their life with their family and friends in Scotland, making a huge contribution to what defines us as a nation and being a part of this place, only to suddenly be made to feel unwelcome and be told that they have to apply to

keep rights that they had thought were theirs for so long? That one act has caused so much damage to relationships that have been built up over so many years.

The fee is not the important issue here—although, yet again, Scotland has stepped in and offered to pay it. It is the principle that is wrong. It sends out a message that our European friends are suddenly no longer part of us but are separate and are to be treated as applicants in a new process that reeks of division and brings credit to no one. Ending freedom of movement might appeal to right-wing Tories, but we think that it is a disgraceful policy that smacks of racism and xenophobia. It will seriously impact on our ability to grow our economy and it damages our country's reputation. Scotland will fight the policy and reverse it as soon as we can.

Members should take a look around the Parliament complex here in Edinburgh. Many of our wonderful staff have come from different parts of Europe to live here and work with us. The UK Government should not be treating them in such a way and the application process should not proceed.

Of course, that is not the only example of how badly the UK Government is treating its people. Last week in the Parliament, I mentioned the case of my constituent Laura Nani, who, despite having lived in Scotland for 34 years—since she was four years old—has been told that she cannot demonstrate that she is habitually resident in the UK and has been denied access to the most basic of assistance through the universal credit system.

That is an absolute disgrace. Laura has provided all the evidence that she can find: employment information, family registrations—her children were all born in Scotland—general practitioner and dentist records and tax and national insurance information that stretch back years and years. She has attended college and university. She has provided all that information to no avail. What else does she have to do?

Laura and her family, and hundreds of thousands like them, have paid tax, national insurance and VAT for decades, with no questions being asked by the UK Government until now. That is a shocking way to treat a person who is as Scottish as we are, and the same treatment is being meted out to our European friends under the guise of taking back control of borders.

The UK Government's white paper on immigration, which was issued today, makes matters even worse. What is proposed could reduce by 85 per cent the number of EEA workers who are allowed to work in Scotland.

I pay tribute to Laura Nani's family: Italian dad Enrico and Scottish mum Rita, who decided to

make Scotland their home in 1984. The many Italian people who came to Ayrshire—local families such as the Togninis, the Varanis, the Bordones, the Sinforianis, the Pedianis and the Guistis, to mention only a few—have shaped our communities for generations and we are all the better for it. The welcome that they received was warm and their contribution has been immense.

A policy that casts doubt over that enduring relationship must surely be the lowest of the low. We are witnessing the start of second-class citizen status, as Kezia Dugdale said, and it is being introduced by the Tories.

Scotland needs a healthy migrant population to come here and work, to help us to grow our economy. Our expected population growth over the next decade can come only from migration, most of it from overseas.

However, this is about more than economics. It is about citizenship, friendship, collaboration, shared values, sharing our cultures and traditions and living, working and studying together—and in Laura Nani's family's case, marrying and settling down to make Scotland home. We must not and should not put a price tag on any of that.

Grazie per ascoltarvi.

16:43

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): EU citizens are welcome here. They are valued. They are wanted. This country would not be the country that it is without them.

That needs to be said, and it needs to be the subject of consensus in this Parliament, because EU citizens need to know that that is the view of all the political parties in the Scottish Parliament. They have had a long wait to learn of their fate and how they will be treated.

It might be common sense and it might be a matter of philosophical principle to support EU migration, but the fact is that we need migration. Our economy needs it. We need the skills and we need to grow our population.

Our EU citizens made their homes here in good faith. They did not know that David Cameron would call a referendum—in which some of them voted—that would have a severe impact on their lives.

As members said, the language that is being used in the debate about migration is deeply concerning. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister used the phrase "jumping the queue", albeit that she has apologised. I think that the phrase will not be forgotten for a long time.

At last there is some clarity, at least for EU citizens, who are living here lawfully. They will

have some understanding of their rights. The fee that they have been asked to pay is not for a passport. They are being asked to pay for existing rights that they thought that they already had. If you look at the arithmetic, it looks as if they are paying the administration costs to confirm that they have the right to settle. It is a wrong decision and a bad decision.

The scheme is going to be hugely complex, with a very tight timescale to boot. It is being built from scratch and has the potential to go seriously wrong. One wonders what will happen to those who do not register by June 2021. If even 5 per cent of EU citizens do not register, that represents a lot out of 3.5 million.

On today's announcement, maybe there is consensus in the chamber that the establishment of criteria that define a highly skilled person as someone who earns more than £30,000 is deeply concerning. There is often no correlation between high skills and high wages; the earnings of early career researchers, technicians and people in many other professions will fall below that figure. It is not just members in this chamber who say that. It has been said by Universities Scotland, the NHS and so on. According to Universities Scotland,

"UK immigration policy post-Brexit will make it more difficult to attract talent".

Today, the minister has set out the policy on immigration. As Kezia Dugdale said earlier, Sajid Javid has said that there is "no reason to think" that his plans would harm the economy. Is he serious? Whatever one thinks of the scheme that we are looking at today, it is utterly flawed to suggest that highly skilled people will always earn more than £30,000.

I have to say to Rachael Hamilton and Alexander Stewart, who on many occasions in this chamber have talked very eloquently about the problems of the hospitality industry, that they are completely underplaying the problem if they think that asking people to come here on a six-month visa, with no right to stay, is going to solve the problem. They really need to challenge their own Government and stand up for the sector that they have so brilliantly supported. It is just not going to work.

Scotland needs a regional immigration policy. Forty-eight per cent of people voted to remain and they support freedom of movement. Scotland needs to grow its population and, in the interests of the union, we need the UK Government to recognise that there should be a regional variation on the question of immigration.

16:47

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I have appreciated the tone of most of this afternoon's

debate, especially on the subject of migration. Listening to the speeches, I believe that there is consensus in the Parliament on the overall premise that migration from other countries not only contributes immensely to meeting unfulfilled need in our employment sectors but—equally and just as important—adds to the richness of our society. The contribution from those who have made Scotland their home is overwhelmingly positive. No one on the Conservative benches has disagreed with that.

As someone who has travelled, lived and worked in other countries, both within and outwith the EU, I understand what migration means—to live and work in someone else's country and to adapt to new customs, new languages and new cultures. The majority of people embrace that with both hands.

As we focus in the debate on the 223,000 people from the EU who have made Scotland their home, we should not forget the contribution of the 135,000 people from outside the EU who have also chosen to settle in this country and make it their home.

In the short time that I have, I want to mention a few important points that have been made in the debate. The first point, which was made at the outset, was about ensuring that the rights of EU citizens who are currently in the UK are guaranteed, whatever the outcome of Brexit. That was, and remains, the right thing to do. Many people have called for a guarantee on the rights of EU citizens and their families to remain in the UK; on the rights of those citizens, including their entitlements to work, study, and access public services or benefits to remain, regardless of what happens with Brexit; and on the rights of UK citizens, including many Scots, who have chosen to make other countries their home. They should all be protected.

The withdrawal agreement does that as a matter of priority. If we strip away some of the political heave-hoing on the deal or no-deal debate, a serious point remains: if the deal on the table does that—a deal that was mutually agreed between the UK and EU27—it remains a mystery why we would oppose that settlement.

Ross Greer: Will the member take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: If it is very brief, Mr McMillan.

Stuart McMillan: Does Jamie Greene agree that the SNP MPs do not want to support the failing deal that is on the table because it would have an adverse effect on Scotland's economy?

The deal would put us at an economic disadvantage. Is that what Mr Greene wants?

Jamie Greene: The withdrawal agreement deals with our departure from the EU; it sets out the premise of the next steps on the negotiation of future trade relationships. The future trade relationship is another debate, for when we have much more time to debate it.

The deal guarantees the rights of EU citizens in the UK—that is relevant to the debate. I want to do that; I am surprised that Mr McMillan and other SNP members do not. It is a mystery.

Controlled immigration does not mean no immigration. Very few, if indeed any, countries in the world have unrestricted immigration. We will continue—we will have to continue—to welcome people to this country.

I have looked through the white paper, in which there are a number of key points that we have not talked about. A lot of negative views have been expressed on the white paper, which is a complex document. The first important point to highlight is that the cap on tier 2 workers will be lifted. Gillian Martin was concerned—rightly—about the number of dentists in the north-east, just as I am concerned about the number of consultants in University hospital Crosshouse, so surely the removal of the cap would be a welcome move. The current system gives suitably qualified doctors from Madrid more preference than doctors from, for example, Manila. That is a by-product of the status quo.

Gillian Martin: Will the member give way?

Jamie Greene: I want to finish.

The status quo is changing, so the visa system must change too, to deal with that change in circumstances.

Tier 2 workers make up about 40 per cent of healthcare workers. That is not an insignificant number. Scotland has a skills shortage across a wide range of areas—I could go into them in great detail. If the new system addresses some of those shortages, I welcome it.

As we have made clear today, there is little to disagree with on many of the points that have been made across the chamber. As Stuart McMillan said, immigration is normal. I do not disagree, but perhaps it is for the very reason that we have been too afraid to talk about it that we have been led to where we are today. If we wash away all the political dogma and have a sensible, evidence-based debate about immigration, there is a surprising amount of consensus. Whatever happens with Brexit, those who have chosen to make Scotland their home are welcome. I hope that we all agree on that.

16:53

Ben Macpherson: I thank all those who have contributed to this debate about the 223,000 EU citizens from elsewhere in the EU who have accorded us the privilege of making Scotland their home. I welcome the supportive statements, the valuable conclusions and, indeed, the moving stories from around the chamber—and all of Scotland—about the huge contributions that EU citizens in our communities make to the enhancement of our collective culture. I will not be able to respond to all the points that have been made, but I will try my best. I will focus on four issues that were raised: the fact that we all welcome EU citizens here and issues related to that; fees; the white paper; and differentiated solutions.

On welcoming EU citizens, there is consensus in the chamber about the contribution that is made by EU citizens. I welcome that in good faith, but the Conservative contributions conflated two issues: guaranteeing EU citizens' rights and the withdrawal agreement. The Conservative UK Government could have guaranteed the rights of EU citizens much earlier in the process, but it failed to do so. When it made statements, it was reluctant to come forward with details, which shows the underlying point that, unfortunately, the Conservatives—they have admitted this—have used EU citizens as a bargaining chip in the negotiations.

I turn to fees, on which important points were made. There seems to be consensus throughout the chamber, apart from among the Conservatives, that to charge EU citizens a fee to continue to contribute the huge amount that they already contribute to our society—and to propose a fee for children, for goodness' sake—is completely wrong-headed and makes no sense. It is a complete misnomer to equate such a fee with a passport fee; the UK Government's justification for that is without foundation.

As members said, the Scottish Government, along with many others, has been calling for the fee to be abolished. The overwhelming message from businesses, third sector organisations, EU citizens and many others is that it is unfair for people to have to pay a fee simply to keep their existing rights to live, work and study in Scotland. In the chamber and beyond, I urge as many individuals, businesses, organisations and others as possible to make their voices heard by writing to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary or by using social media to call for the UK Government to scrap the unfair charge.

As members know, the Scottish Government has committed to doing what it can to help mitigate the hardship of the settled status scheme and to pay the fee for those in public services. We will

come forward with more details on that point, but our clear position is that there should not be a fee.

One of the barriers that we face is that there is no way for the Scottish Government to pay the fee directly to the UK Government; there is no way for employers to do so either, which many of them want to do. That is a nonsensical position. It is also nonsensical that in order to pay EU citizens a refund on their fee, we would need to include a tax element, because, unfortunately, the fee is quoted as a taxable benefit.

Adam Tomkins said earlier that he wished that he had more influence on his UK colleagues. If we cannot get rid of the fee, I call on him to at least help make the case that we should allow bulk payment and that it should not be a taxable benefit.

It is important to emphasise that we in the Scottish Government were not adequately consulted on the white paper on immigration and we were given very little prior notice of it. That is why it is not referenced in the motion, but I am sure that we can have a debate on it at another time. As I have emphasised, our analysis shows a drop in real GDP of 6.2 per cent by 2040 as a result of what is being proposed in the white paper. That has a value of almost £6.8 billion a year by 2040, so it would have a devastating effect.

There has been a very concerning reaction to the white paper from business. The Scottish Tourism Alliance, the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry and the Confederation of British Industry Scotland all raised huge concerns about what is proposed in the white paper. The UK hospitality industry, to which Conservative members referred, is also deeply concerned about what is proposed.

Many members on the Conservative benches took a dismissive approach to having a differentiated set of solutions for Scotland. Today's white paper has brought many people to a place of much more open-mindedness about differentiated solutions for Scotland.

The CBI said that

“calls for devolved and regional immigration policies will only grow louder”

if there are no changes to what is proposed in the white paper.

The FSB stated that there are distinct demographic and employment needs in Scotland and that

“a system in Scotland that responds to the particular needs of Scottish industry and demography”

would potentially be welcome.

Importantly, CBI Scotland said that if there is a “more restrictive system ... the case for greater flexibility for Scotland increases.”

Therefore we have a position in which not only is it important that we, as a Parliament, emphasise the contribution that EU citizens make to Scotland; we need to work together in a constructive manner to seek solutions that will make a difference for Scotland. That is what we in the Scottish Government—and indeed in other parties—are doing. It would be good if the Scottish Conservatives were to show some willingness towards doing that.

Let me conclude by reiterating how much the Government—and, I believe, the Parliament—has confidence in that from today. Indeed, Scotland as a whole welcomes and supports the many EU citizens who have built their lives here and call Scotland their home.

The story of Scotland's population has long been one of outward migration—of Scots seeking opportunities abroad or being forced to leave their homeland. That is not our national story any more, and in large part we have people from other countries—especially those from other EU member states—to thank for that. We are in a more positive place because of migration. EU citizens are a welcome and integral part of communities across the country and are valued employees and employers in key sectors such as health and social care, education, construction, tourism and hospitality, culture, rural industries, financial services, agriculture, aquaculture and, indeed, every other part of our economy. They enrich our society.

I say again that our friends, neighbours, colleagues and loved ones who are EU citizens make a huge contribution that benefits us all. They are welcome here, and we want them to stay in a Scotland that looks out to Europe and the world in a spirit of friendship, openness and solidarity.

Business Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-15192, 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 8 January 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 9 January 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Finance, Economy and Fair Work
followed by Ministerial Statement: Improving Animal Welfare
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Recognising the Life Sciences Sector in Scotland
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 10 January 2019

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: Future Rural Policy and Support in Scotland
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 15 January 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 16 January 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 17 January 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by 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 9 January 2019, 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"

and

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 10 January 2019, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister".—[Graeme Dey]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-15193, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the stage 2 timetable of a bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 8 February 2019.—[Graeme Dey]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-

15208, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, extending the stage 2 timetable of a bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be extended to 1 March 2019.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-15195, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on committee substitutions.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Andy Wightman as the Green Party substitute on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee;

Andy Wightman be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as the Green Party substitute on the Justice Committee.—
[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-15184.2, in the name of Adam Tomkins, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15184, in the name of Ben Macpherson, on the contribution of European Union citizens to Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

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)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 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, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 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)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 27, Against 90, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-15184.1, in the name of Claire Baker, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15184, in the name of Ben Macpherson, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-15184, in the name of Ben Macpherson, on the contribution of EU citizens to Scotland, 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)
 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)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 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, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 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)
 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

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the significant economic, social and cultural contributions made by EU citizens to Scotland; acknowledges that they are a welcome and integral part of communities across the country; notes that EU citizens are important contributors to key sectors such as health and social care, education, construction, tourism and hospitality, culture, rural industries and financial services; recognises that EU citizens who have settled in Scotland have done so under freedom of movement; commends the work of organisations such as EU Citizens Rights Project, in partnership with stakeholders, to address the needs and concerns of EU citizens, ensuring that their voice is heard throughout the negotiation period; however, notes that the UK Government's policy is for EU citizens, including children, to enter an application process to obtain settled status and pay a fee to retain their existing rights to live, work and study in Scotland; recognises the risk that this charge could create a barrier for families and for individuals on low incomes; notes the Scottish Government commitment to meet the settled status fee for EU citizens working in devolved public services and to provide an information and advice service to support them; however, believes that EU citizens should not have to pay to retain rights that they already hold, and therefore calls on the UK Government to scrap its fee for settled status applications.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-15195, in the name of Graeme Dey, on committee substitutions, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Andy Wightman as the Green Party substitute on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee;

Andy Wightman be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as the Green Party substitute on the Justice Committee.

Water Charges (Single-person Households)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14677, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on the Scottish Government to penalise Scots for living alone. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I call Jackie—Jackie Baillie—to open the debate.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): You can call me Jackie any time you like, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is too close to recess. I am drifting. I call Jackie Baillie to open the debate.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament disagrees with the Scottish Water proposal to cut the single occupancy discount from over half a million people in Scotland; understands that, currently, 944,659 people in Scotland receive a discount from Scottish Water due to the fact that they receive Council Tax Reduction or live alone; understands that the proposal is to instead offer discounts to only those who receive Council Tax Reduction, regardless of how many people live in the household; believes that this will see hundreds of thousands of people in Scotland, including those in the Dumbarton constituency, being forced to pay for far more water than they are actually using; considers that this will particularly affect older people who are on low and fixed incomes, and notes calls on the Scottish Government to work with Scottish Water to rethink what it considers this ill-advised proposal to penalise those who live alone.

17:08

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Almost 950,000 people in Scotland receive a discount for their water. For the overwhelming majority of those people, the discount is worth 25 per cent of the total bill, which is a lot of money. For the average band D house, that discount is worth £109 a year.

In the summer, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on changing the discount. That change, which has so far received little attention from the Parliament, is the focus of my members' business debate this evening. I am happy to clarify at the start that the change was suggested by the Scottish Government and not by Scottish Water.

In a nutshell, the Scottish Government wants to increase the water discount for those receiving council tax reduction. That is welcome—I have no problem with that. However, the Government wants to pay for it by taking away the council tax discount from half a million single people.

That is nothing short of an attack on single older people, who might be living alone because they

are widowed, and might have a small works pension that means that they do not qualify for council tax reduction. They will find it difficult to manage.

It is an attack on single parents who struggle to manage bringing up children on one income.

It is an attack on half a million people who rely on getting that discount; they will be penalised simply because they live alone.

There is an argument that someone who lives alone will use less water than a household of, say, four people, but there also seems to be an assumption that people who live alone have considerable resources. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the Fraser of Allander institute noted that there are poor people in every council tax band.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does Jackie Baillie accept that some of us who are single and live on our own would happily pay a bit of extra money?

Jackie Baillie: If John Mason wishes to do so, I am sure that Glasgow City Council would welcome him paying extra. However, that is not the point. The majority of people in this category are on low and fixed incomes. Losing the discount could have serious consequences, as they will need to find more from an existing pot—a small pot—simply to stay afloat. Age Scotland's briefing for the debate has pointed out that, in a recent survey, six out of 10 pensioners said that they struggle with their fuel bills. We can imagine how much more difficult the Scottish Government will make it if it removes the discount for water from older people, too. The number of older people is set to rise significantly over the next decade; in particular, the number of older people who live alone is expected to rise by nearly 50 per cent.

Has the Scottish Government, in its wisdom as part of its consultation, published an analysis of responses yet? I was told by the cabinet secretary herself that the final consultation report would be presented to a multi-stakeholder group on 25 October and published on Scottish Water's website thereafter. However, thereafter, somebody ran for cover. Despite emails to Scottish Water and portfolio questions to the Government, the report remains hidden away. I am now told, as the result of a freedom of information request, that it will be published—wait for it—on Friday 21 December when we have all gone home and no one will be paying attention. That is woeful, to be frank, and tells us everything that we need to know about the cynicism of this Government.

I will now turn to the council tax reduction for single-person households. People get the water discount if they get the council tax discount. Members will appreciate the concern that we are

witnessing the thin end of the wedge. Today it is the water discount that they are after; tomorrow it will be the council tax discount. Welcome to the new Scotland where people are being penalised for living alone.

This is not far-fetched. A former Scottish National Party MSP, Roderick Campbell, questioned whether the single-person council tax discount should remain at all. When I put that to the First Minister at First Minister's questions a few weeks ago, I expected her to rule it out. However, she did not rule it out; she pointed to further consultation.

Let us be clear about the cost of the removal of both single-person discounts, for water and for council tax—it would cost the average band D household more than £400 a year. People would need to find an extra £400 on a fixed income at a time when the price of everything is going up but earnings are flat or declining in real terms for the majority of the population.

As I said at the start, providing more assistance for those who are on council tax reduction is welcome, but how it is paid for is the issue at stake. I do not believe that taking from the slightly less poor to pay for the poorest is the right way to do it. I cannot begin to understand why the cabinet secretary appears to be hellbent on making changes that would leave substantial numbers of people in Scotland poorer than they are today.

Let me genuinely ask the cabinet secretary to think again. Has she considered whether there is a way to protect single-person pensioner households? What discussions has she had with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People? Now that the Scottish Government has new powers, has she thought imaginatively about how those could be used to help people who are on low incomes with water charges? Will she meet Age Scotland and include pensioners directly in a discussion about this policy, which will affect their income going forward? I genuinely hope that we can persuade the cabinet secretary, who is politically astute, not to rush into this. Let us work together to ensure that no one is penalised if they happen to live alone in Scotland today.

17:15

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): As is normal, I thank Jackie Baillie for securing the debate. However, I am deeply disappointed in the tone of her motion, and I am also surprised that it was allowed in the first place. The motion talks as if it is a formal and proven fact that the Scottish Government is penalising Scots. However, Jackie Baillie knows that that is clearly not the case. In this fantasy motion, Jackie Baillie goes from, "They're going to lose their Scottish Water rebate,"

to, "They're going to lose their council tax rebate," when neither of those things is factually accurate.

Our record clearly shows that this is a Government that takes the necessary action to protect people who are on lower incomes and supports the poorest people in our society, whether it is through our commitment to tackle child poverty—

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

James Dornan: Only if it is not coming of my time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is time, Mr Dornan.

Daniel Johnson: I gather, based on his remarks, that the member is asking the Scottish Government to rule out removing the single-person discount for water. Is that correct?

James Dornan: I thought that Daniel Johnson had been here long enough to know the difference between a consultation and something that is not a consultation. The consultation process is still going on. Once a consultation process is completed, the Government looks at the results and makes its decisions. If a Government rules things out before a consultation starts, there is no point having the consultation in the first place. I would have thought that Mr Johnson would know that by now.

The Scottish Government is protecting the poor in a variety of ways. It has made a commitment to tackle child poverty, and is using its new social security powers to support young families on low incomes with a new best start grant, the first payments of which were made on Monday; it has made a commitment to tackle funeral poverty, unveiling a 10-point funeral costs plan to help those who face financial problems during a difficult time; and it has made a world-leading commitment to tackle period poverty. This Government looks after those who need looked after. It is called being progressive. As I look around the Labour benches, I see maybe one or two people who are progressive. Perhaps the rest of the party should give it a go. Some of the older ones on those benches might have a distant memory of a time when Labour was progressive but, since I came into this Parliament, I have seen absolutely no sign of it, except in press releases and speeches.

Since Scottish Water's creation in 2002, we have seen continual improvement in the work that it does. The collective focus on the need to improve the quality and standards of services, the determination to keep charges affordable and the commitment that is shown by our water industry have resulted in Scotland's drinking water quality, environmental performance and service reaching

their highest levels ever. Those are impressive achievements over a period in which average charges have fallen in real terms and remain among the lowest in the UK. According to the Scottish Parliament information centre, the average annual household water charge in 2018-19 is £360 in Scotland, which is more than 20 per cent cheaper than the charge in Labour-run Wales, where consumers were charged £439 this year. That makes me look forward to Jackie Baillie's next motion, which I assume will be about what the Welsh Government can learn from the Scottish Government about how to treat people fairly.

However, I do not deny that significant challenges lie ahead, and we have to plan carefully to address those and ensure that the progress that has been made is maintained. We must continue to have a sustainable and high-performing water industry that meets customers' needs at affordable prices.

As Jackie Baillie well knows, the process of determining charges for the period between 2021 and 2027 is now under way. The Scottish Government plays a central role in determining the key policy parameters to guide that process, and everyone was encouraged to submit their views on key issues that are central to the development of that framework. Those views will be taken into account in the finalisation of those documents at a later stage of the review, which will allow the Water Industry Commission to issue its final determination in March 2020. That determination will set out its view of charges for the regulatory period. It is just a shame that Jackie Baillie's views were not part of the consultation, as she did not bother to participate in it.

As was set out by the First Minister in November—coincidentally, in response to Jackie Baillie—there is absolutely no proposal to remove the single occupancy discount. The Scottish Government is, indeed, reviewing the responses to the consultation at the moment but, importantly, any detailed changes to the charging policy would be subject to further consultation with customers and stakeholders. Any possible reduction in the discount for single-person households would potentially allow increased discounts for those on low incomes to be introduced, all the same. That is the point that Citizens Advice Scotland has welcomed. It said:

"the ... proposal to increase the maximum reduction for recipients of the Water Charges Reduction Scheme from 25% to 50% ... will provide additional benefit to over 340,000 households on full Council Tax Reduction, and another 160,000 on partial Council Tax Reduction."

That sounds rather progressive to me.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member should be concluding, Ms Baillie.

James Dornan: I reiterate that no decisions have been taken on the issue. However, when the decision is taken, it will be about ensuring that the help that we provide goes to the people who need it most.

It appears to me that, just as it did during its better together days, Labour continues to try to scare our most vulnerable people in order to make political points.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Dornan. Just for—[*Interruption.*] I ask members to please be quiet. Mr Dornan, you said that you did not know why the motion was allowed. The process is, that the motion was submitted to the chamber desk, which ruled that it was competent—that is the first step and you all know that. Secondly, the parliamentary bureau unanimously agreed, across all parties, that the motion should be debated.

James Dornan rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sit down, Mr Dornan.

James Dornan: I raise a point of order.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Tread carefully—it had better be a point of order.

James Dornan: Do we have clarification of what the boundaries are for a member's debate?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sit down, Mr Dornan. Sit down. That is not a point of order. You asked why the debate was allowed and I have explained the parliamentary process. That is why the motion is being debated today. There is no conversation to be had. Thank you. Calm down.

17:21

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): My speech completely misjudges the tone of the debate, but I will continue.

I thank Jackie Baillie for bringing this important subject to the chamber. As the member for the rural constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, I am acutely aware of my many rural constituents who live alone, some through choice but many not through choice. Age Scotland's briefing ahead of the debate highlighted how, over the next 25 years, the number of older people who are expected to live alone is expected to rise by 50 per cent. It is those people who will be hit by the proposal. That is one reason why the proposal by Scottish Water to reduce the single occupancy discount from 25 to 10 per cent is misguided and needs to be addressed.

It is beyond belief to suggest that single occupancy and vacant homes use as much water as a fully occupied house. There is every reason to maintain the discounts, given the people who will be most affected by the proposed change. However, it is not beyond belief that the proposal is nothing more than an attempt to increase by stealth council taxes on single occupancy homes and vacant properties. Council tax is already a progressive system and people who are on low incomes rightly receive discounts. The proposal demonstrates, once again, that under this Scottish National Party Government, hard-working taxpayers will pay more and get less. Rural users will also be disproportionately hit, which is not insignificant because of another issue facing my constituency—connectivity—which is still a major issue throughout rural areas.

Age Scotland has pointed out that many people simply do not have access to information about applying for the benefits that they are entitled to. Forty per cent of people who are eligible for pension credits do not claim them. Therefore, it is a double whammy: there are extra costs but less accessibility to the information that will assist in getting support.

This morning, I met with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, on the subject of affordable broadband. I wonder how many members, let alone their constituents, know that if a person is in receipt of certain benefits, they can sign up for a £10-a-month home phone and broadband package from BT. If you do not have connectivity, you cannot find out what support you are entitled to. The importance of boosting our digital connectivity across rural communities cannot be overstated. Bringing about improvements can open up further job opportunities and bring our communities closer together—helping to reduce social isolation—and, in this ever more digitally driven world, we must ensure that everyone has access to the information that they need.

Presiding Officer, in the light of what has gone before in the debate, I hope that you and Jackie Baillie will indulge me in going off at somewhat of a tangent. When I initially read the motion, I thought that it was about people living on their own and loneliness, which would have been very appropriate at this time of year.

I was pleased to meet with the British Red Cross to discuss the issue of loneliness. It provided me with a great insight into the effects of social isolation and feeling alone, which was highlighted in the report "Trapped in a bubble: An investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK". It is those people who will be most affected by Scottish Water's proposed policy change.

I met the then Minister for Social Security, Jeane Freeman, to ask what action could be taken to address social isolation and loneliness. It is disappointing that it has taken until this week for the Government to reveal the findings of its consultation, given that the consultation finished at the end of April. In response, my colleague Annie Wells put forward wide-ranging plans to combat loneliness, including national awareness campaigns and—perhaps most important of all—the recognition that the need for loneliness support affects people of all ages.

Tonight, in the spirit of the season—I presumed that the debate was going to be more in that spirit—I pay tribute to some of the organisations that are working tirelessly across Dumfries and Galloway to help people who are living on their own.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have been quite indulgent, because you did not read the motion properly.

Finlay Carson: You are absolutely right.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do not test my indulgence by giving me a big list of all the organisations that you want on the record.

Finlay Carson: I certainly will not do that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, you will not.

Finlay Carson: At this time of year, when the focus is on goodwill to all men and women, Scottish Water needs to look again at its misguided plans that will punish people simply for their living circumstances.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. I see that you have found your card and I have found my glasses, so things are improving.

17:25

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): I start by paying tribute to my colleague Jackie Baillie for securing the debate and lodging her relevant motion. Jackie has a formidable record as a campaigner and in bringing issues of substance and issues that matter to the Scottish Parliament chamber. Scottish Water's proposed cut to the discount for single persons is no different from those.

We should look at the extent of the issue. The proposal will affect nearly one million people; the geographic breakdown shows that it will affect 138,000 people in Glasgow and 57,000 people in South Lanarkshire. I have no doubt that many people across Rutherglen, Cambuslang and Blantyre will be concerned about the proposals in the Scottish Government's consultation document. Age Scotland is right to highlight the impact on pensioners. We know that over the next 25 years, the impact will grow by 50 per cent.

It is relevant that we are having the debate at this time of year, when we are also focusing on fuel poverty. A quarter of people in Scotland suffer from fuel poverty, and half of them are older people. A lot of the issues relating to the single-person discount affect older people.

That being the case, the Scottish Government is pursuing the wrong policy. First, the policy is unfair. If the single occupancy discount was reduced or removed, nearly a million people would be affected, including a lot of pensioners.

Secondly, there seems to be an argument about shifting to the council tax reduction element of the water charge. That has very poor uptake, so it would not have the same impact in terms of helping people. There would be unintended consequences to the policy.

I suspect that the Scottish Government is taking the approach because it continues to pursue fundraising options to fill the black holes in its budget—not just this year, but in future years. Nobody should be surprised by that. From the publication of last week's draft budget, we know that there will be a decrease of £319 million in real terms for local councils alone. There are clear issues with that.

Jackie Baillie has brought a relevant issue to the chamber. Having looked at the consultation, I say to James Dornan that it lists clearly the various current exemptions and says:

"Ministers ... consider that there is a strong case for reducing or removing these discounts."

It says not just that there is a case, but that there is "a strong case". That shows how the Government is thinking. It clearly knows that the issue is controversial, given that it will publish the results of the consultation on Friday, when most people will be heading off for the Christmas break. I agree with Jackie Baillie that the Government should rethink its position, if the direction of travel is to reduce or get rid of the discount.

This debate has been relevant in bringing the issue to the chamber, so I hope that the cabinet secretary's response to it is constructive. As the change would have a detrimental effect on nearly a million Scots, a lot of whom are pensioners, we need to rethink the way forward.

17:30

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): First, I declare an interest as the owner of a dormant water distribution company.

I congratulate Jackie Baillie on lodging the motion, which questions Scottish Water's—or, indeed, the Scottish Government's—intention to remove the 25 per cent single occupancy discount. The proposal to reduce the discount to

10 per cent will be a significant blow to the ever-growing number of people living on their own in Scotland, and will not bring Christmas cheer to the many hundreds of thousands of people who will be affected by the proposal, if the Scottish Government has its way.

Of course, the move will affect not just people who live alone; it will affect single people on low and fixed incomes, as well as elderly people, who will feel most upset if the Scottish Government reduces the discount. In addition, information that has been provided by Age Concern, and which has been used by other members, suggests that over the next 25 years the number of older people living alone in Scotland is set to rise by almost 50 per cent. The Scottish Government's proposals will see all those people facing increased council tax through increased water rates.

We know that the Scottish Government is consulting on proposals on how to change the charging structure for Scottish Water customers, and we are aware of the growing need to fund new infrastructure projects in Scotland, as Victorian water distribution and sewerage systems become obsolete and are simply overwhelmed by lack of capacity and higher rainfall resulting from climate change.

However, such renewal must not be undertaken at the expense of pensioners, single people or the least well-off people in our country. For example, desperately needed new infrastructure in Prestwick in my constituency, where frequent external sewer flooding is now a regular occurrence, must not be funded in that way. Rebuilding the sewerage network to deliver new external sewer capacity must be delivered from charging and taxing those who are better able to afford such costs, so I hope that the Scottish Government, through Scottish Water, will soon create the new infrastructure that is so desperately needed in Prestwick without feeling the need to put its hands in the pockets of those who are least able to afford it.

With regard to water rates and new charging structures, I note that water rates are just one of the many costs that disproportionately affect people who live on their own. At the moment, the reduction is only 25 per cent, and it is important that Government remembers that 40 per cent of the people who are eligible for pension credits do not claim them. Other benefits to which many of our proud but often lonely elderly are entitled are also unclaimed, and I am always happy to ask our ever-helpful South Ayrshire Council and the Department for Work and Pensions in Ayr to organise a benefits check for any of my constituents, just in case they are missing out on benefits to which they are, properly, entitled.

I again congratulate Jackie Baillie on securing and promoting this lively debate on a very important issue. The Scottish Conservatives certainly agree with her motion in this last members' business debate before Christmas. It is in the spirit of Christmas that we urge the Scottish Government to listen to Jackie Baillie and the many speeches in the debate before it reduces discounts on water rates for single people.

17:33

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I restate at the outset that this is a debate on a consultation about which no decision has yet been made. The consultation dealt with a number of issues, one of which was whether the current discounting system could be better focused on those who are most in need.

Water charges in Scotland remain among the lowest in the UK, and the range of discounts, exemptions and reductions that we offer to classes of customers who face specific circumstances are not available elsewhere. That is a source of pride, and it shows the merits of our public sector ownership. However, I make it clear that the discounts and exemptions are not Government grants or subsidies, but are paid for by other household customers. The current range of discounts costs them £146 million, which is equivalent to nearly £63 in the average bill.

It is not unreasonable to ask whether the current system helps the people who have most difficulty paying. That is what we set out to consider, and what led us to put the proposal in the consultation. We did that after close discussion with Citizens Advice Scotland, and in the light of research that was undertaken by it. Research that was undertaken by the Fraser of Allander institute on behalf of CAS, and which was published on the CAS website, estimated that 12 per cent of households in Scotland spend more than 3 per cent of their weekly income on water and sewerage charges. That is 297,000 households that could be said to face affordability issues.

The research noted that not all single-occupant households face affordability issues. Indeed, they do not: as John Mason pointed out, a fair number of MSPs might be in that category. Being a single-person household does not equate to inability to pay. The research by the Fraser of Allander institute also concluded that households that are in receipt of council tax reduction are those that are most likely to face affordability issues.

The consultation was about finding out whether there is a way to support better the people who are most vulnerable. I am surprised that anyone

would think that that is not a reasonable question to ask.

Jackie Baillie: I do not think that anybody is disputing that what we want is that the people who have least gain from the discount. However, the method by which the Government has chosen to do that is to remove the discount from others who cannot afford to have it taken away.

Roseanna Cunningham: I commented that single-person household status is not related to affordability. I said that we worked with Citizens Advice Scotland. Members might want to look at its report, which was published in September, entitled "Charting a new course: A study in developing affordability policy for water and sewerage charges". The results of the consultation have been analysed and are now online. People can therefore see who did and who did not lodge submissions to the consultation.

Further research, consultation and engagement with the potentially affected demographics and relevant interest groups will be undertaken prior to a decision being made. I reiterate that no decision has been made.

Meeting closed at 17:37.

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