



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 10 January 2019

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 10 January 2019

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

General Question Time

Unlicensed Weirs (River Tyne, East Lothian)

1. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made on ensuring that the six unlicensed weirs on the River Tyne in East Lothian are properly authorised and provided with fish passages, and for what reason this work did not start in 2017 as planned. (S5O-02749)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): One fish pass was, in fact, completed in 2016. Options are under development for three others, and two weirs have been provisionally assessed as passable for fish at present.

Iain Gray: I thank the cabinet secretary for that helpful answer. Can she tell me whether, as in the original plan, it is still possible to complete all the work by 2021?

Roseanna Cunningham: In a global sense—by which I mean Scotland-wide—the plan was to finish all the work by 2027. There is active work at present on three of the weirs. As I indicated, one weir has been completed and two are classified as being clear for fish, and I understand that active work is taking place on three of them and is being completed.

Although the member asked about six weirs, I have a great deal of detail on what I understand to be seven weirs. I am very happy to share that detailed information with him if he wishes to speak to me later.

Hospital Bedside Televisions (Affordability)

2. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the affordability for patients of using bedside televisions in hospitals. (S5O-02750)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): Across NHS Scotland, patient entertainment services are provided either free in house or through Hospedia's bedside entertainment services, which are purchased by patients voluntarily and are in addition to communal telephones and televisions.

We recognise that television provides respite to many patients; we also recognise the importance of technology in enabling patients to remain connected. We are working with national health service directors of estates to establish the feasibility of free bedside entertainment, to be supplied via wi-fi, across NHS Scotland.

NHS Lothian is currently trialling free patient wi-fi services, including access to video streaming. If that is successful, we would hope to extend it to other NHS boards.

Edward Mountain: At £9.90 a day in NHS Highland, it is extremely expensive to watch television. NHS Highland entered a 15-year contract that is due to expire in June 2019. Will the cabinet secretary give me an undertaking that she will work with NHS Highland to ensure that patient television is more affordable, to allow patients to watch television during their stay in hospital, which in some cases may be for a long period?

Jeane Freeman: I am happy to give Mr Mountain that undertaking. He is right that NHS Highland's current contract expires in June. I expect all boards, on the expiration of any Hospedia contracts that they may have, to consider not only best value but the right patient-centred approach. That is a hallmark of our NHS and I therefore expect NHS Highland to be actively considering free wi-fi services. I undertake to work with the board and to keep Mr Mountain up to date as we make progress.

Universal Credit (Local Authority Rent Arrears)

3. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the roll-out of universal credit is impacting on local authority rent arrears. (S5O-02751)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Universal credit has had a devastating impact on people in Scotland. As of November 2018, there were around 135,000 people in Scotland in receipt of universal credit, of whom 15,000 were in the Fife area.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' evidence shows that the average arrears for those on universal credit are more than 2.5 times the average arrears for those on housing benefit. Although we welcome reports that the Westminster vote on universal credit managed migration regulations will now be scaled back to a vote on a pilot scheme for 10,000 people, we will continue to call on the United Kingdom Government not to commence managed migration until the fundamental flaws with that catastrophic benefit are fixed.

David Torrance: In Fife, the level of council rent arrears directly attributable to the roll-out of

universal credit currently exceeds £1.1 million. Does the cabinet secretary agree that such an increase, which is being suffered by many local authorities, will have a devastating effect on planned housing programmes and continued investment in housing stock across Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: David Torrance is right to point out the impact of universal credit on rent arrears and the impact that that will then have on local authorities. The Scottish Government introduced the council house building programme in April 2009—the first such central Government support to councils in a generation. The most recently published statistics show that a total of 10,293 council homes have now been delivered, including 1,236 council homes in Fife.

Council house building continues to be an integral part of the 58,000 affordable homes target for this parliamentary session. Mr Torrance can be assured that we are determined to meet that target despite the additional challenges posed by UK Government welfare cuts. We will deliver on our promises in housing and in other welfare areas, despite the budget cuts from Westminster and the callous welfare policies administered by the Conservative Government.

Post-Brexit European Health Insurance Card

4. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether the European health insurance card will still be available for residents in Scotland following a no-deal Brexit or during any transition period. (S50-02752)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): Under the withdrawal agreement of 8 December 2017, the current European Union regulations that apply to reciprocal healthcare, including the European health insurance card, would remain in force during the transition period. The United Kingdom Government has responsibility for reciprocal healthcare on a UK-wide basis. The UK Government believes that the Healthcare (International Arrangements) Bill could support a broad continuance of existing rights, such as those under the European health insurance card, in the event of a no-deal scenario. However, I am obliged to point out that that is simply the UK Government's belief, and we have seen no evidence to substantiate it. In my view, it is therefore yet another reason to remove the option of a no-deal Brexit from the table.

Rona Mackay: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Brexit mess that the Westminster Government has led us into is causing uncertainty at every level and will create more worry and expense for people in Scotland—who did not vote

to leave the EU—when travelling abroad for leisure or business?

Jeane Freeman: I agree with Ms Mackay that this is yet another area of uncertainty and concern for people who wish to travel overseas and into the European Union following Brexit, whether that is for business, pleasure or education. We know that many of our fellow EU citizens—as well as ourselves—have enjoyed that ease of access. It is important to recognise that freedom of movement applies two ways.

We are concerned about freedom of movement in terms of our capacity to attract the skills of EU citizens and secure the continuing contribution of those EU citizens currently living and working in our country. However, the same concern applies to our citizens' freedom to move across Europe in the manner to which they have become accustomed. It is yet another example of inadequate planning, a poor approach and the madness that is Brexit.

Glasgow Airport Rail Link

5. Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the potential economic impact of a direct rail link between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow Airport. (S50-02753)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The Scottish Government has not made any recent economic assessment of the impact of a direct rail link between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow airport. The Glasgow city region growth deal includes the Glasgow airport access project, which is being led by the project team from Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council. Therefore, responsibility for undertaking an assessment of the economic impact of that project lies with that team.

Johann Lamont: I thank the cabinet secretary for what I regard as a rather disappointing response. The project has been delayed time and again. Despite numerous assessments being undertaken by Glasgow City Council and the airport that demonstrate significant benefits to the wider economy of the west of Scotland, the project is once again at risk. Meanwhile, recent reports show that increasing levels of congestion on the motorway network are increasing journey times to and from the airport. Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge the significant economic benefits that Glasgow airport brings and that the case for a direct rail link between Glasgow city centre and the airport grows stronger every year? Will he provide assurances that Transport Scotland and other agencies will work together and will he now commit to the project and tell us when he hopes it could be completed?

Michael Matheson: I am sorry if the member found my earlier response disappointing. I will try to address some of the points that she has raised. I recognise the important role that Glasgow airport has in the region and in the nation's economy as a whole. It is in all our interests to improve connectivity between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow airport. Work is being taken forward to look at the outline business case and carry out a further assessment of capacity on the existing Paisley corridor line. Those issues need to be addressed in looking at the possibility of the rail option. At the next meeting of the Glasgow airport access executive steering group, which I will chair and which includes the leaders of Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council along with other business partners that have an interest in the matter, we will consider how we can make further progress on improving access to and providing greater connectivity with Glasgow airport.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): If one of the problems or constraints is capacity at Glasgow Central high-level station, will the Government give consideration to Glasgow crossrail and to providing a station at Glasgow Cross, which would allow some trains that come from Paisley Gilmour Street to stop there?

Michael Matheson: The member is correct to highlight the fact that there are challenges with any rail-based link between Glasgow airport and Central station. As well as the capacity issues at the station, there are issues with the Paisley corridor, where there are particular constraints at Arklestone junction and Shields junction. Those issues would not be overcome by the Glasgow crossrail proposal. Those matters are being given due consideration as part of our overall assessment of the delivery of the Glasgow city region growth deal and ensuring that we get the right type of improved access options from Glasgow city centre to Glasgow airport.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I have a huge amount of sympathy for Johann Lamont's question. There is growing frustration about the fact that the project seems to stall time after time. We need to improve connectivity to the airport to grow the west of Scotland economy. Given that part of the reason for the impasse is to do with the impact that the rail link might have on other services, will the cabinet secretary give a commitment that his department will fully assist the local authorities that will approve the project to ensure that the impact is minimised and that the project can make progress?

Michael Matheson: Transport Scotland officials are already engaged with the partners who are taking forward the proposal. It is important that we understand the full impact that it could have on rail services in the Paisley corridor area. Those

impacts could be significantly detrimental to other service users, and that has to be properly understood. The impact would be not just on those who use services from Paisley Gilmour Street but on those who use services from Ayrshire. A wider piece of work has to be done to consider all those matters, and that is exactly what is being done at present. I recognise that some people feel that the timeframe has been too long, but there are significant complexities that have to be properly understood and considered. The meeting that I will chair later this month will give us an opportunity to consider what further progress we can make in the coming months.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary advise me of the benefits to North Ayrshire of having less congestion on the A737 once the rail link is established? Can he confirm that work on planning the timetabling of the service is already under way, given the concerns that have been expressed to the Local Government and Communities Committee about the time that it will take Network Rail to schedule that?

Michael Matheson: I will correspond with the member to give him more specific details on some of the points that he has raised. Those are important pieces of work that are about addressing issues of congestion and improving services for passengers. Network Rail needs to have a clear indication of the timeframe for taking forward the work. I will provide the member with more specific details on the matter in correspondence.

Public Sector Equality Duty (Sex)

6. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what work it is doing to ensure that all public bodies are fulfilling their public sector equality duty with regard specifically to the protected characteristic of "sex" as represented in the Equality Act 2010. (S5O-02754)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Equality Act 2010 is largely reserved. However, a framework to help public authorities to meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty has been set by the Scottish ministers through regulations. The Scottish Government expects all relevant organisations to comply with the requirements of the 2010 act in relation to all protected characteristics. Responsibility for oversight of compliance with the 2010 act, including compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, rests with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The commission is independent and cannot be directed by the Scottish ministers. Private individuals may also seek to enforce their

rights under the Equality Act 2010 in courts and tribunals.

Joan McAlpine: Is the cabinet secretary aware of recent research by the academic consultancy, Murray Blackburn Mackenzie, that found that only seven out of the 32 local authorities in Scotland had a clear definition of sex as a protected characteristic, while others conflated sex with gender identity, which has no definition in law, or gender reassignment, which is a completely separate protected characteristic? Many Scottish Government documents also conflate those things. That undermines the Equality Act 2010 exemptions that are designed to protect women and girls. Does the cabinet secretary agree that to support women and girls we need clear data on sex, and would she consider issuing guidelines to ensure that every public authority in Scotland adheres to that aspect of the Equality Act 2010?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act 2010 relates to being a man or a woman. We accept that sex and gender are distinct concepts. The Scottish Government agrees that there is a need to have disaggregated data to allow for the impacts of policies on men and women to be demonstrated. In Scotland there is both technical guidance and non-statutory guidance on the public sector equality duty for public bodies, which is published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Scottish Government expects all relevant organisations to comply with the requirements of the 2010 act and with the published guidance.

Attainment Scotland Fund

7. Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government how many teachers who are employed using the attainment Scotland fund are on permanent contracts. (S5O-02755)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Of the 962 full-time equivalent teachers funded through the attainment Scotland fund, 542 full-time equivalent teachers are recorded as having a permanent employment status.

Ross Greer: There are hundreds of teachers employed on temporary contracts under the attainment Scotland fund. In many local authorities, 100 per cent of teaching posts funded through the fund are temporary contracts. Those contracts do not contribute towards a sustainable teaching workforce. They often prevent staff from accessing opportunities for proper career progression and continuing professional development. Does the Deputy First Minister acknowledge that, although they make a valuable contribution, teaching posts funded through the attainment Scotland fund that are temporary

contracts are no substitute for permanently employed core teaching posts?

John Swinney: I would certainly encourage local authorities to employ teachers on full-time contracts. We have given an absolute commitment about the stability of funding for the attainment Scotland fund over this parliamentary session. That is beyond dispute. In addition to that, there is obviously regular turnover within the teaching profession. Vacancies will arise, and they can be filled as and when they do. The arguments to make more of those posts permanent are compelling.

I am pleased to see the progress that has been made with the recruitment of 962 full-time equivalent teachers through the attainment Scotland fund. They made a contribution to the increase in teacher numbers of 447 that we saw last year, which was a welcome increase in the teaching profession in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Question 8 has not been lodged.

Rail Network Improvements

9. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to improve the rail network. (S5O-02757)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Since 2007, we have invested around £8 billion in infrastructure and services to support Scotland's railways. We continue to demonstrate our commitment to improving rail infrastructure through the high-level output specification and the rail enhancements and capital investment strategy, supported by a £4.85 billion investment in control period 6. An announcement on which rail projects will form the first part of the control period 6 portfolio will be made by the end of March 2019.

Colin Beattie: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the recent reports regarding train delays and cancellations. Will he outline what specific steps are being taken to improve the Musselburgh line and the Borders railway in the short and long terms?

Michael Matheson: As I stated in the chamber earlier this week, performance on our railways has been unacceptable, which is why I instructed Transport Scotland to serve a contractual notice on ScotRail to prepare and submit a remedial plan that sets out how it plans to address performance issues, including on the North Berwick route that serves Musselburgh and on the Borders railway, to the contractually required levels. I assure Colin Beattie that there is no lack of determination on my part to ensure that ScotRail keeps to the standards that are expected of it as set out in the

contract. I am determined to ensure that we address the issue, and the remedial plan will assist in dealing with it.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general question time. Before we turn to First Minister's question time, I am sure that members will like to join me in welcoming to the gallery Dr Gabriele Andretta, President of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I want to extend in British Sign Language, if I can—my sign language is rusty—a warm welcome to the Scottish Parliament to the many members of the deaf community and BSL users and signers who are present in the public gallery today. I am sure that members will be pleased to hear that, for the next six months, we will provide a signed translation of First Minister's questions, and we will review that after the summer. I will end with an appeal to the First Minister, our party leaders and all members who wish to ask a question today to keep their questions concise. [*Interruption.*] Yes, and the answers. The First Minister signed her approval.

Alex Salmond Investigation

1. **Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** I can try, but I cannot promise.

I would very much like to give the First Minister a further opportunity to explain some of the inconsistencies surrounding the investigation into Alex Salmond. On Tuesday, the First Minister claimed that "there is no manual" for dealing with situations such as the complaints that Mr Salmond faces. Except that such a manual does exist: it is the Scottish Government's complaints process, which the First Minister signed off in December 2017. It makes clear that the First Minister should become involved only when an investigation is complete. Discussing the case with the subject of the investigation on five separate occasions is surely getting involved, is it not?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): No, it is not. I intervened in the process at no stage. It would have been wholly inappropriate for me to do so. The procedure that was signed off, as Jackson Carlaw rightly points out, says that I should not have known about the process, which was why the permanent secretary did not tell me about the investigation that followed from the complaints. As First Minister, I had no role in that process. That is the position, which is right and proper.

Obviously, like other party leaders here, I have responsibilities as leader of my party and I took part in meetings in that capacity. However, all along, in every decision that I took, I was anxious and determined to ensure that I did not intervene in a process in which I had no role to play.

Jackson Carlaw: I am sorry, but if the First Minister had said that to my grandmother, my grandmother would have given the First Minister what she called "an old-fashioned look". In my book, meeting the subject of a complaint is getting

involved, and I am surprised that the First Minister does not appreciate that.

In the First Minister's statement this week, she said that she

"did not know what was going on in the investigation",

yet she also told us that, on April 2, Mr Salmond detailed to her the nature of the complaints and that, in subsequent meetings, he set out his

"concerns about the process"

and the

"proposals that he was making ... for mediation and arbitration."—[*Official Report*, 8 January 2019; c 64, 61.]

So she did know, because Mr Salmond told her. How does the First Minister square her claim that she did not know what was going on with the fact that Mr Salmond was telling her what was going on?

The First Minister: I did not know how the Scottish Government was dealing with the complaint, I did not know how the Scottish Government intended to deal with the complaint and I did not make any effort to find out how the Scottish Government was dealing with the complaint or to intervene in how the Scottish Government was dealing with the complaint.

As Jackson Carlaw has said, Alex Salmond informed me of the investigation at a meeting on 2 April 2018. I was so anxious not to even inadvertently create any impression that I was seeking to intervene that I did not immediately tell the permanent secretary that I was aware of the investigation. I changed that judgment when Alex Salmond asked to meet me a second time.

As Jackson Carlaw has said and as I set out on Tuesday, Alex Salmond set out his concerns about the process. It was clear from what he told me then that he was considering a legal challenge. When he requested a second meeting, I was concerned that that challenge could be imminent, so I told the permanent secretary then that I knew about the investigation and I told her about the previous meeting, including the reference to a potential legal challenge. I told her that I supported her decision to investigate and that I would not seek to intervene in the investigation in any way. I also said that I would make it clear to Alex Salmond again that I would not intervene. That is what I did in the second meeting on 7 June 2018, and I told the permanent secretary of all subsequent contact.

Self-evidently, I did not intervene in the process. It seems to me that I am being simultaneously accused of being involved in a conspiracy against Alex Salmond and accused of colluding with Alex Salmond. Nothing could be further from the truth. Neither of those things is true.

Since I found out about the investigation, I have tried to do the right thing in a situation that, no matter what happened, was never going to be easy for me. The most important thing here has always been and continues to be the complaints that were made and the people who made those complaints.

Jackson Carlaw: The First Minister is an experienced politician. The obvious, commonsense thing to have done after Alex Salmond advised her of the allegation on 2 April 2018 would have been to decline to meet him or speak with him on four separate occasions.

Again on Tuesday, the First Minister said that the five conversations that she had with Mr Salmond about this matter "were not Government meetings". In other words, her position appears to be that a meeting between the First Minister of the Government and the former First Minister of the Government about a Government investigation involving two Government employees was not Government business. Really? How? To be completely clear, will the First Minister confirm whether she and the former First Minister were the only two people at those meetings or whether other people were present? If other people were present, who were they?

The First Minister: At the first meeting, my chief of staff was with me and Mr Salmond was represented. Of course, my chief of staff is a special adviser who also has the ability to assist me—[*Interruption.*]—in party matters. At the other meetings, no one else was present.

I accept unreservedly the scrutiny on me; I did not choose to be in the situation that we are in—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the answer, please.

The First Minister: All along, I have been absolutely clear that the most important thing was that I did not intervene in the Government process in which I had no role. The fact that I had no role in the Government process is why it would not have been appropriate for the meetings to be Government meetings. I have responsibilities as party leader, as other leaders do.

I did not intervene in the process—self-evidently, I did not intervene in it because, as Jackson Carlaw referred to, things such as mediation and arbitration did not take place. I acted appropriately. I accept that there will be others who think that I made wrong judgments along the way, and they are absolutely entitled to think that. However, I will stand by and defend the judgments that I made. I am absolutely adamant that I did not intervene in this process, as it would have been entirely inappropriate for me to have done so.

Jackson Carlaw: So a Scottish Government special adviser, who is an employee of the Government, was present at the meetings, which we are told were not Government meetings.

This whole sorry business simply does not stack up. At the heart of it are two women whose complaint has been entirely botched by the Government. We have the former First Minister claiming, incredibly, that there is a political plot led by this Government to destroy his reputation. It is incredible. All we have to show for it is a bill estimated to be at least £500,000, which the taxpayer will now be left to settle.

If the Government will not explain convincingly what has happened—frankly, the First Minister has not done so today—I and others believe that the Parliament should be given the authority to do so. Will the First Minister agree today that her officials and ministers will provide evidence on this matter, because the public deserve to know?

The First Minister: As all members know, it is entirely for Parliament—rightly and properly—to decide what it wants to look into and inquire into. Ministers and Government officials will co-operate fully with that, as they do in all inquiries.

Jackson Carlaw puts his finger on a point that I made earlier. I am right now being simultaneously accused of being engaged in a political conspiracy against Alex Salmond and accused of colluding with Alex Salmond. Neither of those things is true.

The fact of the matter is that complaints came forward. The permanent secretary was right to investigate them. I absolutely agree with Jackson Carlaw that the most important thing is that people brought forward complaints and it is right that those complaints are investigated. The question whether behaviour is criminal is a matter for the police and is not for me to comment on.

It was for the Scottish Government to investigate whether the behaviour was inappropriate. The Scottish Government did not get that right. In all this, that is what I deeply regret. That is why I am also determined that the Government will learn lessons from that. If Parliament wants to be part of that process, I would certainly welcome that.

Alex Salmond Investigation

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I hope that all of us in the chamber remember that at the centre of this week's court case are two courageous women who put their faith in a system that has let them down badly. We owe them a duty of care, and they have the right to access to justice.

Labour backs a parliamentary inquiry, because serious questions need to be answered—for

example, about the First Minister's five conversations with Alex Salmond. The First Minister has already said that she does not consider those to have been Government meetings, even though they were meetings and conversations between the current First Minister of the Scottish Government and the former First Minister of the Scottish Government about a Scottish Government investigation into allegations of sexual assault that had been reported by two Scottish Government civil servants.

Why does the First Minister not think that the public has a right to know the basic facts of those discussions?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): On Tuesday and again today I have told Parliament and, by extension, the public about the subject matter of the discussions.

I still say that the most important point—this is absolutely self-evident—is that I did not intervene in the process in any way.

On the question about a wider inquiry, it is entirely for Parliament to decide whether it wants an inquiry into all this. As I said on Tuesday, and as the permanent secretary said on Tuesday, the Government intends to review the procedure that it applied in which it was in error. That is something in which Parliament will have an interest. Of course, Parliament also has an interest in the wider issues. It is not for me to say what Parliament should and should not do, but obviously I, the Scottish Government, the permanent secretary and any other member or official of the Scottish Government will co-operate fully with whatever Parliament decides to do.

Richard Leonard: Presiding Officer,

"If Ministers meet external organisations or individuals and find themselves discussing official business without an official present—for example at a party conference or social occasion ... any significant content ... should be passed back to their Private Offices as soon as possible after the event, who should arrange for the basic facts of such meetings to be recorded".

That is paragraph 4.23 of the "Scottish Ministerial Code: 2018 edition".

Will the First Minister say whether she is in breach of that code? Alternatively, if she placed a record with the permanent secretary, will she publish it?

The First Minister: If there is a parliamentary inquiry, we will, of course, make all appropriate information available. I have just set out to Jackson Carlaw when and of what I informed the permanent secretary, and we will make that information available. I am satisfied that I conducted myself appropriately and in line with all the rules, but Parliament will perform its scrutiny role in the best way that it considers necessary.

Richard Leonard: On Tuesday, the First Minister invited us to judge her decision to hold a series of meetings and discussions with Alex Salmond about the cases. That was a grave error of judgment, but it was also a clear potential breach of the ministerial code of conduct. After the events of this week, people need to have trust and confidence in the system. That is why the First Minister should back a full parliamentary inquiry, and it is why she should, today, refer herself to the panel of independent advisers on the ministerial code. Will she commit to doing so?

The First Minister: I will consider any request that is made, including that one. I am perfectly happy for Parliament to hold an inquiry. The simple point that I am making is that it is not for me, as First Minister, to tell Parliament what it should or should not inquire into. If there is a parliamentary inquiry, I will ensure that all parts of the Scottish Government co-operate fully with it.

The Presiding Officer: We have a number of constituency supplementaries, the first of which is from Alasdair Allan.

HMY Iolaire (Military Maritime Grave)

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The communities of Lewis and Harris recently commemorated the centenary of the loss of HMY Iolaire, which on new year's day in 1919 claimed the lives of 201 servicemen. The First Minister will, from her recent very welcome visit to Lewis, be aware of the deep feelings that the tragedy still invokes. Will the Scottish Government give its support to the communities' calls for the Ministry of Defence to designate the site as a military maritime grave?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Alasdair Allan for raising the issue. On 1 January, I attended the very moving commemoration of the loss of HMY Iolaire. Clearly, the event is still keenly felt by the local community. The bodies of about one third of those who were lost in the tragedy were never recovered, so I support the call to have the wreck of the Iolaire recognised as a war grave. The Scottish commemorations panel, whose members are appointed by the Scottish Government, has already raised the matter with the Ministry of Defence, with whom the decision rests. The Scottish Government will continue to support the call.

Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Glasgow (Laundry Supplies)

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Last week, it was reported that patients at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital Glasgow were unable to wash because of a lack of fresh laundry. Patients who were awaiting surgery had to sleep in dirty linen. That is completely unacceptable and is a

demonstration of the crisis in the national health service. Will the First Minister apologise to the patients who were affected, and set out what immediate action the Government will take to ensure that such a disgraceful episode does not happen again?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I understand from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde that laundry supplies were affected by a particularly busy period over the new year. The board has already apologised—I echo that apology—and given assurances that the issue has been resolved. It was quickly resolved, but such issues should not happen. I expect the board to learn and apply lessons from the experience.

Hourstons Ltd (Closure)

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The First Minister will be aware that Hourstons Ltd in Ayr is scheduled to close on 16 February. Although my primary concern is for the future of the 81 members of staff, I am also concerned about the loss of the long-established and iconic store to Ayr. I am aware that Government teams have already met Hourstons staff, but can anything further be done to help to protect the future of the staff and the business?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I, too, am concerned to hear the news about Hourstons in Ayr. I was brought up in Ayr and knew the store well when I was much younger. Clearly, the news is a blow not only to the staff but, given the longevity of the store in Ayr, to the town, as well. The Scottish Government will, as we always do in such situations, liaise with the employer to see whether anything can be done to help. If the closure cannot, unfortunately, be averted, we will make sure, through the partnership action for continuing employment initiative, that appropriate support is provided to staff. I am sure that the news will raise wider issues about regeneration in Ayr, which the Government would also be happy to be involved in.

Medicinal Cannabis

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): At the end of November, in the chamber, I raised with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport the plight of six-year-old Cole Thomson from East Kilbride. Cole has debilitating epilepsy, and medicinal cannabis could save and transform his life. I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for meeting Cole's mum, Lisa Quarrell, last month.

However, I have learned that Epidiolex has been rationed to only a handful of children in Scotland and that Cole is on a very long waiting list. In a letter to Lisa Quarrell, Jeane Freeman said that specialist centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh will each be limited to applying for

treatment for five children. Lisa has now secured medicinal cannabis privately from Spain, but at significant financial cost.

Will the First Minister do everything that she can to help Cole, and children like him who are suffering in Scotland, to receive the medicine and treatment that they need from our national health service?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): My thoughts are with Cole and his family. It is absolutely heartbreaking to watch any loved one suffer, and even more so when it is a child. We take such calls from families very seriously.

Monica Lennon knows the position on medicinal cannabis, which is that the medicine is unlicensed in the United Kingdom. The manufacturer has applied for a licence, on which the European Medicines Agency is expected to make a decision early this year.

In the light of Monica Lennon's latest question, I will ask Jeane Freeman to look again at Cole's case in particular to see whether there is any more that the Scottish Government can reasonably do to help in his situation.

Additional Support Needs (Funding)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Like MSPs across the chamber, I have been hearing from colleagues and constituents from around the country about the cuts that local councils are now having to contemplate and the devastating impact if councils are forced down that road.

I would like to tell the First Minister about one disturbing example of that. Ryan is five years old, lives in Falkirk and has severe autism. His mum wrote to explain that the family were happy when his nursery recommended sending him to a mainstream primary school, because the support that he needed was there. She said:

"The first few weeks were challenging but we were amazed at how his social interaction improved—he can now speak! He is very intelligent & we are very proud to be his parents and want to thank the school for all their input.

On Monday, my husband was pulled aside by his teacher who told us that as of THAT DAY, Ryan's support has been slashed from 2 hours PER DAY to 2.5 hours PER WEEK!!"

This is a young boy whose condition means that he cannot go to the toilet by himself. Now, in order for him to remain in school, his parents will have to go into his class twice a day to change him. Those two hours a day of support were essential to give him a chance to benefit from his education and to flourish.

Ryan's parents have been told clearly that the school can do nothing about the cut. Ryan's mum says:

"Not only is this disappointing & stressful, we fear it will completely undo all the work that's been done to give Ryan a routine. God forbid he has a bowel movement in-between the allocated changing times!

This slash of hours affects all kids with support needs, not just our son."

Does the First Minister think that that situation is remotely acceptable?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The situation that Patrick Harvie describes does not strike me as acceptable. I know how important it is for children with special needs in mainstream education to have the appropriate support. Patrick Harvie has given a fair amount of detail about Ryan's case, but I do not know all the circumstances of that case. I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to look at that case and any wider issues that it raises, and he will be happy to correspond with Patrick Harvie when he has had the opportunity to do so.

Patrick Harvie: I appreciate the offer to correspond. I understand that the First Minister does not know all the individual details, but the First Minister does know that—despite the number of children with additional needs more than doubling—there are 500 fewer additional support needs teachers in Scotland's schools in 2018 than there were in 2010, because we have been making that case for a long time, as have others across the spectrum. That situation and others in local services will only get worse if more cuts are forced on our councils. ASN and every other local service will suffer. New ring-fenced funds for new policies that the Government imposes on councils will not make up for the cuts that are proposed to their core services.

Since the Scottish National Party lost its majority, the Greens have been persistent in seeking positive changes to protect local services, but we do not demand the impossible. The Government admits that there is an extra £500 million in the coming year's budget because of the fairer tax plans that we persuaded it to adopt last year. Why, then, should we saddle our councils with a staggering level of funding cuts, which the First Minister knows will inevitably deny vulnerable pupils and many other people in Scotland the support they need?

The First Minister: Before I come on to the budget point, let me return to the ASN point, because it is an important issue. I had an exchange with Richard Leonard on that point in the chamber a few weeks ago. The overall number of staff in schools who are working with children with ASN has increased. Obviously, teacher numbers have generally increased in the last couple of years, but I do not underestimate the pressures of dealing with children with special needs of that nature.

On the budget point, I will say what I have said to Patrick Harvie and to others before. We have put forward a draft budget. Patrick Harvie is right that resource is available in that draft budget because of the tax decisions that the Government has taken, but we have allocated that resource to the national health service and to local authorities—for example, for the roll-out of the doubling of childcare provision.

The simple point that I make to Patrick Harvie and others is that, if people want us to change our judgments about allocations in order to put more money into an area of the budget, there has to be a discussion about which area of the budget that money should come from. That part of the discussion cannot be avoided, because what is not in the budget is £500 million of unallocated resource. Every penny that we have available to us has been allocated.

Obviously, we want to have budget discussions, and we are prepared to have those discussions with parties across the chamber, but those discussions have to be rooted in reality. We cannot create money from nowhere. If more money is to go to one area of our budget, we have to be honest about where we are taking that money from.

Primary 1 National Assessments

4. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, has repeatedly claimed that there are many people who “emphatically” support his primary 1 national tests. We asked the Government who those many people were. It turned out that there were just two of them. One was Professor Dylan Wiliam—an education adviser to Education Scotland. However, he has said that John Swinney’s claim that he “emphatically” argued for the Government’s tests was a

“substantial, and ... perverse misrepresentation of my work”

and that the person who made that claim was

“too stupid to be doing that job”

or

“deliberately misleading”.

Can the First Minister tell us: was John Swinney “deliberately misleading” or is he

“too stupid to be doing that job”?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Let me address the substance of the issue. The Scottish Government referenced Professor Wiliam’s work because we interpreted his research as being supportive of a formative approach to assessment. If that is not the case, we are happy to recognise that. It was not our intention to imply that he supported the specifics of the Scottish national

standardised assessments, but it is the Scottish Government’s view that—in line with international best practice—the assessments provide formative, diagnostic information to teachers on aspects of literacy and numeracy and that the information is then important in allowing teachers to ensure that their judgments get the right support to pupils in the right way. All of that is crucial to our objective of raising attainment and closing the attainment gap.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Rennie, before you ask your second question, I advise you that your first question was on the borderline of what is acceptable. Be careful about insulting other members of the Parliament.

Willie Rennie: Presiding Officer, those were the professor’s words, not mine.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Rennie, you quoted the professor and then tried to turn it into a clever question that was almost an insult. I will not accept other members being insulted in the chamber. Be careful about how you word your next question, Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: The First Minister is absolutely wrong. We asked John Swinney’s office for the names of academics who support P1 tests, and the professor’s name was supplied. The professor is now owed an apology, as is Professor W James Popham, whose name is second on the list. He said that the claim

“Whether made from ignorance or malevolence ... is flat-out incorrect.”

The First Minister must apologise for insulting that global expert.

Teachers are against the tests. The Educational Institute of Scotland opposes the tests. Councils are ditching the tests. Parliament voted against the tests. Now, the cabinet secretary’s preferred experts think that his tests are useless and use the words “ignorance”, “useless”, “malevolence”, “stupid” and “misleading”. Will the First Minister finally dump these tests?

The First Minister: The work of the professors was cited as we believed that it was evidence of support for formative assessments. If we got that wrong, of course, we apologise to the professors for that. We did not say that they specifically supported the Scottish national standardised assessments.

The assessments are important. It is important to have something that allows teachers to moderate their own judgments, although teacher judgment remains the definitive assessment tool in our schools. It is important that we can know which pupils are doing well, which pupils need to be stretched and which pupils need extra help.

On the point about councils withdrawing from assessments, that is not the case. Councils that are withdrawing from the standardised assessments that we have put in place are going back to old assessments. Fife Council, for example, is going back to doing two assessments a year instead of one, and it is using a system of assessment that is not aligned to curriculum for excellence. It is important to be clear about that.

We will continue to support an approach in our schools that allows us to get the right support to pupils and that helps to close the attainment gap.

Industrial Investment (Tayside)

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): On Monday, the First Minister announced £10 million for the Tayside industrial strategy. That is, of course, welcome, but will she confirm and reiterate the previous Scottish Government commitment that Michelin in my constituency will receive resources beyond those that are already allocated in the Tay cities deal to repurpose the site and create a true economic legacy for the Michelin workforce? Will she also undertake to press the United Kingdom Government to step up to the plate and fund the Michelin legacy, given that it has already short-changed the Tay cities deal by £50 million?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government was clear all along that we were prepared to invest £200 million in the Tay cities region and we have delivered on that promise. Like Shona Robison, I remain disappointed that the UK Government has chosen not to match that scale of ambition; I hope, even now, that it changes its mind.

The £50 million that I announced on Monday will include £10 million for the needs of manufacturing businesses across the region. I am sure that future options for the Michelin plant in Dundee will be a key focus of discussions with regional partners as they work with us to shape the industrial investment programme. However, we are absolutely clear that we will also provide additional support to deliver on the memorandum of understanding that we signed with Michelin in December. As a member of the Michelin action group, I expect the UK Government to do likewise.

Dundee City Council (Redundancies)

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am disappointed that this week the First Minister had £50 million to allocate to our region and, following the closure of Michelin, managed to find only £10 million for any industrial development in Dundee. I and many people in Dundee would have expected a full share of the £50 million to come to our city.

As a result of the First Minister's budget, jobs are under threat in Dundee. Compulsory redundancies have been mooted by Scottish National Party councillors, when we all know that the First Minister has a policy of no compulsory redundancies. Will she confirm that policy today and guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies in Dundee City Council while she is First Minister?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As members across the chamber frequently remind me, councils are autonomous and take their own decisions. The Scottish Government's policy of no compulsory redundancies remains in place. If my memory serves me correctly, I do not think that any such policy was in place when Labour was previously in government.

As for the start of Jenny Marra's question, only a Labour MSP could stand up in the chamber and say that they are furious that we announced £50 million of additional investment. What a pathetic response that was. Of that, £40 million will be for transport infrastructure that will open up investment across Tayside and £10 million will help with manufacturing, which is important for Dundee and other parts of Tayside. All parts of Tayside gave Monday's announcement a warm welcome; it is disappointing that Jenny Marra cannot find it in herself to welcome it, too.

Fox Hunting

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): With fox-hunting legislation set to be significantly strengthened, what message is being sent to those who might seek to flout the rules? How will Police Scotland's hand be strengthened in tackling illegal hunts?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Mairi Gougeon, the responsible minister, set out our proposed way forward on fox hunting yesterday. We will implement the majority of Lord Bonyon's recommendations and introduce a new limit, so that no more than two dogs can be used to find or flush foxes. Hunting or chasing wild mammals, including foxes, will continue to be against the law, as at present. We also intend to ensure that no loopholes would allow hunting to continue.

That sends a message about the importance that we attach to animal welfare, which I hope that Ruth Maguire and others will welcome. As with any strengthening of the law—of course, the proposals have still to get Parliament's support—the police will be given options to ensure that illegal activity does not take place.

Kaiam Europe Ltd

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): When problems were identified at Michelin in Dundee, the

Government worked with the company and the workforce and kept employees informed of developments. In contrast, workers at Kaiam in Livingston were kept in the dark, although the Government knew about the company's problems a month before it went into administration. This week, we learned that the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn, did not even lift the phone to the company throughout the month before the closure. Is that good enough?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I express my sympathy for the position that the Kaiam workers are in. Any support that the Scottish Government can give them to find alternative employment or on other matters will be provided.

I am not saying that Neil Findlay has deliberately misrepresented the Scottish Government's position, but he has mischaracterised it. The Scottish Government is frequently given information about companies that are in difficulty or have cash-flow problems or whose future is in jeopardy. Principally through Scottish Enterprise, we seek to support companies—I understand that that was the case with Kaiam—to find an alternative buyer, solve cash-flow issues and get investment in. In many cases that people never hear about, such work proves successful, but in some circumstances—regrettably—that is not the case, and that is the situation for Kaiam.

When efforts to save a company are on-going, it is not for the Scottish Government to tell employees about that; that is a matter for the company. It is also not for the Scottish Government to do anything that would undermine a company's efforts to find alternative ways forward. When we can intervene to save a company from closure—to be fair, I think that Neil Findlay recognises that this applies to Michelin and other companies—we will do that, but we will not pretend that that is always possible, because unfortunately it is not.

Brexit (Preparations)

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): We are within 80 days of the potential disaster of a no-deal Brexit. What we have seen this week—lorries parked in an airfield and a ferry contract awarded to a company that has no ferries—instils no confidence among the population. Are the preparations adequate? What share of resources is Scotland receiving to help our country to prepare? Can Scotland establish better direct links with Europe by sea and air to counter the damage of Brexit?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As everybody knows, a no-deal Brexit will be catastrophic, but let us be plain about it: any Brexit

is going to be bad for Scotland—and, of course, Scotland voted against Brexit. The Prime Minister's deal is bad for Scotland; and it is bad for the United Kingdom, which is why it looks like a majority of people in the House of Commons will vote against it.

In response to the question, of course the Scottish Government has to look at all contingency options, including how Scottish companies in different sectors of the economy can get their products to market, and we will continue to do that. However, the fundamental issue, which is becoming ever clearer for people in Scotland, is that until we are in charge of our own destiny and are able to make these decisions ourselves by being an independent country, we will always be at the mercy of damaging Westminster decisions. In that respect, the sooner Scotland decides to become independent, the better.

Universal Credit Roll-out

5. Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that the United Kingdom Government plans to halt the full roll-out of universal credit. (S5F-02930)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Amber Rudd's announcement of a pilot for managed migration does not change the reality of those who are already suffering under universal credit because previous calls to halt the roll-out were completely ignored. Nor will that announcement prevent an estimated 1.6 million people across the UK from naturally migrating to universal credit, due to changed circumstances, ahead of full migration from 2020.

I still take the view that there should be a complete halt to universal credit in order for fundamental changes to be made, because people are suffering and being driven into poverty and debt because of universal credit; that is completely and utterly unacceptable.

Keith Brown: My constituency of Clackmannanshire and Dunblane was unfortunate enough to be at the vanguard of universal credit, which, in many respects for Scotland, is reminiscent of Thatcher's poll tax. Despite the hardship and damage that it has caused and continues to cause to many of my constituents, and despite the fact that Conservative members in this chamber have ignored, denied and downplayed its effects, I am hugely disappointed that the UK Government plans to proceed with its managed migration without any changes to the current deeply flawed system, which has forced many thousands into poverty.

Does the First Minister agree that the UK Government must listen to the calls from many

people, including the United Nations, to fix this failing policy? Will her Government raise the issue with the work and pensions secretary, and does she agree that the full powers of the welfare system should be devolved to Scotland?

The First Minister: I agree whole-heartedly. Keith Brown talked about universal credit being reminiscent of Thatcher's poll tax. I hope that I am not misquoting him, but I think that John Major, a former Tory Prime Minister, has also described universal credit as being like the poll tax. It is time for the UK Government to listen to the overwhelming evidence of the failings of universal credit, which the UN special rapporteur on poverty recently described as "universal discredit". The UK Government should make fundamental changes to make it fit for purpose and halt it in the meantime.

The Scottish Government has repeatedly raised those failings with a succession of work and pensions secretaries and we will continue to do so. As I have said in the chamber before, rather than having to plead with a Department for Work and Pensions minister in Westminster, I would prefer that this Parliament had full powers over universal credit and the wider social security system so that we could take our own decisions. That is another reason why, sooner or later, this country should become independent.

Antisemitism

6. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to tackle antisemitism. (S5F-02933)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government—I hope in common with everybody across the chamber—is committed to tackling hate crime and prejudice, and I want to reassure Scotland's Jewish communities that there is no place in Scotland for any form of antisemitism or religious hatred. We value our Jewish communities. We value the contribution that they make to Scotland, and that is a message that should go out strongly from this chamber.

As well as our ambitious programme of work to tackle hate crime and build community cohesion, we have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. That sends a strong message that we believe antisemitism to be entirely unacceptable in Scotland.

Jamie Greene: The First Minister will be aware of recent press reports of comments made by Ephraim Borowski, director of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, in this very Parliament. He said:

"Mostly the Jewish community used to feel that Scotland was a good place to be Jewish but for many that has

reversed. Many Jews actively discuss leaving Scotland because they feel alienated, vulnerable and not at home."

I hope that the First Minister is as worried and saddened by that assertion as members on these benches are.

What guidance has been issued specifically to Police Scotland to address the scourge of antisemitism in Scotland? Will the First Minister join me in calling for all political parties represented in this Parliament to do everything in their power to make sure that no one in the Jewish community feels vulnerable or unwelcome in Scotland?

The First Minister: I encourage all parties to do exactly what Jamie Greene has called for. As for the police, I believe that they have a good relationship and work very closely with the Jewish community to tackle antisemitism and address its concerns about security.

With regard to Ephraim Borowski's comments, I have huge respect for him and the work that he does, and I have personally discussed this issue with him in the past. He is more than capable of speaking for himself, but I do not think that there was any suggestion that the very legitimate concerns that he raised at the weekend were in any way unique to Scotland. I think that he was reflecting not only a feeling of the Jewish community across the whole of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, but an apparent rise in antisemitism not just across the UK but further afield. We all have to be very vigilant about that, and my responsibility is to make sure that that is the case, particularly in Scotland. As I have said, I have had and will continue to have discussions with the Jewish community about exactly that.

I made this point when I spoke earlier this week at the reception in Parliament for the Holocaust Educational Trust, and I will say it again here: the Jewish community is a valuable and vital part of our society in Scotland, and if one member of that community feels unsafe here, all of us have a duty to respond to that and do everything possible to change it. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously for the Jewish community and for any other minority community living in our diverse country, and I hope that all members will agree with and echo that. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time.

We will move shortly to members' business, but we will have a short suspension to allow members to change seats and the gallery to clear.

12:47

Meeting suspended.

12:52

On resuming—

End-of-Life Carers Support

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10559, in the name of Mark Griffin, on the report by Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support, "Getting it right for carers supporting someone at the end of life".

Motion moved,

That the Parliament welcomes the new report by Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support, *Getting it right for carers supporting someone at the end of life*; notes that the report found that too many people caring for someone at the end of life are going unidentified and unsupported, carers supporting someone at the end of life without support are at risk of falling into crisis and a breakdown of care, the decline towards end of life and death can often be rapid, sometimes quicker than expected, and that the support needs of carers can be very high at this time; further notes that the report sets out that carers need to be identified early, need good care co-ordination and information to support them in their caring role, need respite and/or replacement care to give them a break, and that more needs to be done to identify those in caring roles, especially those caring for someone at the end of life and particularly by those in primary care roles, such as GPs and district nurses, and recognises the report's recommendation that all those caring for someone at end of life, including those in Central Scotland should have their needs assessed quickly and a plan put in place to support them.

12:52

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am grateful to the members whose support for the motion made this debate possible, and to Joe FitzPatrick for his interest in the issue.

Nearly 100,000 people in Scotland will have spent the Christmas period caring for someone living with a terminal illness. It is estimated that, each year, around 40,000 to 46,000 people in Scotland with a terminal illness pass away. It is tragic that, for some, that might have been their last Christmas together.

It goes without saying that, even if we try to cherish every last moment with a loved one, the impending loss can cause people to grieve even before that person passes. On top of that heartbreak, the person who is caring for their loved one faces a new and demanding experience that requires them to get to grips with the terminally ill person's condition, their decline and the public services that they come to rely on. They face new problems every day, and that is when carers need the most help and is precisely when society and the national health service should be stepping in to provide intensive help for all involved.

"Getting it right for carers supporting someone at the end of life" is an important report. It highlights the problems faced by carers, especially those looking after someone who is terminally ill and approaching the end of their life. I thank Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support for their work on the report. In particular, I thank the research team—Susan Swan, Emma Carduff and Richard Meade of Marie Curie—as well as Macmillan, the Scottish Government, carers centres and especially the carers who took part and shared their very personal stories.

Regardless of the time of year, out of love and kindness, carers dedicate themselves to friends and relatives. They save the NHS billions, they thrive in their roles and they enhance the quality of life for those they care for.

However, we know that many carers will themselves experience ill health. The impetus behind the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, which has now been implemented, was to attempt to respond to that sorry reality. Physically and emotionally exhausted, frightened and unsure, some carers are, sadly, overwhelmed by the demands that are on them.

The report highlights that caring for someone who is terminally ill can be complex, highly demanding and, at times, all consuming. Many carers will watch as their loved one gets support while they themselves are rarely asked about what help they need. Underlining their desperation, one carer told researchers:

"I didn't even think 'Where can I go for help?'"

That is just one example—the report cites many more. Another carer told researchers:

"It's the bashing your head against a brick wall, it's going from crisis, to crisis."

Another said:

"I started seeing myself as a carer when I was taken into hospital one night with a suspected heart attack because I was so stressed."

Carers need support to help them to care. When that support is not there, their own health is put at risk. It is therefore vitally important that councils and the Government ensure that adult carer support plans or young carer statements are requested and agreed. I hope that the minister will be able to tell us how many plans have been requested and completed.

Last year, with the support of Marie Curie, I attempted to amend the Social Security (Scotland) Bill to ensure that carers get their allowance fast tracked alongside the fast tracking of benefits for those who are terminally ill. Similarly, the fast tracking of the plans for carers of terminally ill people could make the difference to whether carers get support in time, and I hope that the

minister will be able to say when that fast tracking will come into force.

The report makes it clear that the mental and physical stress of caring and beginning to lose someone impacts hugely on a carer's ability to grieve after bereavement and on their long-term quality of life. The chance to talk about their role, getting peer support or having a break from caring—whether for a day or for just a few hours—are all referenced as being vitally important to improving the situation.

In 2018, the carer's allowance supplement for low-income carers was introduced. That financial support is the start of the journey to recognising the contribution of carers. I was delighted to support and improve that measure by protecting it from the effects of inflation.

Although I have been critical of the Government's decision to leave carer's allowance in the hands of the Department of Work and Pensions for now, the powers must be used with carers' backing. That is precisely why I have begun to ask carers how long that financial support should continue once the cared-for person passes or goes into long-term hospital care. In both cases, the carers who have given up so much to care for their loved ones are expected just to return to the life that they had before caring, with no support and no financial assistance, as if they can just automatically pick up their job from where they left off. If we in this Parliament are ambitious with the new powers, I hope that we can make those changes for carers, so that they face less financial stress while caring.

One of the most intriguing parts of the report deals with the difficulties that we encounter in identifying carers. Many carers see themselves not as a carer, but as a mother, a husband, a son, a sister, a friend or, sometimes, a neighbour. As a result, they will not ask for help or even think that they are entitled to help because they see themselves just as doing what they would expect of themselves for someone they love. It is clear from the Marie Curie and Macmillan study that, tragically, there are too many missed opportunities to identify those carers. Fundamentally, the research shows that it makes a huge difference when carers are identified and get support. We need to do more on identification so that plans can be put in place and a carer's own health supported. General practitioners, district nurses, social care staff, third sector workers, loved ones, family members and friends—everyone has a part to play. I hope that the minister can say how, across Government and communities, we can better identify the carers of people who are terminally ill to make sure that they get the support that they need.

Caring for someone at the end of their life will be one of the most difficult and challenging experiences for people and families to face. People can decline quickly, and as they do, the support that the carer needs increases rapidly. Those last stages of life are painful and tragic. Carers struggle to keep up with the loss physically and emotionally, but we can step in to help them get through and it is important that we do so.

The report shows the areas on which we must focus that support to improve the lives of carers. I look forward to hearing from other members and to hearing the Government's response to the report.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will move on to the open debate. I have quite a few requests to speak so I ask members to keep their speeches to no more than four minutes.

13:00

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I start by thanking Mark Griffin for bringing this hugely important topic to Parliament for debate. I also thank both Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support for their joint report, "Getting it right for carers supporting someone at end of life".

It is an important, complex and emotive subject. It is crucial that today's members' business debate brings increased awareness of carers' rights. The carers charter outlines a carer's right to an adult carer support plan from their local authority. The process of identifying a carer's needs through that plan should happen as quickly as possible. That would mean that support is provided when it is needed.

Two aspects are particularly important for ensuring a swift provision of support: identifying carers, and increasing awareness of their rights. The report recommends that identification of carers is seen as everyone's responsibility. It also highlights general practitioners and district nurses as professionals who are well placed to identify them. The presumption should be that a patient with a terminal illness has a carer looking after them.

Early identification can lead to health professionals proposing an adult carer support plan or to the carer directly requesting a plan. The carers charter promotes both routes towards receiving support.

In Glasgow Anniesland, we are appreciative of the work done by Macmillan in providing support and information to carers and patients at the Beatson cancer centre at Gartnavel. Such services can signpost carers' rights to people at an emotional and difficult time. Marie Curie has also provided significant support to people facing the

situation of caring for a loved one with a terminal illness. In 2017-2018, Marie Curie volunteers visited families more than 10,000 times to provide face-to-face support. We can all agree that that is an incredible and very valuable effort.

In the final stages of the cared-for person's life, it is right that the carer is focused on how they can best support their loved one. However, as Mark Griffin mentioned, at that very difficult time, the carer's physical and emotional needs can often be put to the side. In addition, there can often be an increased financial burden on carers, particularly if they have had to stop working.

The report highlights that if the carer has unmet needs there may be a detrimental effect on them. In the last three months of the cared-for person's life, a carer will be looking after their loved one for an average of 70 hours a week and will often have poor sleep patterns. The combination of those different factors can often lead to carers becoming themselves more susceptible to viruses and other illnesses, for example.

The report warns that unmet carer support needs could lead to a breakdown of care and to greater complexities in the healthcare provision that is required. Quick provision of support for carers is pivotal. It can avoid the breakdown of care and means that carers who are family members are treated with the dignity and care that they deserve at such a difficult time.

Identifying carers and assessing their needs quickly are key to enabling the quick provision of support, as the report thoroughly evidences. As support for carers increases, we need to get the message out about what their rights are and how they can access them. It is my hope that the debate goes some way towards achieving that.

13:04

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I, too, congratulate Mark Griffin on securing time in the chamber for this debate on what is, as Bill Kidd said, an important topic. I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to it.

Many members will have experience of family members or friends approaching the end of life. Some years ago, my grandmother died from cancer in the Ayrshire Hospice, and the care that she and my grandfather and family received helped us immeasurably at that difficult time. Not long after that, my grandfather also died from accelerated dementia while in the care of another hospice. Prior to my grandparents entering those hospices, my family gave them as much support as possible. At the time, I was lucky, because my grandparents did not live too far away from me and, as I was involved in sport, I could drop in every day. My father was self-employed and also

had a certain amount of flexibility, which allowed him to spend time every day with my grandparents.

I recognise that not all families are in that situation. I wonder how my grandfather would have coped with my grandmother's situation as her health deteriorated and then with his health issues had the family not been close by and able to help and had he not finally received the very best of care from the hospice. The truth is that, as pointed out in the Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support report and in Mark Griffin's motion, too many people do not receive that kind of dignified support as they approach the end of life. According to the report, a quarter of people miss out on the palliative care that they need, which leads to an accelerated deterioration of their condition.

Crucially, support for carers and their health is often not considered. The pressure that they are under in balancing their lives—they often have families to care for—while caring for a terminally ill relative is all too frequently overlooked. I have often said in the chamber that we need to consider the health of our healthcare professionals as they care for us, and that same ethos should be applied to those who care for someone with a terminal illness. If we do not ensure that the carers are looked after, they will be in danger of falling into ill health, to their detriment and the detriment of those whom they are caring for. We need to recognise that there is huge pressure on carers as they manage the decline of a relative. We need to recognise the stress and worry that are associated with the thought, "What will happen if something happens to me?"

I believe that primary care has a big role to play. There is, I think, agreement across the chamber that we need a shift from secondary care into community care, and support for carers provides a case in point. General practitioners and district nurses should be able to identify those in a caring role—although those people should also be able to self-refer—and, crucially, direct them and their families to the help that they need. It is about communication and developing a system that is easy to access and utilise. Technology will inevitably play a key role in the development of such a system. If properly enabled, the system will potentially help to prevent some GP appointments and hospital visits.

In that respect, it is not necessarily just about increasing investment; it is about better utilisation of resource. We know that GPs are under increasing pressure so, in developing such systems, we must always ensure that they are designed to take the burden away from GPs by making them easy to access and use. The outcome that we seek is end-of-life care that

allows the patient peace, dignity and respect, that provides the carers and family members with breathing space to keep stress at bay and that allows the family and the patient quality time together.

I put on record our thanks to Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support for producing the report and to all carers, professional or otherwise, who deliver palliative care and comfort in the most trying of circumstances. Today, we are debating the need to understand and identify those who are carers and the ability to signpost them to the help and support that they require. That does not seem like too much of an ask.

13:09

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank Mark Griffin, first of all for being a tireless champion for carers, and for securing this important debate, which I know is close to the hearts of many people across Scotland. I fully support the motion and commend Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support for their report highlighting the needs of people who care for loved ones towards the end of their lives, and I thank those organisations for the briefings that they have provided for the debate.

In Central Scotland, the parliamentary region that I share with Mark Griffin, more than 7,000 people need palliative care every year, and countless friends, relatives and loved ones are involved in providing care. As others have said, caring for carers is hugely important, and I am grateful that carers in my area of Lanarkshire have the support of 45 nurses and 94 volunteers through Marie Curie and the wonderful services of Lanarkshire Carers Centre and others. Staff at Lanarkshire Carers Centre have pointed out to me many times that meaningful conversations with carers can make a real difference and help people who are supporting loved ones towards the end of their lives. Elsewhere in our region, there are 57 Marie Curie volunteers in Forth Valley and six nurses. That support is invaluable. As Bill Kidd mentioned, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on local authorities to prepare appropriate plans for carers.

The Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Care report's findings reinforce how complex it can be to identify carers—as Mark Griffin said, many people care out of love and do not see themselves as carers. It can be difficult to get support to carers, and when people who are carers reach out for help, because our health and social care system is so stretched, the system is not always joined up, which can mean that people do not get the support that they desperately need.

Support must be available quickly, because the decline towards end of life and death is often swifter than expected. Bill Kidd powerfully warned us that the breakdown of care is a serious risk, and I will be interested to hear the minister's response. Other groups that I have met, including together in dementia everyday—TIDE—say that there is not enough bereavement support for carers when someone has died. I would like to hear what the minister and the Government are doing to address that.

When a terminal diagnosis is communicated to a family, it turns everyone's lives upside down. Other members have talked about the financial impact, which can only make a bad situation worse. People have to take time off work, and there are travel costs and the additional costs of getting to hospital and so on. There is a big role for employers, who can help to prevent families who are affected by terminal illness from falling into crisis. The carer positive accreditation scheme enables employers to give carers flexibility to deliver care at home.

The GMB trade union—of which I declare that I am a member—and the Trades Union Congress have the dying to work campaign, which urges employers to offer greater employment protection to workers who are diagnosed with terminal illness and want to carry on working. I am eager to work with the Scottish Government to see what we can do in Scotland to get behind and implement some of the measures in the dying to work campaign.

Caring for a loved one towards the end of their life is often described as a privilege and, as Mark Griffin's motion conveys, there is love at the heart of this debate. Carers play an invaluable role for their families, and it is important that we do not allow them to become isolated and lonely or to miss their own urgent medical appointments and put their health at risk. I am grateful to Mark Griffin for securing the debate and I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

13:13

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I, too, thank Mark Griffin for bringing to the chamber this important debate, in which I am very pleased to speak. In an unpredictable, ever-changing world, Marie Curie is a constant reassurance, like a big comfort blanket, that gives people the knowledge that they, or a family member or friend, will have choice and dignity in the event of terminal illness.

In 2017-18, Marie Curie nurses cared for 32,692 people in the United Kingdom. The combined work hours of more than 2,000 nursing staff members reached 1.2 million hours. That work was funded half by the national health service and half by

charitable donations. Last year, Marie Curie invested £3.3 million in palliative care research. More than 4,000 people were involved in research studies funded by Marie Curie or carried out by its researchers. There are Marie Curie fundraising groups in my constituency in Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch, Lenzie and Bearsden, and they are just some of the 85 groups in Scotland that are doing fantastic work.

The latest research from Marie Curie, which I thank for its briefing, and Macmillan Cancer Support has found that too many people who care for someone at the end of life are going unidentified and unsupported. The research rightly highlights that carers who support someone at the end of life without support are at risk of falling into crisis themselves, and a breakdown of care can follow.

Carers need to be identified early, and it is the responsibility of everyone—not least GPs, social workers and district nurses—to identify them and signpost them to Marie Curie so that they can at least have a break, even just for a few hours. It is also vital that carers are aware of the financial support and advice that are available. Alarming, the Carers UK 2017 survey found that the number of carers identified by GPs had fallen in the previous three years, with only 9 per cent of carers reporting that their GP knew that they were caring for someone.

Marie Curie is a household name. As Mark Griffin and other members have said, the problem is that carers often do not see themselves as such; they see themselves as mothers, sons, brothers or friends doing what they do out of love. They do not self-identify as carers or ask for help, often to the detriment of their own health. Physical care can require a level of fitness and strength that is increasingly difficult for carers to provide, especially with the ageing demographic of today's carers.

Isolation, combined with sleep deprivation and not always being free to leave the person who is being cared for, can have a significant impact on carers' mental health, feelings of loneliness and wellbeing. Carers should know that Marie Curie is always there to step in and help them to care for their loved one with tenderness and professionalism.

Another aspect of the charity is that it is always at the forefront of the ever-changing needs of society and, working with MND Scotland, it led a campaign for a fair definition of terminal illness to be included in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. The new definition bases the decision on whether someone has a terminal illness on clinical judgment, thereby removing the last-six-months-of-life restriction that is currently used by the DWP.

Marie Curie is now working to help shape the accompanying guidance.

Marie Curie nurses give people with a terminal illness choice and dignity. Put simply, it is a fantastic charity that makes it possible for people faced with a terminal illness to have the choice to die peacefully, in their own homes, surrounded by the people they love.

None of us knows whether we will need the support of Marie Curie nurses or when we will need it, but we should all be eternally grateful that if we do need it, they will be there.

13:16

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Like other members, I thank Mark Griffin for bringing this important issue to the chamber. I also thank Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie for their on-going work and for the research that we are debating.

There are almost 800,000 unpaid carers, including young carers, in Scotland, and we know that they play a hugely valuable role in providing care, support and love to friends, family and neighbours in a whole variety of circumstances, which are often extremely challenging. Caring for someone at the end of their life can be especially difficult, as the report by Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support highlights and as Mark Griffin described so well.

As well as being hugely rewarding, caring can be physically and emotionally demanding, especially when the cared-for person is nearing the end of their life, when more intensive and complex care is often required. That is why I share the concerns that are expressed in the report, which have been echoed by members, that, at times, we are struggling to identify carers in that situation.

The report and today's motion emphasise the importance of primary healthcare professionals in identifying those carers, but the report also reveals that, in the past three years, the number of carers identified by GPs has fallen, and only 9 per cent of respondents to the Carers UK 2017 survey reported that their GP knew that they were caring and offered extra support to fit their caring role. We know that demands on GPs have never been greater, but we must increase awareness of the need to recognise the carer's role among all professionals and wider society.

Difficulty in identifying carers is especially worrying in the case of young people. My reading of the section of the report on young carers is that we simply do not know how many young carers are caring for relatives at the end of their lives. I

would be grateful if the minister would address that when she closes the debate.

I draw attention to what the report says about the support needs of carers after the person they cared for has passed away. Caring for a loved one at the end of their life can be all consuming, and people might experience guilt, bewilderment and the loss of identity and purpose after the death. The support for carers in that position is not always what we would want it to be. The report says:

“There was a general sense of being abandoned once the person had died and many carers spoke of a sadness in the lack of professionals who offered condolences.”

In contrast, those carers who attended support services after their loved one died spoke of the benefit of those services and of being able to access peer support during that time.

I also want to mention the excellent work that is being done by the more than 40 organisations and individuals who are involved in the good life, good death, good grief initiative, which works to encourage all of us in Scotland to be more open in how we discuss death, dying and bereavement.

Before I close, I would like to focus on the report's findings in relation to the financial pressures on carers who provide end-of-life care and the opportunities that we now have with the devolution of carers allowance. The survey that was conducted for the report found that many of the carers were unsure of what financial support they were entitled to, with one saying that they did not even know what carers allowance was. That is consistent with the figures from Turn2us, which suggest that, across the UK, £1.3 billion-worth of carers allowance owed to 400,000 people goes unclaimed every year. That is at a time when costs can be incredibly high. With so much going on, it is understandable that some of the carers were not able to find the time to claim or did not know that they could claim carers allowance.

That being the case, raising awareness is absolutely key, and I ask the minister to consider whether there might be scope to pay additional assistance to those carers who provide particularly intense and demanding forms of support, such as caring for people at the end of their lives.

Carers perform a highly valued role, often in difficult circumstances—none more so, perhaps, than when the person being cared for is coming to the end of their life. We cannot thank carers enough, so it is vital that we reflect the importance of their role by offering the support that they need while they are caring and afterwards. The report shows that we are not always doing that at the moment, and that needs to change.

13:21

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)

(LD): I echo the thanks that have been offered to Mark Griffin for bringing this important debate to the chamber and for the report that has been published by Macmillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie, “Getting it right for carers supporting someone at end of life”. Their voices are important in any issues affecting end-of-life care; I also recognise the longitudinal commitment that Mark Griffin has shown to such issues.

Such debates offer us an opportunity as parliamentarians to pay tribute to the unpaid carers who support countless people in our country. Carers are the bedrock on which all our health and social care strata are built. Without their support, everything would collapse. I am not being overly dramatic in saying that. They offer that care out of a sense of duty to and love for the people around them. As policymakers, we often exploit that love, because we could not match that care in any public policy offering that we could come up with.

My mother-in-law was one such carer. She never thought of herself as that. Her husband Rob was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at the age of 41. For the last 20 years of his life, he spent much of his time confined to a chair. My mother-in-law had never really suggested that she needed help and we all just assumed that she and Rob were quietly enjoying their life together until, one day, she confided in me that she had had to flag down a passing motorist when Rob had had a fall and she had been unable to lift him herself. At that point, we realised that they needed a bit of extra support. That quiet dignity is so commonplace among our unpaid family carers and they would not seek to have it otherwise.

This time last year, Rob went into hospital with an infection and it quickly became apparent that he had an aggressive form of cancer that was going to limit his time with us to a matter of weeks, if not days. The staff at the hospital were excellent and the care that he got in the hospital was excellent, but it was a noisy place, where he was without his home creature comforts.

Getting Rob home—because it was clear that he was beyond the reach of medical care—was our number 1 priority. We came up against a complicated landscape, which is all too commonplace an experience for people who are caring for loved ones in such situations. The fact that there was not a health and social care package that could be delivered to him at home meant that his departure from hospital was delayed.

It was only after our insistence and because two of his offspring are GPs that the health and social

care partnership agreed to release Rob to our care. Thankfully, it bolted on some support later, but it was very much the Marie Curie nurses who were the cavalry in that situation. I do not think that we could have offered Rob those last six days in a quiet bubble of love, light and happiness were it not for their support. They taught us basic humanitarian things that we would not think of associating with end-of-life care, such as massaging moisturiser into Rob's arms because his skin was dry and because doing so gave him comfort and companionship.

That support did not end with Rob's passing. If we could choose the manner of our passing, I would choose something like that, because those nurses gave him dignity and comfort. They continued to support our family. They arrived days after the funeral with a bouquet of flowers and a private mobile telephone number through which they could be contacted. That was a level of support that I never expected but for which I am eternally grateful. Such nurses are supported by other organisations, such as Cruse Bereavement Care, which offers after-life support to carers left behind.

Let us remember that, as our papers state, 11,000 people dying in this country each year do not get the end-of-life care that they need; one in four misses out on palliative care. Supporting those around them is absolutely vital to improving their last days. That starts with identification. Only 9 per cent of carers recognise that they are carers or reveal that to their GPs. The figure is even worse for young carers.

We need to do more as a Parliament for each of those individuals, because behind each of them is an opportunity to offer some of our most vulnerable citizens the right and opportunity to have a dignified and comfortable death.

13:25

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I thank Mark Griffin for the opportunity to debate this important subject. Equally, I thank Macmillan in a personal capacity as someone whose family has benefited, as have so many others, from its support over the years in circumstances of terminal illness.

Given that I am statistically closer to death than anyone else present in this debate, it is worth my saying that death is the last great taboo. Therefore, we often do not engage with the idea of death and the necessity to prepare for it in a way that would support to an adequate extent the person who is departing and those who care for them. That lack of recognition is part of the issue.

I make the minor observation that one thing that has not emerged in the debate, which slightly

surprised me, is the role of faith communities in supporting families of terminally ill people. The visit from the priest, pastor, minister or elder of the church can often be a very important part of the support before death and the bereavement process after death to which Mark Griffin and Monica Lennon referred.

As a GP's son, I am aware of the conventional view of bereavement that there are five phases and that, basically, it lasts six months. As Monica Lennon and Mark Griffin said, it is important that there is support for people in that time. It does not matter how unexpected a death is or how long-anticipated it is—it is a shock when it happens, and bereavement support for the carer is very important indeed.

Modern medicine has created particular problems in this regard. People survive after diagnosis of a terminal condition much longer than they used to. They might survive with comorbidities; people might have many different conditions and a complex set of needs and require support from the medical profession. In that sense, we create a problem for the system of supporting carers.

We expect more of carers, given those comorbidities, and we expect longer-term support because of the generally longer survival times after diagnosis. Therefore, this whole issue has become more important than it ever was.

We cannot start early enough to help people to understand the process of death and bereavement. This might sound quite trivial, but that is one of the reasons why it is quite important for children to have pets—it confronts them with the idea that nothing in life is forever, because pets tend to die, and that is as true of us as it is of our pets.

I hope that this debate makes its own modest contribution to engaging us with the idea that death is normal and natural. Indeed, it is important that we move out of the way to allow the next generation to come through.

Macmillan's study is a very valuable contribution to understanding the pressures on carers and the support gaps that we need to address. As a rural MSP, I point in particular to the difficulties in reaching people in rural areas and in identifying carers there. In those areas, people are more likely not to be identified and to lack support.

We can never thank Macmillan too much; I do so again.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: To allow time for our final member's speech and the response from the minister, I am happy to accept a motion without notice under rule 8.14.3 to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[Mark Griffin]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am very pleased that the motion has been agreed to, but that does not give licence to Ms Wells or the minister to talk for 30 minutes.

13:30

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak in today's debate. Like others across the chamber, I thank Mark Griffin for securing the debate. I also thank Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support for their efforts in producing the report.

One of my most memorable experiences as an MSP was a visit that I made to the young carers festival in West Linton in 2017. The people whom I met were not all caring for someone who needed palliative care, but the visit brought home just how all-encompassing caring for a loved one can be. Although the children and young people with whom I spoke made no complaints about the situation that they were in, it was evident that personal sacrifices had been made and that their lives were noticeably more difficult than those of their peers. It is vital that we do all that we can to get the right support in place for people who are caring for someone who is nearing the end of their life, because that time can be emotionally exhausting and, for some, completely unexpected.

The Scottish health survey estimated that more than 788,000 people were caring for a relative, friend or neighbour in 2016. Although it is difficult to determine how many people are giving palliative care, we know that between 40,000 and 46,000 people with a terminal illness die in Scotland every year, and that, across the UK, about one in 12 carers cares for someone with a terminal illness.

As noted in the report, the main issues are that carers are not being identified—sometimes not at all and, for many, not early enough. That means that carers are not being supported, and the consequence is a lack of good care co-ordination or no support at all.

Often, the path into a caring role can be a gradual one, with many people believing that they are simply carrying out a social role that is expected of them. As many others have said, carers do not see themselves as such, because of the busyness of the role and because, for many, it is an evolutionary process.

The report by Marie Curie and Macmillan notes the

“clear need for health professionals to empower carers to self-identify”.

That could be done through simple interventions, such as leaflets in GP waiting rooms or a public awareness campaign. As Rona Mackay said, by empowering carers to self-identify, there is a greater chance of support plans being put in place. Being proactive in that process would mean that carers could receive financial as well as physical and psychological support. Notably, the report highlighted

“a lack of knowledge”

among carers

“as to how to access services to meet their needs”.

Many carers felt hindered by poor communication between health professionals and by not having a central point of contact. Given the juggling demands of carers, many of whom still work, it is extremely important that care is carefully co-ordinated in advance, with a central professional being able to provide care in times of crisis, if needed.

The report highlights the need for respite. Given that 23 per cent of carers said that they did not know how to get a break, that needs to be prioritised. Sleep deprivation is a major issue for many carers, and time away from the caring role provides people with the opportunity to maintain their physical and emotional health.

I again thank Mark Griffin for securing this debate. Experiencing the death of a loved one is difficult enough, but to care and nurture someone right to the point of their death is even more difficult. For that reason, I welcome the publication of the report and ask that the calls that it makes be duly acted on.

13:34

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): I add my congratulations to Mark Griffin on securing this important and timely debate. It has been valuable to hear members from across the chamber highlighting the particular pressures on those who care for people with a terminal illness. I particularly thank the members who gave their personal experiences, including Brian Whittle, Alex Cole-Hamilton and Stewart Stevenson. I am grateful for the opportunity that the debate has provided to discuss the priorities for supporting people who care for people with a terminal illness.

I join other members in welcoming the research in the report from Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support. It is a valuable piece of work that has gone further than the slightly narrower focus that we commissioned from them. The Scottish Government funded the study in order to inform

our work on developing forthcoming regulations on priority timescales for identifying the needs of carers of people with terminal illnesses. Mark Griffin asked about the timescale for that, which is important. I was going to cover that later, but I confirm now that we will consult on regulations in the coming weeks. I will talk later about how we formulated the regulations on which we will be consulting.

It is worth emphasising that the research was carried out before the new rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 were put in place last April. That system of carers' rights makes carer support more consistent and personalised to individuals' needs, in order to help to protect carers' health and wellbeing and to sustain caring relationships. A number of points on that that have been made by members. Those rights now extend to all carers so that they can access support earlier in their caring journeys.

As is highlighted in our programme for government, working to embed those rights for Scotland's 790,000 carers is a priority. Alison Johnstone asked whether we know how many young carers care for people who are at the end of their lives. We estimate that there are some 44,000 young carers in Scotland, but we do not, as far as I am aware, currently have figures on the proportion who provide care for people with a terminal illness. However, as the 2016 act beds in, it is likely that the numbers will come out. If the number is available, I will get back to Alison Johnstone with it.

Across the Government, a number of pieces of work gel with the 2016 act. We intend to improve carers' social security benefits, to accelerate the integration of health and social care and to reform social care to make sure that it is fit for the future. Those actions should help carers' overall experience.

We heard about the importance of making sure that carers can access support early. As Bill Kidd said, a key aspect of our work is to help carers to be aware of their rights to support, and of how to access that support. Our carers' charter, which summarises carers' rights under the act, is now widely used across Scotland, and there is a series of practical "What to expect" leaflets from the Coalition of Carers in Scotland. Advice on carers' rights is also accessible through the information and advice services for carers that are now required in every area.

Mark Griffin, Brian Whittle and Monica Lennon all mentioned the importance of carer identification, which is an important theme in the report; identification is key to getting it right for carers. A main factor is that staff who come into contact with carers are able to identify them as carers and help them to access support. We are

supporting local staff training and awareness in a number of ways, including our funding of an excellent e-book that was produced by the Scottish Social Services Council, and our work with national carer organisations and NHS Education Scotland.

Rona Mackay and Annie Wells talked about how empowering it is for carers to self-identify, but we must make sure that information is available so that people understand their rights. It is also important to mention the new duty to involve carers when people are discharged from hospital, which is an excellent opportunity to identify carers earlier.

I think that Annie Wells mentioned short breaks. Alongside carer identification, the report highlights the value of breaks from caring. Under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, authorities must now consider whether support should include a break from caring. We are continuing to fund the non-statutory breaks fund, through which we have spent more than £26 million since 2010.

The motion and report rightly highlight the need for co-ordination of support. That is central to the new adult carer support plans and young carer statements, which are at the heart of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. All carers have the right to a plan to identify their personal outcomes and individual needs. The plans also provide tailored information about support that is available locally, future care planning and the support that the local authority will provide.

Mark Griffin asked about the number of adult carer support plans and young carer statements that have been requested. We have asked local authorities to provide figures that cover the first six months. The figures are not yet available, but we will make sure that they are made available to members. That will be a test of how awareness of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 is filtering across the country.

When scrutinising the Carers (Scotland) Bill, Parliament decided that carers of people with a terminal illness should have priority access to the plans. That will require legislation. As I said, we commissioned the report from MacMillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie to inform that work. We have been working with both organisations on proposals for regulations, which we will publish for consultation in the coming weeks.

Local authorities and health and social care partnerships have told us that they already prioritise such carers, but we want our regulations to ensure that they receive support quickly, without compromising the quality of support or creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

Monica Lennon asked about bereavement support. Under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016,

each local authority carer information and advice service has to provide information and advice on treatment and support for carers. We need to make sure that, as the 2016 act is implemented, that is happening and that it is people's experience on the ground, because that is very important.

I acknowledge the contributions from across the chamber and the excellent work of MacMillan Cancer Support and Marie Curie. Most important, I acknowledge the contribution of carers who look after loved ones who have a terminal illness. I reiterate our commitment to doing what we can to make sure that they can access the support that they need and deserve, when they need it.

13:43

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

UK Immigration White Paper

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by Fiona Hyslop on the implications of the white paper on immigration and the population of Scotland. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): In the last week before Christmas, the United Kingdom Government published its long-delayed plans for the immigration system after the UK leaves the European Union. I will provide Parliament with an assessment of the impact that those retrograde proposals will have on Scotland, to build on the reaction that the First Minister outlined in Downing Street.

It is sometimes difficult for politicians to make the positive case in support of immigration. It is undoubtedly true that concerns about immigration were an important driver of the vote to leave the EU in some parts of the UK, and immigration remains a contentious issue for many.

People who have concerns deserve to have them listened to and treated seriously. It is true that such concerns are often based on misconceptions that are not supported by evidence. Political leaders have a responsibility to listen but also to respond in a way that builds understanding and raises awareness. It is greatly to this Parliament's credit that its members have risen to that challenge. We all agree that migration to Scotland supports economic growth, helps to address the serious issue of long-term demographic change and enhances and sustains our communities.

When the Migration Advisory Committee reviewed the impact of migration on the UK labour market last year, it found no evidence that migration reduces employment or training opportunities or UK workers' wages. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that migrants contribute more through taxes than they receive in benefits or public services. The committee found that migration increases productivity, innovation and gross domestic product per capita, which helps to raise living standards for all of us.

It is therefore extremely disappointing that the policy measures that the UK Government has proposed fail to lead the debate or respond to the evidence. The proposals in the UK white paper would economically damage the whole UK and especially Scotland. I will briefly remind members

of the white paper's key measures before I describe why Scotland would fare worse than other parts of the UK.

The UK Government plans to end freedom of movement of people from the European Economic Area after the implementation period and to manage all economic migration to the UK through a single system. In effect, that will be the current tier 2 employer-sponsored route for most workers, with some adjustments. Tier 2 is widely held by business to be complex and costly; in the main, it is limited to highly paid graduate-level roles.

Once European migration comes into tier 2, the UK Government proposes to lower the skill requirement, so that skilled roles that are below graduate level are eligible for it. However, it intends to maintain a salary threshold, which is expected to be set at £30,000. That will price out many roles, even if the skill barrier is reduced, and it does nothing to address the fact that the administrative and financial cost of tier 2 means that many small and medium-sized enterprises cannot use it. The Federation of Small Businesses estimates that, because of those barriers, 95 per cent of small businesses in the UK have never used tier 2. Cutting off access to international talent by ending free movement would be a disaster for those firms.

No route is proposed for what the UK Government terms lower-skilled roles, although such roles and the important skills for them—such as those in social care, tourism, hospitality and construction—make a vital contribution to our economy and society. The 12-month visa for such workers that has been announced as a transitional measure will be inadequate for business. Without a route to settlement, that will prevent people with the valued and valuable skills that we need from living, working and—importantly—raising their families here and helping to tackle demographic challenges.

We must remember that all our projected population growth is meant to come from migration in the next 25 years. The proposals will have a negative impact on the economy of the whole UK—the figures in the white paper show that clearly—and it is important that members understand that the changes will have a greater impact on Scotland than on the UK as a whole.

UK Government figures published in the white paper show that 80 per cent of projected long-term EEA worker inflows to the UK would be affected by these changes, rising to 85 per cent for Scotland.

That accords with Scottish Government economic modelling published earlier last year in our discussion paper, "Scotland's Population Needs and Migration Policy". Using official

population projections from the Office for National Statistics and from the National Records of Scotland, the paper showed that the slow-down in migration as a result of the Brexit vote would result in reduced GDP growth in the UK of 3.7 per cent by 2040, but 4.5 per cent in Scotland.

An alternative scenario, using the 50 per cent less EU migration projection, estimated a 6.2 per cent reduction in GDP growth for Scotland, relative to growth in the economy under pre-Brexit population projections. That scenario also estimates that the UK economy could be 5.9 per cent smaller as a result of lower population growth.

Separate modelling has also highlighted the importance of migration and productivity. Under a hard Brexit, trade and tariff barriers are estimated to have the most immediate economic impact, but in the medium to long term, the impact of reduced migration, and the decline in productivity will overtake that, accounting for up to 85 per cent of lost economic growth compared to remaining in the EU.

Migration is particularly important to supporting growth in our working age population. In the 50 per cent reduction scenario, Scotland's working age population will decrease over the 25 years to 2041. However, the UK Government says that migration to Scotland will fall not by 50 per cent—it is 85 per cent of future workers who would not be eligible under these plans. It has never been clearer that keeping free movement of people would be in both Scotland's and the UK's best interests. Free movement is also a set of reciprocal rights that British people, as EU citizens themselves, can enjoy, allowing them to live, work and study across the continent.

We want our fellow EU citizens already in Scotland to stay. They are part of the fabric of our country. In December we announced that the Scottish Government will deliver an advice service for EU citizens in Scotland in partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland and their network of citizens' advice bureaux. There is an urgent need for clear and trusted information on citizens' rights and the existing network of Citizens Advice Scotland, together with their trusted status, will allow the service to be delivered quickly across Scotland.

Of course, the Scottish Parliament voted on 19 December, calling on the UK to scrap the settled status fee, but if it goes ahead, the Scottish Government has made the commitment to pay the fees for EU citizens working in our devolved public services. They include doctors, nurses and other public sector workers on whom we all rely. We will shortly provide further details of that process.

As the disastrous approach of the UK Government unfolds, there is growing support for a new tailor-made solution for Scotland. In response to the white paper, the Scottish Trades Union Congress said:

“The First Minister is right to highlight both the negative effect of pandering to anti-migrant sentiment and the need for a separate Scottish approach. The STUC supports additional powers on migration for the Scottish Parliament.”

Business groups and employers have made similar statements. FSB Scotland said:

“We have argued that there should be a system in Scotland which responds to the particular needs of Scottish industry and demography.”

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry points out that:

“Other countries successfully operate regional migration schemes which target the specific needs of their economies ... there are workable options for more differentiation in the UK’s system.”

I strongly encourage business to make its voice heard by responding to the white paper. It is important that the UK Government understands what business across the UK needs, and what opportunities employers in Scotland see in a tailored approach.

The minister, Ben Macpherson, last year commissioned an independent expert advisory group to review the policy options before the UK Government, and consider the impact of those choices on areas of devolved responsibility in Scotland. It will provide its initial report next month, and the minister will return to Parliament with its findings.

The white paper is described as

“the UK’s future skills-based immigration system”

but, as the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association points out, it has very little to do with skills or, even more importantly, little to do with social values. Instead, it envisages a narrow, selective system based on wealth and ability to pay, and focuses on cutting numbers at the expense of all else.

Scotland has a different experience and we want to forge a different society in which the contribution of the nurse, the carer, the restaurant worker and the technician are all seen and valued as being core to our society and economy. The UK immigration white paper is not only wrong-headed but wrong-hearted.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow about 20 minutes for questions, after which we must, as members will know, move on to the next item of business. Members who wish to ask questions

should press their request-to-speak buttons now, and I call Adam Tomkins.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of her statement. There are some remarks in it with which I agree. For example, I agree that this Parliament, by and large, debates matters relating to migration in a way that is to its credit, and I hope that that continues this afternoon.

I also agree with her urging Scottish business and other important members of Scottish society to take part in this consultation exercise. It is important to underscore that the white paper published last month is a consultation document, and all of us should feel free to engage in that consultation process and to encourage others to do so. It is very important that the voice of Scottish business is fully heard in the process.

I want to ask the cabinet secretary two questions about her statement. 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”.

The withdrawal agreement that has now been successfully negotiated by the Prime Minister and her team with the European Union provides exactly that. All EU citizens lawfully residing in the United Kingdom at the end of the implementation period will be able to stay here in the United Kingdom, and it also makes extensive, detailed and welcome provision for family members, children and dependants.

In her statement, the cabinet secretary referred to a “hard Brexit”. The way to avoid a hard Brexit is to vote for the Prime Minister’s deal, which delivers exactly what the Scottish National Party has been calling for. When, in December, I asked Ben Macpherson why his party colleagues at Westminster were preparing to vote against the deal instead of backing it, he could not answer the question. I therefore repeat it to the cabinet secretary today: why is the SNP not going to back this deal when it delivers exactly what it has been calling for?

Secondly, immigration experts and business groups, including the director of the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, the Food and Drink Federation Scotland, Scottish Chambers of Commerce and NFU Scotland, have previously condemned the SNP’s insistence that powers over migration be devolved to this Parliament. Does the fact that the cabinet secretary did not repeat her party’s call for immigration powers to be devolved mean that the SNP has finally listened to the

experts and dropped that unwanted and dangerous policy? If so, that would be welcome.

Fiona Hyslop: There are a number of issues to address in that question. First, I make it clear that the problem with Theresa May's deal is that the proposal to end of freedom of movement makes it as bad as there being no deal. The majority of what I have laid out in my statement is an economic analysis of a reduction in freedom of movement, and under the white paper that is before us and which we are discussing, 85 per cent of the EU citizens who were previously able to come here would not be able to do so. That would affect our health service and so many businesses—it would be an economic disaster. Many other things are wrong with Theresa May's deal, but that area alone, which we are addressing in the chamber, shows us in simple terms how bad the deal is. Freedom of movement is vital to this country.

As for our proposals for certain areas, I published in February last year a very comprehensive paper that set out proposals for ensuring that Scotland had a tailor-made system. Do we want more powers for the Parliament? Yes, but we also want the power to make policy, and even having the ability to make policy within the UK system would allow us to address some of the issues. For example, there are the differentials in salary levels: the median salary in London is £32,000, whereas in Scotland it is £23,833. Such absolutely material issues will make a difference to how the white paper is implemented, and that is why—as Mr Tomkins was right to point out—we need to ensure that people respond to it.

I would point out that CBI Scotland said:

“The proposals outlined in the White Paper don't meet Scotland's needs or the needs of the UK as a whole, and would be a sucker punch for many firms right across the country.”

It also said that the UK

“cannot indulge in selective hearing. It tunes in to business evidence on a disastrous Brexit no deal, but tunes out from the economic damage of draconian blocks on access to vital overseas workers.”

We in the Scottish Government have tried to compromise in many different ways over the past few months with regard to Brexit. Surely to goodness, on the practical measure of having a differential, tailored solution and policy within the UK system—which businesses across Scotland are starting to understand would help our economy—this Parliament, including the Conservatives, can forge some kind of process to ensure that we protect jobs, our health service and our economy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I understand why it was that long, but that was a five-minute

exchange. I have 12 people who want to ask questions, so I would ask for crisp questions and short answers, if appropriate. That does not apply to you, Ms Baker; you have a time slot that gives you one minute in which to ask your question.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): If we are exiting the EU under the proposed deal or the disastrous no deal, we will see the end of freedom of movement. In that case, how can we retain the benefits that freedom of movement has given to Scotland? Our demographic challenges demand that we do.

The white paper fails to address Scotland's needs. It will restrict population growth; the proposed £30,000 threshold is unworkable; the 12-month visa is derisory and undervalues people; and the commitment to immigration targets by the Prime Minister does not respond to the needs of key sectors in Scotland—that is perhaps not surprising, given her approach when she was Home Secretary.

We need flexibility within a UK framework. Other countries such as Canada and Australia have differentiation models that work. I fully appreciate how obdurate the UK Government is on this issue, but what work has the Scottish Government undertaken to consider other models, and will the cabinet secretary commit to working with all parties to propose workable solutions that we can unite around?

Fiona Hyslop: I thank Claire Baker for her question, and for its tone. She is correct to identify that both Theresa May's deal and no deal would remove freedom of movement. That is a critical point.

She touched on the issue of what we can do to address the situation. The issue of population is as important as that of immigration. The white paper says that there might be a 12-month visa for people with certain skills. That does not encourage people to settle in Scotland and have families here. In some of our rural and remote areas, a third of local authorities will see their populations decrease. It is important to address the issue of depopulation.

On the issue of Parliament coming together, I would say that we have come together in many ways. I would also point out that the previous Administration's fresh talent initiative is another example of a differentiated position within the UK system. Such a solution is perfectly possible within the system that we are in.

Claire Baker asks about the comparisons that we have made. In a paper that was produced in February last year, we set out what other countries have done in this regard. The proposal that we have put forward is doable and practical. Many things are wrong with the UK system as a whole—

the hostile environment and all the rest of it—but, in terms of practical issues, there are steps that we can take together, and I sincerely hope that the Conservative party in Scotland will join us in working with business, the voluntary sector, local authorities and our health service to ensure that we can retain the workers that we have and also recruit new workers.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Under the UK Government's pay-to-stay policy, EU nationals must apply to remain here, facing charges of £65 per adult and £32.50 per child. If an organisation wishes to pay that fee on behalf of their employee, it faces a possible tax burden, as that will be deemed to be a taxable benefit. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, if organisations wish to pay the Tories' shameful status fee for their employees, they should be able to do so in a straightforward manner without additional charges?

Fiona Hyslop: The UK Government is proposing that workers must pay to stay here with the rights that they had when they arrived here in the first place, and the member is right to identify one of the problems regarding the imposition of that fee. We have said that, if there is to be a fee, the Scottish Government will pay the fee on behalf of those workers who come within our administrative responsibilities, and I know that other employers wish to pay that fee as well.

We should scrap the fee—we should not have it in the first place. However, organisations such as Heathrow Airport, the University of Oxford, a number of national health service boards and the Carluccio's restaurant chain have already said that, if it is to be brought in, they want to pay the fee on behalf of their employees. They have been told that that will be charged as a benefit in kind for their employees, and there is not even the option to bulk pay it.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary mentioned the Migration Advisory Committee's report and the benefits of migration that it included. However, it also said that a separate immigration system for Scotland is "not justified". The MAC are not the only people who think that; many business organisations think the same. Why are they all wrong? Why should we not be working to get a system that works for every constituent part of the UK? Why will the cabinet secretary not work with us on that?

Fiona Hyslop: First, I suggest that Jamie Greene read the report properly. He should also listen to the comments from business, including from the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, to the effect that we can and should be looking at other options, and that other countries have differentiated systems.

I am not arguing for a completely separate Scottish immigration system. I am arguing, as I have consistently argued over a considerable time—including in the February paper that we published, as Jamie Greene would know, had he bothered to read it—for a proposal that would allow us to make policy decisions that would be tailor-made for Scotland. They would be policy decisions that would ensure that we address the needs of our country and that we take back control of our future in terms of the country's population needs, the employment needs of our industries and the social and care needs of our vital health service.

I ask Conservative Party members to do two things: to read the material that is in front of them and to engage constructively, as our businesses in Scotland would wish them to do.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Is the cabinet secretary aware of the award-winning Real Food Cafe in Tyndrum in my constituency, which is a fantastic example of a successful tourism-related business? Around 70 per cent of its employees are from the EU. Many have stayed here long term and they contribute hugely to the local economy. One employee is a retained firefighter.

Does the minister share the deep concern of the tourism and hospitality sector in Scotland that the Tory post-Brexit migration policy could do serious harm to Scotland's rural economy?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, I do. As the tourism secretary in the Scottish Government, I am acutely aware of the concerns of the tourism sector. Bruce Crawford makes the important point that it is absolutely vital that families settle and stay.

It is also important to recall that the Migration Advisory Committee chair implied, when he came to Parliament, that there is something unproductive about tourism in Scotland. It is a vital part of the economy and it is essential that that be addressed. I was pleased that when I met the UK tourism minister he agreed to engage with the chair of the MAC in order to dispossess him of some of the views that he expressed about tourism to this Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have seven minutes and eight members want to ask questions, so I want short questions.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree that there is a world of difference between devolving immigration and having a differentiated system of immigration, that the two should not be confused, and that the 1,700 EU nationals who demonstrate the need for Scotland to deal with its ageing population are a case in point?

I ask the cabinet secretary what contingency plans there are to ensure that social care services—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No. I love you dearly, Ms McNeill, but I was hoping that you would set a crisp example. I am going to be naughty now and be hard on everybody. My health is suffering.

Fiona Hyslop: I missed the end of that question. However, Pauline McNeill is absolutely right that we are taking a pragmatic approach. We are compromising on so much in trying to ensure that we promote an approach on which we can all come together. This is a very immediate issue that must be addressed.

It would absolutely help our economy if we could ensure that there will be a tailor-made solution and policies that could include a Scottish visa option in respect of salaries and skill bases. We want to do that and have been arguing for it for some time. If only the Conservative Party could start listening and paying attention, as Pauline McNeill obviously has.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The UK's hostile environment system is regularly exploited by human traffickers, disproportionate numbers of whose victims are women. Given that expanding that system to European nationals will result in an increased number of human trafficking victims across the UK and Scotland, what consideration has been given to the potential need to increase support services for victims of human trafficking?

Fiona Hyslop: That is a very important matter. There will be great ramifications. There will not be just the most obvious ones for our economy and society in ensuring that we have the right workforce; there will also be ramifications for how people arrive here. I will draw the question to the attention of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I will provide whatever updates from the justice department I can provide.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The strawberries left rotting in the fields of Fife due to the wider economic impacts that will come will be symbolic of the problems that will come from the UK Government immigration policy. Does the minister think that the UK Government should be straight with the British people about those economic impacts?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Rennie. Charming, as ever.

Fiona Hyslop: I do think that. The provisions that the UK Government has put in place for the whole UK would not be sufficient to satisfy the workforce needs for the berry fields and

agricultural work in Angus, let alone in the rest of Scotland or the rest of the UK.

We have heard some politicians talking about cheese and onion crisps, which is a triviality. Some Conservative members who have important responsibilities need to face up to the serious issues that we face, including that which was mentioned by Willie Rennie.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Professor Alan Manning, the chair of the Migration Advisory Committee, who has been mentioned by the cabinet secretary, admitted to the Scottish Parliament Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee that he had done no modelling of the demographic or fiscal impacts on Scotland of his proposals, and that he had done no in-depth study of the differentiated migration systems in countries such as Canada. Does the cabinet secretary agree that that invalidates the conclusions of the MAC, which dismissed differentiated migration for Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: I cited in my statement some important evidence about labour force and labour-market issues that had been raised by the Migration Advisory Committee. However, Joan McAlpine is right that the fundamental flaw in the Migration Advisory Committee's approach was that it did not tackle demographics or the fiscal consequences of lack of productivity and lack of economic growth that are caused by of population issues. That is why we want to ensure that population is key in the analysis.

It is not just about short-term gain, which is why the 12-month visa is unsatisfactory. We need longer-term arrangements. We will again draw the issues to the attention of the Migration Advisory Committee. As I just said, we have already done that with the UK tourism minister. The UK Government has to understand that focusing only on labour-force analysis will not tackle Scotland's needs.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The statement indicates that all our projected population growth is due to come from migration over the next 25 years. How does the Scottish Government think that making Scotland the highest-taxed part of the United Kingdom will achieve that ambition?

Fiona Hyslop: We are not the highest-taxed part of the UK; we have people who are paying less tax than they would pay elsewhere in the UK.

It is important that we address things in the round. Scotland has to be attractive, and we are encouraging people to live, work, study and invest in Scotland. We need families to relocate to Scotland and we need to make sure that we are not saying that people can come to Scotland only if they earn more than £30,000. That is no way to

bring in the bright technicians and researchers, or all the people who could have the opportunity to build the entrepreneurial Scotland that we need.

It is a mindset issue. The problem is that we have a Conservative Government that is ideologically bound and is not considering the evidence—in particular, the economic evidence.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): The clear message from business organisations in Scotland is that the UK Government white paper proposals would place businesses in severe jeopardy. Is it not therefore the case that the Conservative Party is putting dogma before rationality and before the interests of our country?

Fiona Hyslop: Annabelle Ewing has put her finger on it. Even the Migration Advisory Committee's limited consideration of population—it is only looking at labour-market issues—shows that the UK as a whole will be worse off. That is why it is essential that we pursue our approach based on the evidence that is before us, which is what leads us to the conclusion that we have to change.

We are in the lucky position that people want to live and work in Scotland. We see movement of people from England to Scotland because people want to come to live and work in Scotland. We want to extend that and to ensure that it continues.

The number of EU citizens coming to Scotland has already declined significantly. We have not even left the EU, but we are already seeing the consequences of a flawed system. That was happening before the white paper.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Some of the key sectors that the cabinet secretary talked about are characterised by low pay and poor terms and conditions. Does she agree that, where Government can intervene—such as through the tier 2 work visa scheme—in relation to pay and terms and conditions in social care, we should do so, so that every job that people come to this country for is decently paid, with decent terms and conditions?

Fiona Hyslop: I agree. In the social care sector, the Government helped to ensure that the real living wage was extended across the sector for care workers. The member is right that we should drive up wages, because everybody benefits from that, but we have to do it in a responsible and sustainable way, and we have to work with employers. Currently, employers are under pressure because they will not necessarily have the labour force that they need under the scheme. They will have rising costs and there will be an economic impact because of the white paper and Brexit more generally. Also, a reduction in GDP of the level that I have talked about—of £10 billion by 2040—would mean less money in the public purse

from taxation to pay for things such as nursing and social care. We have to look at the whole system.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): What impact does the Scottish Government foresee the proposed extension of the £30,000 minimum-earnings rule to tier 2 visas having on public services in key economic sectors including agriculture, particularly in the south-west of Scotland, where we have 48 per cent of Scotland's dairy farms, many of which are reliant on—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is lovely. We have got the percentage.

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, no area of business is untouched. The impact on rural areas in particular will be absolutely catastrophic unless the issue is addressed. As I have pointed out previously, a limited agricultural workers pilot is taking place, involving 2,500 workers for the whole UK. That number would not even fill the vacancies in Angus. We have to ensure that the UK Government understands that. However, if the UK Government is thirled to thinking about the issue in ideological terms rather than on evidence-based economic terms, it will not address the issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions. What do you know? We managed to get all the questions in.

Future Rural Policy and Support

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-15279, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on future rural policy and support in Scotland.

15:03

The Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy (Fergus Ewing): We are 78 days from Brexit, yet we still do not know what sort of Brexit we face. What is clear is that none of the Brexit options is good for Scotland's rural economy—all are problematic for sectors such as farming, food and drink, aquaculture, forestry and fisheries. The Government maintains that the best outcome for Scotland is what we voted for: to remain in the European Union. The least bad option is membership of the single market and customs union.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary not accept that the vote was a United Kingdom-wide one and that the UK decided to come out of the EU?

Fergus Ewing: I am actually pleased about that intervention, because it allows me to point out that one of the differences between my party and Mr Chapman's is that we believe that the people of Scotland have the right to determine their future. I believe that other parties subscribe to that principle, too. It is astounding to me that the Conservatives prefer to ignore the view expressed by the population of Scotland in that vote—it was a clear no, a clear remain and clear opposition to Brexit. We respect that mandate and we are doing our best to deliver it.

A no-deal scenario would be catastrophic for rural Scotland and simply must be taken off the table. When we first debated Brexit's impact on rural Scotland, in September 2016, I was clear that Scotland needed to get on with deciding her own future, and that is what we have done. We have worked to gather views and recommendations to inform policy and support, and I thank everyone who participated in that work—principally the agricultural champions and the members of the National Council of Rural Advisers.

We have listened carefully to the changes that stakeholders have recommended and we continue to do so. We have consulted on a plan to transition from the common agricultural policy, which sets out the most detailed proposals that exist in the UK, and I am pleased that most respondents have said that they broadly support our proposals in the "Stability and Simplicity" paper. Those proposals take us forward not to 2022, as some of the Conservative Government's proposals do, but to

2024—five years ahead—and I am determined to continue to take those forward.

Our plan sets out as much stability as we can provide for the first two years. Beyond 2021, we will maintain the current landscape of schemes but with changes to simplify them. We will also seek to free up resources to pilot new approaches that we want to implement beyond 2024.

We have created an internal simplification task force and have appointed a panel of individuals and sector representatives to guide the task force's work and priorities. Members of that panel have real-life experience of how CAP schemes have operated and a significant stake in rural Scotland's future.

Opportunities have already been identified to streamline current schemes. I can announce that the task force will be asked to review the process for forestry grant applications to determine where we can make improvements. I have also asked for a review of the whole forestry grant scheme, so that more small landowners can access support to plant trees and create woodland.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I am not going to ask the cabinet secretary about forests, but, in the context of the task force, I ask about the appeals mechanism for crofters and farmers who have fallen foul of the scheme in the past. Will that be part of the task force's considerations?

Fergus Ewing: Yes, it will. Mr Scott raises a point that has been raised by members across the political spectrum. Many farmers and crofters, including in Shetland, are very concerned about the overprescriptive nature of the CAP scheme, the limited and restricted permitted margin for error, the way in which alleged or actual infringements of the scheme are treated and the disproportionate nature of the penalties, which often seem to be far more swingeing than anyone feels is fair or reasonable. There is common ground on that point, and it is at the root of many farmers' and crofters' discontent with the CAP rather than the EU itself, which in financial terms has been a good friend particularly to the Highlands and Islands, part of which Mr Scott represents.

We believe that that is very important work, but creating bespoke policy for farming and food production requires careful consideration. It is very complex, and it is right that we give it that careful consideration. I was, therefore, happy to include in our motion the proposal from Mr Rumbles and the Scottish Liberal Democrats that we

"convene a group consisting of producer, consumer and environmental organisations to inform"

the development of future—[*Interruption.*] Well, Mr Rumbles thinks that it is right to involve the people

of Scotland in the work that we do and not impose top-down policies from these benches. We think that it is right to involve stakeholders in policy making and not exclude them.

The written part of my speech says, “I hope that all parties will support this action.” How naive am I, Presiding Officer?

The motion also sets out key principles for future policy. Sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability are core objectives. Those objectives are designed as a starting point rather than an exhaustive list, and I will focus on the last one—profitability—because we need to create policy and support for Scotland’s rural economy that allows it to succeed.

One key driver and measure of success should surely be that rural businesses and sectors are profitable, that they create wealth for their owners and—perhaps more important—provide fair work beyond their own families where possible, creating opportunities for wider supply chains and helping the communities in which they are based to flourish. Creating greater profitability in the sector will, in part, depend on future support. I have been clear that this Government sees a continuing role for direct support, particularly for farming and food production. Our definition of public goods must encompass the multiple roles performed by farmers and crofters in food production and in stewardship of the countryside and our natural assets.

However, policy needs funding to turn good intentions into success, and the UK Government is at risk of having overpromised and continuing to underdeliver in that regard. Those in favour of Brexit, including Michael Gove and George Eustice—with whom I have good and workmanlike relations and whom I will see in London on Monday—led us to believe that there might be more funding available post-Brexit for rural industries if we voted to leave. That is what they said during the Brexit referendum. They gave those guarantees and, although the guarantees are welcome, we are some way off their delivery.

I hope that the review of convergence funding, which is now—at long last—under way, will deliver the fair outcomes that Scotland’s farmers are due. I remain hopeful that the UK Government will accept amendments to its Agriculture Bill to provide a funding guarantee for the future. However, on-going uncertainty about funding is creating specific real-time issues.

Turning to the less favoured area support scheme, we should not forget that Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently provides that additional support to our most marginalised farmers, especially in crofting and in the hills and uplands. We continued the LFASS funding when

England and Wales did not, because it is needed. That is why the situation in which we find ourselves—transitioning out of LFASS without clarity on what we are transitioning to—is so difficult. I want to provide certainty where I can.

Less favoured areas funding for 2019 and 2020 will not fall below 80 per cent of LFASS. I and my officials will continue to work with stakeholders to find options to achieve that. Further, as I have previously committed to, any additional funding arising from Lord Bew’s convergence review, which is now under way, will be prioritised for that purpose. If there are sufficient moneys, we will effectively reinstate funding levels to 100 per cent of LFASS. I want to make it absolutely clear that, in the future, this Government will continue to ensure that the most marginalised farmers and crofters receive additional financial support that acknowledges the difficulties under which they farm and steward our countryside.

Of course, funding is not the only thing that we are having to fight for. As the legislative consent memorandum laid before this Parliament sets out, we have had to fight a rearguard action to keep Scotland’s powers over farming and food production. I have sought to resolve those issues constructively with Mr Gove in the Agriculture Bill and have been heartened by his willingness to at least consider those matters.

However, on fundamental issues—which he maintains are reserved but which I and this Government are certain are devolved—the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has not budged, sadly, and we have run out of time. Some people continue to suggest that the best way to legislate for future rural policy is through a schedule in the UK’s Agriculture Bill, but that would be inappropriate, not least because the substantive issues over powers in the UK bill remain unresolved.

I contend that it is this Parliament’s job and role to develop, consider and pass the legislation that rural Scotland needs to underpin policy in the future. Indeed, I suggest that this Parliament is best placed to legislate for rural Scotland’s needs and interests, not least because our legislative process is more transparent and more thoughtful. Our process also ensures that stakeholders and communities are fully engaged, and I can testify that this Parliament can and does hold the Government to account in seeking to arrive at a considered compromise.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary put a date on when a Scottish agriculture bill will be introduced?

Fergus Ewing: I cannot give a date for that at the moment, as the timetable has yet to be fixed, but it will be introduced in more than sufficient time

before it is required. The purpose of the bill is primarily to provide the fundamental framework for the continuance of payments being made as well as to allow changes in future policy post-Brexit, should that occur. I will, of course, come back to the member—and all members—about the timetable in due course, but the key point is that I can provide a 100 per cent assurance that the bill will be introduced in more than sufficient time for Parliament to debate it in full and for the bill to receive consent and approval in time to do its job. There is no doubt about that: this is what we do, this is what we are here for and this is what we will achieve.

I look forward to the debate and to hearing what all members have to say. In Scotland, we are proud of what our farmers and crofters, as well as those who work in the wider rural economy, achieve. They produce great food and provide the environmental stewardship that creates the scenery and the landscape that we enjoy, which so many people come to Scotland to visit. They are at the heart of rural communities. It is impossible to imagine rural Scotland without farming continuing for generations and, indeed, centuries to come, as it has played an essential part in the history of Scotland over generations and centuries past.

It is my privilege to champion their interests, and I will do everything in my power to continue to do so. The motion in my name marks the start of that process.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges that future policy for Scotland's rural economy should be founded on key principles, including sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability; recognises that it should seek to maintain flourishing communities, enable farmers and crofters to continue to deliver high-quality goods and services through food production and stewardship of the countryside and Scotland's natural assets, and encourage diverse land use; calls on the UK Government to deliver a fair allocation of future rural funds to Scotland, including fully replacing all lost EU funding, that will allow development and implementation of a funding support scheme that meets rural Scotland's needs and interests; further calls on the Scottish Government to convene a group consisting of producer, consumer and environmental organisations to inform and recommend a new bespoke policy on farming and food production for Scotland, and agrees that the Parliament should legislate for future rural policy.

15:16

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer to the mention of crofting and farming in my entry in the register of members' interests.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss our vision for future rural policy and support in this important debate. Both the challenges and the possibilities

for rural Scotland are significant, particularly as we leave the European Union, and it is our determination that we do right by our rural communities in this regard.

I cannot let the reference to the Prime Minister's deal go unremarked upon. The fact is that there is the Prime Minister's deal or there is no deal on the table. The Scottish National Party opposes no deal, so it should support the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's deal has the support of NFU Scotland but not the SNP, and I know whose word I would prefer to take.

As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I recognise and understand the challenges that rural parts of Scotland face.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I have with me the latest issue of the *Scottish Farming Leader*, in which Clare Slipper, the political affairs manager at NFU Scotland, says that its members need to have access to the single market and to remain in the customs union. Does the Prime Minister's deal deliver that?

Donald Cameron: The NFUS has been quite clear, many times, that it supports the Prime Minister's deal as being the best way of protecting Scotland's farmers.

From concerns over long-term funding and farm debt, to fewer younger people looking to take on a career in farming and the on-going battles that farmers face to get a fair price for their product from supermarkets, there are a lot of issues to tackle. However, there are also reasons to be optimistic about the future, and the opportunity to design a new and bespoke system of support for our farmers and crofters is one of them.

I would like to address some of the issues covered in our amendment. In it, we refer to the UK Agriculture Bill, as did the cabinet secretary. We continue to believe that the interests of Scottish farmers will be best served by Scotland being part of the bill, just as Wales and Northern Ireland will be; that will provide a framework for support payments to be made. We take succour from the fact that the clear preference of the NFUS is to have a Scottish schedule to the UK Agriculture Bill in order to, as it says,

"offer certainty and stability sooner rather than later".

That is described as a belt-and-braces approach.

It is a matter of great regret that the SNP appears to be more concerned with putting nationalism ahead of the interests of Scotland's farmers by refusing to engage with, or take up the offer of a Scottish schedule to, the bill. Such a schedule would not restrain our ability to create a bespoke Scottish system later via Scottish legislation.

On the wider aspects of the UK bill, although I think that many of the principles and ideas articulated by Michael Gove on agriculture in England deserve consideration, such as the principle of public money for public goods, we on these benches are committed to a definitive Scottish support system that addresses the unique nature of farming here in Scotland.

Our amendment also mentions the reduction of LFASS payments and

“the effects that this will have on livestock farming”.

The fact of the matter is that only a few days ago, the cabinet secretary suggested that LFASS payments would drop to 40 per cent of current levels over the next two years, but today he has clarified his position in what I have to say was a screeching U-turn made under intense pressure.

Fergus Ewing: I have made it clear countless times, including from where I stand, that I am determined that LFASS should not go below 80 per cent. The press release to which Donald Cameron refers simply alluded to the fact that at the December council meeting, which I attended and where I made representations to Commissioner Hogan directly, the European Union decided to lift its proposed reduction from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. That is a modest improvement, but it is not enough; that is crystal clear. I have always made that as clear as I have made it today.

Donald Cameron: Nevertheless, cuts to LFASS will have a catastrophic impact on Scotland’s hill farmers and crofters. They have nothing whatever to do with Brexit; to pretend otherwise is to play politics with farmers’ livelihoods.

The NFUS has been clear about LFASS. Andrew McCornick said:

“LFASS payments provide a vital financial boost to those who are trying to forge a living out of some of the hardest land in the country.”

Much starker were the words of the chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation, Russell Smith, who said yesterday:

“Reducing the Less Favoured Areas support to 80% of current rates for 2019 sends out a very negative message, but we can live with it but to then cut it to a mere 40% for 2020 will be ruinous ... Being told now that this vital support to crofters will be reduced to 40% next year is a slap in the face to us in the less favoured areas and indicates failure on the part of the Scottish Government.”

Looking forward, as the cabinet secretary designs the new support system, I urge him to ensure that those farming on the 85 per cent or so of Scottish land classified as less favourable are properly supported. This moment in time provides him with the perfect opportunity to mitigate the effects of the damaging cuts that he is making to LFASS payments.

On future support, let me strike a more consensual note. We agree with much of the Scottish Government’s motion and we pledge to work with the cabinet secretary, others across the chamber and the many interested parties across Scotland to help to devise a support system that is fit for Scotland’s farmers.

We agree that any future support must ensure that farmers are able to continue to deliver the high-quality produce that makes up Scotland’s natural larder. We agree that the new system must be simpler, create stability and reward active productive farming. We agree that profitability is central.

We welcome the opportunity to include producer groups, consumer groups and environmental groups in assisting with the formulation of a bespoke system. However, like many others, we are wary about the creation of yet another expert group. We have task-force fatigue. Over the past two and a half years, since the Brexit vote, we have had countless councils, committees, task forces, groups of advisers and reports, all of which have been well intentioned, but yet another Scottish Government committee or group is the last thing that we need, especially in the absence of any detailed policy from the Government.

I turn to some of the specific things that we on these benches have proposed, which we think will help our rural communities to flourish. First and foremost, I pay tribute to our farmers and crofters who are, after all, the custodians of our countryside. I know how hard they work and I am always conscious of the decisions that we as politicians make and the impact that they will have on our farming communities.

I have written to the cabinet secretary to say that we

“believe that food production must be at the heart of future farming policy.”

Scottish food and drink is world renowned and the promotional efforts of both the UK Government and the Scottish Government should be commended, not least because we know that our food and drink sector is looking to double its worth from £15 billion to £30 billion annually by 2030. We think that that can be achieved.

We think that farmers should be incentivised to deliver the raw produce required to make that ambition real. Our farmers and crofters do exemplary work in looking after the natural environment. Scottish Environment LINK argues that

“food production is part of a fair, healthy and sustainable food system.”

I am pleased to see that Scottish Rural Action, led by Emma Cooper and Fiona Thompson—who

have had a stand in the Parliament all week, promoted by Finlay Carson—wants to promote the importance of engaging more widely with Scotland's rural communities.

We also believe that for there to be a stable future in farming we need to look at ways of encouraging the next generation of farmers to get involved. Organisations such as the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs already carry out important work in encouraging new entrants. However, we need to make farming more flexible, so that new farmers can pursue other income streams while maintaining the farming side of their business, thereby making farming a more attractive prospect for new entrants. Above all, we need a system that allows farmers to improve their farms rather than one that punishes them for non-compliance.

We want a proper system to be put in place that is tailored to Scotland, is easy to access and does not burden farmers with unnecessary bureaucracy. We want our food and drink sector to grow, and we want rural communities to reap the benefits of that growth. We are willing to work with the Government to achieve those aims, but the SNP needs to present a clear and detailed policy proposal soon, so that Scotland's farmers and crofters have clarity on what the future holds for them.

I move amendment S5M-15279.3, to leave out from "including fully replacing" to end and insert:

"which will allow the development and implementation of a funding support scheme that meets rural Scotland's needs and interests; notes the serious concern across the farming and crofting sectors about the potential reduction of Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) payments and the effects that this will have on livestock farming, given the unique importance of LFASS; welcomes the input of producer, consumer and environmental organisations in assisting with the formulation of a new bespoke policy on farming and food production for Scotland; notes the preference of the NFUS for a Scottish Schedule to the UK Agriculture Bill in order 'to offer certainty and stability sooner rather than later', and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that it has sufficient legislative powers to implement a support scheme that will allow the active rural economy to transition from the current system."

15:25

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Our crofters and farmers have been looking for an indication of the direction of travel on agricultural support post-Brexit for some time, and I hope that today will bring some clarity.

There is little to disagree with in the Government's motion, but it lacks ambition for our rural communities and takes little notice of the particular disadvantages that affect those on the periphery. The motion is about preserving the status quo rather than showing ambition for our

farming and crofting communities. In turbulent times, I can understand that the status quo appears attractive, but we need to grasp this opportunity. Now more than ever, we need to grow rural economies, and agriculture remains a key driver in achieving that.

The motion does not recognise the needs of our more remote rural areas, which have higher costs due to the distance from market and suppliers. Such areas need more funding. It also does not mention the disadvantages of climate and poor soil quality, which put people in the industry in some parts of Scotland at a natural disadvantage. LFASS was designed to mitigate such disadvantages, but when the EU proposed a new scheme to assist areas of natural constraint, the Scottish Government did not move from LFASS to an ANC scheme. Although we welcome the assurances that the cabinet secretary has given today, the Government must take responsibility for the 80 per cent cuts to LFASS that our most marginal farming and crofting businesses are facing, and from that must learn that the status quo is not always best.

Our current system is very biased towards large-scale production, with some farmers who could run profitable businesses without support receiving the lion's share of the support. The top five recipients of single farm payments in Scotland receive more than the bottom 3,500 recipients combined. Sadly, 45 per cent of farms make an income that is equivalent to less than the minimum agricultural wage, with 23 per cent making a loss; yet it is those businesses, which arguably offer more by way of public goods, that receive the least funding. Public money must be used prudently to address those issues.

The new scheme must recognise public benefits as well as food security. The scheme cannot operate in a silo; it has to fit with wider Government policy, which is why we have been calling for a good food nation bill. We have fantastic world-renowned produce, yet many of our people are malnourished; therefore, what we want from our farmers and crofters needs to be the basis of the new scheme. Although the key principles of sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability are laudable, they do not take into account the right to food. Many of our children are growing up in poverty, which stores up problems for future generations and their health service and affects children's life chances and lifespan.

Farmers and crofters are economic drivers as well as food producers, but much of their profitability is lost through very long food chains, which build in costs that eat into profits. Local procurement could cut costs to the public sector while supporting the local agriculture industry. We

have never fully recognised the potential for allowing farmers and crofters to sell directly to large public bodies. We need to encourage co-operative working between individual businesses, which would allow them to compete and would ensure a supply of goods to such organisations.

Such enterprises would need support to get off the ground, but given that co-operation already lies at the heart of many of our agricultural communities, with the use of machinery rings and management of common grazings, the concept is not alien. However, current schemes—especially environment schemes—work against that method of co-operation. We must recognise that, by providing work and economic benefit, agriculture plays a part in keeping people in those communities. If we are to halt and turn around depopulation, we must maximise the impact of the industry by keeping secondary processing in those communities, too. We speak about diversification, but we should couch that in terms of maximising the benefits that agriculture brings to our rural communities.

We agree with the call in the Scottish Government's motion for fair funding, which recognises that Scotland, with its large rural areas, provides a greater share of the UK's agriculture and should be funded accordingly. Although the UK Government appears to have accepted the argument for fairer funding, we must work to ensure that that comes to fruition. Labour cannot support the Conservative amendment, because it removes that part of the motion.

Our preference would be for a Scottish agriculture bill in order to protect the devolved settlement, and we welcome the cabinet secretary's commitment to that. However, we must also work to replace other EU funding for our rural communities, for example the LEADER programme, which initiated innovative work that helped to underpin many of those communities.

Like the Labour amendment, the Green amendment highlights the need for schemes to encourage good environmental practice. As I mentioned, current schemes lock out co-operative working, but they also ignore steps towards carbon sequestration. That is a disincentive, when we must use such support to help to offset emissions from the farming sector.

We recognise the impact that the prevailing uncertainty has on our agriculture sector, but we believe that we have an opportunity to build a policy and a strategy that support our farming communities. Given the challenges that the future holds, it is important to strengthen and protect the sector now.

I move S5M-15279.2, to insert at end:

“; notes that, in designing a future farm payments system, there is an opportunity to mitigate current reductions to Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) payments; recognises that any future system should prioritise payments to those farmers and agricultural workers most in need of financial support, due to land quality and distance from market, and notes that there is an opportunity to design a scheme that tackles rural poverty and food poverty, leads to sustainable development and inclusive growth, supports the repopulation of rural areas, protects the environment and addresses climate change.”

15:32

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Like other members, I welcome the opportunity to debate the future of rural policy and funding, but the opportunity has been a long time coming. With only 78 days to go, allegedly, until we leave the EU, we are behind other parts of the UK in deciding what will replace the common agricultural policy. I had hoped that we could find consensus in the debate and begin to move forward with that urgent process.

My amendment seeks to place the climate emergency at the heart of our rural support policy, because the future of farming—perhaps more than any other sector—is in doubt if we fail to take urgent action. It is not just our domestic industry that is at stake, but our entire globalised food supply chain.

The NFUS said in Parliament recently that it did not believe that climate change was a top priority for the Scottish Government—its words, not mine. We need to see that change, and we need to see greater recognition that profitable farms are also low-carbon farms, which can maintain strong market advantage on quality and public goods delivery.

Government ministers have previously said in the chamber that a net zero target for the farming sector is not possible because of the emissions inherent in our food production, but that misses the point of net zero and the need for whole-farm accounting. When I talk about achieving net zero emissions from agriculture, I mean emissions on a whole-farm level, with farmers being credited with the positive carbon sequestration effects of well-managed farmland on one side of the balance sheet, and the carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions caused by farming practices on the other.

Stewart Stevenson: Just as a matter of clarification, is it now the Greens' policy that every single sector has to produce zero greenhouse gas emissions? I had thought that the policy applied to Scotland, which is quite different.

Mark Ruskell: Mr Stevenson will know from our deliberations in the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee that every single

sector needs to play its part, and farming, or agriculture, and transport are two sectors that need to work very hard. He will also be aware of the enormous carbon sequestration potential from land management in Scotland. I am sure that we will continue that discussion in the committee as we work on our report on the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill.

Current emissions accounting puts agriculture in one silo and land management in another, and it does not reflect the reality of whole-farm systems. The farming and land management sector is perhaps the only one where we can talk not only about reducing emissions, but about the carbon-banking side of the balance sheet. That needs to be at the ambitious heart of a national plan for achieving a net zero carbon economy.

Until now, we have relied on voluntary methods, such as the farming for a better climate programme. That is good, but such methods have had limited uptake, and reductions in emissions from the sector as a whole have stagnated in the past 10 years. Resourcing remains poor: the committee heard that there is only one full-time equivalent in the Scottish Government dedicated to that huge agenda. It is clear that voluntary measures on their own are not going to deliver the transformation that we need in farming. Although worthy, farm-assurance schemes will always be limited in ambition if they are governed solely by their membership.

Therefore, it is time for us to use our most powerful non-punitive measures and directly link farm support to action on climate change and the delivery of other, wider public goods. That means embedding the principle of a net zero target into our farm support scheme and financially rewarding farmers for actions such as reducing reliance on industrial fertilisers while building soils as healthy carbon sinks through agroecological farming and agroforestry. Alongside essential flood management work, many of those approaches can be rolled out on a catchment-wide scale, but that needs co-ordination between farms, as Rhoda Grant alluded to. Without that co-ordinated delivery work, we will not see the scale of knowledge transfer and action that can make the difference on the ground.

Our net zero target has the backing of civil society, with 50 organisations, including Community Land Scotland, the Organic Growers Alliance, the Scottish Crofting Federation and Scottish Land & Estates, writing an open letter to the Scottish Government last year in which they called for a target for carbon neutral farming.

Just last week—

John Scott: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Ruskell: If I have time.

John Scott: I thank Mr Ruskell. Notwithstanding what he says, would he accept that, nonetheless, it is the advice of the Committee on Climate Change that a net zero target is not achievable for the whole of Scotland, and particularly not for agriculture?

Mark Ruskell: As Mr Scott knows, there are complexities in the way that the inventory in relation to agriculture is assessed. I would welcome the UKCCC's advice on that and the Government has requested advice, so let us see what it comes back with in April. We may be in a very different place on that.

The president of the National Farmers Union, Minette Batters, recently told the Oxford Farming Conference that

“Our aim must be ambitious: to get our industry to net zero across all greenhouse gas inventories by 2040 or before.”

That is not the Green Party speaking—that is the National Farmers Union speaking. She recognises that that will not only fulfil farming's duty to the environment, but help build our reputation as a world leader in climate-friendly food production.

For those of us who see Scotland's place as being firmly within the EU, it can be hard to talk about opportunities that may come from Brexit, but seeking alignment with the common agricultural policy does not have to mean clinging to the status quo. The CAP is changing, with plans well under way for reform post-2020. We can guarantee that climate change and the Paris agreement will be at the heart of the new CAP.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned us last year that we have only 12 years left to make the necessary changes to avoid catastrophic climate change. This may be our only chance to change the direction of our rural policy and funding in Scotland. We must prioritise the sustainable management of our natural resources and our climate, on which our entire farming system is based. We are the first and last generation of people on this earth who know both the scale of the climate emergency and how to fix it. We should act now without any further delay.

I move amendment S5M-15279.1, to insert after “land use;”

“agrees that agricultural support is a key tool in addressing the climate emergency and emissions from agriculture and land use, and that future funding should help develop a net-zero emissions farming sector in Scotland;”.

The Presiding Officer: I call Mike Rumbles to open for the Liberal Democrats.

15:39

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I am very pleased to speak on behalf of the Liberal Democrats in support of the Government motion before us today.

In the spirit of New Year cheer, I put forward a positive addition to the draft motion, which Fergus Ewing generously shared with me over the break. As he said, he has incorporated my proposal into the motion, and I appreciate that. The motion

“calls on the Scottish Government to convene a group consisting of producer, consumer and environmental organisations to inform and recommend a new bespoke policy on farming and food production for Scotland”.

I have long argued, both in the chamber and beyond, that if we are to establish an effective, bespoke policy for the rural economy that works, we need to ensure that everyone involved buys into whatever is produced. We will get a successful, bespoke new policy if we manage to achieve buy-in from producers, consumers and environmentalists. If organisations representing those interests can get around the table and reach an agreement that informs and recommends to the Scottish Government a positive way forward, we will have a much better chance of succeeding in developing the right bespoke system for Scotland. I am a bit lost, because I do not understand how anyone could call that the status quo.

I am very pleased to see that Fergus Ewing is willing to convene such a group, and if producer organisations such as NFU Scotland, consumer organisations and environmental groups such as Scottish Environment LINK are more than happy to participate, we will be well on the way to achieving success in developing our new policy.

I do not wish to be prescriptive as to which other producer, consumer and environmental organisations should be involved as I think that it is only right that the rural economy secretary himself should make that decision. It is, however, important to acknowledge that, as political parties, we have our genuine differences. For instance, as a Liberal Democrat, I fervently wish that we were not leaving the European Union and therefore in need of designing our own system of rural support. However, we are where we are. For the future prosperity of our rural economy, it is essential that we all make our best efforts to reach agreement across the chamber on designing the best bespoke system of rural support that meets the unique needs of Scotland's rural economy.

This is where, if I may gently say this to Donald Cameron, the Conservative amendment completely misses the whole point. That amendment would remove the requirement for the Scottish Government to convene the group of producer, consumer and environmental

organisations that needs to come up with recommendations for our new bespoke system—it would remove the requirement for any real buy-in from those organisations.

Fergus Ewing, our rural economy secretary, has an enormously difficult job to do and I want to see him succeed in the task. I am glad that the motion recognises the need to reach broad agreement from stakeholders, but I am sorry to say that if we were to accept the Conservative amendment, we would actually make things more difficult.

I would like to see us put party arguments and party advantage to one side. If we do, I am sure that our producer, consumer and environmental organisations will also be willing to do the same. The great prize is a bespoke and successful system of rural support that will enable our rural economy to thrive.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Is the member hearing the same things from stakeholders that I am? They are asking us to put our party differences aside when we talk about this issue.

Mike Rumbles: I agree. That is the message that I am getting, and I hope that everyone else is also receiving it. There is no reason why every party in Parliament cannot back the motion.

There is obviously some discussion to be had about future frameworks for rural support across the UK. However, there should be no doubt that rural issues are devolved under the Scotland Act 1998, and that the Scottish Parliament has responsibility for legislating in the area. It is clear that it is our responsibility to legislate for Scotland's rural economy. However, that puts even greater responsibility on our rural economy secretary and on the UK ministers who are responsible for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to use their best efforts to reach agreement on how any future common framework would operate.

Having a bespoke policy on farming and food production for Scotland legislated for by this Parliament and having an agreed UK-wide common framework for rural support are not mutually exclusive. We should not put up false barriers to reaching a commonly agreed framework; it must be an agreed framework that lies within the competences of both the Scottish and UK Parliaments and which is operated in a spirit of co-operation by both Governments.

It is a new year. I know that 2019 might bring division and differences between political parties to the fore on many issues and, at the right moment and on the right issue, I will be party to that—as I sometimes am. However, in designing a new and bespoke system of support for our rural economy that works, the rural economy secretary

has a difficult task ahead of him, and we must all make the extra effort not to create false divisions between us simply for party advantage.

We have an opportunity to create a new and bespoke system that works for the benefit of the people we represent. If we agree to the motion, the rural economy secretary will have a clear way forward to create a successful new and bespoke system.

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Members have six minutes each and there is no time in hand.

15:45

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): When the cabinet secretary delivered a statement on the future of agricultural support and post-Brexit transitional arrangements in the chamber last June, he said that a central conclusion of the agriculture champions' report was that

"No change is not an option."

He also cited the discussion paper that the national council of rural advisers published, which said:

"Now is the time to change the way we think, act and operate to tailor bespoke policy frameworks."

That date marked the start of a consultation to provide rural Scotland with stability and some continuity for rural support payments.

The Scottish Government's consultation document "Stability and Simplicity" focused on the arrangements that will need to be put in place immediately after the UK leaves the EU in March or whenever that happens. It asked what short-term simplifications could be made to help current claimants of CAP support and discussed how best to support agriculture and integrate it into the broader rural economy. The consultation asked how pilot projects might be developed and used to test different approaches and how to reduce the administrative burden; it contained proposals to streamline and synergise some pillar 2 schemes and suggested the creation of a transition period. I welcome the cabinet secretary's confirmation in his opening speech that we will commit to a five-year transition period, as recommended by the agriculture champions.

If, as the motion says, we want to ensure the key principles of a future rural support system that "should seek to maintain flourishing communities",

we cannot ignore the contribution that LEADER funding has made to our rural areas. LEADER is part of the Scotland rural development programme pillar 2 funding. In my constituency alone, in the tranche of funding from 2014 to 2020, it will invest

£3.2 million in projects on activities that include farm diversification, electric vehicle training, road signage and many more. So far, 55 projects have been given a considerable boost in Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, with the added bonus of attracting other sources of funding, match funding and investment.

For our small communities, the effect of such support from the EU cannot be overstated; it has transformed communities that have suffered decades of neglect from successive Westminster economic policies. The aim of LEADER funding is to increase support to local, rural and community networks and to build and modernise our wealth of knowledge and skills. It encourages innovation and co-operation in order to tackle local development objectives. The funding is the embodiment of the community empowerment policies that the Parliament has laid down, and I am grateful for the support from our European friends to invest in such crucial developments.

Meanwhile, in Westminster, we see the progress of the Agriculture Bill, which I have no doubt will have its third reading in coming weeks. While the Scottish Government is doing everything possible to support agriculture and integrate it into the broader rural economy, it is frustrating that the UK bill still requires significant improvements to meet the aspirations of the industry in Scotland. My SNP colleagues in Westminster have tabled amendments to that bill to replace current EU geographical indicators in future UK legislation and to protect the quality of the domestic food supply by ensuring that any imported foodstuffs are held to the same standards as domestic foodstuffs. Those are only two examples, which might seem simple enough but, unfortunately, the Tory Government rejected both proposals at the committee stage. It will be interesting to see what approach is taken when the bill returns for its third reading. Is this another example of the UK Government abandoning our rural communities?

Many suggestions have been made about what a new agricultural support system could look like. It could be based on food production rather than land area, and it might not even be an agricultural system—it could be a countryside system that encompasses all our rural commitments, including biodiversity, forestry and the wider environment.

I conclude with a quote from the Scottish rural parliament's policy statement on engaging Scotland's rural communities on Brexit:

"The EU brings a long history of support for peripheral rural and island areas which has had a significant impact on the sustainability and development of rural areas. We need reassurance through clear commitments that the UK and Scottish Government will continue to meet the needs of rural people, places and enterprises."

I welcome the debate today and I am happy to say that the Scottish Government has pledged to meet its commitment to rural Scotland.

15:50

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): I start by declaring an interest as a partner in a farming business.

This is a crucial debate at a time when the future of our farming sector has never been so uncertain. Farmers across Scotland are desperate for some answers as to what their future holds. Frankly, they are watching with dismay and anger at the way in which many of our MSPs and MPs are putting short-term party politics ahead of our country's long-term prospects and prosperity.

The outcome of Brexit is the big question on which all else hinges. If the deal that was negotiated between the UK Government and the EU is passed next week, we will have some degree of certainty on a way forward. If it is voted down, as appears likely because both Labour and SNP MPs have their own party politics to pursue, we are heading for uncharted waters.

Many people do not want a no-deal Brexit, but the only sure way to avoid a no-deal Brexit is to vote for the only deal on the table. MPs of all parties need to reflect on that. This morning's letter from the four UK NFUs is a stark reminder that a no-deal Brexit could be catastrophic for UK agriculture. Fergus Ewing is well aware of the danger, yet he blithely follows the party line that the SNP MPs will all vote against this deal for their own narrow party-political reasons—politics at its worst.

There is a plethora of study groups set up by the Scottish Government. I remind Mike Rumbles of just how many we have already had: the agricultural champions, the national council of rural advisers, the Scottish sheep strategy group, the beef strategy group, the fruit and veg group, the Griggs greening review group, and another agricultural policy simplification task force. Yet, despite all these groups, we still have no vision and no idea of where the SNP Government wants to take the industry.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member take an intervention?

Peter Chapman: I do not have time. I have only six minutes.

Indeed, I note from the motion that the Government wants to convene yet another group. Fergus Ewing should already be the best-informed minister in history with all that advice, but it looks much more like an exercise of kicking the can down the road than an attempt to come up with any decisions. Setting up another group reinforces

my fears that the cabinet secretary has no idea how to proceed.

Fergus Ewing: I remind Mr Chapman that "Stability and Simplicity" sets out a clear plan for five years, and a clear majority of respondents, including many farmers and crofters, support that clear plan. What part of that does Mr Chapman not understand?

Peter Chapman: I understand it fine, but what it really says is that the status quo will remain until 2024 but we do not know what will happen then. That is not nearly good enough. The big prize that is available from Brexit is the ability to design a system of support that is much better suited to the needs of Scottish agriculture than the CAP could ever be and yet, two and a half years on, there is no vision and no plan.

The industry is also facing swingeing cuts to LFASS payments. The cabinet secretary just confirmed—[*Interruption.*] Can we carry on?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Chapman, you can carry on.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Peter Chapman: No, I really do not have the time—I have a lot to say.

Mike Rumbles: Does he have time, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: There is actually very little time, and it is up to Mr Chapman.

Peter Chapman: I am sorry, but no. I would love to give way, but I have six minutes for my speech and I really want to deliver it.

The cabinet secretary confirmed only yesterday that there will be a 20 per cent cut to LFASS funding this year and a 60 per cent cut next year.

Fergus Ewing: No.

Peter Chapman: I have heard and absolutely welcome what the cabinet secretary has said today, but that was what was reported only yesterday.

Fergus Ewing: No, I did not say that.

Peter Chapman: Anyway, as we know, LFASS money is vital in supporting farmers who are trying to eke out a living in some of our most remote and hardest land. We should be in no doubt that cuts to LFASS, even to 80 per cent, will result in bankruptcies and land abandonment.

As well as lacking vision for the future of farming, we are also lacking the necessary legislative structure. We are content that the Scottish Government has the legal basis to make payments under pillars 1 and 2 for the 2019 payment year, but we believe that legislation is

necessary to make payments in 2020 and beyond and, as things stand, that legal basis does not exist. The Scottish Government, unlike Northern Ireland and Wales, has declared that it will not take powers within the UK Government's Agriculture Bill, which means that the Scottish Government must produce a Scottish agriculture bill to ensure that farmers are able to be paid and future policy can be developed from 2020 onwards. However, there was no mention of such a bill in the programme for government that was published in September. That is hardly the sign of a Government that is in control of events.

The industry deserves better. We need to recognise that our farmers' first priority is to produce high-quality food, but there is no way we can grow our food and drink industry to £30 billion by 2030 unless measures are put in place to fund the industry properly. Any new system that is put in place must be easier to apply for, easier to administer and targeted at the farmers producing the food that we need. It must recognise that 85 per cent of our farmland is LFA and target extra support to those areas to maintain our high-quality red meat industry, and it must also support a suite of environmental measures that all farmers can buy into simply. There can be no tension between productive agriculture and high environmental standards—both must go hand in hand.

The industry is at a pivotal point. Brexit negotiations are at a critical stage, creating huge uncertainty. On top of that, we have an SNP Government that is presiding over huge cuts to LFASS payments, which is failing even to put the necessary legislation in place to allow for future support payments and which has no vision for what our future support should look like. In short, it is an SNP Government that is incompetent, tired, out of ideas and failing our farmers.

15:57

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): First of all, I declare my joint ownership of a very small registered agricultural holding, from which my wife and I derive no income whatever.

Like, I suspect, the whole chamber, I want to agree with Donald Cameron's comment that we should demand that our farmers be properly supported. Of course, this debate is about the question, "What is proper support?"

I always like to look at what the motions and amendments before us are doing. The first and most obvious thing to note is that the first seven words that the Conservative amendment would delete from the Government motion are:

"including fully replacing all lost EU funding".

That tells us straight away that the Conservatives are opposed to farming having the amount of funding that it currently gets from the EU. It therefore ill behoves Peter Chapman or anyone else on the Conservative benches to talk about funding, lack of vision or kicking cans down the road, given that the stark reality is that the Conservatives are opposed to farmers having all the funding that they currently have under the scheme. They will have to account to farmers for that.

Peter Chapman: Will the member give way?

Stewart Stevenson: I have not quite finished dealing with the amendment.

The amendment ends:

"and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that it has sufficient legislative powers".

If it has "sufficient legislative powers", the Government will legislate, but the Tories are clearly suggesting that we do not have "sufficient legislative powers" and therefore cannot legislate.

I know that the motion that is before us is in the name of an advocate. I have had many informed and interesting discussions with him, and I suspect that he just didn't read what somebody put in front of him, because it makes no sense to imply that we do not have sufficient legislative powers unless the Conservatives are suggesting that, as we have suggested, powers are being taken away.

Donald Cameron: Will the member take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: I will take the intervention from Donald Cameron, but I will come back to Peter Chapman.

Donald Cameron: The point that is being made in the last sentence of the amendment is that, if we are not part of the UK Agriculture Bill, we will not have the belt-and-braces approach that the NFUS has said will provide clarity now. That is the lack of legislative power that we are talking about. Why does the SNP Government not agree with the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Administration and believe that it, too, should be in the bill?

Stewart Stevenson: I understand the point that is being made in the debate, but I have to go back to the words that are on the page, which are fundamentally different. I will now take Mr Chapman.

Peter Chapman: I want to respond Mr Stevenson's claim that we do not want agriculture to be fully funded in Scotland. Of course we want agriculture to be fully funded, and we support the convergence money coming fully back to Scotland. That has always been our position. It has never changed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Mr Stevenson, we are very short of time and we have no spare time at all. Please stick to your six minutes.

Stewart Stevenson: I was conscious of that when I accepted the interventions, Presiding Officer, but I wanted to be fair to the Conservatives, because probably nobody else will be.

The bottom line is that the Conservative amendment would delete the words:

“including fully replacing all lost EU funding”.

Let us move on from that, because enough has been said about that subject.

I think that we all accept that farming is an important part of our economy, especially our rural economy. At Christmas, I was delighted to see that everything on the table had come from locations that were no more than 50 miles from my home. I hope that that was the case for others, but that will not be the case if we do not get the kind of environment that is important.

I will pick up on one or two points that I suspect that others will not pick up on.

The report of the National Council of Rural Advisers contains some wider recommendations beyond support from Government. Action point 4B in that report says:

“Ensure equitable access to finance for rural communities and businesses, including a simplified grant system.”

That is great. However, when I picked up the Scottish Rural Action report that I got from the stand yesterday, I saw that it focuses on the closures of branches of the Royal Bank of Scotland, which is a bank that is publicly owned by the Government down south. If we take banks out of communities, it will be a heck of a lot more difficult to follow that recommendation. The issue is not just about funding farmers; it is about the total infrastructure that we have.

Action point 8B of the report of the National Council of Rural Advisers talks about micro-enterprises and ways of encouraging women and young people into the sector. I support that very much.

The bottom line that the Conservatives at Westminster in particular have to think about is this: what is the effect of creating barriers between Scotland—and the UK, for that matter—and one of our biggest markets, which is the EU? The NFUS and other farmers unions have called for frictionless trade. If we are not in the single market, we do not have frictionless trade, and, as the ministerial statement that we heard before this debate highlighted, if we do not have free

movement of people, there will be problems for more than just the strawberry farms in Fife—as well as the raspberry farms in Fife, one of which I worked on donkey’s years ago. That issue goes to the heart of the problem that confronts us. Yes, the issue is about support to farmers, but it is also about the total system, and things are not looking terribly good.

16:03

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I want to start by addressing some of the climate change challenges, as that is part of my brief. Agriculture and related land-use sectors are Scotland’s second biggest greenhouse gas emitters, yet they seem to be the sectors that have perhaps the weakest leadership in that regard from the Scottish Government. The latest climate change plan asked for only a small reduction of 9 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions from the sector, which went against the recommendations of this Parliament’s Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and the UK Committee on Climate Change.

Much more is possible, but only if the Government improves the system in many ways and provides support and advice that enables farmers to be productive and environmentally conscious. As many farmers already know, that is not a false dichotomy. It is great to see growing instances of knowledge sharing and perception shifting in farms across the country.

Many farmers are already adapting and supporting each other with best practice, as was clearly demonstrated in how a recent ban on burning farm plastics was taken up. In England, the NFU has called for net zero agricultural emissions by 2040, which is inspiring.

Farmers are among those in the front line of the global challenge, and we rely on them and land managers to help us to reach net zero more easily by playing an increasing role in sequestration. The agriculture industry is on a longer decarbonisation journey than much of big business or electricity, for example, and it could be the sector that benefits most from a just transition commission with a long-term purpose that is set well beyond the two years of the current commission.

Climate-friendly farming is full of win-wins that can be shared between farmers, the planet and the public. The NFUS sent a briefing on climate change issues today and my speech will highlight some of the challenges and how they may be addressed.

One such challenge is that the data that is held on agricultural emissions is flawed and does not recognise much of what farmers do on their farms, such as peatland restoration and forestry. Farmers

have said to me that carbon audits do not fairly reflect their climate commitment. I hope that the cabinet secretary will consider that issue in his closing remarks.

The Government motion calls for a togetherness of food production and stewardship of land, and I agree with that holistic approach. Considering our land and food production as a public good is the right approach for a more sustainable farming system. That principle could deliver benefits to local communities, wider society, the environment and future generations. Such a fusion of purposes should be intrinsic to any new farm payment system. What work is the Scottish Government doing to ensure, as a priority, that pillar 2 environmental payments are more integrated, rather than just being an add-on? If that is our aim, perhaps agroecology is a way to achieve it.

All farming and food production can sustain and restore the natural environment, rather than further depleting natural capital, whether in Scotland or in the countries from which we import feed. This Government has promised that Scotland is to be a world leader in green farming, but it still has a long way to go in promoting that sort of model in the way that we do our farming, teach farming at colleges, do research and design public support for farming. Has the cabinet secretary looked at models in other countries, such as France, where a basic law on agroecology has been introduced?

In this context, I turn our thoughts to the present agri-environment schemes and ask the chamber and the cabinet secretary to reflect on the words of Tom French, who is the vice-chairman of the Clydesdale branch of the NFUS and an upland beef and sheep farmer from Crawfordjohn in South Lanarkshire. He says that currently, only a small percentage

“of farm businesses have achieved access to agri-environment schemes in spite of many more wishing to do so. One of the main reasons for the lack of uptake ... is the work involved in preparing applications and the costs involved.”

He says that sometimes even small farmers feel an obligation to engage with a consultant to prepare their application and can spend around £2,000

“with absolutely no guarantee of success.”

He goes on to say that those measures and restrictions are “very inflexible” and that

“perhaps a solution would be to guarantee entry to possibly a tiered scheme with entry level measures that all businesses could access should they so wish”.

I stress the next point that he makes, which is that management measures and restrictions could be drawn up “in conjunction” with individual farmers, with a limit or ceiling—I also stress that

point—on what any business could receive. He says:

“I would think this would give multiple benefits ... and enhance the green credentials of the industry.”

As we know, farmers often work in isolation and in challenging weather conditions. Better advice and support are vital for sustainable development.

As one of the Scottish Co-operative Party group of MSPs, I have attended Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society conferences. This year’s conference is entitled “Promoting Innovation”. Opportunities for support for co-operative working are very important to farmers. It was unfortunate that the EU questioned the need for the pillar 2 co-operation fund, which had to be abandoned. I hope that the cabinet secretary in his closing remarks will talk about the need for a future fund.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close your speech now, Ms Beamish.

Claudia Beamish: Catchment levels for flood management also need collaborative working.

16:10

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): It will be very obvious from every speech on the subject that I have made in Parliament that I am a supporter of staying in the European Union, and that I struggle to find any positives to Brexit. When it comes to the financial benefits of membership of the EU, agriculture in Scotland is one of the main beneficiaries. Those benefits have been outlined many times by members in the past two years.

However, we are where we are, so we must seriously contemplate and plan for a Scottish farming future that does not have access to the funding support that has been given to us as part of our EU membership. Questions remain about the replacement for that funding, but our current situation could at least give us a chance to start from scratch and build a new system that throws out everything that was problematic about the CAP, which actively tackles the challenges that the land-use sector is facing in the 21st century and which takes into account Scotland’s geographic diversity.

My understanding of farming support is that it is for three key things: to protect our domestic quality food supply, to support management of the land and the environment, and to support rural communities to thrive through job creation. Are we currently achieving all those things? That is the question that we must ask ourselves as we debate what a new system should look like.

Over the past week, I have reached out to a number of my farming contacts, professional and personal, to ask them the simple question, “What would you like to see in the new support system?”

As convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I have also been party to a great deal of discussion with various land-use stakeholders on how the system can support farmers to play their part in tackling climate change. Every opinion that will be expressed in the remainder of my speech is reflective of the feedback that I have had from those people.

Very high on the list in that feedback was that the system should encourage more new entrants into farming. Colleagues at the Scottish rural parliament mentioned that and—as in the sentiments that were expressed by Rhoda Grant—the unfairness and imbalance between funding for small farms and that for large farms. I was encouraged to hear the cabinet secretary make the commitment today that smaller business concerns will be treated more fairly than they are under the CAP, and that we will dispense with the penalties that have caused so much stress and heartache for businesses that have tighter margins.

A good few of my correspondents mentioned the need for the funding system to include start-up grants to allow minorities, young people and women to enter the sector.

John Fyall is the current chair of the National Sheep Association Scotland, and is a neighbour of mine, at Sittyton farm on the Straloch estate in Newmachar. He was very critical of the tenure system. At the top of his list is a system that is based on business structure, and which pays out to farms that create jobs for people and discourages payment for existence rather than activity. He said:

“We need a system that supports those with the most to offer, not the most to lose”

and that

“Public money should be used for those who are investing in producing quality food for the nation, working to ensure the environment is left in better condition, those creating employment, and protecting communities. Subsidy should be a stimulant, not a right that belongs to an individual regardless of activity”.

One of my go-to sounding boards on women in agriculture is Joyce Campbell, who farms in Gail Ross’s constituency. She said:

“Active farming is key, as is membership of Quality Meat Scotland for those in livestock, for a guarantee of welfare standards.”

Daye Tucker, who is also a Highlands sheep farmer, said:

“We have no excuse not to embrace change and those who do so should be rewarded. Support for protecting and preserving soils is a no brainer. They are our national assets and they should be protected and enhanced for future generations”.

Many people have made the point today that farmers are among our key temporary custodians of the land. Their efforts, which benefit the wider environment, should be recognised and built into the funding system. We should be incentivising people to farm sustainably in business terms and in environmental terms. Those who are actively reducing emissions, who are producing quality food in ways that enhance and protect the environment, who are actively encouraging biodiversity on their land—for example by restoring and preserving peat bogs—and who are using areas of land for trees alongside food production should be incentivised and encouraged.

My contacts also echoed the points that have been made in the debate, particularly by Gail Ross, about the need to continue LEADER funding, and about our responsibility to recognise the wider economic and community benefits that agriculture brings.

I will sum up the other points that were raised by my contacts. Any new system of funding must at least match the volume of funding that is currently gained by EU membership, and must be tailored to the particular needs of Scotland—especially the needs of those who farm in the remotest places, which face most challenges.

The system must be simplified and must not be closed to new entrants, tenant farmers and smallholders. It must reward and encourage knowledge exchange, good welfare practice, profitable, fair and innovative business models and environmental sustainability, and it must dispense with mechanisms that encourage inactivity.

Most of all, the system must ensure that Scotland remains food secure, and that we can all know that most of the food on our plate is local, of a high standard and has created jobs in our localities. Almost everyone whom I spoke to said that they want all political parties to work together to realise those goals.

16:16

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare interests as a farmer and food producer, and as a member of the NFUS. I welcome the debate on post-Brexit Scottish agriculture. I recognise that, for the first time in my lifetime, we in Scotland have a blank sheet of paper on which to consider how to shape a bespoke policy for Scottish land use in general, and agriculture in particular.

Some of the known parameters are the available budgets as promised by the UK Government until 2022, the current lack of profitability of Scottish farming, and the need for Scottish agriculture to reduce its greenhouse gas

emissions in order to help to keep planetary temperature rise to a minimum.

Having established some of the parameters, we have to define our ambition. I have spent much of my life farming and fighting for farmers' and crofters' livelihoods, as well as fighting for the preservation and enhancement of our landscapes, so no one will be surprised to learn that my vision is of working landscapes. That builds on the NFUS concept of actively farmed hectares, and offers a more holistic approach to land use in Scotland.

It is self-evident that working landscapes require people to work on delivering food production, forestry, environmental enhancement and tourism, and to create and maintain renewable energy systems, maintain our road and rail infrastructure and build strong and integrated communities that are supported by strong and resilient rural businesses.

The first priority in that objective is, therefore, the need for rural business to be profitable. In particular, and in the context of this debate on agriculture, farm businesses need to become profitable if production of livestock and red meat is to continue in Scotland. Already, barely enough livestock is produced in Scotland to support our growing food-exporting business, and tens of thousands of hectares that used to carry livestock only 30 years ago no longer do so. Furthermore, one can conclude only that the pathway that the Scottish Government has chosen is one that will create still more wilderness landscapes without people in them.

As a past convener of the NFUS hill farming committee, I know how important LFASS payments are to the 85 per cent of Scotland that is classified as less favoured areas. Therefore, the 20 per cent reduction that is being proposed by the Scottish Government for next year would, along with the increase to a 60 per cent reduction in the following year that had been proposed, have been completely unacceptable, because those cuts would have driven many more farmers and food producers out of business and off their land.

As the cabinet secretary will be too well aware, there are no financial reserves left in many LFA farming businesses, following many years of declining profitability, as demonstrated by his own TIFF—total income from farming—figures. It is not acceptable to blame the CAP, the European Union or the UK Government when it is apparently in his gift, or at his discretion, to maintain the payments at current levels. I welcome his commitment today that future payments will not fall below 80 per cent of current levels, although a 20 per cent reduction would be unsustainable. I hope that the cabinet secretary will make Lord Bew aware of that in his discussions with him.

Everyone accepts that we need, now more than ever, more timber production to support our timber-processing industry, but driving people off the land and leaving crumbling empty steadings, farmhouses and cottages is not the way to go about it.

I suggest to the cabinet secretary that creating his own hill and upland clearances is not what he wants—or, indeed, deserves—to be remembered for, so a balance has to be struck. People must be supported in our countryside, and land use prioritised. That is a job for the Scottish Government, using the tools that are at its disposal—the most important one being the ability to disburse financial support in order to deliver on its rural objectives.

Farmers and crofters have for many years been demanding that activity be the benchmark for delivery of support, and have willingly accepted that that should also require delivery of public goods. In the future, the concept of delivering public goods should apply not only to agriculture, but to forestry, renewable energy production, housing and tourism grants and generally to all rural industries that are in receipt of public money.

In addition, to help to restore profitability, collaborative working should be a Government-supported option, which would allow those who wish to work together to get a better return from the marketplace. The concept of co-operation, which is supported by the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society, should again apply to all Scottish rural industries, whether in tourism, food, timber or energy production.

Better locally delivered further education provision and knowledge transfer in our rural areas will also be required in order that people understand the new complexities of post-Brexit rural Scotland, and can understand and deal with the complexities of carbon reduction and climate change across all the sectors that I have mentioned. The decision by Scotland's Rural College to withdraw that capability from the University of the West of Scotland at Ayr is among the SRUC's poorest decisions yet—goodness knows, it has made many—and is another hammer blow to the Ayrshire rural economy. In my view, it should be reversed, as the cabinet secretary knows.

I turn now to the Government motion. Scottish Conservatives remain to be convinced that we might benefit from yet another representative advisory committee being set up to advise the Scottish Government on the content of a new Scottish agriculture bill. Surely, enough advice has already been given to the cabinet secretary.

However, what is important is that the cabinet secretary makes up his mind soon on the content

of the new Scottish agriculture bill that we will require—that is more the case if there is not going to be a Scottish schedule in the UK agriculture bill—and gets a document into the public domain for discussion. The next Scottish agriculture bill is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do so much more than deliver agricultural support, essential though it is. It is an opportunity that should be seized with both hands, and the sooner, the better.

16:22

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate about the future of rural policy and support in Scotland. Since coming to this place as a newbie, in May 2016, I have been actively involved with our rural and agricultural communities.

Since I was elected, I have had the opportunity to learn from many experts from the NFUS, the SRUC, the National Sheep Association Scotland and the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association. I thank them all for their willingness to engage, for informing me about policy and issues across rural Scotland and for suggesting changes that need to be made.

In recent meetings with those organisations and with farmers across south-west Scotland, one thing has been clear: Brexit is causing much concern, anxiety and uncertainty. I do not need to remind members that Scotland's farmers and rural communities receive valuable support from the EU. With a chaotic UK Government reluctant to provide clarity over future funding arrangements, I am pleased that we have a Scottish Government that is standing up for our rural communities, farmers and agricultural workers.

Prior to the recess, I attended the Scottish rural parliament, which was hosted by Scottish Rural Action and was held in Stranraer. I will mention some of the points that were raised by SRA in its annual report, which I know many members across the chamber will also have read. SRA is asking both the Scottish and UK Governments for a commitment to equality for our rural people, places and businesses in Scotland, to ensure that they are not forgotten but are considered in any policy and decision making. The idea of not being forgotten is becoming a theme for me—earlier this week, I spoke in a members' business debate about the need for further and major infrastructure investment in the south-west of Scotland's roads. Many constituents there say that they feel forgotten. I therefore seek assurances from the cabinet secretary that our rural people, communities and businesses will be supported by the Scottish Government, because they are crucial not only to our rural economy but to Scotland's economy.

Another of SRA's asks, and one of the most important, is that the UK and Scottish Governments attract migrant workers and their families to live and work here and to become integrated members of our communities. Those families help to keep our rural communities functioning: their children attend our rural schools; they work on our farms, in our care sector and in small and microbusinesses, of which we have dozens in south-west Scotland; and they add to our diverse and open society. However, their future has been put in question by a chaotic and out-of-touch UK Government that is imposing a salary cap of £30,000 on tier 2 visas for EU migrants coming to Scotland. Many of those EU workers will not earn that amount of money. It is all very well that the UK Government has proposed a seasonal agricultural workers scheme, but Scottish dairy farms, 48 per cent of which are in the South Scotland region, are not seasonal. Those farms rely on 24/7, 365-days-a-year workers to milk cows, clean out sheds, look after the beasts and carry out complex jobs such as artificial insemination as well as providing support to vet care. Therefore, I seek assurances from the cabinet secretary that the Scottish Government is actively lobbying the UK Government to scrap that unrealistic UK Government migrant salary cap.

Peter Chapman: Will Emma Harper take an intervention on that point?

Emma Harper: No, I do not have time.

The Green amendment proposes addressing agricultural emissions. As a former member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I am interested in that issue. Just this morning, I met representatives from Biocell Agri Ltd and Tricet UK. Both companies promote products that improve the efficiency of ruminants and slurry processing and that improve soil health. Following the meeting, I will write to the cabinet secretary, as I would like the Government to be aware of and perhaps support such products. Biocell and Tricet are about innovation, sustainability and profitability.

The Labour and Conservative amendments talk about LFASS support for sheep farmers. There is an additional economic consideration in that, year on year, there has been a rise in the number of attacks on sheep by out-of-control dogs, which has had a direct negative economic and emotional impact on those farmers. I ask all members to get behind the consultation that I am about to launch to ensure that we get the legislation right for our farmers. The consequences of livestock attacks can be traumatic and tragic for animal and farmer. I am extremely grateful for the fantastic support that I have been given in that work by many organisations including NFUS, NSA, SRUC, Police Scotland, the Scottish SPCA and others.

Our rural economy is diverse and multinational, and it is not about just one particular group. For example, during my time as an MSP, I have met deer farmers, beekeepers, chilli growers and even oyster farmers.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government has published the most comprehensive Brexit paper on farming of any Government or devolved Administration in the UK. I urge the Scottish Government to continue to stand up for rural Scotland and to ensure that our agricultural sector continues to thrive, is attractive and welcomes all regardless of their background and where they come from.

16:28

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Fortunately, the opportunities that this debate presents have not been totally usurped by the shambles that is Brexit, which the Tories in the Scottish Parliament continue to try to defend while knowing in their heart of hearts that it will be catastrophic for Scottish farming.

We all know that farming in Scotland is vastly different from farming in the rest of the UK, not least because of the vast tracts of less favoured areas that we have in Scotland, which is recognised in the motion and some of the amendments. That, of course, is why agriculture is a devolved competence, which it was prior to devolution. The fact that the Westminster Government has taken for itself powers over Scottish agriculture is an outrage, so I am very pleased that the cabinet secretary announced today that an agriculture bill will be introduced to this Parliament. I look forward to scrutinising it in the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.

During the debate, the Tories have asked us to get involved with the Agriculture Bill that is currently going through Westminster, but why should we when we can have a bill of our own? After all, as Gail Ross said, the UK Government has not accepted any of the amendments that were lodged by our SNP colleagues at Westminster. The UK Agriculture Bill will impose unwanted policies and rules on Scottish farmers in areas of devolved competence. For example, as drafted, it could affect the Scottish Parliament's ability to provide support for active beef and sheep farmers.

The House of Lords Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee is wholly damning of the UK Agriculture Bill as it is drafted. It states:

"The Agriculture Bill represents a major transfer of powers from the EU to Ministers of the Crown, bypassing Parliament and the devolved legislatures ... Parliament will not be able to debate the merits of the new agriculture regime because the Bill does not contain even an outline of

the substantive law that will replace the CAP after the United Kingdom leaves the EU."

It continues:

"At this stage it cannot even be said that the devil is in the detail, because the Bill contains so little detail ... Significantly, powers are exercisable indefinitely and without sunset clauses"

—the Tories in this place are always calling for sunset clauses. It adds:

"We are not convinced by the need for such extensive powers to be conferred on Ministers indefinitely."

By contrast, the stability and simplicity paper that was published in June last year set out this Government's detailed plan to minimise the potential disruption of Brexit to our rural communities. That is dependent, of course, on the UK Government honouring its commitments to replace the lost EU funding in full—and we all know that its history on that is not favourable.

We have a wealth of talent and ambition in our rural communities, which is demonstrated not least by the number of briefings for the debate that we have received from many organisations. They are brimful of ideas and recommendations for the Government on the future of our rural communities. As a farmer's daughter, I remain convinced that the primary use of our land should be—where appropriate and as far as possible—sustainable food production. Although there is much that we cannot grow because of our temperate climate—obviously, we will continue to have to import—there is much that we can grow for our own use and for export to offset our imported food bill. The growth in our food and drink production and export has been spectacular over the past few years and is based on the quality of the product, the purity of the environment in which it is grown and the ambitions of those in the sector.

As the cabinet secretary said in his opening speech, he has listened to many organisations, including the National Council of Rural Advisers. I represented the health portfolio on the day that the NCRA came to the Cabinet, and I had the opportunity to hear its presentation of its findings. I was blown away by the analysis, the initiative and the sheer enthusiasm for the rural economy of Alison Milne, the co-convenor of the council. One of the council's recommendations is about recognising the strategic importance of the rural economy and

"mainstreaming it within all policy and decision-making processes."

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee is currently scrutinising the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill. As we know, the south of Scotland is the centre of Scotland's dairy production, yet dairy production is not currently

embedded by Scottish Enterprise as an area with potential for growth. The opportunities in the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill are there to be seen. In other recommendations, the NCRA dovetails into this point. It calls for a rural economic strategy

“putting the rural economy at the heart of the national economic plan.”

The NCRA says that it is significant that the Scottish Government embraced that idea in its programme for government.

The motion and the announcement today confirm that this Government is, as always, putting the interests of our rural economy at the heart of everything it does.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches. Again, I stress that there is no time in hand.

16:34

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

This has been an interesting debate and what could be more important at this time? The cabinet secretary started by giving us the timeframe within which we are operating and setting out the uncertainty that is being caused by Brexit. The Scottish Greens welcome the announcement of a Scottish bill.

Of course, it is about not just policy but support, which is an important factor. Like others, I am very grateful for the many briefings that we have received. Scottish Environment LINK calls on the Government to set up a process, which is outlined in the motion and which has long been championed by my colleague on the RECC Committee Mike Rumbles. It is important that we have

“a group consisting of producer, consumer and environmental organisations to inform and recommend a bespoke policy”.

Scottish Environment LINK calls on us to help deliver the sustainable development goals, which Scotland was among the first nations to sign up to. A number of the 17 goals are highly pertinent, such as zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, responsible consumption and production, climate action and life on land. Others have alluded to that, and the goals are also part of the Scottish Government’s national performance framework.

It is important to say that we have a climate emergency. The briefing that we got from NFU Scotland, which arrived at 13:22 today, states:

“farmers and crofters are on the front line in experiencing the impacts of climate change.”

That is irrefutable. It continues:

“Agriculture is a source of greenhouse gas emissions, and farmers and crofters are a big part of helping tackle the collective challenge that we face.”

That is an honest assessment. It is disappointing, however, that the first bullet point in the briefing is:

“A future emission target of ‘net zero’ for Scottish agriculture is unrealistic as food production necessarily involves emissions.”

My colleague Mark Ruskell touched on that, as did Claudia Beamish. Life is challenging and we must push ourselves. In a spirit of consensus, I commend the position that has been adopted by the National Farmers Union south of the border. It is worth repeating that, on 16 October, the United Nations report warned that CO₂ emissions must be stopped completely if we are to avoid dangerous climate disruption. Green GB week was designed to encourage debate in society about how to tackle that. The NFU deputy president Guy Smith said:

“Last week’s report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was a final alarm call from the science community; the rise in global temperature must be limited to 1.5 degrees. Farmers and growers have weathered extremes of cold, drought and flood so far this year, and we are ready to play our part in a global move towards net zero emissions.”

Everyone seems very happy that we have an evidence-based approach. I am not hearing anyone say necessarily that we want more of the same. What is important is the very issue that the cabinet secretary rightly challenged one speaker about: the level of engagement. It is manifest in the motion that it is important that everyone plays their part.

There is not a level playing field and there are great variations across our country. A news release from today states:

“Crofting must get support for disadvantage”.

That is the case. We will support the Labour Party amendment and I align myself with some of the comments that Rhoda Grant made about the challenges that are faced. The situation is not uniform.

Everyone seems very happy with the idea of public money for public goods. One of the briefings that we received states:

“The strongest justification for using public funds to support farming, crofting and forestry is that these activities can produce a wide range of environmental and social goods and services (public goods) that are not rewarded through markets.”

The relationship between support for the producer and the market is very important. The briefing goes on to say:

“Support to land managers should therefore be tailored accordingly.”

I have not heard anyone say any different. We are custodians of public money, given the decisions that we make here. It is important that we ensure that those funds are disbursed sensibly and to the general benefit rather than individual benefit.

One of the principles that Scottish Environment LINK talks about is the business-based and planned principle, which would be part of the evidence process.

I hope that people understand that the position of the NFU south of the border has not been adopted recklessly; it wants to play its part. I remind members of our amendment, which would insert the phrase:

“agrees that agricultural support is a key tool in addressing the climate emergency and emissions from agriculture and land use, and that future funding should help develop a net-zero emissions farming sector in Scotland;”.

I hope that no one could take issue with that, but I suspect that our amendment will not be supported. However, as others have said, it is important that we work as consensually as possible on policy development in this very important sector.

16:40

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): This has been a welcome, if long overdue, debate. Getting support for rural communities right post-Brexit is crucial, not only to sectors such as agriculture but to Scotland's economy as a whole. Agriculture is a vital source of jobs and income in our rural areas, but it is also the foundation of a food and drink sector that is worth billions of pounds and countless jobs across Scotland. However, agriculture is one of the sectors that is put most at risk by the utter chaos of the current Brexit process.

During this time of uncertainty, we need as much direction and clarity on the future as possible, which has so far not been forthcoming from either the UK or Scottish Governments. I therefore welcome the commitment that was given today by the Scottish Government, at long last, to bring together a truly wide range of stakeholders to inform policy and direction.

The clock is ticking towards our leaving the EU and the common agricultural policy, and there is a great deal of ideas and agreement from many stakeholders on what our aims, priorities and direction of travel should be.

Fergus Ewing: Does Colin Smyth accept that “Stability and Simplicity”, which forms the basis of this debate, provides clarity, financial certainty and the prospect of stability for five years? Given that that was welcomed by the majority of stakeholders during the consultation, all of us should be able to welcome that.

Colin Smyth: I welcome that, but producers in rural communities want long-term stability and a long-term vision for the future of rural support. Farmers do not plan on the basis of one, two or three years; they plan beyond five years, so we need to get the detail right beyond that five-year period. That is why I agree with the Government's decision to bring together a group of stakeholders. Harnessing the consensus that is out there among many stakeholders is important, and it is critical to providing farmers, crofters, food and drink producers and the wider rural community with the long-term vision and stability that they need.

As the cabinet secretary said in his opening remarks, one of the challenges to setting out the detail of our new system is funding uncertainty from the UK Government. I share that frustration, but that does not prevent us from making the case for the resources to meet the unique needs of Scotland's rural communities and agriculture sector. We should do so by putting forward credible, detailed plans that show what a new Scottish system should look like in the long term. The system should be evidence based, it should better target support to those who need it most and it should incentivise the change that is needed. The system should promote not only growth but inclusive growth, tackle deprivation in rural communities and help to put an end to the scandal of food poverty.

Direct payments make up the bulk of current funding, and they are one of the areas in which reform is needed most. Such payments provide large, and often wealthy, landowners with significant sums of money, while 45 per cent of farms generate income that works out below the minimum agriculture wage. Funding needs to be allocated more fairly and according to the principle of public good for public money, and new schemes should have clear, coherent policy aims.

Labour believes that protecting some element of basic payments is important, but we need to move the emphasis towards targeted and conditional payments, such as the ones that are currently paid under pillar 2. Those two sources of support should be integrated to provide a simplified and cohesive system. Over time, the proportion of funding that is spent on land-based payments should be reduced, with a cap placed on the amount that an individual or single organisation can receive.

Additional agricultural payments should be focused on three broad priorities: redressing natural disadvantages; promoting environmental and social benefits; and improving productivity. Redressing natural disadvantages, such as biophysical constraints and remoteness, is essential. A number of members have mentioned LFASS, and Jen Craig, the chair of the Clydesdale

branch of NFU Scotland, has said that she cannot highlight enough the importance of LFASS. The cabinet secretary needs to guarantee not only that he will protect against the upcoming 60 per cent cut but that a source of support of that kind will be made available in the long term.

A greater emphasis on social and environmental benefit is the key change that needs to be made to our support system. That means incentivising best practice and helping to fund measures that provide a public good. As Claudia Beamish stressed, it is also crucial that we support environmental sustainability in the sector, taking into account factors such as emissions, biodiversity, and air and soil quality. Likewise, improvements to the culture and conditions on farms and crofts should be incentivised to underpin good working conditions and animal welfare, with a particular emphasis on expanding ethical farming practices. There is also a need to improve productivity.

Beyond agricultural support, a range of other vital schemes that are currently provided through the Scottish rural development programme need to be replicated following Brexit. The new entrants scheme, which is closed for the foreseeable future, is of huge importance to the long-term sustainability of the sector. As Rhoda Grant and Gail Ross stressed, the LEADER scheme is a vital source of support and funding for a range of rural projects, and recreating an equivalent scheme for Scotland in the long term is essential.

Crucially, in the support that we provide rural Scotland there needs to be a greater emphasis on tackling poverty, for example in rural communities, where the problem can often be hidden. We must also tackle the scandal of food poverty throughout Scotland. As Rhoda Grant said, the Scottish Government's lack of commitment to a good food nation bill, with the right to food at its heart, remains deeply disappointing.

Finally, any new support scheme must have inclusive growth at its heart to ensure that all areas of Scotland benefit from any new system.

Labour is pleased that the Scottish Government is, at long last, beginning to develop the details of a new rural support system and is bringing a wide range of stakeholders together to help to achieve that consensually. European funding may no longer be coming our way, but the case for additional support for rural Scotland is clear and has been stressed here today.

Although the somewhat petty decision by the Scottish National Party to oppose Labour's reasoned amendment today suggests that the usual barriers exist at the top of the Scottish Government, Labour is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that the process that is

being debated today provides the change that is needed to deliver the ambitions of rural Scotland.

16:47

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests—specifically, as it relates to farming. To be absolutely clear and to avoid any dubiety, I point out that my family farming partnership receives payments under the current schemes, including LFASS.

I welcome the debate, but like many others who understand farming, I feel let down by the slow progress over the past year. I had hoped that the new year might herald a more constructive approach from the cabinet secretary, and a timescale for a Scottish agriculture bill, but we do not seem to have that. The cabinet secretary is still putting politics before farmers, and soundbites before the rural economy.

We have heard this afternoon from many members. Before I pick up on what they have said, I want to focus on two things: future policy and the LFASS. The cabinet secretary's views on Brexit are clear: he makes them clear at every opportunity. He has shown a lack of commitment to preparing rural businesses for the future. He has hidden behind numerous task forces and consultations and has shown a lack of vision and leadership. If he holds up the "Stability and Simplicity" document again, with its 46 questions, I will begin to wonder where the answers are.

I contrast that with what happens when he deals with Scottish fishermen. There is no such obscuration and prevarication: there is just the promise that he will get them the very best deal under Brexit. That shameless politicking has led him into a trap that means that he cannot implement any changes to rural policy until he gets on and produces a Scottish agriculture bill. I urge him to do that. Like other members, I do not believe that there is any problem with the belt-and-braces approach of joining in with the UK Agriculture Bill 2017-19.

The shameless politicking has extended to LFASS payments. The cabinet secretary always takes time to remind me of things that I have said in the past. Let me remind him of some of the things that he has said in relation to the importance of LFASS. On 31 May 2017, he said:

"LFASS is vital for our rural economy and remote communities".—[*Written Answers*, 31 May 2017; S5O-1040.]

On 13 September 2018, he said:

"I have said to local farmers and NFUS members that we are absolutely committed to finding a way to avoid that 80 per cent reduction in LFASS".—[*Official Report*, 13 September 2018; c 83.]

On 31 October 2018, he told the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee:

“We made it clear in ‘Stability and Simplicity’ that reducing LFASS payments to 20 per cent is unacceptable. However, those are the rules of the scheme, so we indicated in our consultation paper that we need to find a workaround for recipients”

and went on to say that he was

“determined to find a workaround. My officials are working very hard on the issue, and I think that that is within our reach. I hope that we are approaching the issue in a practical way.”—[*Official Report, Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee*, 31 October 2018; c 12-13.]

Cabinet Secretary, as to the workaround for LFASS for next year—what have you achieved? You have achieved a 20 per cent cut. That is £13 million that has been taken out of the rural economy from the areas that probably need it most. Serious questions need to be asked about why you have not found a workaround to the problem and how you are going to find a workaround for the further reduction that is looming over us, unless you can find a way around the state-aid rules. I would like to hear about that. To me, that shows a complete lack of simplicity and stability in your policy—it is neither simple nor stable.

I turn to important points that other members made. It is vital to remember Donald Cameron’s point that having no deal is not a good position to be in. If you do not want a no deal position, you must look seriously at the deal that is on the table instead of writing it off at every opportunity. I also agree with Donald Cameron that we should look at being included in the UK Agriculture Bill. There is no power grab: to say so is politics speaking.

Keith Brown: Typical Tory. Let London decide.

Edward Mountain: If you want to interrupt from a sedentary position, stand up and ask for an intervention. If not, Mr Brown, I suggest that you leave your comments until later.

Rhoda Grant was right that the Government’s statement “lacks ambition”. However, I also agree with her that public funding should be for the public good.

I agree with Mark Ruskell—let us have a debate about the issue. I agree with something else that he said in relation to net zero emissions. Before we can get down to that, we must identify all that farmers are already achieving in the countryside, in order to identify how net zero emissions can be achieved. Farmers are undervalued for what they are achieving. What has been done under the peatland restoration grant scheme is a perfect example.

I agree with some of what Mike Rumbles said, but he asked for more talking shops. How many more talking shops do we need?

Mike Rumbles: Will the member take an intervention?

Edward Mountain: No. I am sorry—I am in my last minute.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is no time, Mr Rumbles.

Edward Mountain: I agree with Peter Chapman that we need to get on with the new system, but we need to have a vision. I agree with Claudia Beamish, who was right to say that farmers are not given credit, as Mark Ruskell said. I also agree with Gillian Martin that we need a plan for the future.

Presiding Officer, one or two other points were made that I agree with, but I have to disagree with Maureen Watt. I am sorry, but there are no bears hiding behind the trees: there are no power grabs by Westminster.

We would welcome a Scottish agriculture bill, so let us get on with it. We do not see problems with being included in the UK Agriculture Bill. We welcome the signposted U-turn on the LFASS.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Edward Mountain: Let us work to get on with that. We do not need more consultation. It is time to get moving for agriculture. Cabinet secretary, if you cannot do that, I suggest that you move on.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the cabinet secretary, I have noticed a tendency this afternoon for members to speak directly to other members. All remarks should be directed through the chair.

I call the cabinet secretary to close the debate. Less than eight minutes would be appreciated, up to decision time, please.

16:53

Fergus Ewing: Being possessed of a thick skin, I have enjoyed most of the debate. We have had many thoughtful and informed contributions from across the chamber.

I would like to respond to some of them, starting with Donald Cameron. Yes, the NFUS wanted clarity in relation to what we are going to do in an agriculture bill. My announcement today gives that clarity. That has followed the proper procedure of taking permission for a Scottish agriculture bill through cabinet and spelling out—in full technical detail—why that is required; that has been agreed. Mr Cameron says that he is in favour of a bespoke policy for Scotland. I welcome that, but he does not appear to want this Parliament to be able to legislate for it. Obviously, I disagree with him there. I do agree with him that food production

should be at the heart of our policy but respectfully suggest that he should perhaps point that out to Michael Gove.

I am grateful for Rhoda Grant's support for fair funding and for having a Scottish bill—I am also grateful for the Greens' support for that, as Mark Ruskell mentioned. I also agree with Rhoda Grant that all lost funding should be replaced. She was one of many speakers who referred to the importance of funds such as LEADER, forestry rural priorities, and AECS. They all serve different but important functions, and many of them provide good environmental stewardship. It is essential that they are all replaced.

So far, the assurances that Mr Gove has provided relate primarily to pillar 1 and farm support under pillar 2, but they do not relate to LEADER, forestry and other areas. That is troubling, particularly because almost all pillar 2 programmes take several years to organise. Some of them have to deal with multiple landowners. The lack of confirmation that funding will be available in relatively short order, beyond 2020 in some cases, is worrying and it is impairing investment and holding us back from doing good work in the environment, the likes of which Mr Ruskell, Claudia Beamish, Rhoda Grant, Gail Ross and others all quite correctly mentioned.

On the good food nation, a consultation exercise is taking place right now. It is right that we consult people and I hope that members respond to that. No doubt we will come back to it.

I agree with Rhoda Grant that we should support collaboration among farmers, which was recommended by the agricultural champions. She also highlighted that some CAP payments are very large. There is a cap but it is very high at the moment. In the paper "Stability and Simplicity", which I am proud to be brandishing once again, we set out a table that indicates the types of return in the event of putting a maximum or ceiling on the level of payment to any individual recipient. We should consider that, as the agricultural champions recommended, and consider using those funds for other purposes.

Mark Ruskell and Mr Finnie pointed out that the NFUS president has supported the Scottish Government's approach. I can assure Mr Ruskell that more than one official is working on this. My colleague, Ms Cunningham, who has just arrived in the chamber, will continue to engage with Mr Ruskell and others on those matters.

I have less time than I normally do, so I apologise to the various other members who contributed to the debate. I thought that Mr Scott made an interesting contribution apart from the uncharacteristically political remarks, but there we are—so what. I almost always agree with his

remarks on farming and I am sure that we can work together.

I kept Mr Rumbles's contribution to last. Perhaps I am not the only person who felt that the tone of his contribution was slightly different to that of some of his previous efforts. The new Mike Rumbles is very welcome. His 100 per cent constructive contribution to today's debate was as welcome as it was somewhat surprising to us all. He and Gillian Martin made the point that the people out there in Scotland want to see us talk about the real issues of farming, without constantly bickering and backbiting. To be fair to Mr Rumbles, he did that today, so good luck to him. That is a very good sign for 2019 and a lesson for us all to follow.

I will finish with one reflection. In our document, "Stability and Simplicity", we have provided a set of proposals that will take us forward through Brexit. We do not support Brexit but, as a responsible Government, we have to prepare for the worst and for every option, and we are doing that. This document is the only document in the UK that sets out a series of plans for five years to 2024. I fully appreciate that some members are impatient to hear what policies we might be implementing in 2029 but, to be fair to ourselves and to the respondents to our consultation document, the farmers and crofters throughout the country who have welcomed the certainty and stability of our proposals for continuing to provide financial support to them in the most uncertain of times, it takes chutzpah to a new level of brazen effrontery to criticise us for not going beyond five years and 2024 when the Conservative Government cannot tell us what will happen next Tuesday.

I departed slightly from my consensual tone there, but I hope everyone enjoyed it.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-15279.3, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15279, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on future rural policy and support in 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)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 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 Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 27, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-15279.2, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15279, in the name of Fergus Ewing, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 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)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 51, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-15279.1, in the name of Mark Ruskell, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15279, in the name of Fergus Ewing, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 24, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-15279, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on future rural policy and support in

Scotland, as amended—I mean, as unamended—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)
 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 Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 27, Abstentions 6.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges that future policy for Scotland's rural economy should be founded on key principles, including sustainability, simplicity, innovation, inclusion, productivity and profitability; recognises that it should seek to maintain flourishing communities, enable farmers and crofters to continue to deliver high-quality

goods and services through food production and stewardship of the countryside and Scotland's natural assets, and encourage diverse land use; calls on the UK Government to deliver a fair allocation of future rural funds to Scotland, including fully replacing all lost EU funding, that will allow development and implementation of a funding support scheme that meets rural Scotland's needs and interests; further calls on the Scottish Government to convene a group consisting of producer, consumer and environmental organisations to inform and recommend a new bespoke policy on farming and food production for Scotland, and agrees that the Parliament should legislate for future rural policy.

Meeting closed at 17:04.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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