



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 14 March 2019

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Thursday 14 March 2019

CONTENTS

	Col.
GENERAL QUESTION TIME	1
Social Housing (Affordability)	1
Funded Childcare (North-east Local Authority Providers).....	3
Air Pollution (North Ayrshire)	5
Town Centre Fund	6
Asbestos-related Illnesses.....	6
Dundee (Economic Plan).....	7
Apprenticeships	8
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	10
Brexit.....	10
Brexit.....	13
Fair Isle Bird Observatory (Fire)	15
Dallas Family (Asylum Appeal).....	16
Fox Hunting (Fife).....	16
Climbing Tragedy (Ben Nevis).....	17
Landfill Ban (Biodegradable Waste).....	17
Malawi (Floods)	19
Police (Pay Award)	19
Spring Statement (United Kingdom Budget)	20
Retirement (Financial Readiness)	23
Mesh Survivors (Meetings with Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport)	24
Drug Deaths.....	25
LONGHOPE LIFEBOAT DISASTER (50TH ANNIVERSARY)	27
<i>Motion debated—[Liam McArthur].</i>	
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	27
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP).....	30
Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	31
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	33
John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green).....	34
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	36
The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey)	37
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	40
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS AND CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS	40
Prime Minister (Discussions).....	40
European Union Withdrawal Negotiations Debate (United Kingdom Government Response)	40
European Union Withdrawal Preparations (Barnett Consequentials)	42
Brexit Preparations (Funding).....	43
Brexit (Impact on Third Sector Funding)	44
Independence Referendum (Impact of Sustainable Growth Commission)	45
UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill (Update).....	47
Programme for Government (Timetable for Introduction of Legislation)	48
BREXIT (IMPACT ON FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION)	50
<i>Statement—[Richard Lochhead].</i>	
The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead)	50
SPACE NATION	63
<i>Motion moved—[Ivan McKee].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Edward Mountain].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[David Stewart].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Tavish Scott].</i>	
The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee)	63
Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	67
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	70
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD).....	72
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	75

John Scott (Ayr) (Con).....	77
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP).....	78
Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab).....	80
Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP).....	82
Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	83
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP).....	85
Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP).....	86
Tavish Scott.....	88
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	89
Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con).....	91
Ivan McKee.....	94
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	98
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
POINT OF ORDER	99
DECISION TIME	101
CORRECTION	107

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 14 March 2019

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

General Question Time

Social Housing (Affordability)

1. **Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that social housing is affordable to tenants. (S5O-02997)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish Government does not direct individual social landlords on setting rent levels for their tenancies. Individual social landlords are responsible for setting rents in consultation with their tenants. In doing so, they are required by the Scottish social housing charter to strike a balance between the level of the services that are provided, the cost of the services and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford the rents. That means that each social landlord should be considering the ability of its current and future tenants to afford proposed increases in the light of the tenants' circumstances.

On the issue of mitigating the United Kingdom Government's welfare reforms, this year we are spending around £50 million to mitigate the bedroom tax, helping over 70,000 households in the social sector that are in receipt of housing benefit or universal credit.

Ruth Maguire: When I raised the matter last year, the minister informed me that the Scottish Government would be working with social landlords in 2018 to understand how savings could be made in the affordable housing supply, which could be reinvested in keeping rents affordable. I have a constituent who, after a 6 per cent rent increase last year, has seen his rent increase by 6 per cent again this year, with few or no improvements to his home. That was not the increase that was consulted on by the housing association; it includes a further recalibration of rent structures. He told me that his rent has increased by 30 per cent in the past five years. Does the minister agree that action on the affordability of social housing for low-paid workers is urgent?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Could you adjust your microphone and pull it towards you, minister?

Kevin Stewart: Certainly, Presiding Officer.

As Ruth Maguire has noted, the Government is taking an active interest in the issue of affordability—for example, in the context of the tackling child poverty delivery plan—and we are currently doing research on that issue. The first progress report on child poverty, which will be published in the summer, will set out the progress that we have made on the agenda to date.

I know that social landlords understand the importance of keeping rents affordable and meeting the needs of the people they serve. They must get the right balance between the rents that they set and the level of the services that they provide, including the cost of the services, as I said previously. They must not increase rents without having regard to affordability.

We will continue to work with the sector to agree the best ways to keep rents affordable—for example, through improving procurement capability to deliver efficiencies. I am more than willing to meet Ruth Maguire to discuss the issues relating to her constituent, including whether the constituent has had a financial health check to make sure that he is getting everything to which he is entitled, and the matters concerning the housing association that she talked about.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Ruth Maguire has raised a really important issue. Of course, one of the ways to keep rents down or in check is to build more social housing. The Government has committed to building 35,000 houses for social rent, yet, according to the Government's own figures, in the first two years of this parliamentary session only 8,500 were built, which is way off target. Will the minister say how he hopes to get the programme back on track?

Kevin Stewart: On rent affordability, in 2016-17, rents for housing association homes were 18 per cent lower in Scotland than they were in England, and rents for local authority homes were 21 per cent lower. There is a big difference between Scottish National Party-run Scotland and Tory-run England in that regard.

The housing programme is on track. We have said that we will deliver 50,000 affordable homes, with 35,000 of those for social rent, and we are on track to do that. I am sure that Mr Simpson knows that that is the case, because I pontificate about it quite a bit. We will continue to deliver the biggest housing programme since the 1970s in contrast to what is happening south of the border, where there does not seem to be the same ethos in relation to the delivery of social housing.

The Presiding Officer: Question 2 has been withdrawn.

**Funded Childcare
(North-east Local Authority Providers)**

3. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how many local authority providers in the north-east provide 1,140 hours of funded childcare. (S5O-02999)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd): Every three and four-year-old, and every eligible two-year-old, will be entitled to 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare from August 2020. At the moment, the legal entitlement is 600 hours—no local authority is under a legal obligation to offer 1,140 hours yet.

Local authorities have been asked to phase in the expanded offer and to ensure that those children who stand to gain the most from extra funded hours are the first to benefit. Currently, 22 local authority settings in the north-east—which comprises Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Moray Council—are offering 1,140 hours. A further 38 local authority settings in the north-east will be phasing in and delivering the extended provision later in 2019.

Liam Kerr: We are well over the halfway point in the expansion to 1,140 hours of childcare provision, and I am happy to help the minister with her answer. Freedom of information requests have revealed that only eight out of 222 public childcare centres in the north-east are offering 1,140 hours, which is the target. To reassure parents who are feeling let down and to ensure confidence in the delivery of the target, will the minister commit to resigning if she fails to deliver the 1,140 hours in every public childcare centre in the north-east by 2020?

Maree Todd: I reassure the member that I am absolutely confident that, in 18 months' time, when the local authorities are legally obliged to deliver 1,140 hours of free childcare, they will do so. I assure him that we are on target and that we will deliver what is a transformative programme.

The member restricted his question to local authority settings, but I hope I can reassure him further by saying that, as well as those local authority settings that are already providing 1,140 hours, an estimated 77 partner providers are currently delivering the expanded entitlement of 1,140 hours, and at least an additional 22 partner providers are expected to do so from August 2019.

If I were building a bridge, Mr Kerr would not expect to be driving over it 18 months before it was built.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Let us not forget that it is the Tories who are in charge of Aberdeenshire Council. On Friday, I visited Hoodles nursery in Oldmeldrum, which is

one of many private partner nurseries that are gearing up for the provision of 1,140 hours. What is the minister doing to ensure that partner providers and childminders are included in the free childcare revolution and that parents get to choose the type of provision that best suits them and their children?

Maree Todd: Our provider-neutral, funding follows the child approach will empower parents and carers to choose from a range of high-quality providers, including childminders and private and third-sector settings. The power to choose the type of childcare that best suits their child and family is well and truly in parents' hands. The provider must meet the national standard and have a place available.

Our multiyear funding agreement will enable local authorities to pay sustainable rates to funded providers by 2020. We are committed to supporting providers in the transition to 2020, and we know that they will be absolutely crucial to our success. Our delivery support plan builds on support that is already available, such as the 100 per cent business rates relief, and it sets out further actions to support providers.

Meaningful partnership working between providers and local authorities is key to ensuring choice for parents and carers. The early learning and childcare partnership forum, which was established with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, is helping to share good practice and we will hold a partnership summit this summer as we approach one year to go.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): What progress is being made by local authorities to adjust payment frequencies to private, voluntary sector and home-based providers, to encourage local and national sustainability of the 1,140 hours?

Maree Todd: A key aspect of our funding follows the child approach, which will be introduced in August 2020, is that local authorities will ensure that funded providers are paid promptly and efficiently for delivering the funded entitlement. That will support the sustainability of funded providers and ensure healthy cash flows. As a minimum, it is expected that local authorities should look to pay a funded provider within 30 days of the start of term; preferably, it will be much sooner. The timing of the payment should be stipulated in the agreement between the local authority and the funded provider or in the general conditions governing the terms of business. There are already examples of local authorities with prompt payment practices, and, as I said, we are encouraging the sharing of good practice through the knowledge hub.

Air Pollution (North Ayrshire)

4. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce air pollution in North Ayrshire. (S5O-03000)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): The Scottish Government works closely with all local authorities in Scotland on reducing air pollution. Financial and other support is provided to authorities to assist them with monitoring and, where necessary, with actions to improve air quality. The “Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to A Healthier Future” strategy sets out a series of actions for Government, Transport Scotland, local authorities and others to reduce air pollution further across all areas of Scotland. An independent review of the strategy is on-going.

Jamie Greene: Clearly, one of the main drivers that would reduce air pollution in towns in North Ayrshire and right across Scotland would be improved uptake of low-emission vehicles. How many charging points has the Government installed in North Ayrshire? If the information is not available now, I will be happy to have it in writing later. How confident is the cabinet secretary that the Government will meet its 2032 target, given that the proportion of new car sales that are sales of low-emission vehicles is at only 6 per cent, at the moment?

Roseanna Cunningham: Jamie Greene knows that that question should be directed to my transport portfolio colleagues.

However, I can advise Jamie Greene that action is being taken in that regard in North Ayrshire. There are currently 12 electric vehicle charging points in place, and six more are being installed. The member should be reassured that the work on vehicle charging points is on-going.

At the end of the day, low-emission vehicle uptake is a matter for all parts of society; it is not something that the Government can absolutely direct. I hope that Jamie Greene will join me in encouraging all car owners who are thinking about new purchases to consider low-emission vehicles.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): How do air quality and air-quality targets in Scotland compare with those in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Roseanna Cunningham: They compare particularly favourably, as one might imagine. In particular, Scotland is the first country in Europe to have adopted, through legislation, a target for fine particulate matter, which is the cause of the biggest concern in respect of the impacts on health of air pollution. We compare well with the rest of the UK and we are fully compliant with

European Union requirements for fine particulate matter.

Town Centre Fund

5. **Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the operation of the town centre fund. (S5O-03001)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): The £50 million town centre fund, which I announced in the budget, has been developed in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and was launched on 1 March. The fund will be distributed across all local authorities to enable them to stimulate and support a wide range of investments that encourage town centres and city neighbourhoods to diversify and flourish. The distribution of the fund was agreed jointly by Scottish Government and COSLA leaders. It will be for local authorities to allocate the fund against the themes of “Town Centre Action Plan—the Scottish Government response”.

Annabelle Ewing: I thank the cabinet secretary warmly for allocating the highest amount—some £4.3 million—of that funding to Fife Council. Can the cabinet secretary clarify how, as the member of the Scottish Parliament for the Cowdenbeath constituency, I can ensure that towns in my constituency get their fair share of that very welcome Scottish Government funding?

Derek Mackay: First, I welcome the warm welcome from Annabelle Ewing for those resources, which will be transformative for our town centres. The precise figure for Fife is £4,335,000. The campaign to ensure that there is fairness for every part of the constituency that Annabelle Ewing represents has, I think, already begun, and Fife Council will be well aware of it. It will be for the council to determine the distribution of that money.

Asbestos-related illnesses

6. **Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to deal with asbestos-related illnesses, and how it supports people with these conditions. (S5O-03002)

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): The Scottish Government expects national health service boards to provide high-quality person-centred care for all people, including those with suspected or confirmed diagnoses of asbestos-related conditions.

The Scottish Government’s cancer strategy, “Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action”, was launched in March 2016, alongside a commitment

to spend £100 million over five years to improve prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of any form of cancer, and on aftercare for those who are affected, including people who have an asbestos-related cancer.

Claire Baker: Today, I am hosting a group from Asbestos Action (Tayside) in Parliament. From experience, I know how much support they give people—and their families—who live with asbestos-related conditions, including mesothelioma, and I thank them for their work.

Concerns remain that a postcode lottery exists when it comes to people receiving the medical or pastoral care that they need and deserve. What is the Scottish Government doing to bridge the gaps in provision, and to raise awareness among healthcare and social workers of the soft support that is available, and of the importance of signposting people to vital services?

Joe FitzPatrick: I recognise Claire Baker's personal commitment to the matter and I acknowledge the work of Asbestos Action (Tayside).

Claire Baker has made an important point. On 22 January, we published revised "Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer", the purpose of which is to ensure consistency around Scotland. The referral guidelines will help to ensure that clinicians have access to the most up-to-date evidence so that they refer patients who have symptoms that suggest cancer to the right pathway at the right time.

I recognise the work of organisations including those that are represented today in the gallery, and I am happy to continue working with Claire Baker on the issue, which I know is of personal importance to her.

Dundee (Economic Plan)

7. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it will put together an economic plan for Dundee. (S5O-03003)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): We have a national economic strategy and action plan that we are delivering for Scotland. We are working with local and regional partners to build the long-term, resilient and inclusive economic growth that Dundee needs in order to thrive.

Jenny Marra: Dundee has lost 850 jobs at Michelin Tyre and more than 200 jobs—just in the city—at McGill & Co. We will lose more than 300 jobs at HM Revenue and Customs, which comes on top of job losses at many smaller businesses that have closed. On Monday, Forth and Tay Decommissioning will launch, but we have yet to

see jobs materialise, and I note that there is to be no Government presence at the launch event.

The Government has a responsibility to voters in Dundee urgently to prioritise our city for new economic opportunities. Will the cabinet secretary publish a Dundee jobs plan this autumn? Will he please commit to that today?

Derek Mackay: We have an economic strategy and action plan. That is what the Government is about: we are delivering the actions that are necessary to grow our economy and create jobs around Scotland.

On Dundee specifically—as Jenny Marra well knows—when Michelin decided to leave Scotland, I got involved and we recalibrated our efforts to ensure that it stayed in Dundee. Michelin committed to doing so because of the actions of this Government and our partners. That is significant.

In relation to the public sector jobs that Jenny Marra spoke about and HMRC pulling out of Dundee, was not it the Labour Party that joined the Conservatives to say that, in order to save civil service jobs, people had to vote against Scottish independence? However, as part of the union, we are still losing those jobs. On the other hand, the Scottish Government is delivering 750 new jobs for Dundee through the creation of Social Security Scotland, which is further action for Dundee.

There have been industrial difficulties, but our agencies got involved to support the Dundee economy. We will continue to do that. With the Scottish Government, Dundee gets action; from the Labour Party, it gets empty rhetoric.

Apprenticeships

8. Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage companies to establish more apprenticeships. (S5O-03004)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): We encourage companies to provide apprenticeship opportunities—of which there will be 29,000 next year, up from 28,000 this year—through a variety of means, including promotional activity during Scottish apprenticeship week, our developing the young workforce regional groups, and activity that is undertaken by the Scottish apprenticeship advisory board. Skills Development Scotland also undertakes a range of promotional activity that sells the benefits of apprenticeships to employers and individuals.

Richard Lyle: I compliment the minister on his drive for more modern apprentices. I note the new target of more than 29,000 that the Scottish Government has set for next year.

Last week, I visited Saltire heating systems in Bellshill. It is taking on apprentices and now has 30, which is nearly 12 per cent of its workforce. I hope that other firms will follow its lead. As people retire, we need more apprentices to take up the slack right across the range, in every company—from drivers to plumbers to bricklayers. What steps can the Scottish Government take to ensure that we have the correct amount of apprentices, male and female, that Scotland requires in order to meet its future needs and to grow as a country?

Jamie Hepburn: I begin by congratulating Saltire for making exactly the type of contribution that we need from employers.

We will continue to undertake our activity to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities, and to ensure that our system is responsive to employer need. That is exactly the sort of system that we have, and we will continue to engage with employers to ensure that our apprenticeship offer responds to the needs of our economy and society. Mr Lyle, and every other member in the chamber, can be assured of that.

The Presiding Officer: Before we turn to First Minister's question time, I invite members to join me in welcoming to the gallery the Hon Ted Arnott, who is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. *[Applause.]*

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Brexit

1. **Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** Those who are calling for the Prime Minister's deal to be supported include NFU Scotland, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scotch Whisky Association, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Confederation of British Industry. Are they traitors, too?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, the Prime Minister's deal is a bad deal. It is a bad deal for the United Kingdom and certainly a bad deal for Scotland. Let me just recap: it would take Scotland out of the European Union against our will, out of the single market and out of the customs union, with no clarity about the future relationship with the EU. I do not think that any MP with the best interests of Scotland at heart should vote for that proposition. However, I say gently to Jackson Carlaw that, even if every single Scottish National Party MP had voted for the deal earlier in the week, it would still have been heavily defeated, because the Prime Minister failed to persuade so many on her own side; indeed, she is failing to persuade those in her own Cabinet.

Jackson Carlaw mentioned NFU Scotland. Yesterday, NFU Scotland said that the tariff schedule that was published by the UK Government

"undermines the food security of the UK."

What an appalling set of circumstances. It also wrote to every Scottish MP urging them to take no deal off the table. Perhaps Jackson Carlaw would therefore like to explain to the chamber and to the public today why, with just one exception—and I am not talking about David Mundell—none of the Scottish Tory MPs voted in the House of Commons last night to take no deal off the table? That is what was shameful, and perhaps Jackson Carlaw would care to explain it.

Jackson Carlaw: On Tuesday, the SNP cabinet secretary Michael Russell, who is sitting just next to the First Minister, accused those who backed the Prime Minister's deal of being traitors to Scotland. As ever, he thought that he was being clever. He hid the accusation behind a hashtag, but that is the charge that he made. Surely the First Minister will disassociate herself from that inflammatory smear? It is telling that she has not done so. However, there is an important point here. There are many of us in Scotland—in politics and outside—who back the Prime Minister's deal. Will the First Minister at least accept that we think

that it is best for our country and that we do so in all good faith?

The First Minister: I am genuinely struggling to believe that Jackson Carlaw has come here to talk about a Twitter hashtag when the Government that is led by his party is in meltdown, is a shambles and is taking this country ever closer to the cliff edge. On the question of the historic ragman roll, he might be interested to know that Robert the Bruce signed it. If David Mundell ever wanted to get any of the spirit of Robert the Bruce, I am sure that all of us would warmly welcome that.

The fact of the matter is that, with the honourable exception of Paul Masterton, every single Scottish Conservative MP chose to put loyalty to the Prime Minister ahead of the interests of the Scottish people. I am afraid that that is a fact. I will give Jackson Carlaw another opportunity to explain why, with one exception, all of them refused last night to vote to take no deal off the table. Businesses such as the one I visited in Glasgow yesterday, the NFU and interests the length and breadth of the country wanted all Scotland's MPs to take no deal off the table. Why did the Scottish Tories refuse to do that?

Jackson Carlaw: I am asking the First Minister to enhance the dignity of her office. She has chosen not to do so. Many joined the business organisations that I mentioned in backing the deal earlier this week because we believe that it is a good deal that offers certainty for business in the country. I respect those who disagree, but they now have a duty to spell out their alternative way forward. The First Minister's preference is to support a second UK Brexit referendum, but that begs so many more questions. What would be the options? This time when leave or remain wins, shall we make it best of three? How would the delay guarantee people and businesses the certainty that they need and which the First Minister talked about last night. Would she accept the result or, as many of us suspect, is all this just a prelude to another referendum—the one that she really wants?

The First Minister: The result of the 2016 Brexit referendum in Scotland should have been accepted, because Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union. That is one of the many areas in which Jackson Carlaw is struggling, not surprisingly given the mess that the Tories are making not just of Brexit but of the entire UK right now. I remind him again that if every single SNP MP had voted for the Prime Minister's deal on Tuesday night, it would still have gone down to a heavy defeat, because she has not managed to persuade those in her own party, let alone anyone else.

On the question of spelling out a way forward, I spent more than two years suggesting compromise to the Prime Minister—a single market, a customs union—but that was cast aside, ignored and dismissed by the Tory Government, as every vote on the issue in this Parliament has been. The way forward is to put the issue back to the people. Parliament has failed to resolve it, and if Parliament cannot decide, the people should. I think that that is the way forward, and it is a better way than the Prime Minister trying to bully the House of Commons into accepting a bad deal. She should accept defeat, change course and open her mind now to the right way forward.

Jackson Carlaw: Not that the First Minister has ever sought to bully the Parliament when she has been defeated on an issue.

We have accepted the result of all referendums; the First Minister has accepted the result of none. The blunt truth is that she will accept the result of any referendum only if it goes her way. I back a deal that gives our fishing communities the sea of opportunity that they want, a deal that is supported by our whisky industry and would give it frictionless trade across the continent, and a deal that our farmers say would ensure that there are no hard barriers to our biggest market. All those Scottish organisations and many people across Scotland are telling us to back the deal and get this done. Is it not time to respect the result and back an orderly Brexit? The whole country then gets a chance to move on.

The First Minister: I respect the result of the 2016 referendum. Scotland voted to remain in the EU. That is the best outcome for Scotland. If, for once in their lives, the Tories could find it within themselves to stand up for Scotland rather than a beleaguered Prime Minister, they would also recognise that it is the best future for Scotland.

It is frankly deluded for anyone to suggest that there is majority support across Scotland for the Prime Minister's deal. There is not support for leaving the EU and there is certainly not support for leaving on the basis of such a profoundly bad deal.

The Prime Minister's deal has been defeated overwhelmingly in the House of Commons, not just once but twice. It is time for her to accept that defeat and open her mind to an alternative way forward. Let us get no deal properly off the table. Let us seek a lengthy extension to allow this issue to go back to the people. If the Conservatives were listening, not to their bosses in Westminster but to majority opinion across Scotland, that is exactly what they would be arguing for. It is to their great discredit that they are failing to do that and are failing Scotland.

Brexit

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):

Last night, the House of Commons voted to oppose a no-deal Brexit, but, as the law stands, we will still be leaving the European Union on 29 March with no deal. The First Minister and I agree that no deal would be a disaster. For two years, Theresa May has claimed that no deal is better than a bad deal, which is nothing less than a lie. Does the First Minister agree that, despite last night's vote, no deal remains an immediate and very real danger?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Be careful of your language, Mr Leonard.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I agree. Richard Leonard is right to point out that, notwithstanding the vote in the House of Commons last night, the legal default is leaving with no deal on 29 March, which is why I think the Government should come forward with a proposition to change the law so that the United Kingdom does not crash out of the EU on 29 March with no deal. I hope that Richard Leonard would support that proposition.

It is important for those who oppose the Prime Minister's deal and for those of us who oppose Brexit—which I think includes Richard Leonard—to come together to find a better way forward. I ask him—I hope in a constructive spirit—to use his influence with Jeremy Corbyn to get him firmly behind the option of a second EU referendum. If Jeremy Corbyn would come off that fence, that option would become not just the best one but the most likely next step. Will he, perhaps this afternoon, get on the phone to Jeremy Corbyn and ask him at long last to show some leadership on the issue of Brexit?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Leonard, I ask you not to use the word “lie”, even when talking about—particularly when talking about—people outside this chamber.

Richard Leonard: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I remind the chamber that last week, in this Parliament, all parties voted to reject no deal in all circumstances, with the sole exception of the Tories. What does it say about the Tories in here that every one of them, without exception, voted for something that neither the Secretary of State for Scotland nor Jackson Carlaw's own MP could support last night? The reality is this: without a majority in the Commons for an alternative, no deal remains a threat. Does the First Minister agree that tonight members of Parliament must vote for article 50 to be extended for long enough to allow for a majority in Parliament to be formed in favour of a different approach?

The First Minister: Yes, and Scottish National Party MPs have been tabling amendments to that effect and will vote for exactly that. In fact, it is time for the House of Commons to take control of this out of the hands of the Prime Minister and the Government and make sure that a sensible way forward is found.

I agree whole-heartedly with Richard Leonard about the Scottish Conservatives. He is right to say that this Parliament voted overwhelmingly to reject no deal last week and this Parliament is again being ignored, not just by the UK Government but by Scottish Tory MPs. It is to Paul Masterton's credit that he did the right thing last night. However, the Secretary of State for Scotland cannot even manage to rebel properly. He pathetically opted for an abstention to save his own job rather than properly standing up for this country, and I think that that is a disgrace.

I say again to Richard Leonard—because on the issue of the way forward, we probably agree more than we disagree—that Jeremy Corbyn surely has to start showing real leadership. Even at this stage, it is not entirely clear to me what would be different about the situation that the UK is in now if Jeremy Corbyn—rather than Theresa May—was leading the Brexit negotiations. The way to break the parliamentary deadlock is to put the issue back to the people. I hope that Richard Leonard will seek to persuade his leader that that is the option that he should back. Then we can build a majority around that and find the right way forward not just for Scotland, but for the whole of the UK.

Richard Leonard: Jeremy Corbyn has made it clear that the House of Commons has two options: to secure a better deal or take it back to the people. That is the Labour Party position. We know that the House of Commons does not want no deal or Theresa May's deal, but the Prime Minister is still not listening and she says that she wants to bring her deal back for a third time, even though the deal is dead. Does the First Minister agree that the Prime Minister cannot keep asking the same question until she gets the answer that she wants?

The First Minister: Yes, I agree with that. One of the Tories' favourite catchphrases is, “We said no and we mean it.” Perhaps they should start applying it to the Prime Minister and the Government in London.

Richard Leonard says that the House of Commons has two options, one of which—according to him—is a better deal. I say to him that there is no good Brexit deal. A Labour Brexit would not be better or less damaging to Scotland than a Tory Brexit. It is Brexit that will do the damage to Scotland, and that is why we should be seeking to honour the vote of the Scottish people and reverse Brexit if we possibly can. I hope that

we will be able to put a majority behind a second European Union referendum, so that the people not just in Scotland, but across the UK, knowing everything that they now know about Brexit, can take that opportunity to keep the UK and Scotland where we belong—in the European Union.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory (Fire)

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The internationally recognised Fair Isle bird observatory was destroyed by a fire last weekend. Thankfully, no one was injured. Despite the valiant efforts of firefighters from across Shetland and the Fair Isle team that was led by Fiona Mitchell, David and Susannah Parnaby's home was completely destroyed. Would the First Minister accept that Fair Isle is the kind of island that gets on and wants to move forward, and that its intention is to rebuild the observatory? Will her Government please provide every assistance towards that? Will she also ensure that lessons are learned from the Fair Isle fire for the emergency services that support firefighting efforts on islands where there is no full-time fire cover? Finally, will she recognise that three out of the nine local firefighting team members are French? Those brave women are having to apply to stay on Fair Isle because of the omnishambles that is Brexit.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Before I come to the substantive issue, I agree wholeheartedly with Tavish Scott's last point. In my view, it is outrageous that any European Union national who has made any part of Scotland their home is having to apply to stay here. Tavish Scott has outlined circumstances that underline how shameful that situation is.

More generally, I thank Tavish Scott for raising the issue. My thoughts are with all those who are connected with the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust at this very sad time—in particular, the warden's family, who sadly lost their home in the fire. As Tavish Scott said, we must be thankful that there were no casualties.

Incidents like this remind us of the bravery and professionalism of our firefighters. I note Tavish Scott's point about islands with no full-time fire cover and we will reflect on that. This was a good example of an effective multi-agency response: the coastguard and Shetland Islands Council both assisted firefighters in reaching the scene. Investigations into the cause of the fire are under way, and we must await the outcome of those inquiries. Thankfully, the wealth of bird census data, which has been collected since 1948, is digitised and safely backed up.

Lastly, I acknowledge the efforts of the Fair Isle community, who, I understand, have raised almost £20,000 in crowdfunding support to help the

warden's family get back on their feet. I assure Tavish Scott and his constituents that the Scottish Government today stands ready to do anything that we reasonably can to help in this very tragic situation.

Dallas Family (Asylum Appeal)

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): My constituents, the Dallas family, have had their appeal for asylum refused. I understand that they fled to the United Kingdom in December 2017, after Mrs Dallas escaped a gun attack in Karachi that was fuelled by a fatwa against her, simply because she did not agree to convert from Christianity to Islam.

It would appear that the Home Office may place an undue weight on local police reports in making such determinations. Does the First Minister share the concern of the European Centre for Law and Justice over police torture of Christians in Pakistan, which makes victims nervous of reporting such incidents? Will the Scottish Government make representations to the UK Home Office asking it to take such concerns into account when cases such as that of the Dallas family are being considered?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Bob Doris for raising that issue. I share the concern of the European Centre for Law and Justice and I strongly condemn—as I am sure everybody in the chamber does—any persecution of people from minority communities. Nobody should ever feel at risk because of their faith or beliefs.

The Scottish Government will always seek to champion human rights and we strongly support international processes such as United Nations scrutiny of individual member states.

Sadly, asylum is reserved to the UK Government and handled by the Home Office. The Scottish Government has consistently urged the Home Office to adopt fair and humane asylum policies and to ensure that full account is taken of all the individual circumstances in every case. We will continue to do that and if there is any assistance that we can offer to the Dallas family, we would be happy to discuss that with Bob Doris.

Fox Hunting (Fife)

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I have been inundated this week with messages from constituents who are quite frankly disgusted—absolutely disgusted—by the images appearing on social media of a fox being ripped apart by the dogs of the Fife fox hunt last weekend.

I have a simple question for the First Minister—should dogs ever be used to hunt a fox?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I absolutely understand the distress that people feel at the images that Mark Ruskell refers to. I share that feeling. As Mark Ruskell knows, following Lord Bony's review, the Government has announced proposals for further restrictions on fox hunting and those proposals will now rightly be debated by Parliament. I know that Mark Ruskell and others—including many on my own benches—who feel very strongly about the issue will make sure that they make their views known as the proposals go through Parliament. That is the right way for Parliament to proceed and I look forward to the debates that will follow.

Climbing Tragedy (Ben Nevis)

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands (Con)): The First Minister will be aware of the tragic loss of life on Ben Nevis earlier this week, in one of the worst climbing accidents in recent history. Will the First Minister join me in expressing condolences to the families of those who died and in paying tribute to the volunteers of Lochaber and Glencoe mountain rescue teams and the coastguard, who worked so courageously in atrocious conditions to rescue the casualties?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I join Donald Cameron in conveying my deepest condolences to the bereaved and the injured and in expressing my deep gratitude, which is echoed, I am sure, across the chamber, to our emergency services, to those in our mountain rescue teams and to the coastguard—to all those people who put their own lives on the line trying to rescue people who get into trouble on our mountains. It is hard to adequately express the debt of gratitude that we owe to those people.

This deeply tragic event is a reminder that, no matter the joy and the beauty of our mountains and our landscape, they can be dangerous places and that has to be taken into account at all times. For now, my condolences go to the bereaved and I express my grateful thanks to all those who took part in the rescue.

Landfill Ban (Biodegradable Waste)

3. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The Scottish National Party Government passed a law that bans sending biodegradable waste to landfill from 2021. However, according to an astonishing report by the Office for Budget Responsibility, which was published yesterday, the Scottish Government has admitted that it can meet that legal deadline only by dumping the waste in England. Is that environmentally responsible?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am not sure that I agree with Willie Rennie's characterisation of the situation. I had an exchange on this issue last week or the week

before with another member. We are committed to the 2021 target. Some councils already have plans in place to meet it. Other councils need to do more work and we are working with councils to responsibly and appropriately deal with waste, as everybody expects us to do.

I am happy to ask the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform to discuss further with Willie Rennie the precise plans that are required so that we can all get behind the target and see it being met.

Willie Rennie: I think that the First Minister should check out the OBR report, because it is all very clear in there.

The Government is making a bit of a habit of breaking its own laws: the SNP national health service waiting times law has been broken for 190,000 patients; the SNP class sizes law has been broken for 4,500 children; and we now find that the SNP Government is about to break its own law on waste.

The First Minister is right to be appalled by the chaotic Conservative Government over Brexit, but her smugness about the incompetence of the Conservative Government cannot hide her incompetence in her own back yard. Law after law has been broken by this failing Government. What sums up her Government best—thousands of pupils overcrowded, hundreds of thousands of patients waiting or a million tonnes of rubbish?

The Presiding Officer: I urge all colleagues to try to be more respectful and not to be personal in their questions.

The First Minister: I think that that ship has sailed with Willie Rennie, Presiding Officer, but keep trying.

On the issue of landfill, I say to Willie Rennie that it is hard to understand how we can be accused of breaking a law, as he puts it, that is not due to even be in force until 2021. We are working towards delivery of that with our local authority partners. It is a very important objective, and it is an important responsibility that will be difficult and complex to deliver on, as many things are, but we will continue to work with our local authority partners, because that is the right thing to do.

As far as NHS waiting times are concerned, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has recently published the waiting times reduction plan. We are investing £850 million to make sure that waiting times are reduced in the areas where there is significant pressure, which comes from an ageing population and greater demand on our national health service.

Willie Rennie also mentioned education. There are more teachers in our schools—there are now more teachers in our primary schools than at any

stage since I was at primary school in 1980. There are, I think, 1,200 more teachers in our schools than there were when I became First Minister.

Unlike the UK Government, which has completely ceased to govern in any meaningful sense, we are getting on with the important issues in our environment, in our health service and in our education system, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

The Presiding Officer: We have some further supplementary questions.

Malawi (Floods)

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the devastating floods that have hit many parts of Malawi in recent days, which have resulted in 45 deaths and 577 injuries. There are at least two missing people, and 150,000 households or 750,000 of the population have been affected. More than 15,000 households have been totally destroyed, as a result of which 187 camps have been established throughout the country. I am sure that the First Minister will agree that that is a horrifying situation.

Given Scotland's, the Scottish Parliament's and the Scottish Government's very close links with Malawi, what can the Scottish Government do to help the people of Malawi at this dreadful time?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Maureen Watt for raising the issue. My condolences go to all those who have been affected by the disaster in Malawi. Our thoughts are with the people of Malawi at what is an incredibly difficult time for them.

I am pleased to tell the chamber that we have just announced the provision of £175,000 to support efforts to ensure safe water supplies in southern Malawi. Funding will be provided through the climate justice fund and will be delivered by our hydro nation partners, who are already working on the ground in southern Malawi to secure water resources that have been affected by the floods. Scottish Government officials will also work closely with partners on the ground to support the relief efforts.

As Maureen Watt indicated, Scotland has a historic relationship with Malawi that goes back 150 years. The people of Malawi are our friends. We do a great deal of work in and for Malawi, from which we ourselves benefit. We stand with the people of Malawi at this difficult time, and we will do everything possible to help.

Police (Pay Award)

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Following the pay deal with teachers, I and some

other members of the Scottish Parliament were contacted last week by a serving police officer from East Kilbride, who wrote:

"Whilst I appreciate that teachers have worked hard and do deserve a pay rise, why is it that NHS staff were given 9% and police officers only 6.5%?"

I remind members that those are the words of a serving police officer. He went on to ask:

"Does the Scottish Government place the value of Police Officers as only half that of School Teachers? Is it that the Government know that because Police Officers cannot strike or take any real industrial action that they are an easy target?"

What would the First Minister say to that police officer and thousands of others?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Parts of those comments were quite disgraceful. I value all public sector workers, and I thank them for the work that they do.

The police pay award is the best award for police officers anywhere in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Police Federation described it as the best pay award in 20 years. If the member thinks that 6.5 per cent is not good enough—and I would love to pay all our public sector workers even more than we are—I wonder what he makes of the 2 per cent that has been awarded to police officers in England by his Tory colleagues in the Westminster Government. It was described by the head of the Metropolitan Police as

"a punch on the nose"

for police officers.

Many of our national health service workers in Scotland get higher pay than NHS workers do in England, because of the value that we attach to the work that they do. Teachers were previously offered a very good pay deal and have now been offered an exceptionally good pay deal. That is a recognition of the good work that they do. I hope that the offer is now accepted.

I value all public sector workers. If people look at any group of public sector workers, they will find that the value that is attached to them by the Scottish Government is much greater than the value that is attached to their counterparts in England by the Tory Government at Westminster.

Spring Statement (United Kingdom Budget)

4. **Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the spring statement. (S5F-03163)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The spring statement underlines again the chaos at the heart of the United Kingdom Government. It showed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has billions of pounds available that he could be

investing in public services but has instead had to set aside to pay for the self-inflicted mess that is Brexit. The UK Government's chaotic approach to Brexit is already undermining the economy. The Office for Budget Responsibility forecast is that UK growth will slow and that, in both 2018 and 2019, business investment will contract. That would represent the weakest period of business investment since the 2008 financial crisis.

That, quite bluntly, is the cost of the UK Government's economic mismanagement. Sadly, there is no sign that the UK Government is about to change course, or at least no sign that it is about to change course voluntarily.

Bruce Crawford: Does the First Minister agree that we should welcome the chancellor's recognition of the strategic importance of the University of Edinburgh and the requirement to invest in the Borderlands? Does she also share my deep disappointment, however, that the chancellor failed to take the opportunity to guarantee that all European Union funding to Scotland—worth over £5 billion in the current EU budget round—will be replaced in full or, indeed, to announce any funding whatsoever? That is simply not good enough from this Tory UK chancellor.

The First Minister: First, I agree with Bruce Crawford's comments about the University of Edinburgh and the Borderlands. The Scottish Government confirmed yesterday that we will invest up to £85 million in the Borderlands growth deal over the next 10 years.

It is deeply disappointing that the UK Government has yet to provide any clarity on future arrangements for EU funding. Proposals on agriculture, fisheries and structural funding are vague and provide no certainty for the future.

The position on the proposed shared prosperity fund is particularly concerning, with no sign of the consultation that was promised in the autumn of last year, nor any meaningful engagement with the devolved Administrations on the matter. It is crucial that the UK Government urgently commits to replacing all funding streams in full and that we receive our fair share of that, to ensure that decisions can be taken in the best interests of Scotland. Funding decisions currently made by Scottish ministers should also continue to be made by Scottish ministers.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): As the First Minister has just said, yesterday's spring statement set out funding of £260 million from the UK Government and £85 million from the Scottish Government for the Borderlands growth deal, delivering a manifesto commitment from the Scottish Conservatives. The deal shows what can be

achieved when both of Scotland's Governments work together.

Cross-border links between the south of Scotland and the north of England are integral and must be enhanced to promote inclusive growth. With that in mind, does the First Minister agree that an extension of the Borders railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle would bring transformational change to the area?

The First Minister: I will come on to substantively agree with the sentiment of Rachael Hamilton's question, but I feel obliged to inject a bit of clarity to the figures that she used at the start of her question. She said that the UK Government has confirmed that it will invest up to £260 million in the Borderlands deal, compared with the £85 million from the Scottish Government. That is true, but it is important to point out that, of the UK Government's £260 million, only £65 million is for the Scottish side; the rest is for England. Nevertheless, given the nature of the Borderlands, it is important that the investment is on both sides.

I am a long-standing supporter of the Borderlands growth deal. I also have a lot of sympathy with what Rachael Hamilton is saying about the Borders railway, which is why the Government has been carrying out feasibility work on the issue. We will continue to support the initiative and I am glad that, given what was announced yesterday, the UK Government is prepared to support it, too.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): The recent Scottish National Party-Green budget resulted in councils being forced to make cuts and to pass them on to local communities. Therefore, we have job cuts in Dundee, the ending of support to the citizens advice bureau in Clackmannanshire and the axing of free school bus travel in Moray. *[James Kelly has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]*

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Why did you vote against the budget?

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

James Kelly: Will any Barnett consequentials that become available following yesterday's spring statement be allocated to local councils, which have needed to inflict pain on local communities?

The First Minister: We have no clarity on whether there will be Barnett consequentials or on the amount of any Barnett consequentials. When we find out that information, we will share it with Parliament.

James Kelly talked about budget decisions. I thought that the Labour group's decision yesterday to vote against an increase in the carers supplement was absolutely and utterly shameful. It

was the only party in the Parliament to vote that way.

More broadly, as James Kelly well knows, the budget for local government has increased, which is positive, but we do not pretend that life is easy for local councils in the current climate. If James Kelly is as concerned as he claims to be about cuts to local government budgets or in any other part of the public sector, is it not time that he started to direct some of that anger at the Tory Government, which is the architect of such cuts? I remind him that, between 2010 and the end of the decade, the Scottish Government's budget will have been cut by £1.9 billion in real terms—that is the reality—and, frankly, what we are living with is as a result of his work with his better together Tory partners in the 2014 referendum.

Retirement (Financial Readiness)

5. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that people are financially ready for their retirement. (S5F-03161)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Unfortunately, matters relating to pensions remain reserved to the United Kingdom Government. However, we are committed to doing what we can, within our current powers, to ensure that people are financially ready for retirement.

We support the development of a labour market that offers good-quality and rewarding jobs for everyone, no matter their age. We also support older people through our financial health check service, which offers free advice to older people to help them to maximise their incomes. We do that work in the face of continuing attacks from the Tory Government on people who are reaching retirement age. Those attacks include the scandal of the thousands of women against state pension inequality who are facing delays in receiving their pensions and the disgraceful cuts to pension credit for mixed-age couples.

I do not know what Michelle Ballantyne's follow-up question will be, but let me warn her that I will take no lectures on pensions from the Tories.

Michelle Ballantyne: Given that I asked a question and was not lecturing, that is quite a sad response. I am heartened to hear that the First Minister is trying to do things for older people who are nearing retirement. However, through my conversations with younger people, I have found that most of them have only a very basic understanding of how their pension works and how to contribute to it during their lives.

Back in 2015, action was taken down south to create teaching materials to explain financial planning to youngsters, following research by the

minister, Steve Webb, which found that teenagers' expectations of a state pension stretched from £800 a week to £9 a week. Is the Scottish Government taking steps to educate school pupils on the importance of their pension and to include learning on that in the curriculum?

The First Minister: To be fair, the question is reasonable. In my original answer, I covered the work that we are doing to ensure that people are financially ready for retirement and it is reasonable to propose that we should also look at how we educate young people is. The matter is reserved, but we acknowledge our responsibility to contribute to it.

I ask Michelle Ballantyne to reflect on this point. If we say that we need to educate young people more on saving for their retirement, we should wonder what example has been set for them when more than 2 million women paid their national insurance contributions in full, in the expectation that they would receive their state pension at a certain age, only to be robbed of that pension entitlement by the UK Government.

If we want to encourage and convince young people to save for their retirement, we must start treating our current pensioners with more dignity and respect than the Government that is currently in charge of pensions is doing. I hope that Michelle Ballantyne will make that case forcibly to her Westminster colleagues.

Mesh Survivors (Meetings with Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport)

6. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government has taken following the recent meeting between the health secretary and mesh survivors. (S5F-03147)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Last week, the health secretary and the chief medical officer met mesh campaigners and Neil Findlay to discuss their concerns about access to specialist services for mesh removal. As the health secretary set out in a written answer on Friday, we are listening carefully to those concerns. We have asked a group of senior medical managers to look at a range of options for improving the care and support for the women, which will draw on international expertise in transvaginal mesh surgery. The group will draw on academics and other advisers, as well as advocates for the women who have been affected. The group's first meeting will be held as soon as possible, and Jeane Freeman has committed to writing to the campaigners within one month to set out the probable timescales for the work.

Neil Findlay: At the meeting that the First Minister mentioned, mesh survivors made an emotional appeal for the Government to take up the offer from a top US surgeon to come to Scotland to carry out pioneering mesh removal and to train surgeons here. On Friday, the Government issued an ambiguous press release that hinted at progress but lacked clarity.

I seek a clear and straightforward answer on the mesh survivors' behalf. When will Scottish mesh survivors have access to mesh removal procedures of the highest global standard? Will the Government now accept the offer from Dr Veronikis to come to Scotland and help mesh-injured women here?

The First Minister: Neil Findlay raises an important issue. Jeane Freeman listened carefully to those she met on Friday and, since then, has done everything that she told the campaigners she would do. As I said in my original answer, she has asked a group of medical directors and senior clinical managers to look at a range of options to improve care and support, which is the right way forward.

As for when there will be more detail, Jeane Freeman will write to campaigners within a month, setting out the next steps. That is the proper way to take the matter forward.

Decisions to remove mesh are made by a patient in consultation with a clinical specialist, who shares all the relevant information and provides support.

There is a commitment to taking forward the proposals that were made on Friday and to doing that in the proper way. I hope that we will have Neil Findlay's support as we do so.

Drug Deaths

7. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking in response to the reported increasing number of drug deaths. (S5F-03157)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Our national alcohol and drug strategy, which was published last November, sets out a range of measures to prevent drug-related harm. The strategy's focus is on improving how we support those who need support and how we address the wider issues that affect them. It outlines how we will work with and fund partners to strengthen links between traditional addiction services and initiatives in housing, mental health services and the third sector. That is backed by an additional £20 million a year for drug and alcohol services. The investment has been allocated to support new approaches that respond in a more joined-up and

person-centred way to the needs of those who are most at risk.

John Finnie: The current approach clearly is not working, First Minister. There were 934 drug-related deaths in 2017 and, sadly, everything suggests that the figure for 2018 may be significantly higher. We are facing a public health crisis. Scottish ministers have the power to establish a public inquiry into any matter in which there is a large loss of life and/or serious health and safety issues. This situation clearly meets both of those criteria. Will the First Minister urgently establish a statutory inquiry into Scotland's drug deaths crisis and commit to acting on its findings in order to end this on-going tragedy?

The First Minister: I absolutely agree about the seriousness of the issue. I am not immediately persuaded that a public inquiry would be the best way forward, but, of course, we will consider any proposal that is made.

Any death from drugs is one too many. Of course, many of the people whom we, sadly, see dying from drugs have lived with alcohol and drug use for a long time and become more vulnerable as they grow older. The 2018 drug-related deaths report showed that there had been fewer deaths among the under-25s than in the previous year. Recent reports also highlight falling heroin use, particularly in the under-25 age group. There is absolutely no room for complacency, but that is an important contextual point to make.

We want to look at different ways of addressing the issues. For example, we have supported Glasgow City Council in its request to set up medically supervised safer consumption facilities. We want to treat the issues much more as public health issues, bringing together different agencies. As we do that, we are, of course, prepared to consider any proposal that is made, and I will consider the one that John Finnie has made today.

The Presiding Officer: That brings us to the end of First Minister's question time. I say to colleagues that, despite making good progress in the past couple of weeks, the questions and answers were too long this afternoon. We need to revisit that, please, otherwise I will have to cut off members. *[Laughter.]* That was a rather unfortunate pun, I think. *[Interruption.]* It is typical of the press to pick up on that.

Before we move to members' business, we will have a short suspension, to allow the chamber and the gallery to clear, and for members to change seats.

12:47

Meeting suspended.

12:48

On resuming—

Longhope Lifeboat Disaster (50th Anniversary)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I ask the members of the public who are leaving the gallery to do so quietly, as the meeting has resumed and we are moving on to a debate.

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-15935, in the name of Liam McArthur, on the 50th anniversary of the Longhope lifeboat disaster. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Longhope lifeboat tragedy, which took place on 17 March 1969; recalls with great sadness that all eight crew members on board the lifeboat, TGB, perished as it capsized in heavy seas after responding to a call from the Wick Coastguard to assist the Liberian-registered vessel, Irene, which was in difficulty and drifting 21 miles east of Duncansby Head; understands that, while the Irene was finally driven onto rocks at Grimness in South Ronaldsay, and the crew brought safely ashore, TGB and her crew were not so fortunate, with the vessel being discovered capsized four miles south west of Tor Ness on 18 March; recognises the shock felt by the whole Orkney community at such a tragic loss of life, but in particular acknowledges the devastating impact on the small community of Brims in Longhope on the island of Hoy, which suffered the loss of a quarter of its population that night; believes that the tragedy was compounded by the fact that fathers and their sons were among those who perished; pays tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by Coxswain Dan Kirkpatrick, Second Coxswain Jimmy Johnston, Bowman Ray Kirkpatrick, Mechanic Robert B Johnston, Assistant Mechanic Jimmy Swanson, and lifeboat men Jack Kirkpatrick, Robert Johnston and Eric McFadyen; agrees wholeheartedly with the sentiment on the memorial to all eight crew members "that greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his fellow men"; notes that the current crew includes relatives of the crew from 1969, and that they, along with others, help run the Longhope Lifeboat Museum, which provides a fitting reminder of the disaster, as well as the life-saving work carried out by the crew of the TGB; wishes those from the local community involved in organising events to mark this difficult anniversary all the best, and extends its heartfelt thanks to lifeboat crews across the country for the selfless work that they do on behalf of the island and coastal communities they serve with such bravery and distinction.

12:49

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Dan Kirkpatrick, coxswain; James Johnston, second coxswain; Ray Kirkpatrick, bowman; Robert B Johnston, mechanic; Jimmy Swanson, assistant mechanic; and Jack Kirkpatrick, Robbie Johnston and Eric McFadyen, lifeboatmen: those are the names of the eight men who perished when the Longhope lifeboat TGB capsized in high winds

and heavy seas in the Pentland Firth on the night of 17 March 1969. Fifty years on, neither the significance nor the poignancy of that tragic event have diminished.

It is not possible in seven minutes to do justice either to what happened or to the bravery of those who lost their lives that night, but it is right for Parliament to have an opportunity to mark the anniversary and to pay tribute to Dan Kirkpatrick and his crew. I am therefore grateful to the many MSPs from all parties who signed my motion, which has allowed the debate to take place, and to colleagues who are in the chamber this afternoon.

There have, of course, been many tragic events in which the loss of life has been considerably greater, but the fact that the eight men died in the selfless act of trying to save others helps, I think, to explain why it had, and continues to have, such a profound impact on the public consciousness.

However, it would do a disservice to the memory of Dan Kirkpatrick and his crew to focus solely on what happened that fateful night. They all had lives well beyond their involvement with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, but even with that, their wider achievements deserve recognition. The crew had shown its worth and proved its mettle over the years by saving many lives and receiving numerous awards for bravery. Indeed, Dan Kirkpatrick was due to have travelled to London in the week following the disaster to receive an RNLI silver clasp and the award for the bravest act of lifesaving in 1968, in acknowledgement of heroics that he and his crew performed in saving 15 men aboard the Grimsby trawler *Ross Puma*. It was their third such honour. He would have vigorously rejected any such suggestion, but Dan Kirkpatrick was something of a celebrity. As well as the RNLI silver medal and clasps, he received the British empire medal and even appeared on "This Is Your Life" with Eamonn Andrews in 1963.

That is all a far cry from the events of Monday 17 March 1969. The lifeboat was launched just before 8 pm in response to a call for help from the Liberian cargo ship, the *SS Irene*. It was reported to be in difficulties east of Orkney, apparently out of control and drifting in a south-easterly force 9 gale that had been blowing for days, and which was creating mountainous waves of up to 60 feet. As it turned out, the stricken vessel was to run aground at Grimness in South Ronaldsay, where the crew of 17 were brought safely to shore by the Broughness and Deerness coastguard teams in a textbook rescue by breeches buoy, for which those involved were later honoured.

However, amid the relief there was growing anxiety about the fate of the Longhope lifeboat. She was spotted by the Pentland Skerries lighthousekeepers around 9.30 pm, but radio

contact with the TGB had been lost an hour or so after she launched. As those ashore clung ever more desperately to the hope that it was just a radio fault, a massive air, sea and land search operation got under way. It continued all through the night and into the following day until, shortly after 1 pm, the Thurso lifeboat sent word that it had found the upturned TGB four miles west of Tor Ness Point on Hoy.

Precisely what happened will never be known, but a fatal accident inquiry in June 1969 heard evidence that it was likely that the mountainous seas broke two windows in the front of the wheelhouse, allowing water to rush in. The coxswain was swept from the wheel and so lost control of the boat, which then went broadside to the sea and capsized. The vessel was towed to Scrabster harbour where it was righted, and the bodies of Dan Kirkpatrick and six of his crew were retrieved. Sadly, Jim Swanson's body was never recovered.

Needless to say, expressions of sympathy, condolence and support were quick to flood in from all over the country and all parts of the globe. An appeal fund for the families soon exceeded £100,000, and the funeral and memorial services in Longhope and St Magnus cathedral drew thousands of mourners and well-wishers.

However, as *The Orcadian* reported,

"The whole of Orkney sorrows over this terrible calamity, but only in Brims itself and Longhope can the utter tragedy of it be felt".

Brims is a small township that, at the time, numbered 30 people. The catastrophic loss of a quarter of its population at one stroke is quite unimaginable. More than that, the eight men who lost their lives included two fathers, each with two sons on board, which prompted the local MP Jo Grimond to question whether the RNLi should be allowing fathers and their sons to be going out on the same lifeboat on such operations. All told, the community of Brims was left with seven widows and 10 fatherless children.

However, as Howard Hazell explains in his fascinating account of events,

"there was no recrimination or bitterness from anyone who'd lost their menfolk."

He quotes Margaret Kirkpatrick, who was married to Dan for 29 years. She said:

"I have no regret about the boat being lost on its way to help others, because that is why it was there."

She added,

"I am happy that the lives of the crew of the Irene have been saved".

Later that year, Margaret was named Scotswoman of the year at a ceremony in Glasgow.

Her sentiments were shared by the rest of the community in Brims and Longhope, who were anxious that the lifeboat be replaced without delay. When that happened in August 1970, albeit initially on a temporary basis, local lifeboat secretary Jackie Groat said:

"the arrival of another boat is what we have been working and waiting for. It is already bringing a new outlook to the community and a much needed uplift. With no lifeboat here we have felt something vital missing in our midst."

Fast forward 50 years, and how fitting it is that Kevin Kirkpatrick carries the mantle of coxswain. I am in no doubt at all that his grandfather, Dan, and his father and uncle would have been proud beyond belief. It just so happens that Kevin's wife, Karen, like her husband, also lost her grandfather, father and uncle in the tragedy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, their son, Jack, and daughter, Stella, are crew members in Kirkwall and Longhope respectively. It is clearly in the blood.

Looking ahead to the commemorations this weekend, they will be an opportunity to reflect, pay tribute and give thanks. As Kevin Kirkpatrick has said:

"What happened that night is part of our history. We want to mark the 50th anniversary as we want to remember them, probably in a quiet way as that is normally the way we do it."

Ahead of the commemorations, I am delighted that Longhope lifeboat museum is being refurbished, following a remarkable public response to an appeal for donations. It really is a wonderful facility.

Seventeen months after the fatal capsizing, as the TGB returned to service in County Donegal, a memorial to the eight men who lost their lives was unveiled by the Queen Mother. At the ceremony, the Rev Ewan Traill spoke powerfully of the disaster and its victims. He said:

"These men were not saints, but essentially they were good men. They had qualities, which constituted greatness. As a crew, they were unsurpassed anywhere in the world for efficiency, judgment, for loyalty and for courage."

Inscribed on the base of the memorial are these words:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lays down his life for his fellow men".

They were truly the heroes of Longhope. I am pleased that Parliament has a chance to honour them today, and I look forward to hearing colleagues' contributions.

12:56

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I thank Liam McArthur for lodging the motion for this members' business

debate. As soon as I saw it, I knew that I wanted to speak in the debate.

I remember the tragedy very well, and all the media sources in our house being on for any update about it. That was because my uncle—I think that his job title would have been chief engineer of the RNLI—had the job of going around all the lifeboat stations in the northern half of Scotland to check the lifeboats' seaworthiness and to give them regular services. He knew all the lifeboatmen particularly well, as he was an Orkney man himself. With the name Alec Cursiter, it was obvious that he was an Orkney man. He was from Stromness.

I remember us listening for any update that we could get about the Longhope lifeboat disaster, and I remember my uncle being very badly affected by it. As I said, he knew all the crew very well because he had been born and brought up in Orkney, although he lived in Aberdeen at that time. He had to dash up to Orkney. I remember seeing him on television a few hours after the tragedy, while people were waiting for news of what had happened to the lifeboat. As Liam McArthur said, there has been a Longhope lifeboat in Orkney since 1874, so the TGB was replaced very quickly after the tragedy.

Many members of the Brims community were affected by the disaster. Shortly afterwards—within the year—there was a similar disaster when the Fraserburgh lifeboat was lost one wintry January morning while responding to a call to assist a Danish fishing vessel. It seems that the same thing happened to that lifeboat, so the two tragedies led to the design of lifeboats being changed shortly afterwards, so that they were self-righting vessels. Fortunately, the number of RNLI and lifeboat disasters has reduced significantly since then, but it is unfortunate that it was those disasters that led to new vessels being designed.

It is important to remember that the RNLI is a voluntary organisation. I take my hat off to all the people who are prepared to put their lives at risk in pursuit of helping others. We should never forget that, and we should donate to the RNLI whenever we can.

13:00

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank Liam McArthur for lodging the motion for debate in Parliament. It is on a matter of great poignancy for our islands.

On 17 March 1969, if you looked out across the Pentland Firth, you would see a broad strait that had, for several days, been battered by gales, lashed by heavy rain and had snow hurled across it by the winds. My home overlooks the island of Hoy, with Longhope tucked behind. I have often

seen how changeable that environment can be—the tides are among the fastest and strongest anywhere on earth. That energy, which today we recognise as a power source to be harnessed, makes for an inhospitable climate for seafarers.

That night, the lifeboatmen who set out to assist another vessel—the Irene—did not come home. Their boat was of wooden construction and very different to the lifeboats of today. Such vessels were strong, but unlike many modern lifeboats, they could not self-right if they capsized.

Visibility at the time was virtually nil and the waves were 60 feet high. As day broke, lifeboats from Kirkwall, Stronsay, Stromness and Thurso searched the area. The bodies of all but one of Longhope's lifeboatmen were recovered, still with their boat. The eighth man, James Swanson, was never found. The islands mourned.

Among the names of those eight men lost, we see three Johnstons—James, Robert and Robert—and three Kirkpatricks, who were Dan, Jack and Ray. Eric McFadyen was the final name of those who died. Orkney is a small place. Such tragedies are felt not just in the homes and in the streets, but across our islands. For those two families, the tragedy must have been hardly bearable. As Liam McArthur said, the population of Brims, the small community on Hoy where the lifeboat was launched, was decimated.

Nevertheless, even today, we find the relatives of those men still faithfully serving the RNLI in Orkney. Today, another Kirkpatrick—Kevin—serves as coxswain at the Longhope lifeboat station. He lost his father, grandfather and uncle that night. However, as he says,

“being in the lifeboat is a way of life. It is in us, it is my blood”.

My home overlooks Scapa Flow, which is one of the world's great natural harbours. When bad weather threatens, it is a refuge, even for some of the largest ships in the world. Anyone who stands on the cliffs at Yesnaby or travels to the south isles in a storm will understand just how ferocious the seas around Orkney can be. No-one who lives in an island community like Orkney needs to be persuaded of the importance of the RNLI. It is part and parcel of the heritage of the islands and touches so many of us directly. When I was young, my mother chaired the local ladies' lifeboat guild. From an early age, I helped fundraising efforts to support the work of lifeboats in Orkney. More important was that I learned of the commitment of the men, and of their sacrifice and bravery.

We acknowledge the bravery of those men today—not just on that ill-fated voyage, but in every other launch when they put their lives in danger to help and rescue others. That night was

not the first night on which a Longhope lifeboat crew was far from home in challenging weather conditions, and it was not the last. Today, there is still a lifeboat at Longhope, well over two centuries since it was inaugurated. The crew faces the same conditions that Orcadian lifeboat crews have battled time and again, over the centuries.

Outside Orkney, lifeboat stations can be found at many other coastal and island communities across the British isles. As members have mentioned, those communities also have a long heritage and have had their fair share of tragedies. Still, brave men and women, who are self-funded and mostly volunteers, venture out in the face of grave risks, simply to help others. They share their successes and, when tragedy hits, they mourn together.

That is why it is fitting that, to mark the 50th anniversary, the RNLI flag will fly at half-mast at the organisation's headquarters in Poole. It will also be lowered at lifeboat stations around the country. As always, the crews will remain on call, ready to respond, as they have for centuries. That is the most fitting tribute to those eight men from Orkney, who did not come home.

13:04

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I, too, congratulate Liam McArthur on securing the debate, and on his moving tribute. He has brought the Longhope lifeboat disaster to the attention of Parliament a number of times and it is therefore fitting that he marks its 50th anniversary here.

The disaster devastated Hoy, especially the small community of Brims, which experienced such a great loss. Eight people lost to a small community not only creates heartbreak but can break a community. The people who were lost were essential to their communities not only for their work on the lifeboat; they had other roles to fulfil.

To lose a quarter of your community in one night is difficult to come back from, and it is a testament to the strength of those who remained that they have supported the families and gone on to provide a fitting tribute to those who were lost. The personal loss was enormous, too, as we have heard. To lose one family member is tragic; to lose generations is unimaginable.

The events surrounding the tragedy are well known. As others have said, the crew of the TGB did what all lifeboat crews do when they responded to the call for help from the Irene. There was a storm and the Irene was adrift in the Pentland Firth, a notoriously dangerous stretch of water. The conditions were atrocious and on the way home the lifeboat capsized. It is not clear what happened, because all hands were lost.

The tragedy brings home to us the sacrifice that is made by those who provide voluntary emergency services. Lifeboat crews and mountain rescue teams are very similar, given the dangers that they face while doing what is largely voluntary work. They love the sea or the mountains and that motivates them to do that work.

Since the tragedy, lifeboats have been developed to be self-righting, as Maureen Watt said. If they capsize they will right themselves, so the people in the boat have a chance of survival. That makes their lifesaving work a little safer for them, but it remains extremely dangerous. Trying to get close to other vessels in high seas and being out on deck in perilous conditions is still putting their own lives at risk. It is therefore right that we mark with this debate the sacrifice not just of those lost on the TGB but of all those lost trying to save others.

I also pay tribute to the work of the community in Orkney, which has more than achieved its target for the maintenance and repair of the Longhope lifeboat museum. That is a memorial to the crew of the TGB and other brave lifeboat crews. The target was a lot more than the amount that the community originally had to raise to establish the museum, but they have achieved it. There is also a memorial in the Kirkhope cemetery among the graves of those who died that night.

As Liam McArthur said, the TGB was recovered and towed into Scrabster by another crew. I can only imagine how they felt. Although they recover crew and boats as part of their normal activities, doing that for your own must be very difficult. What also seems strange to me and difficult to contemplate is that the TGB returned to service in Ireland. I wonder how the lifeboat crews sailing on her felt. That said, she continued to provide a lifesaving service and is now in the Scottish maritime museum in Irvine.

The tragedy led to the RNLI introducing self-righting lifeboats. That means that the crew's lives were not lost in vain and I am sure that many lives were saved as a result of that development in the design of boats. However, we must never forget the risks that crews continue to face. We use this debate to thank them for that and to thank all the people who volunteer to save lives in very dangerous circumstances.

13:08

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

I congratulate Liam McArthur on bringing the motion to the chamber and on his very fine speech, which was a fitting tribute to the community for which he is the constituency member.

I was 12 years old when the disaster occurred and living in rural Lochaber. Lots of communities had disasters. I recall a multiple fatal accident involving north-east fishermen who were returning home that had a significant impact on the communities there. I also recall the community grief when police officers Detective Sergeant Evan Lumsden and Constable Iain Ritchie were killed in the Caledonian canal. They were part of the volunteer Inverness burgh police sub-aqua team that was searching the canal locks for a missing person. Both officers became trapped and lost their lives.

It was a matter of only four months later, on 17 March 1969, that the Longhope disaster occurred. Members have vividly outlined the circumstances of the capsizing of the vessel that was going to the aid of the Liberian vessel and of its entire crew losing their lives.

Communities deal with tragedies in different ways and a lot of people were affected by that tragedy. Until I spoke to a member of my staff, Linda, I was not aware that her father-in-law, Ian Williamson, was the policeman there. There were also medical professionals and coastguards there, so the effects would have been wide-ranging.

Earlier this year, the Parliament held a debate on the centenary of the lolaire disaster, and many members commented on how the communities in Lewis and Harris dealt with grief, which was by not talking about it. What is apparent is that those communities were never the same again, which is the same in Orkney.

A number of members alluded to the weather conditions at the time of the disaster. There was a force 9 gale, near zero visibility and a spring tide that resulted in waves more than 60 feet high. I have reflected on that, because 60 feet is two and a half times the height of a house, which is an astonishing statistic.

Members have talked about a positive outcome of the disaster, which was the design change for the vessels, which are now self-righting.

I am a big fan of the Canadian folk musician Gordon Lightfoot. Members might be familiar with the song "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald", which was about a similar and much celebrated tragedy in the Great Lakes in 1975. At his concerts, he often talks about how many vessels perished the same year—48 ships were lost—although only one is remembered in that song. In Longhope, there is a unique situation in that the community will not allow the circumstances of the loss to be forgotten.

Maureen Watt talked about people keeping abreast of the news. People today struggle to understand that there was not the same flow of news that there is now. Then, the news came from

radio, television—to a lesser extent—and newspapers.

We occupy islands off the coast of continental Europe and we have many treacherous waters. However, there are none more treacherous than the Pentland Firth, which is why we seek to harness it. We need volunteers at sea and on land to support that, and I am sure that those who lost their lives would be proud of their descendants for continuing that work.

I was brought up in a household that placed great significance on helping others and valued public service and efforts for the common good. The men at Longhope and their successors in the RNLI there, and elsewhere, display all that is best about humanity. Their legacy lives on and I thank Orkney's constituency MSP, Liam McArthur, for giving Parliament the opportunity to remember their sacrifice. The tragic loss of life and the community's loss will not be forgotten.

13:12

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands (Con)): I thank Liam McArthur for bringing forward this debate. Like other members, I pay my respects to those men who lost their lives in March 1969. My thoughts go to their descendants and to the community of Brims in Longhope, on the island of Hoy.

They say that time is a healer, but many local communities who experience such tragedies never quite heal. Having seen the heartfelt commemorations in Lewis recently for the lolaire tragedy, which John Finnie mentioned, it is abundantly clear to me that no community ever truly recovers from such a tragedy, however distant in the past, and tight-knit island and coastal communities seem especially affected.

As Liam McArthur might know, I stood as a candidate in Orkney and Shetland in the 2015 election—unsuccessfully, clearly. It might be an obvious point to make, but, in that election campaign, the importance of the sea in Orkney was brought home to me. Travelling across the islands and speaking to locals, I heard that the sea is very much part of people's lives, whether they work offshore in oil and gas, are part of the fishing fleet or are on call to go out in a lifeboat to potentially save lives. Clearly, the sea poses dangers as well as many rewards.

I join other members in paying tribute to those who work on our seas and, in the context of the debate, to the RNLI, including the thousands of people who volunteer. RNLI-operated lifeboat crews provide a 24-hour rescue service in the United Kingdom, and they have saved more than 142,000 lives since 1824.

The RNLI also provides education to local communities. Its community safety teams explain the risks and share safety knowledge with anyone going out to sea or to the coast, and the organisation supports people around the world to prevent drowning in areas where there is a high risk.

I am sure that, when we are out and about in our local communities, many of us—probably all of us—find that it is rare that we do not see an RNLI sticker on a car window or on someone's door. Such is the public support for the RNLI. As Maureen Watt said, it is important that we support that terrific organisation in any way that we can.

Maureen Watt mentioned that it was heartening to find that one of the lessons that was learned following the disaster was the need for the development of self-righting lifeboats. They prevented the loss of life in 1979, when two vessels, from Barra and Islay respectively, were deployed to respond to emergencies. Both capsized, only to successfully right again with no loss of life to the crew.

As with all maritime disasters, it is right and fitting that we remember those who put their lives at risk. I was very moved by the fact that, as Liam McArthur said in his speech, Kevin Kirkpatrick, the grandson of one of the people who perished, now volunteers for the lifeboat crew. I am delighted to hear that some of the descendants of the eight crewmen will remember them by playing the song "The Heroes of Longhope" at the commemoration—what a fitting tribute.

I thank Liam McArthur again for securing this debate to allow MSPs across the chamber to join with the community of Brims in Longhope on Hoy, and to remember those courageous men who were, so sadly, taken away.

13:16

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): I begin by joining the members who have congratulated Liam McArthur on bringing this debate to the chamber. It is entirely fitting that Scotland's Parliament should set aside time to reflect on the night of 17 March 1969 and the Longhope tragedy and—alongside that—have an opportunity to highlight the heroism of the crews of the RNLI.

I pay tribute to Mr McArthur for his moving opening speech and to others for their thoughtful contributions. The 50th anniversary of that dreadful tragedy, in which eight men lost their lives while trying to save the crew of the SS Irene—coxswain Daniel Kirkpatrick; second coxswain James Johnston; bowman Ray Kirkpatrick; mechanic Robert Johnston; assistant mechanic James Swanson; and crewmen Jack Kirkpatrick,

Robert Johnston and Eric McFadyen—serves to remind us all of the price that has been paid by our coastal communities in helping seafarers in peril, because it is from the ranks of the ordinary men and women who live in the communities that are dotted around the coastline that RNLI crews are drawn.

It is a hugely laudable and frankly staggering statistic that, over the 195 years since the formation of the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck—as it was originally titled—the RNLI has saved more than 142,000 lives, as Donald Cameron highlighted. Alongside that sits the sobering statistic that 778 crew have paid the ultimate price while seeking to rescue fellow mariners. Behind that second figure lie so many tragedies that have devastated the communities that crewed the lifeboats concerned.

Maureen Watt reminded us of the Fraserburgh lifeboat disaster. My constituency was touched by another such event, in the loss, 65 years ago, of the Robert Lindsay lifeboat, which was based in Arbroath, as it returned to harbour from a rescue mission. Six crew perished and the tragedy remains woven into the fabric of the port and, indeed, the county. So, too, with the tiny, 30-strong community of Brims in Longhope, which suffered the loss of a quarter of its population with the capsizing of the TGB in 1969.

The Longhope tragedy was made particularly awful by the close and lasting family connections within the crew. As we have heard, there will be a commemoration of the tragedy on Sunday 17 March at the Longhope bay museum. As Liam McArthur revealed, the organisation of the commemoration has been led by Kevin Kirkpatrick, coxswain of the current Longhope lifeboat, who lost his father, uncle and grandfather on the night of the tragedy. Kevin's wife, Karen, lost her grandfather and uncle as well—two families as well as a small community left utterly and unimaginably devastated.

The RNLI calls its crew members

"ordinary people doing extraordinary things."

That is right. When conditions are of a type from which most of us would retreat, the RNLI crews head straight into them, because someone is in peril and needs help. The comparisons with mountain rescue services that Rhoda Grant drew—and perhaps those with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service—are obvious. That point was reinforced for me last year when I joined the current Arbroath lifeboat crew for a joint training exercise with the local fire and rescue team. Those are two different emergency services, but there is a degree of commonality around the circumstances in which they are so often called into action.

Like any charity, the RNLI is heavily dependent on fundraising and donation. It is pleasing that Scottish Government officials have a long-lasting and continuing commitment to supporting an official civil service charity called the Communications and Public Service Lifeboat Fund. The fund started in 1866, when a handful of civil servants decided that they wanted to buy a lifeboat for the RNLI and raised the £300 that it took to do so then. All moneys raised by the fund since then have gone to help the RNLI's life-saving work.

Down the years, the charity has supported the purchase of 53 lifeboats as well as crew kit, the provision of lifeguard training and the refurbishing of lifeboat stations. The public service charity is the RNLI's longest-standing supporter. The fund celebrated its 150th anniversary by raising £1.1 million for a Shannon class lifeboat—the RNLI's latest design—with the efforts of Scottish Government staff contributing more than any other single Government body.

That has been followed by a new appeal, which aims to reduce drowning in Scotland, the UK and overseas. Here in Scotland, children and young people are being helped to stay safe in and around water through a project in Fife, where RNLI lifeguarding is also being supported through the on-going appeal.

The nature of the RNLI's role has evolved over its 195-year history, but the selflessness, courage and dedication that ran through the crew of the TGB when it set off that fateful day remain the characteristics demanded of crews today.

In marking the 50th anniversary of the Longhope lifeboat disaster, which Liam McArthur has afforded us the opportunity to do today, let us acknowledge, as Rhoda Grant called on us to do, the enormous debt owed to those who put themselves at risk to assist seafarers in trouble around Scotland's mainland coast and islands.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate.

13:22

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Government Business and Constitutional Relations

Prime Minister (Discussions)

1. **Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last held discussions with the Prime Minister. (S5O-02989)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The First Minister spoke to the Prime Minister by phone on Tuesday afternoon, when the First Minister reinforced the Scottish Government's position that article 50 should be extended to allow time for a second referendum on membership of the European Union.

Linda Fabiani: It is certainly the case that a lot has happened, even since Tuesday. When is a further discussion with the Prime Minister about Scotland's future likely to take place? Does the cabinet secretary believe that the Prime Minister is in control of events? Is she listening to the increasing number of calls for an extension to article 50?

Michael Russell: I see no sign that the Prime Minister is listening. She is not even listening to her own party, which is voting against her. The way in which this issue has gone is a tragedy. We are now within a fortnight of the expected date of Brexit, and there is little sign of agreement.

There is a real democratic issue if the Prime Minister keeps coming back to the House of Commons with the same proposal. That is wearing people down, and it is government by attrition, not democracy. I would be happy—as, I am sure, the First Minister would be—to enter into substantive and meaningful discussions with the Prime Minister about how she might change the position that she is in and change her red lines. That should have happened months—some might say years—ago. It has not happened, and I do not think that the Prime Minister is the type of person who can make it happen now.

European Union Withdrawal Negotiations Debate (United Kingdom Government Response)

2. **Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what response it has received from the UK Government to the simultaneous debates of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly that voted to

reject the withdrawal agreement and a no-deal Brexit. (S5O-02990)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): We have received no response from the UK Government. After the various fiascos in the House of Commons last night, including the extraordinary spectacle of the Prime Minister yet again voting against what she had proposed, it is not even clear whether there is an agreed UK Government position. That is an absolutely extraordinary situation, given that there is little more than two weeks to go before the UK is due to leave the European Union.

The views of this Parliament and those of the Welsh Assembly have consistently been ignored throughout the Brexit process. Large sections of Northern Irish opinion have also been ignored, because the Prime Minister has put herself in hock to the Democratic Unionist Party. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is still trying deliberately to run down the clock to a deeply damaging exit from the EU, but we will do everything that we can to prevent that disaster.

Clare Adamson: I share the cabinet secretary's frustration that a handful of DUP MPs have more sway over the future of the countries of the UK than the Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly has. The First Minister and the Parliament have been ignored during the Brexit process. Does that not demonstrate the need for Scotland to go its own way as an independent country?

Michael Russell: I recall the wise observation of the late, great Donnie Stewart—a former president of the Scottish National Party and MP for the Western Isles—who said that if every person in Scotland got the opportunity to spend 30 minutes in the gallery of the House of Commons, they would be in no doubt about voting for independence. Again and again, we have seen how chaotic the House of Commons system is and how chaotically MPs are being led—or, frankly, not being led—by a Prime Minister in name only. As I said, she has put herself and her Government in hock to extremists in the DUP and, in particular, in the European research group. Those people will never be satisfied with any resolution, and they certainly will not be satisfied until they have got their own destructive way for their own destructive ends.

Many people, including the Scottish Government, have repeatedly told the Prime Minister that she should have been talking constructively to others; instead, she has chosen to pander to the worst elements in her party, and the consequences are there for everyone to see.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): It is disappointing that the UK Government has not responded to the

Parliament's joint work with the National Assembly for Wales. I am pleased that the Scottish Government engaged in that initiative and I hope that we will work closely with our colleagues in Wales on other issues, as well as continuing to work with them on Brexit.

Will the cabinet secretary have a word in the First Minister's ear to ask her to stop using the Welsh Government as one of her regular diversionary shields when she is in trouble at First Minister's question time? In fact, we should learn from the Welsh Government, which is doing tremendous work.

Michael Russell: My engagement with the Welsh Government has been on the business of Brexit, and I have made it clear that that engagement has been and continues to be constructive. However, that does not prevent the Welsh Government or the First Minister of Wales from criticising the Scottish National Party, which I believe happened at the Labour Party conference at the weekend, and it does not inhibit the First Minister of Scotland and others from criticising the Welsh Government.

However, it is important to say that, on Brexit, we have worked constructively with the Welsh Government, as we have worked constructively with Mr Findlay and the Labour Party in Scotland. Our aim is the same, and I hope that the Labour Party will endorse and publicly press for a second referendum, which would help enormously. We have worked well with the Welsh Government on Brexit and I hope that we will continue to do so.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Questions 3 and 8 have been grouped.

European Union Withdrawal Preparations (Barnett Consequentials)

3. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how much of the £55 million it received in Barnett consequentials for 2019-20 to prepare for leaving the EU has been allocated and to what. (S5O-02991)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): The £55 million has been distributed in its entirety across portfolios. Particular consideration has been given to the areas that will be heavily affected by Brexit: the economy, transport, food and drink, medicines, agriculture and the rural economy. Those portfolios are responsible for managing their preparations within their total budgets.

Jackie Baillie: I am pleased to hear the minister's response. He will be aware that last year's budget included £37 million to address the effects of Brexit, but I understand that only £27 million of that money was spent and that none of it went to Police Scotland, which was not mentioned

in the list that he gave. The minister will be aware that Police Scotland is reporting that there will be a significant risk if additional funding is not secured to recruit new officers to deal with the consequences of Brexit.

The £55 million was allocated on the basis of civil contingencies in the event of a no-deal scenario. Is the money contingent on there being no deal or can we keep it anyway, which would be helpful? Will the minister consider urgently making an allocation from that amount to Police Scotland?

Graeme Dey: I will try to cover that as best I can. Of the £37 million, £27 million was allocated to specific Brexit-related activity in the Scottish Government and its agencies, and the remaining £10 million was spent by portfolios as part of the overall budget settlement. All portfolio areas have benefited from all the EU consequentials that have been allocated via the budget, but none of the Scottish Government's 2018-19 and 2019-20 EU consequentials arose from increased United Kingdom Government spending on policing. Of course, as with all public bodies, dialogue continues with Police Scotland.

Brexit Preparations (Funding)

8. **Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how much it has received from the United Kingdom Government to prepare for Brexit, and how much of this has been spent. (S5O-02996)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): As I said, a sum was provided last year, and there is £55 million this year. All those sums have been or are being allocated.

Kezia Dugdale: Yesterday, the chief executive of Morrisons reported a 7 per cent increase in the purchase of basic medicines and toilet paper; Tesco and Marks and Spencer have also increased their orders of tinned goods. Is the minister stockpiling anything ahead of Brexit? What is the Government's advice to consumers ahead of the UK leaving the European Union? Should they take steps to stockpile the basics?

Graeme Dey: As a responsible Government, we do not advise people to stockpile. We are doing considerable work to assess the challenges that will be faced as a consequence of Brexit, particularly a no-deal Brexit—if that is where we end up.

The Cabinet sub-committee on Scottish Government resilience, in conjunction with local authorities, for example, is doing considerable work that covers the full range of issues that we would face, such as access to boilers. Medicines are part of that consideration, too.

I assure the member that a great deal of work is going on to prepare Scotland—in so far as we can—for the consequences of Brexit, and we will continue to do that.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): In his answer to Kezia Dugdale, the minister stated that £55 million had been made available this year from the UK Government. What is the minister's view on how that amount compares with the loss of economic funding and the consequent economic damage that Scotland will face from being dragged out of the EU against its will?

Graeme Dey: It is a drop in the ocean compared with the impact that Scotland faces as a consequence of leaving the EU. That impact is being felt across the board—by the Scottish Government directly, by local authorities, by a multitude of public bodies and, of course, by the private sector. That amount is a very small proportion of what would be required to mitigate the impact of Brexit—it would be far better if we could find a way to avoid it completely.

Brexit (Impact on Third Sector Funding)

4. **David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact that Brexit will have on third sector funding. (S5O-02992)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): European Union funding benefits Scotland's third sector significantly. As a result of the United Kingdom Government's chosen route for exiting the EU, we will lose access to almost all that funding. As yet, the UK Government has failed to provide any real detail on future funding arrangements.

Scotland's third sector has told us that, in particular, the loss of structural funds—without consultation and without a clear replacement—is of grave concern. The UK Government had committed to consulting on a shared prosperity fund by the end of the 2018, so it is disappointing that that has not been forthcoming and there has been no update to the devolved Administrations. On 5 February, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government wrote to the UK Government, to seek an urgent update and reassurance that the third sector's concerns will be properly considered. We await a response.

David Torrance: A number of groups in my constituency have benefited over the years from EU funding, including Fife Coast and Countryside Trust. The contributions of such groups cannot be overstated, yet the support to our committees is under serious threat. What assurances can the minister give to third sector organisations across Scotland that have grave concerns about their future?

Graeme Dey: The reality is that we cannot offer any guarantees, because we are dependent on the UK Government. Should the withdrawal agreement be agreed in full, Scotland will continue to benefit from programmes and funding covered by the multi-annual financial framework, as it would if the UK continued to be a member state at least until the end of the current budget round in December 2020.

In the event of no deal, the UK Government has given guarantees for replacing EU funding with UK finance. We have committed to passing on those guarantees in full—provided that we are given the means to do so, of course—and we will continue to press the UK Government on the issue of how those will operate in practice.

As I have said, it is deeply disappointing that the UK Government has yet to provide any further clarity on future arrangements for EU funding—the proposals that it has made so far provide no certainty for the future and the situation with the shared prosperity fund is particularly concerning. It is crucial that the UK Government urgently firms up the commitment to replacing in full all funding streams and that we receive our fair share, to ensure that decisions can be taken in the best interests of Scotland.

Independence Referendum (Impact of Sustainable Growth Commission)

5. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how its plans for a future independence referendum have been informed by the sustainable growth commission. (S5O-02993)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The case for independence has been informed by the way Scotland's interests have been consistently ignored and sidelined by successive Westminster Governments, particularly during the whole disastrous Brexit process.

An anonymous United Kingdom Government minister recently told the BBC that there should not be another independence referendum because, in his or her words:

“Once you've hit the iceberg, you're all on it together”.

The sustainable growth commission was set up by the Scottish National Party, not the Scottish Government. The evidence that it presents shows that, rather than hitting the iceberg—as James Kelly seems to prefer—Scotland can prosper as an independent country with the full powers of independence.

The First Minister has made clear that the Scottish Government will set out its views on a future independence referendum when the position on Brexit is clearer. We believe that

Scotland's future should be in Scotland's hands, not under the control of a Westminster Government that the people in Scotland did not elect.

James Kelly: Is it not the case that the position set out by the SNP growth commission—or, I should say, the SNP cuts commission—means year after year of cuts and uncertainty about currency, which will pile agony on to local communities in the form of cuts and inequality? Does the cabinet secretary not accept that the Government would be better to explicitly rule out another independence referendum and to concentrate on the important issues for the country, such as providing proper public services, tackling inequality and ensuring jobs and growth in the economy?

Michael Russell: Of course, that is what the Scottish Government has been concentrating on, and will continue to concentrate on, because we are very focused on making Scotland a better place to live as well as cleaning up the mess that has been made by successive Westminster Governments, both Tory and Labour.

As for the growth commission, it did not say what Mr Kelly has suggested that it said. Of course, there have been years of cuts, austerity and confusion, but they have been brought about by the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats refusing to back independence in 2014. It is clear that the recipe for continued chaos, confusion and cuts is to continue to vote Labour, Conservative or Liberal. That is what will bring about cuts; what will bring about prosperity and a better future is choosing the international normality of independence.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): In some of his previous writings on these subjects, the cabinet secretary did not argue for independence. As I recall, he argued for a new union, and he also argued for educational vouchers and the privatisation of the national health service and the civil service. Can he also remind us what currency he wanted in those days?

Michael Russell: I love Mr Findlay's attempts—

Neil Findlay: I know you love me!

Michael Russell: Oh, I know—I really do. I really love two things about Mr Findlay: first, his attempts to continue to essentially misrepresent something that he has read only once, if at all; and secondly, his view that nothing changes, apparently, year after year and decade after decade. Mr Findlay might go on talking about the same old things in the same old way—*[Interruption.]* I hear him being cheered on by the Conservatives as he does so, which is of course very significant. It is the better together alliance back again.

First, I refer Mr Findlay to my regular answers on this point—I am fascinated that he is still interested in my career as an author—but, secondly, I refer him to the reality of Scotland today, which has been created by his failure, by the Labour Party's failure and by the Tories' failure in government at Westminster and refusal to back the international normality of independence.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): In light of that answer, can the cabinet secretary tell us what this week's plan is for the currency of an independent Scotland and how it is different from last week's plan?

Michael Russell: The Tories are on rather dodgy ground in asking about changed plans—how extraordinary! People who saw last night's farce being played out on television of a Government that could not decide whether to vote for or against its own policy will regard what we have just heard from Professor Tomkins as a diversionary tactic. The Scottish Government's policy is to have a modern, prosperous and independent Scotland, but Scotland cannot be modern and prosperous when it gets dragged out of the European Union against its will and dragged backwards by the Conservatives or Labour.

UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill (Update)

6. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the progress of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill. (S5O-02994)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The Supreme Court's positive decision in the reference of the continuity bill has significant implications for the devolution settlement in Scotland. I have held discussions on the consequences of the judgment with representatives of parties across the chamber on a number of occasions, and I am grateful for their input. A further discussion is planned for next week, and I hope that a consensus can be achieved that will allow me to make a decision on how to proceed. I will, of course, bring any such decision to the chamber.

Alexander Burnett: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the impartial and independent United Kingdom Supreme Court struck down the most contentious portions of his bill, a situation caused by the Scottish Government's misuse of emergency legislation powers to force it through. Has he learned any lessons about using such powers more sparingly and judiciously in future?

Michael Russell: I recommend that Alexander Burnett read the judgment, not the opinion of the

judgment from Professor Tomkins—those are two very different documents. One of them, the judgment of the Supreme Court, is grounded in constitutional law and fact, and one of them, the opinion of Professor Tomkins, is grounded in political prejudice. It is up to Professor Tomkins what he does but, I have to say, it does not enhance his reputation in the academic world, as I know from comments that I have received from many people. The reality of the situation is that the Supreme Court was utterly clear about the position: the bill is one very small—

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): Unlawful!

Michael Russell: Presiding Officer, I am trying to explain this, even to Professor Tomkins, who seems keen to shout, rather than to listen. An exception was made for one very small part of the bill. Mr Burnett does not seem to have read the judgment, so I will tell him. As far as the rest of the judgment was concerned, the court was absolutely clear that the difference was due to the passage of a bill by the UK Government after the Scottish Parliament approved the continuity bill. I do not know whether they use this word in the grand surroundings of Aberdeenshire, but we call that pauchling. The continuity bill was pauchled by the UK Tory Government and the member should be ashamed of that fact, rather than shaking his head and grinning. The thing to grin about in this is that, unfortunately, Scotland was cheated of its bill by pauchling by the UK Tory Government.

Programme for Government (Timetable for Introduction of Legislation)

7. Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to publish an up-to-date timetable for the introduction of legislation included in its programme for government. (S5O-02995)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): The Scottish Government is committed to introducing all the bills in the current programme for government ahead of the announcement of our next programme. The timetabling of new bills, and the progress of those that are already in the Parliament, is of course being impacted by the unwelcome requirement to divert resources to prepare for a no-deal Brexit. Individual bill timetables are therefore subject to continual review, and I am discussing that with relevant committee conveners on a regular basis. I take the opportunity to recognise the work of the committees of the Parliament, which have responded superbly to the challenges that have beset the Parliament due to Brexit.

Annie Wells: Only a third of the bills that were announced in the 2017 programme for government progressed beyond stage 1 in 2017.

Will the Scottish Government commit to do better in this coming year?

Graeme Dey: Let us deal with reality here. The bills that are currently going through the Parliament, and which we expect to reach stage 3 by the end of 2019, are the Damages (Investment Returns and Periodical Payments) (Scotland) Bill; the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill; the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill; the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill; the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill; the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill; the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill; the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill; the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill; the Planning (Scotland) Bill; the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill; and the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

The remaining year 3 bills, which we expect to be introduced in Parliament before the summer, are the non-domestic rates bill; the disclosure bill; the female genital mutilation bill; the biometric data bill; the consumer protection bill; the electoral reform bill; the electoral franchise bill; and the family law bill. Those are proof, were it needed, that this is a Government that is getting with the day job—compare and contrast the UK Government.

Brexit (Impact on Further and Higher Education)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Richard Lochhead. It is an update on the impact of Brexit on the Scottish further and higher education sectors. I encourage members who wish to ask a question of the minister to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as they can.

14:53

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): It has been 994 days since the European Union referendum. Yet, as we all know, because Westminster and the United Kingdom Government remain engulfed in chaos, we still do not have any clarity as to where Scotland and the UK will be in 15 days' time. It happens to be science week, and I remind Parliament that our scientific and research excellence is going to be disproportionately harmed by Brexit. I will outline the Scottish Government's latest understanding of what Brexit means for our further and higher education sectors more generally. I assure colleagues that we are doing all that we can to ensure that our colleges and universities continue to thrive.

As I was reminded on my visit to the University of Strathclyde yesterday and on my visit to the University of the West of Scotland this morning, any visit to such an institution brings home the international character of our campuses. Some of the best brains in Europe choose to study and work in Scotland, and EU researchers are driving forward our science and innovation. It is utter madness that the United Kingdom Government is willing to damage that success and the rich cultural vein that adds so much to student and academic life in Scotland and to our economy. I say to our EU staff and students directly: you are welcome here, you are valued members of our community in Scotland and we want you to remain.

There can be no good Brexit. For many people, it is a deeply personal and emotive issue. At a recent event at the University of the Highlands and Islands, I met Florence, who is originally from Hamburg. At the question-and-answer event, as she was asking me a question, she broke down in tears because of Brexit. Florence is one of the many people who have chosen to come and live, work and build lives here, in Scotland. Nobody should be made to feel that way. It is completely unacceptable, and the UK Government's botched handling of the entire Brexit process is to blame.

The UK Government's stance threatens the continued success of our colleges and universities. It means a loss of talent; a loss of access to EU programmes, reducing opportunities for student mobility, research collaborations and funding; and a loss of reputation on the global stage. All of that is made much worse by the UK Government's draconian approach to immigration. For instance, the proposed £30,000 earning threshold will prevent a majority of early-career researchers from coming to the UK. The recent announcement of an exemption for PhD-level jobs from the UK immigration threshold is a welcome and necessary but small first step by the UK Government. Much more needs to be done.

In a stunning display of just how little the UK Government knows or cares about Scotland, its proposed temporary leave-to-remain scheme would fall short of covering students who are studying for a four-year degree in Scotland. To suggest that EU students will have to apply for a visa for a further year—to make it up to four years—at a cost of up to £840 is an outrage. That proposal must be dropped immediately. I have raised those issues with my UK counterpart, Chris Skidmore, and today I am seeking a meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland—if he is still in post—requesting his urgent intervention on the issue. Throughout my meetings with the UK Government and other devolved Administrations, I have emphasised Scotland's distinct needs, including by calling for the reintroduction of the post-study work visa and full participation in programmes such as Erasmus+.

The European Commission's recent emergency regulation on the Erasmus programme is very welcome. It allows current Erasmus students to complete their studies abroad regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations and shows a degree of leadership that is sorely lacking from the UK Government. However, that regulation applies only to current Erasmus students and, as I said, much more needs to be done. If there is no deal, Erasmus funding is in jeopardy for all students who are involved in work or study placements across Europe from 29 March onwards. In the next few weeks, I will travel to London to meet Mr Skidmore again to raise that issue, among others.

Throughout the past few months, I have consulted extensively with the sectors. Last November, I convened the first ever joint sector Brexit summit to discuss the expected impact of Brexit. I want to build on that and have asked the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to host another summit next month.

There are some immediate challenges that we are addressing as a matter of urgency. Depending on whether and how the UK leaves the EU, UK citizens who are studying for full degrees in the EU

may suddenly find themselves liable for international student fees, medical care and travel insurance. Our estimates suggest that hundreds of students may be affected. Facing untenable increases in costs, many of those students—perhaps even the vast majority of them—may simply have to come back to Scotland. Their studies will have been cut short and they will come home with no degree and their dreams destroyed—all because of a Brexit that Scotland did not vote for. That damage will have been compounded by the UK Government's botched handling of the process.

The Scottish Government has been working urgently with the sector to prepare for students returning to Scotland and to minimise any disruption to their studies. The Student Awards Agency for Scotland has provided clear information and guidance for such students on its website, which will guide them in transferring to a Scottish institution if that becomes necessary. I reassure those students that, if they left Scotland to study in the EU and Brexit means that they are forced to give up their studies, we guarantee to provide student support and tuition fees to students who are eligible to enable them to study in Scotland. That is a guarantee that they can bank on in these uncertain times.

We are also taking action to consider longer-term rights for Scottish citizens who are living in the EU to access further and higher education student support. That will ensure that eligible citizens residing in the EU, the European Economic Area and Switzerland post-Brexit can return to Scotland to study in the future and will be able to access the same support that they are currently eligible for. Members will know that, in respect of EU students who are currently studying here or thinking of studying here, we have already committed to providing tuition fees for eligible EU students who are commencing their studies in academic year 2019-20 for the duration of their course. That guarantee will remain in the event of a no-deal Brexit. We are also in active discussions with the sectors about how we might support students beyond that period.

As well as attracting talented EU citizens, our university research is successful in attracting funding from horizon 2020, the EU's flagship competitive research and innovation funding programme. A country's attractiveness as a place in which to do research is fundamentally dependent on that country's access to international schemes. Since horizon 2020 launched, in 2014, more than €558 million in funding for research and innovation has been secured by Scottish organisations. However, we are already beginning to see worrying evidence of the damage that we are facing. Catherine Heymans, a renowned professor of astrophysics

at the University of Edinburgh, is shifting the majority of her research activities to the University of Bonn, and she has confirmed that Brexit is the reason behind her move. Ninety per cent of her research funding has been provided by the EU, and Professor Heymans does not believe that that funding would be replaced were she to remain in the UK. The latest figures show that the total share of UK and Scottish participations in horizon 2020 projects is falling, and our researchers tell us that EU partners who would have wished to collaborate are avoiding doing so with partners in the UK due to the on-going uncertainty.

The Scottish Government is seeking to provide much-needed clarity where we can and to represent fully the interests of our staff and researchers in our negotiations with the UK Government. To provide just one example, we have demanded that more information be urgently provided concerning the UK Government's review, by the Alan Turing Institute, of UK alternatives to horizon Europe.

My officials and I, along with the Scottish funding council, are having regular discussions with the sectors in Scotland on those and other issues. That includes liaising with staff and researchers on issues that affect them directly. We want to understand their concerns and to support them in any way that we can. I have, of course, taken those concerns directly to the European Commission, when appropriate. Last December, I led a delegation representing Scotland's research interests to Brussels, where we highlighted our world-leading credentials and continuing desire to work with European partners and benefit from European funding streams.

This week, the Deputy First Minister and I met the chair and chief executive of UK Research and Innovation. If UKRI is going to play a role in plugging some of the gap in research funding left by Brexit, we need Scotland to benefit and devolution to matter.

Much of my time and that of my officials is now being taken up by considering how best to respond to the challenges and threats of Brexit. Beyond the examples that I have highlighted, much work is being progressed across the Scottish Government, from resilience planning and external communications to meetings with stakeholders and the UK Government.

I am pleased to confirm that, today, we have published our Brexit action plan, highlighting the broad scope of activity that we are currently engaged in across my portfolio. I will write to each of our college and university principals to highlight that and to continue the dialogue that we have established with the sector on the impact of Brexit.

In closing, I emphasise that the Scottish Government will continue to do everything we can to protect Scotland's interests in a challenging and uncertain context. We recognise and value the enormous contributions that EU citizens make to our universities, our colleges and our nation, and we will, of course, continue to make the case—passionately—for the benefits of EU membership.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the minister for prior sight of his statement. Members in the chamber are well aware that the Scottish Conservatives have expressed considerable concerns about some of the challenges resulting from Brexit and I put on record that I have some sympathy for the comments within the minister's statement.

Notwithstanding that and the on-going uncertainty about the final Brexit outcome, some areas of responsibility lie with the Scottish Government and it is on those areas that I will ask the minister two questions, if I may.

First, Universities Scotland has been clear about its concerns regarding the future fee status of EU students. We welcome the commitment that the minister has made on that with regard to the academic year 2019-20, but I note that, in his statement, he also said that the Scottish Government is looking at what might happen beyond that period. Will he update members on when the Scottish Government will confirm its policy choice on the fee status of EU students for courses beginning in academic year 2020-21 and beyond?

Secondly, assuming that Brexit will mean that Scottish and EU students will no longer be treated as groups with reciprocal rights to equal treatment, is it the intention of the Scottish Government to commit to retaining the £90 million or so that it currently spends on EU students and putting that back into the higher education sector? As the minister will know, Universities Scotland has made a strong call for that commitment to be made.

Richard Lochhead: I thank Liz Smith for the spirit in which she asked her questions.

On her first point, which was in relation to the status of EU students and the guarantee that we have given to pay their fees for academic year 2019-20, as I said in my statement, we continue to reflect on what the outcome of the current shambolic process at Westminster might be for Scotland and the UK's status in the European Union after the end of this month.

There are a number of issues for us to take into account. First, there is the disruption to our institutions if the thousands of EU students studying and playing a vital role in our colleges and universities were suddenly to become international students. We do not know the extent

of the disruption in respect of those who intend to come and study at our universities and colleges, but there would be an element of disruption there.

Secondly, if we were to pay the fees of EU students in the following academic year, which we are being called to provide clarity on now, we must note that the students' current status would not allow them to work in Scotland. I hope that we all agree that that would be wholly unacceptable, which is why we need powers over post-study work visas and other aspects of immigration. I believe that there is cross-party consensus on that in this Parliament. With such powers, we could take the right decisions with regard to EU students, so that they could make a contribution to Scottish society if they chose to come and live in this country.

The number 1 factor on which we need clarity is the outcome of the votes this week in Westminster. We want some sensible decisions made in that absolutely chaotic process.

We will also reflect on Liz Smith's second point, which is about the money that would potentially be saved if we were not paying EU fees. We are listening closely to the case that is being put by the further and higher education sectors, but we need clarity from Westminster.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The minister is right to criticise the Tory Government for the chaos and the threat of Brexit. I associate members on the Labour benches with his assurances to EU staff and students that they are valued and welcome here in Scotland.

The Scottish Government did not create this uncertainty—that is for sure—but Ms Smith was right that there are some areas on which the Scottish Government must provide the required clarity and I fear that, in response to her questions, that clarity was not forthcoming.

I will return to the points that are critical for universities.

Does the minister understand that university prospectuses for 2020-21 are out now, so potential EU students need to have some certainty about their fee status? Active discussion is not enough; some clarity, at least, could be given about that aspect of studying in Scotland. Will not the minister simply give the guarantee that students need and which Universities Scotland is asking for about their tuition fee status? I take the minister's point about other things being less clear, but on that, at least, clarity could be given.

The same applies to the resources that are currently spent on tuition fees for EU students, which amount to around £90 million. The university sector is simply asking for a guarantee that, if less than that amount is required for that

purpose—whether all of it or some of it—the resource will not be removed from the higher education sector. That is a simple thing to ask the Government to commit to, especially with FE and HE facing such uncertainty.

My last point is: will the minister explain to us why the Government thought that this was a good year in which to cut college and university funding in the budget?

Richard Lochhead: On Iain Gray's demand for clarity, he should be asking not this Parliament or this Government for clarity on what is happening with regard to Brexit; he should be asking the UK Conservative Government for clarity, given the chaos that is happening at Westminster this week alone. Let us get clarity on what is happening down there to enable us to take proper decisions for the future of further and higher education here in Scotland—indeed, he could ask the leader of his own party, Jeremy Corbyn, for some clarity on his position on Brexit at the same time.

We are well aware of the potential impacts on EU students in Scotland if there is a departure from the EU without any deal. However, this week of all weeks, we must absolutely focus on getting the right decision for EU students in Scotland, which is our continued membership of the European Union and, failing that, a good deal that enables the good arrangements that we have with other European countries to continue.

We are in serious talks with the further and higher education sectors about all the various scenarios that might happen over the coming weeks and months and about the potential impact that those might have on further and higher education. We will take a decision that maintains our links with Europe and does what is best for the future of Scotland's students and our further and higher education institutions.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Like colleagues, I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement and the work that the Government is doing to try to limit the damage from someone else's crisis.

Specifically in relation to Erasmus+, as it stands, if Brexit goes ahead, we will lose both our right to freedom of movement and the UK's membership of the Erasmus+ programme. We could, in theory, participate as a third country, but that is not the same as being a member of Erasmus+. This Parliament has taken evidence from colleges and youth clubs, which, in particular, have made the point that, without freedom of movement, the administrative burden of trying to participate in the programme is simply too much.

Therefore, what work is the Scottish Government doing to support those who benefit most from participation in the programme, namely,

our college students and those who are involved through youth programmes?

Richard Lochhead: Ross Greer highlights the huge contribution that Erasmus makes to the experience of Scottish students and—indeed—the experience of EU students who come to study in Scotland for a short time through Erasmus.

We have made the strongest representations to the UK Government on the UK and Scotland continuing to have full participation in Erasmus+. We want to see the UK Government adopt that position and put it into practice as soon as possible.

That is not its position just now; we have a lack of commitment. Therefore, there is a real danger that if we leave Europe without a deal on 29 March, Scotland's participation and the disproportionate benefits that we get from Erasmus—because, per head of population, far more students from Scotland participate in Erasmus compared with the number who participate from the rest of the UK—will be jeopardised. Losing out on Erasmus would disproportionately harm Scotland and would, of course, damage the experience of EU students at the same time.

The situation just now is that leaving without a deal, will—as I said—clearly jeopardise the position of Scottish students. As I mentioned, we have a guarantee, which I welcome, from the European Commission that current students who are in Europe as part of Erasmus will—irrespective of whether there is no deal or a deal at the end of this month—be able to continue with and complete their programme in Europe. That is welcome.

However, we need the support of the UK Government to put the funding guarantees in place and ensure that we get full participation in Erasmus+ going forward.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I, too, have sympathy for the minister given the lack of clarity that is being caused by what is currently going on. However, it is a bit puzzling why an action plan has been produced that cannot have many actions in it because of the lack of clarity. Therefore, I will perhaps ask my question another way around.

Catrina Mulla is a Shetlander who is studying at the European University Institute in Florence—in other words, she is a Scot who has travelled to Europe for her studies. She is a postgraduate student and is just about to enter a PhD there. She does not know what the situation with her fees will be from March—she does not even know whether she will be able to undertake her PhD. The Scottish Government has looked at statutory instruments, which were produced in London. Is the minister in a position to update Parliament on

those and on the position for students in the kind of circumstances in which Catrina finds herself, where there is no certainty about her future study and no certainty about the fees for what she is currently undertaking? We will potentially lose having a Scot who would have gained valuable international experience studying overseas, as she might have to come back to Scotland.

Richard Lochhead: Just as Tavish Scott expressed his sympathy for the position that I find myself in as Scotland's further and higher education minister, I express my sympathy for the position that Mr Scott's constituent, Catrina Mulla, finds herself in, because many Scots have benefited from attending the European University Institute.

I have written to the UK Government on that issue in the last week or two and have expressed my deep concern about the impact of Brexit on Scottish students' ability to participate in the European University Institute. I have asked for action to be taken to allow participation in the institute and the flow of benefits to Scotland to continue.

In a separate letter, we wrote to the UK Government expressing our unhappiness with the approach taken to the statutory instruments designed to enable the UK to withdraw from the European University Institute. I will update the member on the outcome of that as soon as I can.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Last week, I attended the celebration of EU researchers in this Parliament, during which seven of our world-class universities demonstrated some of the work that they are doing and showed how important horizon 2020 is to Scotland's attractiveness as a research destination. We already have a reputation for producing world-class research, some of which I am sure will be celebrated in the debate this afternoon. We also know that that research has been strengthened by EU citizens who work in Scotland, and by our membership of the European Union. What can the minister do to protect research collaboration with Europe?

Richard Lochhead: Clare Adamson highlights such an important issue: the impact not only on researchers and students at Scottish institutions, but on the future of the Scottish economy. This morning I was at the University of the West of Scotland, where I spoke to students—many of whom were international and European students—who are involved in a £15 million programme that looks at the impact of 5G and involves a number of European countries. That is a European programme with European research money, of which we will be unable to take future advantage if we leave the EU with no deal.

As I mentioned in my statement, we are in close discussion with UKRI about Scotland's ability to get UK research funding in the future, should that organisation try to fill the gap that would be left if we lost out on European programmes. I say again that if we leave the EU, the loss of horizon 2020 will have a disproportionate impact on Scotland, because we do better out of that programme than any other part of the UK. The best way to protect that is to continue our EU membership or to get a good deal that would allow our full participation in horizon 2020 to continue.

We have a guarantee from the UK Government that, irrespective of what will happen at the end of this month, any contract signed will be honoured up until 2020. However, I have been told that that commitment only covers part of horizon 2020 and that up to €50 million a year of research funding is not included in it. Once again, the UK Government has an unacceptable approach that does not recognise the importance of horizon 2020 to Scottish institutions or the Scottish economy.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Despite many points of contention in the minister's statement, which Liz Smith has already commented on, the Scottish Conservatives have sympathy with and welcome the minister's highlighting of horizon 2020. Will he at least join me in supporting the UK Government's pledge to underwrite payments to the universities participating in horizon 2020?

Richard Lochhead: As I have just said, we have very limited guarantees on the future participation of Scotland and the UK in horizon 2020, and that is simply not good enough. The UK Treasury is carrying out a value for money exercise before it takes further decisions on our future participation—with or without a deal. Scotland should be involved in that process, because we are the biggest beneficiary of horizon 2020, and the Scottish Government is enormously frustrated with its limited input to that value for money exercise and with the limited information that we are getting back from it. We know that horizon 2020 research funding is enormously valuable to Scotland; international collaboration and amazing initiatives are taking place across the length and breadth of Scotland's colleges, universities and research institutions. We cannot afford to lose that, so I ask all parties to urge the UK Government to give us the guarantees that we require.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Last July, in a statement about the loss of horizon 2020 funding, the UK Government said:

"The government is working in partnership with UK Research and Innovation to develop a new International Research and Innovation Strategy. The Strategy will further set out our desire to build on the UK's long tradition of

international collaborations in research and innovation across all fields and our openness to international talent."

There are just two weeks until exit day. Can the minister tell us whether that UK strategy has now been made clear to him and to the university sector and, if it has, what it means for the sector?

Richard Lochhead: Clearly, we are very keen to make sure that Scotland takes maximum advantage of any UK Research and Innovation funds. Members will have noticed that there was an announcement this week of funding for the University of Edinburgh from one of the funds. That is welcome, but we have to remember that those are existing funds, and what we are talking about is European funding over and above those domestic UK funds, which has been worth €0.5 billion to our institutions and research community over the past few years alone. That pot of money is crucial. The international collaboration that is brought with it helps boost Scotland's international reputation for research and innovation at the same time, which is an important part of this debate. It is about the benefits of soft diplomacy through scientific collaboration as well as the financial benefits. We need a lot more clarity from the UK Government to ensure that Scotland does not lose out should— heaven forbid—there be an exit from the European Union at the end of this month.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Given the potential loss of EU workers in key sectors such as health and social care, what is being done in further and higher education to identify potential gaps and take action to fill them, so that we do not have an absence of skills going forward?

Richard Lochhead: That is an excellent question from James Kelly. At the forefront of my mind is how we ensure that we have the skills required for the future of the Scottish economy, given that we face a reduction in the number of young people through demographic changes in this country. If that were to be compounded by a reduction in the number of EU workers coming to this country, that would be highly damaging to Scotland's future prospects. That is linked to the Brexit debate and how we work with our universities and colleges.

I reassure James Kelly that this is near the top of the agenda. It is linked to how we fund going forward, because we want to ensure that we address any skills gaps that arise through Brexit as well as other demographic changes. We are speaking to the colleges and universities about that, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council is doing a great deal of work on that, and work is being done on skills alignment between all Scotland's agencies through the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. That is very much at the centre of our attention at the moment.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde)

(SNP): I welcome the measures in the statement, particularly the assurances provided to students and EU nationals involved in the Erasmus+ scheme. I know about that, because I was an Erasmus-Socrates student. I would be grateful if, when the minister meets Mr Skidmore in a few weeks' time, he could invite him to come to Scotland to speak to EU nationals and institutions in Scotland, including the Jack Kane centre in Edinburgh, which hosted the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee when we did our Erasmus+ inquiry. I am sure that the minister will be aware of that. If Mr Skidmore met students and people from Scotland, I am sure that it would encourage him to provide the assurances that are required about keeping the Erasmus+ scheme.

Richard Lochhead: I know that Stuart McMillan has mentioned before how he benefited from the Erasmus scheme. He is a perfect example of where one can go in life by enriching one's experience through such schemes. Indeed, I undertook a Carnegie Trust scholarship when I was a student and I travelled to Brussels and Copenhagen as part of my research for my dissertation. It fills me with horror to think that my children might not have the same advantages that I had through freedom of movement and the ability to go to other countries in that way.

Unfortunately, however, I think that Stuart McMillan has missed his opportunity, because Chris Skidmore was here just last week and he visited some institutions in Glasgow. He has told me—as indeed have the Scottish Conservatives today—that he is very sympathetic to the arguments made in relation to Erasmus and horizon 2020 and other dimensions of the Brexit debate. However, even he is reliant on the Home Office, the Treasury and the Prime Minister—and all the chaos at the heart of the Conservative Government—in trying to get some clarity so that he can take the right decisions. That clarity is ultimately what we require in order to get the right decisions for Scotland.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I will continue in the same constructive tone and candour that my colleague Liz Smith used.

In his statement, the minister mentioned announcements that were made in the spring statement yesterday, including the announcement on PhD level occupations being made exempt from the tier 2 visa cap. I could also mention newly updated rules on absences of up to 180 days that concern researchers who conduct fieldwork overseas and then apply to settle in the UK. Will the minister acknowledge—and perhaps welcome—those shifts and the willingness to listen to the concerns from across and outwith this

chamber? I do not doubt that the minister is capable of being quite forthcoming in his views at his next meeting with the minister in London.

Richard Lochhead: The changes that were announced yesterday are a small, necessary step forward, which, of course, I welcome, but it is important to convey to the chamber that it is a very small part of a much bigger picture. If we take the £30,000 salary threshold in the UK Government's immigration policy, any institution will tell us that that will cover a small percentage of the researchers who come from other European countries to study or work in our country. Many earn far below £30,000, and it is not just them who are affected; it is their spouses as well. Researchers might come with a spouse who is on a lower wage than them and they will not be able to get into the country without some difficulty.

Of course, another thing that must be addressed urgently is the fact that temporary leave to remain is granted for three years, not the four years that are needed for the Scottish degree.

I welcome that the issues that the member mentioned are being addressed, but we have a long way to go to prevent the UK Government's immigration policy from inflicting severe damage on Scottish further and higher education.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Will the minister clarify the action that the Scottish Government has taken—and might take—to support Scottish students who might be unable to complete their studies at an EU university? He mentioned, in particular, fees and medical care. Might we be able to bring about a situation in which they could complete their studies at those EU universities?

Richard Lochhead: Again, with regard to this week's votes in Westminster, we do not know what is going to happen over the next few weeks in the run-up to the end of the month. However, if there is no deal, Scottish undergraduate students who are studying full time in the EU will become international students and potentially will lose their rights. That could have devastating consequences. If there is no deal, a range of costs could be incurred, which would make it completely untenable and unaffordable for Scottish undergraduate students to continue their studies in EU institutions. Therefore, today, we are keen to emphasise our assurance to them that if—in horrific circumstances—they have to come back to Scotland to continue their studies here, they will be entitled to all the necessary support that Scottish students get. We will make sure that that is made available to them.

Space Nation

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-16312, in the name of Ivan McKee, on building on Scotland's strengths in technology and engineering to become Europe's leading space nation. I invite all members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible.

15:28

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak about space, the importance of the space sector in Scotland to our economy and the focus that the Scottish Government places on the development of the sector.

These are exciting times for the space industry in Scotland. The sector's rapid global growth offers huge opportunities, which Scotland is well placed to take advantage of.

Scotland already has an innovative and diverse engineering base, with world-class companies competing in international markets. We have excellence in data science and application and we already punch above our weight in the space sector. We are in a great place to consolidate those existing strengths.

Over two years, we have seen a 27 per cent increase in the number of space organisations in Scotland to more than 130, with a total income of £140 million. They include the headquarters of 83 United Kingdom space industry firms. Nearly a fifth of all UK space jobs are in Scotland—more than double our population share.

On their way into the Parliament building today, people may have seen the Black Arrow rocket parked outside—if they did not, I recommend that they go to have a look. Black Arrow's third flight was the first, and only, successful UK-led orbital launch. It placed the Prospero satellite into orbit from a launch site in Australia in 1971—the only British satellite to be put into orbit using a British launch vehicle. Prospero is still in orbit, although it is no longer in communication with planet earth. Some may say that it shares that characteristic with some of those currently responsible for the future of the UK's place in Europe; I could not possibly comment.

At a time when Scotland aims to be the first place in Europe capable of launching small satellites into orbit, it seems fitting that the Black Arrow is now here in Edinburgh, and I congratulate Skyrora—one of Scotland's rocket manufacturing

businesses—on successfully bringing it back to the UK.

When we talk of space, we may think of the massive rocket launches at Cape Canaveral, but the modern space industry comprises much more than space rockets—exciting though they are. We have opportunities in upstream space manufacturing and space operations, including small satellite manufacture, as well as opportunities for companies dealing with downstream space data and data applications.

Looking ahead, we see longer-term potential opportunities emerging, such as energy provision through solar panels in space, asteroid prospecting for minerals, together with the associated supporting habitat facilities, and low-gravity manufacturing in space. Not so long ago, that would all have been considered science fiction, but it is rapidly becoming science fact.

Scotland is proud to be the home of agile space, a versatile and adaptable sector that involves close collaboration between Government, industry and academia. Our culture of open innovation and collaboration is essential for our continuing success.

We have a supportive business environment, with the developing national manufacturing institute for Scotland, real academic strengths, a range of practical support and advice available via our enterprise agencies, and a strong partnership with the sector through the industry-led Scottish space leadership council.

The NMIS will be an industry-led international centre of expertise in manufacturing, which will make Scotland a global leader, with academia, industry and the public sector working together to transform manufacturing skills, productivity and innovation right across Scotland.

Our excellent higher education sector is at the forefront of this technology. Glasgow, Strathclyde, Edinburgh and Dundee universities all have major strengths in the space sector. Edinburgh's Higgs centre for innovation, which is located at the Royal Observatory, provides a business incubation centre as well as space testing and development facilities. I was at the centre earlier this year, and I thoroughly recommend a visit.

Scotland is very much open for business, and our enterprise agencies will continue to work with any company with a viable proposal that is seeking to develop a future in our successful space sector.

Scotland is already a world leader in small satellite manufacture and we have businesses that analyse and use the valuable data that is beamed back from orbit. The missing link is the ability to launch satellites. Scotland is the best place in the

UK to reach in-demand orbits with vertical rockets, and there is a real opportunity to capture a share of the growing market for launching an estimated 2,000 small satellites by 2030.

With more small satellites being built in the city of Glasgow than in any other place in Europe, affordable and efficient access to space is key to growing our fast-developing small satellite industry. Clyde Space is recognised as a world-class innovator and supplier of small satellite systems. Spire Global, the first company in the UK and Europe to provide an end-to-end CubeSat development and data service offering, and Alba Orbital, which is building and launching some of the world's most advanced picosatellites for earth observation and telecoms purposes, are also based in Glasgow.

Our ambition is to have at least one spaceport in Scotland. Having satellite launch facilities will help us to deliver strong economic benefits and is expected to open up a wide range of market opportunities for Scotland. With launch capability, we can then build, launch and operate satellites, all from Scotland—supporting the ambition to grow the sector here into a £4 billion industry by 2030.

The UK Space Agency's decision to support the development of space hub Sutherland is key to meeting those aspirations, although, as members will well understand, that is not the only potential spaceport that is being considered. A total funding package of £17.3 million will be invested in the site. Highlands and Islands Enterprise is working hard to deliver on that ambition in partnership with Lockheed Martin Space Systems and Orbex. As the market for small satellites continues to grow, so will the demand for launch facilities, and sites in the Western Isles, the Shetland Islands and at Prestwick are all interested in developing space-related launch activities.

On Friday, my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity signed the heads of terms for the Ayrshire growth deal, which includes support for an aerospace and space programme that will benefit from up to £30 million of Scottish Government investment. Through the involvement of partners, that will increase to total investment of up to £80 million.

The aerospace and space sector employs more than 4,000 people in Ayrshire, and we have ambitious plans to help to double that.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): What assessment have the minister and the Government made of the Machrihanish airstrip in Campbeltown? The minister will know that, during the second world war, it was the largest airstrip in Europe, and it has great facilities.

Ivan McKee: As I said, the Scottish Government and its agencies are very keen to

hear from any business or other opportunity that would help to grow and further develop the Scottish space sector. I would be interested in discussing that option further. I know that work has been done on a range of opportunities for launch sites, and I believe that the Machrihanish site was included in earlier reports. I would be willing to talk to the member about that.

I return to the situation in Ayrshire. Investment secured through the Ayrshire growth deal will deliver spaceport infrastructure to support the ambition of establishing a horizontal launch facility at Prestwick airport, which will include commercial space and transport infrastructure. That investment will also support the creation of an aerospace and space innovation centre, which will be a central hub for encouraging growth and supporting aerospace and space businesses in Scotland and the UK.

The development of launch facilities will open the door to a range of new business opportunities. We already know that Orbex is to open its new rocket-manufacturing facilities in Forres. I was delighted to be at the formal opening of its launch-vehicle development and manufacturing facility last month, to hear about its plans to employ around 150 people on the site, and to see the Prime rocket, which is an impressive piece of engineering with a carbon-fibre structure and a 3D-printed engine that runs on low-emission fuel. Other rocket research and manufacturing businesses are already based in Scotland, including Skyrora, which I mentioned earlier; I thank it for bringing the Black Arrow back to Scotland. The Shetland Space Centre is also developing proposals for ground-station satellite tracking facilities, which could support launch facilities.

As we know, Scotland is the data-driven capital of Europe—it hosts the largest centre for informatics in Europe and has more than 170 data science companies. The downstream use of space data is supporting a diverse and growing range of services: Bird.i, which is based in Glasgow, uses space-derived intelligence to monitor global construction; Trade in Space, which is also based in Glasgow, is developing new financial services with data that has been collected by satellites, thereby making peer-to-peer trading fairer and easier; Ecometrica, Global Surface Intelligence and Carbomap, which are all based in Edinburgh, and others are monitoring the earth's forests and crops and tracking the impact of climate change; Astrosat, which is based in Musselburgh, is helping people to understand the planet while aiding disaster response; and the Scottish centre of excellence in satellite applications—SOXSA—at the University of Strathclyde is helping to develop smart, connected fish farms.

There are still challenges ahead. As with every sector, the industry is concerned about the potential impact of the UK's exit from the EU. Companies are particularly concerned about the potential for a research funding gap to emerge. Any agreement with the EU on science and innovation will need to reflect priorities and strengths across the UK, including in Scotland, and we fully expect the UK Government to engage effectively with us on that.

A challenge for our ambition to start the launching of small satellites in 2021 is the need for launch operating companies and launch sites to have operating licences. The UK Government has said that the required secondary legislation should be in place by the end of 2020-21 and has confirmed that any site that can meet the safety and regulatory aspects of spaceflight would be eligible to apply for a licence to establish a spaceport.

Our ambitious plans for the space sector need strong leadership to succeed—political leadership, public sector leadership and business leadership. We are working in partnership with the Scottish space leadership council, which includes representatives from all parts of the space sector, from potential launch sites to satellite manufacturers, businesses engaged in data analysis and academic partners. Together, we will deliver on the aspiration to grow the Scottish space sector into a £4 billion industry by 2030 and we will seize the opportunity to make Scotland Europe's leading space nation.

The Government will support the Conservative and Labour amendments. We will not support the Liberal Democrat amendment, not because we are opposed to enterprise zones or their application in this sector, but because we await a review from Scottish Enterprise into their effectiveness, which will inform our future decisions.

I move,

"That the Parliament welcomes the rapid growth of the Scottish space sector; notes that it now accounts for 18% of all jobs in the UK space industry; encourages investment in support of the ambition to deliver a full end-to-end space sector capability in Scotland, to build, launch and operate satellites; agrees that now is the time to take advantage of the strengths that Scotland has in technology, engineering and data science to realise this ambition; further agrees that Scotland's clear strengths in small satellite manufacturing and space data are starting points for success, laying the foundations for Scotland to become Europe's leading space nation, and considers that this success will be enhanced by Scotland's plan to become the site of the first spaceport in Europe."

15:40

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives welcome today's debate on the Scottish space sector. We

believe that Scotland is in a unique position to become Europe's leading commercial space nation, so grasping the opportunity should unite all MSPs across the chamber.

The Scottish Conservatives welcome the funding from the UK Government that is boosting Scotland's space industry and ensuring that Scotland is a world leader in research and development.

We also support the partnership of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the UK Space Agency to deliver the first spaceport in the UK. As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I am delighted that Sutherland could lead the way as the location of the UK's first spaceport. I am also delighted that I am opening for my party today, because it means that I will be able to make the case for Sutherland before John Scott makes the case for Prestwick and Tavish Scott builds on the article that he wrote for the papers today about the suitability of Shetland. We are under no illusions—all the sites have merits and all the sites could deliver for Scotland.

Joking aside, I say that the simple truth is that every MSP would like to see their constituency or region reaping the benefits of the space industry and all that it offers. I firmly believe that every region, as I have said, has something to offer. That should be celebrated by everyone.

My initial position is to support the Highlands and Islands, which brings me conflict over whether to support the spaceport in Sutherland, or Tavish Scott's recommendation for Shetland. I do not believe that the answer should be either/or: there are opportunities not only for the vertical launch spaceports that we have heard about but for the horizontal launch spaceports that we will hear about.

In Scotland, we are capable not only of launching rockets—we can build them, too. In fact, Scotland builds

"more spacecraft than anywhere outside California"

That is something to be proud of; it is a remarkable success story for Scottish manufacturing. Scotland is leading the European space race, because we can not only design, build and operate spacecraft, but we will now be able to launch them, too. I believe that the UK has the right business environment and the right industrial capability, and that it is blessed with the right geography to succeed.

As my amendment sets out, it is important to recognise that the success is underpinned by a UK Government that is making the right choices in supporting the space industry. First, the UK Government's Space Industry Act 2018 allows commercial operators to launch flights into orbit,

with payloads that can include satellites and scientific experiments. Secondly, the UK Government's industrial strategy includes support for a £50 million programme, known as LaunchUK, to support small satellite launches and suborbital flights.

Taken together, the Space Industry Act and the UK industrial strategy make Scotland the best place in Europe to start and to grow a space business. The economic potential is huge, as we have heard, so I want to mention that a bit more. Commercial small-satellite launches could be worth up to £4 billion to the UK economy over the next decade, and would contribute to the UK Government's aim of growing our share of the global market to 10 per cent by 2030.

Choosing Sutherland as the site for Scotland's first spaceport must be just the start. I hope that members will excuse the play on words—there are only two in this speech. Although that might be “one small step” for the LaunchUK programme, it could be “one giant leap” for the Highlands economy.

Lockheed Martin UK and Orbex have already signed memorandums of understanding that say that they can use the launch site, and it is anticipated that there could be up to six launches per year. It is expected that a spaceport in Sutherland would create about 40 highly skilled jobs in the area, and HIE estimates that that figure could multiply to 400 jobs by 2023. The spaceport would have a really positive impact that would spread across the wider region. We already know that Orbex is looking to base its mission control and design hub in Forres in Moray. That is important.

Such crucial investment in Sutherland and across the Highlands could not come at a better time for the region. There is a real need in the area for high-skilled jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and the growth of the space industry has the potential to soften the negative impact of the site at Dounreay being decommissioned.

That brings me to my final point. It is vital that investment in the space industry be made to work for local communities. It is fair to say that the plans for the Sutherland spaceport have divided opinion in the communities of Melness and Tongue. The appropriate channel through which to support or oppose any development is the local planning system. I have always been clear that planning decisions should be made locally, and that they should be honoured by the Government. I believe that the communities will see the benefit of having a spaceport, because the space industry is a lucrative business. The growth of the industry could work not only for communities in the Highlands, but across Scotland.

Presiding Officer, I hope that you will excuse my second play on words.

“To infinity and beyond!” That is the prize that is within touching distance for Scotland and the rest of the UK. We are leading the way in cutting-edge commercial space technology, and the opportunity exists to launch an estimated 2,000 satellites by 2030. By making the right choices now, we will give Scottish businesses a head start in the European space race.

The Conservatives will support the Labour amendment, but we are slightly concerned by the Liberal Democrat amendment. We look forward to a full explanation of the “enterprise zones” that are referenced.

Scotland is well placed in the space race: it is a race that we can win. I hope that all members across the chamber will join me in supporting that effort.

I move amendment S5M-16312.2, to insert at end:

“; and welcomes both the Space Industry Act 2018 and the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, which includes support for a £50 million programme to support small satellite launches and sub-orbital flight from UK spaceports.”

14:48

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I warmly welcome the Scottish Government's initiative to debate the Scottish space sector. With perfect timing, we are doing so during British science week. I am sure that that was well planned. Labour will support the motion in the name of Ivan McKee.

On 9 July 1962, a Thor-Delta rocket was launched from Cape Canaveral. On board was the United Kingdom's Ariel 1 satellite, which not only made the UK the third country, after the USA and the Soviet Union, to operate a satellite, but it launched the UK's space industry. That industry has developed to the point at which, in 2014, it contributed £11.8 billion to the British economy and supported 35,000 jobs, according to UK Government figures.

Just as it was a satellite that began the UK space industry, so it is satellites that will allow the UK Government to secure its ambition of a space industry that will be worth, as we have heard, £40 billion by 2030. That would represent a 10 per cent share of the global space industry market.

The first step towards that goal was the UK Government's announcement that it intends to develop a single site as the UK's spaceport. In July 2014, a shortlist of potential sites was announced, with the view being that the chosen site would be up and running by 2018. The original

shortlist of eight was reduced to five, which included three sites in Scotland: Prestwick, Campbeltown and the Western Isles. In May 2016, the Department for Transport wrote to the spaceport bidders to inform them of its decision to end the bidding process and to move towards a licensing model.

In previous debates, I supported the case for selecting Campbeltown airport as a horizontal take-off spaceport, but I also recognised the great strengths of the other locations—in Prestwick, Shetland, the Western Isles and Sutherland. In the three years since my members' business debate on spaceports, there have been substantial developments—for example, the UK Space Agency announced financial support last summer for a HIE-backed scheme to launch satellites from Melness crofters estate in Sutherland. As we have heard, HIE's board has approved £17.3 million to support that project. That includes £2.5 million from the UKSA, nearly £10 million from HIE and £5 million that is being sought from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The HIE board approval depends on identification and delivery of local community benefits.

Space hub Sutherland would be a vertical take-off site and, as we have heard, it would aim for six launches annually, with the first in 2020. David Oxley, who is an HIE director, has stated that the jobs target is 400, with the aim of sending 2,000 small satellites into orbit by 2030.

As the minister said, start-up firm Orbex has opened a base in Forres, with the promise of 40 jobs this year and plans to expand to 150. Professor Malcolm Macdonald, who is the director of the Scottish centre of excellence in satellite applications and a UKSA board member, has said:

"we build more spacecraft than anywhere outside California, we have more frequent access to space than anywhere ... in the world, and we're almost certainly going to have the first spaceport in Europe."

In effect, there is a gap in the market. In Scotland, we design, build and operate spacecraft, and we can exploit the data that comes from them. The gap is in the ability to launch, so a spaceport would solve that problem.

At the most recent meeting of the cross-party group on aviation, which I chaired, Lockheed Martin raised some key issues for the future. For example, will the UK Government provide a liability cap for launch activities? That might become clearer following publication of the secondary legislation that is linked to the Space Industry Act 2018. The other key issue is the commercial viability of the first European small-satellite launch-on-demand service. There is intense competition across Europe on that, so it is crucial that the UK get there first, because the prize is immense.

Oxford Economics carried out an economic impact assessment that said that UK satellite launch capability would add £2.5 billion to gross domestic product and sustain 375 jobs. The largest amount of gross value added—63 per cent—would be in Scotland, because we would house the launch site. Scotland in general, and the Highlands and Islands in particular, have a comparative advantage on location. Scotland provides access to sun-synchronous and polar orbits—low-altitude orbits—which are both well suited to a wide range of commercial and other satellite applications.

It is vital that Scotland does not miss this important opportunity. Throughout history, Scottish scientists and engineers have been in the vanguard of innovation and discovery—from James Watt, who was the godfather of the industrial revolution, to Robert Watson-Watt, who invented radar, and from Williamina Fleming, who was an early astrophysics pioneer, to James Clerk Maxwell, who worked out the composition of Saturn's rings more than 120 years before a space probe studied them.

Space technology can offer economic, strategic and inspirational gains. As the writer Arthur C Clarke said,

"The inspirational value of the space program is probably of far greater importance to education than any input of dollars ... A whole generation is growing up which has been attracted to the hard disciplines of science and engineering by the romance of space."

We owe it not just to the people of today but to those who are yet to be born to get behind the project. We can build a great legacy and grasp the opportunity to be at the forefront of space technology, or we can choose to be left behind.

Space technology offers a new frontier for Scotland. Now we just need to boldly go and deliver it.

I move amendment S5M-16312.3, to insert at end:

“; notes the crucial diversification to the Scottish economy that the space sector provides; considers that future commercial viability will be dependent on the European small satellite launch on demand service, and notes the comparative advantage that Scotland enjoys for spaceport location by providing access to sun-synchronous and polar orbits.”

15:54

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The space race is on—it is Scotland as a location versus European and worldwide alternatives. The issue is not just whether Scotland can be such a location; it is important to recognise, as I am sure Mr Stewart does, that Andøya in Norway, the Swedish Government and the Portuguese Azores

are all competing to have the first vertical launch site in Europe.

Small satellites can be launched from Scotland, but launches will depend on being first to market—and the market stress is the important aspect of the industry. Who will invest £1 billion a year, every year, in the coming decades? That is why the Shetland Space Centre, Shetland Islands Council and our industry partners will deliver a ground and data centre in Unst this year and a launch facility for small-scale satellites by 2020. As a director of the company, I find that an incredibly exciting project, which is being developed by private sector investment.

Shetland understands what industry needs and when—we have been doing that with oil and gas for the past 40 years. Unst, in particular, deserves economic support and a vibrant future. Shell flew fixed-wing and helicopter oil industry transfers from Baltasound airfield to the east Shetland oil basin until that was discontinued in the late 1990s, and, in 2006, NATO closed down its Saxa Vord radar station. Those decisions halved Unst's population and were a huge blow to the island's economic future. I want to reverse that, as do our council and partners, and nothing will prevent our pursuing that objective.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise in Inverness authored the Sceptre report, which is an authoritative assessment of the small-scale satellite space market and where a UK launch site should be situated. The report established Unst as the best location for vertical launch in the UK because it is the furthest and most northerly point. For reasons that I do not understand, HIE refused to publish the report. Shetland Islands Council obtained the report not from the Highlands and Islands' economic development agency but from the UK Space Agency. HIE has not worked to help Shetland on its launch proposals ever since, and I do not understand why.

HIE should adopt a fair approach of encouraging all options, as the minister and David Stewart rightly said. Ministers should adopt a level playing field on launch sites to ensure that Scotland delivers against European competition. To answer Edward Mountain's question, that is what is behind my amendment. All areas of space activity need Government support to compete not with each other but in the worldwide market. Enterprise areas could be established to bring in business—that would be a signal that the Government is taking an even-handed approach to the market and supporting all of Scotland. I hope that the minister and the Tories accept that logic, and I hope that he refers to that issue in his closing remarks.

Unst is the right location for space launches. Why? A rocket blasting off from Unst would cross

only sea; it would not pass over the west of Shetland's oil fields and installations or the Faroe Islands.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I, too, have a copy of the Sceptre report. Although it says that the Shetland isles are the best location to launch from because, as the member said, the trajectory avoids the populations in the Faroe Islands and Iceland, it also says that a remote island location would be more logistically challenging than a mainland site such as the Moine peninsula. That is why that site was chosen to be supported.

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

Tavish Scott: I hope Gail Ross accepts that, if that argument had been followed, we would never have built the Sullom Voe oil terminal or the Total gas plant at a cost of \$4 billion, and engineering companies such as Schlumberger and many others would not have been based in Shetland for the past 40 years. I cannot understand why HIE is running down Shetland, as it has been doing, as though we cannot do things, as though we do not have engineering companies and as though we have not had oil and gas for 40 years. The evidence is, rather, to the contrary.

An Unst launch would directly reach polar and sun-synchronous orbits, as David Stewart rightly said, and that is what industry needs. Unst would do that directly; no other site would do that.

The parallels with oil and gas are resonant. When the vast east Shetland basin was discovered, in the 1970s, the industry needed the nearest point of land for a terminal. That became Sullom Voe. Once again, but for space launches, it is industry and not public agencies that will choose the preferred location. That is why ArianeGroup, the European space monolith, is partnering with the Shetland Space Centre to design and build the launch facility.

I am grateful to the First Minister for her discussion with our partners in ArianeGroup when she recently met the company in Paris. As the company explained to the First Minister, Unst is the best location in northern Europe. That is why commercial satellite businesses across Scotland of the kind that the minister and others have described have been to Unst and want to launch from Unst. It is why Goonhilly Earth Station in Cornwall—a UK earth observation centre—will partner with Shetland. Its chief executive said:

"it's obvious that Shetland is recognised as the best location by key launch companies."

It is why the UK Government and its regulator, the UK Space Agency, support launch options across the UK. Let us be in no doubt that Unst will be at

the centre of this exciting new industrial future. I say to Edward Mountain that it will be the final frontier.

I move amendment S5M-16312.1, to insert at end:

“; and supports the creation of enterprise zones in those areas of Scotland where space activity is being developed.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Oh dear. I do not really want to hear any more of these astronomical quotes, quotes about satellites or whatever, but I suppose that I am going to.

We move to the open debate, and I ask for four-minute speeches. I call Clare Adamson, to be followed by John Scott.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Can I start by saying—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I beg your pardon—I might have done something wrong. *[Interruption.]* It was you who jumped the gun, Mr Scott—I did not get it wrong.

John Scott: I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer. It was my fault.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Och, it is such a change. I call Clare Adamson, to be followed by the former Deputy Presiding Officer, John Scott, who should know better.

16:00

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Perhaps I should declare an interest in that I will not be arguing this afternoon for the spaceport to come to my constituency. However, I should point out that Motherwell and Wishaw has a great tradition of engineering and science and a wonderful college. I would welcome any new businesses in the sector to come and investigate what is happening in our area.

Last week, I was delighted to attend the celebrating EU researchers night, which was hosted in the Parliament by Lewis Macdonald—I certainly hope that it will not be the last time that we are able to celebrate horizon 2020 projects in this area. Explorathon was there with seven of our world-class universities, showing off work that they are doing that has been funded by the European Commission.

Among those involved was the University of Strathclyde, and I was delighted to meet Peter McGinty, the network manager for the stardust project, which is devoted to mastering the techniques for monitoring asteroids and space debris, managing their removal and deflection and exploring possible benefits of exploiting them as a resource in the future. The stardust consortium is a collaboration of universities from across the EU

and private investors who are seeking an ethical approach to space exploration that embraces the reusability of components and manufacturing to allow us to limit the amount of debris that there is in space as well as potential risks from asteroids and man-made space debris. It is a fantastic project.

If members want a timely reminder of what space debris looks like, they should go and see the Black Arrow R3, which is sitting outside. I thank the Presiding Officer for working with Skyrora to bring it to the Parliament today—in fact, its people told me that you are now affectionately known as “the rocket lady”. I realise that I might have to pay for that comment later.

Stardust is a truly visionary project that exemplifies the potential for Scotland and our universities to lead in this new industry.

In 2016, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s directorate for science, technology and innovation produced a policy note titled “Space and Innovation: How do Space Activities Relate to the Global Economy?” It states:

“Three overarching thrusts ... driving innovation in the space sector”

up to 2026 are

“the persistence of national security and science objectives (with ever-more countries investing in space programmes); ... the expansion of downstream space applications; ... and the pursuit of human space exploration.”

It is therefore not surprising that Government funding is key to the sector.

However, disappointingly, when the policy note came out, the UK had one of the lowest percentage shares of gross domestic product being spent in the area. Only 0.05 per cent of the research budget was being allocated to it compared with 0.1 per cent in France—double the UK’s spend. Business enterprise research and development statistics show that, since then, Scotland has been investing in research and development in the area, with a particularly impressive figure of more than £1.2 billion having been spent on R and D businesses in Scotland last year. That is a sizeable 13.9 per cent real-terms increase on what was spent in 2016 and a 93.6 per cent increase on 2007 levels of spend. BERD expenditure in Scotland in 2017 was £1.247 billion—the highest level since 2001—while UK expenditure increased by only 2.9 per cent in real terms over the same period.

This is an area in which we can boldly go and be world leaders. After all, space is the final frontier. Whether we are talking about space debris or landing Philae on comet 67P, Scotland can lead the way.

16:04

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): What a pleasure it is to take part in this debate on Scotland becoming Europe's leading space nation. Indeed, it is a pleasure following last week's signing of the Ayrshire growth deal at Ayrshire College, when £80 million was allocated to aerospace and the space programme, of which £32 million came from the UK Government and £30 million came from the Scottish Government, with South Ayrshire Council adding £18 million to the total. I say thank you, in my old-fashioned way, to each of those agencies of government for that massive level of support.

Prestwick airport, with its 880 acres of land and its unique natural and geographical attributes, has a bright future and enormous potential. Of still greater importance to Ayrshire—particularly South Ayrshire—is the almost 4,000 largely maintenance, repair and overhaul jobs that are supported by the aerospace sector in and around the airport. The concept of a spaceport at Prestwick would build on and from that solid foundation.

Companies such as Spirit, which employs more than 1,000 people and builds 65 leading-edge wings per month for Airbus, are involved in pioneering use of composite materials; BAE Systems designs the aeroplanes of the future and is involved in helping to develop a new horizontal-launch reusable spacecraft; and companies such as Chevron are seeking more hangar space to refurbish aircraft from many of the world's major airlines. Between them, Ryanair, UTC, Woodward and GE Caledonian support more than 1,000 jobs, and, with 800 jobs at National Air Traffic Services, there is a genuinely world-class hub of expertise in and around Prestwick.

Prestwick seeks to be part of the growing small-satellite space industry, which is expected to be worth £3.8 billion to the UK by 2030, as Ivan McKee said, because Prestwick is the location of choice in the UK for horizontal-launch spacecraft, with cleared airspace all the way to the north pole. That is why the allocation of the £80 million to Prestwick airport last week is so important. That money and other funds that are available will allow the airport to make the modest infrastructure improvements that are necessary to make horizontal launch possible from the site and to gain the necessary civil aviation authority certification as well as host the Scottish space and innovation centre.

Of course, Scottish Conservatives welcome the vertical launch site that is to be built in Sutherland, but the big prize in the field will go to those who are using reusable horizontal-launch vehicles at a location that is supported by excellent road and rail infrastructure as well as by can-do companies

that can design, build and repair anything that flies. Cleared airspace to the north pole is another vital asset of the Prestwick site.

One of the local companies that is very much involved in the new space race is Orbital Access, which is led by Stuart McIntyre, who is the grandson of Group Captain McIntyre, one of the founders of the airport in 1935. In addition, the University of Glasgow, the University of Strathclyde and the University of the West of Scotland are all involved in the development of the spaceport, and they support Clyde Space and other Glasgow builders of small satellites. I congratulate those hugely successful pioneers and market leaders on the development of small satellites in the west of Scotland.

Horizontal satellite space launch may be just around the corner at Prestwick, where, it is hoped, the operational model and business case for horizontal launch will be in place by October this year. When that happens, the world will once again take note of what Prestwick can deliver. It is my hope that this cutting edge industry, along with the other organisations that are already on site, will attract further investors to Prestwick and Ayrshire.

The Ayrshire growth deal has come at exactly the right time for the development of Prestwick, and it is an opportunity to be seized with both hands—as, I am certain, it will be, with both Governments, three councils, three universities and Ayrshire College, as well as the people of Ayrshire, all working together in a collaborative way to make that development a success.

16:08

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): As a 13-year-old, I would catch the bus into Glasgow city centre with my friend Colin and visit the old spit and sawdust Bay Horse pub. Over a Coca-Cola, we watched the original—to my mind, the only—"Star Trek", our mothers' addiction to "Coronation Street" denying us the chance to see such a magnificent programme at home in an era before catch-up television, DVD and even video, although, I know that for you, Presiding Officer, it was the invention of the talkies that changed your world.

Members: Oh!

Kenneth Gibson: While watching fleshy, flashy Captain Kirk, Mr Spock, Bones and the gang, we escaped the reality of the cold war and a hot conflict in Vietnam, travelling to a future three centuries hence, where Captain Kirk always got the girl and the nations of the earth had set aside their differences, abolished poverty, racism and conflict to create a multi-ethnic, indeed multispecies, united federation of planets, and

explored the universe with astonishingly advanced technology.

In the mid-1970s, the Apollo project was winding down, but we looked forward to humanity landing on Mars by 1985, moon bases by 1999 and our species fulfilling its destiny and reaching for the stars long before now. Sadly, as Scotty, chief engineer of the Starship Enterprise said, ye cannae change the laws of physics, and the invention of warp drive—moving faster than the speed of light—still eludes us. I take my hat off to those space pioneers who still look upwards and see humanity reaching beyond the confines of our beautiful planet.

Today, we had a wee glimpse of our current involvement in space with Skyrora bringing the Black Arrow to Parliament. I thank you for that, Presiding Officer.

Back in October 2016, I strongly argued for Prestwick to be the UK's first spaceport. Since then, Prestwick has worked with partners to make a horizontal space launch from there a reality, moving towards a licence application. It has one of the longest runways in the UK—more than 2,980m long—and frequently handles the largest aircraft.

Already a NASA partner, Prestwick has hygiene, health check and rehabilitation facilities for astronauts returning from space via Kazakhstan. With the space industry set for rapid growth, we have a tremendous opportunity for Ayrshire to become a hub for commercial space flights. That would showcase Scotland's already world-renowned skills in engineering and science, propelling us into developing the next generation of space-related industries. Scotland already has 18 per cent of UK space-related jobs.

Some of the largest global aerospace companies are already in Prestwick, including BAE Systems, GE Caledonian, UTC Aerospace Systems, Woodward International Inc and, as John Scott mentioned, Spirit Aerosystems, which employs around 1,000 people at Prestwick.

Scotland's achievable share of the global space market is £4 billion by 2030. Prestwick will be vital to that, offering the UK's first horizontal launch facility and low-cost regular access to space, and providing full services to the sector. It is not only the space industry that will profit; we will have more spending power in the Ayrshire economy from the spaceport workers and increased tourism will bring further benefits. Ayrshire already has huge appeal because of our beautiful coastlines, golf courses and rich heritage. The spaceport will build on that.

Prestwick is one of only two tier 1 UK airports able to take aircraft in security emergencies and is also a search and rescue base for Her Majesty's Coastguard. A further advantage is Prestwick's

proximity to two hospitals within 20 minutes' drive. Glasgow, home to some of our nation's finest university graduates, research teams, innovative companies and over half of Scotland's aerospace workforce—along with 8,000 engineering undergraduates—is within an hour of Prestwick. Central road and rail services make it simple to transport equipment and materials and to attract specialist staff.

Thanks to the SNP Government, more than £50 million has been invested in Ayrshire's further and higher education infrastructure over the past five years. The Scottish and UK Governments, through the Ayrshire growth deal, agreed to £62 million just last Friday which, along with £18 million from South Ayrshire Council, will support the space and aerospace industries at Prestwick.

Prestwick has been a centre of aerospace excellence for over 80 years and today it continues to go from strength to strength.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude there.

Kenneth Gibson: Prestwick's spaceport will perfectly showcase—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Conclude! I am sorry, but if you make an ageist comment to the Presiding Officer, you cannot expect me to be sympathetic.

16:13

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I was going to begin by calling you rocket lady, Presiding Officer, but now I dare not do that.

This is an important debate for several reasons. First, it is clearly an opportunity for the Scottish economy and one that we need to grasp. Secondly, and more importantly, it is an opportunity that, as the Government motion identifies, builds on the strengths that we have in Scotland. As Scots, we are sometimes too slow to recognise our strengths and it is important that we identify them. However, finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is an opportunity for us to talk about the cool stuff that we have seen on recent visits in and around our constituencies.

Let me begin by doing just that. I was hugely excited to look at the NASA robot Valkyrie, which is based at the informatics department at the University of Edinburgh. It is a 1.8m humanoid robot that has been gifted by the Johnson Space Center to the University of Edinburgh so that it can develop the robot's control systems and other technology. The robot has been built to explore how robots can be used in space exploration.

Robots in space—it really does not get much better than that. I must admit that, when I come

home from work having had a day like that and describe what I have done, my wife asks me whether I have a real job. However, it is hugely important that we look at such things.

If, a number of years ago, people had talked to me about spaceports, I would have thought that they were talking about Mos Eisley rather than somewhere here in Scotland, although I would not dare describe either Shetland or Sutherland as a

“hive of scum and villainy”,

even if that is how Obi-Wan Kenobi might have described such a place. I will not embroil myself in that particular space war, but the very fact that Scotland builds more satellites than anywhere else in Europe or, indeed, anywhere outside California, is remarkable.

The way the space industry has changed in terms of entrepreneurial opportunities, perhaps most conspicuously with Elon Musk and SpaceX, and the fact that we can take advantage of those opportunities here in Scotland, is hugely exciting. Scotland is truly a centre of excellence for technology and engineering, and I was pleased that the minister highlighted the activity that is taking place at the Royal Observatory in my Edinburgh constituency. There we have the Higgs centre for innovation and the UK astronomy technology centre, which are very much at the forefront of development and investment in small and medium enterprises developing space opportunities.

The award of funding in August 2018 to the University of Edinburgh as part of the space research and innovation network for technology—SPRINT—is hugely welcome. It enables us to draw on many important factors that we have here in Edinburgh, including data science as well as the data infrastructure and the opportunities presented through the city region deal. A number of other things are also occurring at the University of Edinburgh, such as the work with Orbital Micro Systems.

More broadly, we need to look at how technology will change our industry and the nature of employment. The space sector is just one of those opportunities and it is vital that we focus on the investment and support that are required to take advantage of those opportunities.

These days, it is almost impossible to ignore Brexit, but the true cost of Brexit is the distraction that it creates from the real focus, which should be on opportunities such as this to develop our economy for the future and make sure that Scotland is at the forefront of both technology and the development of jobs for the future.

16:17

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I thank the Presiding Officer for allowing me to leave after my speech, as I have other business to attend to. I apologise to the members whose speeches I will not be able to enjoy.

As I am the MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, it will be no surprise that I am able to support one site for a spaceport. A few years ago, someone who shall remain nameless whispered to me at the end of a meeting in Caithness, “What do you think about launching rockets from north Sutherland?” At that time, I admit that it seemed to be an impossibility. What on earth could that little piece of the Highlands offer to the multibillion-pound space industry? How could we ever get that off the ground?

Move forward to 2018, and I find myself on “Good Morning Scotland” explaining how a remote peninsula in north Sutherland could become the first vertical launch site in Europe. There is a total funding package of £17.3 million for one of the most remote, rural and fragile areas in Scotland, including the grant award from the UK Space Agency of £2.5 million, along with £9.8 million from HIE—and that is without the private investment of Lockheed Martin and Orbex.

Sutherland is one of the areas set to be hit by the closure of the Dounreay nuclear power plant, which is the single biggest employer on the north coast. It is predicted that the population will fall by at least 11.9 per cent by 2041. It is imperative that we do all we can to create opportunities to keep young people and families in the area. In that and many more regards, the announcement of the UK Space Agency grant funding, along with the backing for the Sutherland site from HIE, Lockheed Martin and Orbex, is brilliant news for my constituents and wider Scotland. With the rundown of Dounreay, that will provide confidence to my area that other industries can and will move into the area and offset the impact that the closure of Dounreay will have, especially for those people who want to remain in the area and work there.

The Caithness and north Sutherland regeneration partnership is recognised as a great way of working. It has been supported from its inception by the Scottish Government and I feel that it is now time for the Scottish Parliament to show that we are looking to support the area as a whole.

Following the award of the grant last summer, HIE is developing the proposed spaceport at Sutherland, which could create 40 jobs for the local community and hundreds more in the wider supply chain.

Orbex has already announced plans for its base in Moray. There are also opportunities for

Inverness, the Western Isles, and Argyll and Bute. Shetland has signed an agreement to establish a satellite tracking and communication centre in Unst. I was happy to hear the Shetland constituency MSP, Tavish Scott, confirm that that is going ahead. It just goes to prove that, when we work together as team Scotland, there can be rewards for all those areas.

The proposal will give the opportunity for people to grow their skills in the sector. Businesses in the supply chain will benefit and it will attract tourists, who will bring their hard-earned cash to spend, enabling more small and medium-sized enterprises to flourish.

The UK Government is working at pace to develop the detailed regulations that are required to implement the Space Industry Act 2018, and HIE continues to support a range of organisations that are interested in establishing space launch services.

The project is a lifeline for my constituency, which is one of the most remote and rural, economically fragile and demographically challenged parts of Scotland. We must get behind the project and show north Sutherland that it is not forgotten, and show the world that that little piece of the Highlands is open for business.

16:21

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

I am pleased to contribute to this important debate on a significant and fast-growing sector of Scotland's economy, although I am disappointed that all the good quotations on space have already been used by other members.

We have heard that the space sector offers the prospect of high-value jobs and a boost to the Scottish economy. The sector has grown at an average of more than 8 per cent every year over the past decade, and average wages in the sector are four times the national average. Over and above that, the space sector will deliver much wider advantages in the fields of transportation, energy, the environment, information technology and industrial productivity.

The good news is that Scotland is uniquely positioned to lead the UK's commercial space sector and become one of the leading pioneers in Europe. We welcome the fact that the UK and Scottish Governments recognise that potential. As the UK astronaut, Tim Peake, said after his voyage in 2015:

"We need to give our industry a chance to develop ... If we're not involved now, then we are simply going to miss the boat."

Responding to that challenge, the UK Government's industrial strategy has set the

ambitious target to increase the UK's share of the global space market from 6.5 per cent now to 10 per cent in the next 10 years. The industrial strategy is also positioning spaceports around the country to access the global market for launching small satellites, which is worth £10 billion.

Scotland is benefiting significantly as a result of those investments. As we have heard, 18 per cent of UK employment in the space industry is in Scotland. Last year, the UK Government announced more than £31 million in funding for the UK space sector, including support for the Sutherland spaceport, which would create hundreds of new jobs and considerable economic benefits. Initial funding of £2.5 million has already been allocated to develop the vertical launch site in Sutherland, which will use innovative rocket technologies to pave the way for a world-leading space flight facility. Commenting on the investments, Lockheed Martin said:

"The UK Space Agency's strategic vision for a world-class launch market will position the nation for a very bright future".

In addition to those investments, the UK Government, working together with the Scottish Government through the Ayrshire growth deal, has committed to developing Prestwick airport as a horizontal take-off spaceport, as well as a new aerospace and space innovation centre as part of a sector-leading cluster. As John Scott said, that investment will bring about a transformational change to Ayrshire's economy—quite rightly, it has cross-party support in this Parliament.

Another crucial area in which the UK industrial strategy is delivering is the field of satellite technology, which has recently received investment of more than £50 million. Scotland already leads in that area. Glasgow companies produce eight satellites every week and those firms have welcomed the new investment in Scotland. Commenting on the future of the space satellite industry, Clyde Space said:

"Having a spaceport located in Scotland will bring about a whole host of commercial advantages and not only to our operations in Glasgow, but to the entire space sector in the whole of the UK."

The space sector offers a significant opportunity for Scotland to develop and lead in a vital industry for the future. The best way of doing that will be through close collaboration with industry and research partners across the UK. The UK industrial strategy provides the scale, expertise and unparalleled levels of research and development that can help Scotland to reach our full potential in this area. I encourage the minister and his colleagues—perhaps he can mention this in his closing speech—to fully realise those opportunities, work together with the UK

Government and take advantage of the scale that the UK industrial strategy will provide.

I support the amendment in Edward Mountain's name.

16:25

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): For this debate, two obvious questions come to mind. First, why Scotland? And secondly, why space? The answers are really quite obvious.

Why space? In Scotland, we have a long tradition of engineering and invention, and many of the technologies that we use today are possible because of that history. David Stewart referred to James Watt, who introduced the steam engine to our industries. John Logie Baird invented the television; indeed, he demonstrated the first colour television in the late 1920s, not long after the first black and white television. Ken Gibson referred to Montgomery Scott of Star Trek but failed to provide the quotation from the actor, James Doohan, who played Scotty and who, when asked by the director of the film what nationality he thought the engineer should be, simply replied

"all the world's best engineers have been Scottish."

That is why Star Trek had a Scottish engineer.

Scotland continues to punch above its weight—we all know that. Members have referred to many of the companies in the west of Scotland such as Spire, which has been blown away by the first-class employees that it can attract in Scotland; that is why Glasgow houses its European headquarters.

Now, why space? Well, space represents an infinite—or near infinite—possibility. In financial terms, we have heard about the value of the industry now and the expectations that it will triple in the lifetime of many of the people who are here today. Capturing just a little bit of that cake would be extremely valuable for our economy, for growth, for the creation of well-paid jobs and, indeed, for the development of new technologies and ownership of the intellectual property here, in order to provide enduring income streams. The public sector has its role in providing the consents and the infrastructure at both UK and Scottish level.

Of course, there is a bit more to it than that. Space has soft power, which we need to recognise. Sputnik 1 went up on 4 October 1957, as a demonstration of Soviet power, and Sputnik 2, with the first mammal, a dog called Laika, on board, went up to align with the 50th anniversary of the Russian revolution—in what was, according to the old calendar, October 1917—on 3

November 1957. Therefore, it is about soft as well as hard power.

We need to look beyond ourselves, at what we can be rather than what we are. I simply love the Shan Jahan quotation that is on the side of the Taj Mahal, which says:

"happy are those who dream dreams and are prepared to make the sacrifice to make them come true."

Well, we have dreams for space and we have the means to make them come true—they do not even need great sacrifice.

Tavish Scott made an important point when he said that we should be the first, and the history of space illustrates that. Who was the second woman in space? The answer is Kondakova. We remember Valentina Tereshkova, who was the first, but we do not remember who was second. Who was the second American to orbit the earth? We remember John Glenn, who was the first, but Gus Grimmon we might not remember. And who was the second Soviet? He was Titov; Gargarin, of course, we remember.

16:29

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I am of an age to have been brought up hearing the immortal words in my ears, "Beam me up, Scotty." Space may be our final frontier, but the galaxy is no longer far, far away. Scotland has the opportunity to be a leader in the on-going reach for space, and we can become a significant force in the context of space advancement and industry for years to come.

Scotland has already begun the push to develop itself as a leader in the reach for space. A 2016 London Economics report entitled "Development of the Scottish Space Industry" stated:

"it is imperative to first consolidate and maintain the strong existing base of the Scottish space industry and economy".

It said:

"In order for Scotland to become a market-leading space cluster, a strategic focus on one capability, market or infrastructure needs to be identified and all development effort needs to be focussed on establishing Scotland as a global authority and centre for that activity."

Scotland is key to the development of the UK space market. As the report said:

"The UK's Space Innovation and Growth ... Action Plan from 2010 defines a target for the UK space economy to capture 10% of the global market by 2030"

and

"Scotland may be regarded as a location-based space cluster ... The Scottish space cluster is supported by a range of institutions, policy measures and other infrastructure characteristics, backing the industry by means of a range of activities including networking and

industry coordination, business incubation, technology funding, business and industry promotion, and research and education activities.”

Some companies in Scotland are already reaching into space. I recently had the opportunity to visit Skyrora’s new production facility in Loanhead, which is in my Midlothian North and Musselburgh constituency. Skyrora is an Edinburgh-based launch vehicle company that leverages proven space technology to provide a cost-effective and reliable launch service for satellites from northern Scotland, in line with the UK Government’s aim to capture a larger share of the global space market. Attracted by its proximity to future launch sites and customers as well as the ability to gain access to universities and to benefit from the long-standing engineering heritage that our country boasts, Skyrora opened its first Scottish production facility in Loanhead. That is evidence that value is already being added to our economy. It has stated:

“We aim to develop the Scottish ... space ecosystem to reduce the cost of access to space, allowing all of society to reap the benefits that space data can provide, ranging across every sector imaginable.”

Skyrora successfully launched Scotland’s first-ever commercial rocket in August 2018 and it plans to launch a further three test vehicles within the next year, building up to its first orbital launch in the early 2020s. It has no doubt that Scotland is the ideal place to conduct such activity, as it pushes forward with its plans to solidify its position as the UK’s most advanced satellite launch vehicle company. That space-focused company is investing in Scotland.

Choosing to invest in space will have diverse, long-lasting and positive effects on the Scottish economy. The London Economics report stated:

“Scotland’s space industry is significant, and it leads the line globally in the nascent field of nanosatellites”.

It also said:

“the closer proximity to a launch facility will make the logistics of launch significantly easier. This will reduce the need to ‘piggy-back’ off larger satellites launches into geostationary orbit.”

According to Skyrora,

“Scotland builds 40% of the world’s small satellites and 25% of the world’s telecom satellites but it lacks the capacity to launch these satellites into space.”

Therefore, Scotland has the opportunity to be a leader in the on-going industrialisation of space.

As we invest in local resources, our economy will be strengthened and we will become a powerful force in the context of space advancement and industry for years to come. Let us, therefore, choose to continue to invest in the development of our space sector.

16:33

Tavish Scott: The real message from the debate is that Kenny Gibson should, in the future, not insult the Presiding Officer, in order to ensure that he can finish his speeches. We were all gleefully waiting for that.

As we are doing history, the 50th anniversary of Neil Armstrong walking on the moon will be on 21 July, this summer. Some years back, I took my family on holiday to Houston for reasons with which I will not bore members—they were to do with friends in the south-west of the United States. The host family took us to the mission control centre in Houston. I do not know whether other members have been there, but it is well worth a visit. It is, of course, part of space history, but for some of us it brings back memories of watching things when were rather younger and smaller than we are now.

I want to stress three points in reflecting on the contributions that have been made. The first, which Stewart Stevenson made too, is that Scotland needs to be first. I do not apologise for making that point. My concern is not so much about what goes on in Scotland as it is about the competition that exists across Europe. Take, for example, the amount of money that the Portuguese might pour into the Azores. They are also trying to catch Orbex and are working hard with other companies that have been mentioned in the debate. We are not the only ones who aspire to provide the services and locations that the launching companies need.

On the satellite companies, a number of members made eminently sensible observations about the scale of that industry, the spin-outs from universities, the benefits for the teaching of STEM subjects in schools in particular, and the excitement that it creates in physics and chemistry departments because teachers can now see a way to make real the reasons why young girls and boys should take physics and chemistry courses in high school.

Space can do all those things—it reaches all those points—but to make its appeal even stronger we have to make sure that we win the launch business. I believe that there will be enough business for more than one launch site in Scotland.

John Scott made a persuasive case for Prestwick. Our people have certainly talked to many of the companies that he mentioned. I agree with his analysis. The interesting thing about horizontal launch is that in order for the rocket to be dropped safely from underneath the belly of the aircraft, it has to get into northern airspace where, in simple terms, there is nothing that it can be dropped upon. The ground station in Shetland and

the ones that will exist in the Faroe Islands—I have no doubt that in time there will be stations north of the Arctic circle—will all be part of the international network.

I do not mean this to be derogatory, but Stewart Stevenson is looking at his mobile phone at the moment. Here's the thing: I am told that from getting up in the morning and going through work every day, most of us use 23 separate satellites. As the minister rightly said, they are not Cape Canaveral satellites, but satellites that are the size of the folder that is sitting on Mr Stevenson's desk. An awful lot more of them will go into space. Scotland designs and builds them now; in the future it will undoubtedly also be able to launch and recover them.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Tavish Scott: Can I, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes—you can take a brief one. I will give you a little extra time.

Stewart Stevenson: Does Tavish Scott recognise that becoming the space dustman is also a commercial opportunity?

Tavish Scott: Absolutely. We could spend an afternoon on that issue, too. That was an entirely fair question.

My plea to the minister is for a level playing field so that all the flowers can flourish and Scotland can build a great industry. There would certainly be cross-party support for that. We should all be allowed to get on without people getting in our way, so we should make sure that wherever the industry exists in Scotland, it benefits Scotland not only in academic terms, but in purely commercial terms. The commercial market is the bit that we really want. That needs to happen as quickly as possible, wherever the industry exists—Sutherland, Unst, Penicuik or wherever.

16:38

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The debate has provided an opportunity for some light-hearted banter. It appears that we are all Trekkies now. However, it is also a serious debate. We have to look at the advancements in technology that have made our talking about spaceports possible. It is absolutely incredible that that has happened, so we need to ensure that we are ready for spaceports.

Tavish Scott mentioned mobile phones. Last night, I told my mother what we were going to be debating today, and she asked why. I asked her whether she uses her phone. She does, so she will benefit from the technology, too.

I was slightly disappointed that the Scottish Government said that its ambition is to have one spaceport in Scotland. As we have heard in the debate, we could have two kinds of spaceport: vertical-launch and horizontal-launch ports. I would like the Scottish Government to be a bit more ambitious.

Ivan McKee: Perhaps I was not clear enough earlier. The Scottish Government is keen to encourage anyone who comes forward with a spaceport proposal. It will be considered by the agencies and assessed on its merits. That goes for vertical-launch spaceports and horizontal-launch spaceports. We are keen to have as many spaceports as we can sustain in Scotland.

Rhoda Grant: That was a welcome intervention.

We in the Parliament must make sure that we unite to ensure that the prize comes to Scotland. We must be careful not to waste too much energy on fighting with each other over where the spaceport should be based. As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I know all the potential sites in my region. A spaceport would bring a great and much-needed economic boost to any of the areas. I am sure that that is true for the whole of Scotland.

Among others, John Scott and Kenny Gibson made strong pleas for Prestwick and Ayrshire. That is why the Lib Dem amendment is important, because it looks to provide assistance to all the areas that want to develop spaceports in order to ensure that the developments come to Scotland, but it would also allow all areas that are interested to benefit in some way and to develop their own centres of excellence.

This is not only about jobs at the launch site: it is also about the jobs in manufacturing and central services. There being a spaceport in Scotland would encourage all areas of Scotland to welcome the industry to set up shop. It could provide a number of centres of excellence. David Stewart told us that we design, build and operate spacecraft but, at the moment, have nowhere from which to launch them. We must therefore take that important step in order to ensure that we fit the bill for all aspects of the industry.

The nature of the work means that developers are looking at rural areas. I am sure that that was also the case when air travel first began. Rather than risking a satellite falling to the ground in a built-up area, launching out to sea means that there is less chance of damage if something goes wrong. I am sure that such concerns will quickly be overcome but, in the meantime, I am happy that the industry is looking at rural areas.

Similar was also, strangely, true of Dounreay. The reactor was built away from centres of population: it was rumoured that the plan was to

roll the reactor into the sea when it was finished with. Therefore, it is perhaps fitting that the Sutherland spaceport should be developed on the same north coast as Dounreay. Gail Ross made the point that, with the downturn of Dounreay, a spaceport in Sutherland would be a much-needed boost to the area, as it would be for other areas.

We must also look at the skills and knowledge that we have and at the technology and robotics that we need to develop the industry, and we need to encourage young people to take up STEM subjects. David Stewart said that space innovation is attracting young people to STEM subjects; I hope that that is the case.

Daniel Johnson spoke about the interesting things that the University of Edinburgh is doing with space robotics. Again, that emphasises that the development is not for just one area of Scotland. Regardless of whether an area is beside the spaceport or not, there is work there that we can develop. Being in the same country means that we can all make the most of it.

In his opening speech, the minister talked about some of the things that we could develop in space, including solar energy and access to minerals, but I sound a note of caution: we must be very careful how we exploit space. We must make sure that we do not wreak havoc there, as we have done on earth. We must be much more gentle with our interventions in space.

16:43

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): Presiding Officer,

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win, and the others, too.”

Those are, of course, the words of President John F Kennedy, as he attempted to persuade the American people about the Apollo programme. It captured the public’s imagination, not only on that side of the Atlantic, but around the world.

Putting a man on the moon once embodied what we thought of as a space project. However, as we have heard today, projects have become much more than that. From satellites that we have sent into space comes data that we—including Stewart Stevenson—use in Parliament on our mobile phones. Scotland is uniquely positioned to make the most of that. As the JFK quotation states, it organises

“the best of our energies and skills”.

In preparing for today’s debate, it has been quite eye-opening to come to understand the extent of Scotland’s readiness to embark on the mission, on which the minister, in his opening speech, Colin Beattie and other members throughout the debate have commented. That readiness is not only in terms of the geographical advantage that we hold for horizontal-launch and vertical-launch sites to reach highly sought-after orbits. I note that that is technical language with which I am certainly not familiar.

Leaders in the sector, including Nick Allain of Spire Global Inc, have been quoted this afternoon as saying that Scotland’s access to manufacturing and engineering expertise, as well as its world-class universities, have been the attraction for businesses to set up in Scotland, which means that Scotland now manufactures more satellites than anywhere outwith the United States, and that Glasgow is building more than any other European city.

That Scotland punches above its weight is evidenced by the fact that, as we have heard, our proportion of jobs in the UK space industry is double our proportion of the UK population as a whole.

We have heard about the importance of the west and the north of Scotland for our space sector. I will comment on the growing role that is played by this very city. The space economy relates not just to the traditional view of the space sector, in terms of manufacture, launch and operation of space assets including satellites, but to use of signals and data that are supplied back to earth from those assets, including for earth-observation imagery.

Edinburgh’s place as part of the space economy—although I think that it was not mentioned by my colleague Edward Mountain in his opening speech—is an important one. For example, the international center for earth data was set up last year jointly by a team from the University of Edinburgh and satellite technology provider Orbital Micro Systems. It will use data to improve weather forecasting around the world, for use by a number of sectors including agriculture, aviation and shipping. The University of Edinburgh is ideally placed to make the most of that opportunity by taking advantage of its excellence in data science and geoscience in order to maximise the value that is derived from earth-observation satellite data using the latest data techniques.

That reputation will only grow, as the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal—which is utilising funding from the UK and Scottish Governments—aims, through the University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University, to train 100,000 data scientists and foster 400 data-

enabled start-up companies in the next 15 years, and as organisations and public bodies come to understand the usefulness of the data in areas ranging from monitoring of crop yields to pollution.

Conservative members have made clear the potential for Scotland to lead the UK's commercial space sector. Given the ambition that the UK Government has in the area, it is an exciting prospect for Scotland. The Scottish Conservative amendment to today's motion welcomes the Space Industry Act 2018 and the investment of £50 million by the UK Government

"to support small satellite launches and sub-orbital flight from UK spaceports",

both of which arise from the ambition in the UK Government's industrial strategy to increase the UK's share of the global space market to 10 per cent by 2030. As we have heard, the 2018 act lays the foundations to allow commercial operators to launch vehicles and payloads into orbit from UK soil.

That was swiftly followed by the announcement that Sutherland has been selected by the UK Space Agency to be the first spaceport in the United Kingdom—indeed, in Europe—backed up by £2.5 million of UK Government funding. The spaceport will bring about 400 jobs to the region by 2023 as a result of launch activities attracting further investment and talent to the area.

The spaceport will, of course, be utilised to launch into orbit the small satellites that are rapidly being manufactured in Scotland. Manufacturing and launching of that hardware could, as we have heard, be worth £3.8 billion to the UK economy.

With downstream use of data in cities such as Edinburgh, Scotland has real end-to-end capability. That might just be youthspeak. I think the phrase should be "beginning-to-end capability": it includes design, manufacture, launch and operation of satellites, and utilisation of the data, all taking place here in Scotland.

To sum up the future prospects for Scotland's space industry, I will wind up by quoting another American President. Richard Nixon said:

"The sky is no longer the limit."

That said, budgets are limited. We will not support Tavish Scott's amendment on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, because it provides no explanation of costings or of what it is intended the "enterprise zones" that he is interested in will do. I close with that remark.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I was not quite sure where Richard Nixon's quote began and ended, but I do not think that he said, "I'll not be supporting Tavish Scott's amendment." I am sure that that is not the point.

16:50

Ivan McKee: It has been a pleasure to take part in the debate, which has featured three Scots—not just John and Tavish but also Montgomery.

It is clear that everybody who has taken part in the debate is very serious about our ambitions for Scotland's space sector. That theme has run through members' speeches. Unlike many other members, Daniel Johnson and Gordon Lindhurst did not put in a bid for a launch site; instead, they talked about the great strengths, including on data science, that Edinburgh brings to the party. Over the coming decades, the people who work in data science will probably get the biggest financial benefit from the space sector.

John Scott and Kenny Gibson talked about Ayrshire and Prestwick, which the Scottish Government is very keen to support. I was intrigued by Kenny Gibson's time machine, which took him back to the Bay Horse in 19-when-ever-it-was.

John Scott: The minister mentioned big data. Will he say a little about the additionality of the Ayrshire growth deal and the data centre that was announced as part of that? Will he explain how that will benefit Prestwick and provide another reason for it being the location of choice?

Ivan McKee: As John Scott mentioned, the Ayrshire growth deal will support the creation of the aerospace and space innovation centre, which will be a central hub for encouraging growth and supporting aerospace and space businesses in the area. It will make a significant contribution to Ayrshire and the sector.

Dean Lockhart mentioned the UK industrial strategy. I make it clear that, at every opportunity, I encourage businesses, universities and others across all sectors to bid into the industrial strategy challenge fund, to make sure that Scotland gets at least its fair share of the money that is available to develop the various sectors here.

I thank Clare Adamson for not putting in a bid for a spaceport, which was very welcome. When she spoke about the opportunities with regard to space debris, she opened up another area, which was also touched on by Rhoda Grant. It is important that we respect the environmental aspects of the issue, whether by dealing with space debris or in the design and operation of the technology or the type of fuel that launch vehicles use, but opportunities for commercial development exist in those areas, too, as Clare Adamson highlighted.

An important issue that came up was that of inspiration. David Stewart and Rhoda Grant talked about how we can leverage the romance of space to inspire young people to get involved in STEM

careers. This morning, I was at a datafest event with Primary Engineer, the City of Glasgow College and the data lab innovation centre in Glasgow. Pupils from a number of primary schools were there to take part in a competition in which—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please stop for a moment, Mr McKee. It is getting loud again. I say this every time: it is not fair to members who have taken part in the debate or to the minister for members to chat. Let us hear what the minister has to say. The members who have taken part in the debate are interested; if you are not interested, just sit there and be quiet.

Ivan McKee: The pupils were presenting on how they were using data. The way the young people were using spreadsheets and analysing data was very impressive. I made the point to them that one of the big uses of data in future will be for the space industry. I encourage the industry to raise its profile proactively in schools and encourage young people to get involved in studying STEM subjects and in STEM careers, using the hook of the space industry as an attraction.

I will talk briefly about enterprise zones, which Tavish Scott raised and which appear in the Lib Dem amendment. As I said in my opening speech, we are looking at enterprise zones, but I do not want to commit at this stage. The review by Scottish Enterprise is under way and the issue will be considered in the round when we know what the evidence says on where and for what sectors such zones are best deployed.

I have been struck by the energy and enthusiasm of everyone involved in the space sector, in both the public and private sectors, and in the chamber this afternoon. Everyone is showing a willingness to take innovative approaches to new challenges. It is important to remember that more than 7,500 people are already employed in Scotland's space sector. Scotland is already the largest producer of small satellites in Europe, as a number of members have mentioned. We probably know more about what is happening in space than we do about what is happening on planet Brexit, but that is another story.

Those are real achievements, creating jobs and wealth for Scotland. We will build on our existing strengths to deliver full end-to-end space sector capability in build, launch and operation. We will encourage investment in the sector, to realise its full potential for Scotland. We are already attracting world-leading companies to all parts of Scotland, and we want it to be clear that Scotland is not only involved in the space sector but is a global leader. Our ambition, as the First Minister has clearly said, is for Scotland to be seen as an inventor and a producer, and not just a consumer,

of goods and, in this case, space services. Perhaps that is nowhere more true than in the fast-growing space sector.

As a number of members have said, we aim to capture £4 billion of space-related business in Scotland by 2030. With the size of the prize within our reach, it is not surprising that there is fierce competition, as we witnessed this afternoon with members clearly passionate in advocating—

Daniel Johnson: Will the minister reflect on the need to focus on consolidation? We have seen flurries of activity in the past, such as in the computer industry in the 1980s, where there have been spin-outs from academic work, only to see that evaporate. Should that be addressed in the strategy?

Ivan McKee: That is an important point. As any sector evolves and develops, there is a flurry of activity at the start. It is not the place of the Government to say who the winners and losers will be. That will happen through a process of merger and development. It is hugely encouraging that there are so many start-ups, and we will watch that process closely to see how it evolves. We are in the early stages. The more businesses start up with great ideas, the better. That is to be encouraged.

We are already seeing economic benefits flow from developments in the space sector. The Orbex rocket factory in Forres, which I have visited, has been mentioned. Colin Beattie mentioned Skyrora and its new rocket facility in Loanhead. Scotland now has two rocket manufacturers based here. Members have mentioned the major investments at Prestwick, with ambitions for the first horizontal launch facility, and the aerospace and space innovation centre. There are also Shetland's space centre's plans for satellite-tracking and vertical-launch facilities; the aspirations for vertical launch in the Western Isles; the potential of the Machrihanish airstrip; the small-satellite manufacturing cluster that is going from strength to strength in Glasgow; and the space data applications businesses in Edinburgh and across the country. There are no doubt many others.

The enterprise agencies are ready and willing to support viable business proposals. The Scottish Government, working with the industry leadership council, is looking at what else we can do to support the sector further, including as I mentioned the review of enterprise zones. Our ambition is to have at least one spaceport in Scotland. With the market for launching small satellites expected to grow to 2,000 by 2030, there could be scope for many more.

We need to ensure that a team Scotland approach prevails, with the public and private sectors working together to deliver our ambition for

the sector. It is a great ambition—to have a fully integrated space sector, building satellites and rockets, launching satellites, and gathering and using data from the satellites.

Scotland might be a small nation, but we are open, agile and flexible. We are already punching above our weight globally and, given the rapidly growing global space industry, now is the time for us to step up and seize the opportunity to make Scotland Europe's leading space nation.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-16365, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Landfill Tax (Standard Rate and Lower Rate) Order 2019 be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Point of Order

believes that a statement is inaccurate, a mechanism exists to correct the record.

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I believe that Keith Brown wants to raise a point of order.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): I wish to raise a point of order on what, I believe, was a false statement that was made by James Kelly today during First Minister's question time. He stated that the budget that was recently agreed by the Parliament has resulted in, among other alleged results, the ending of support for the citizens advice bureau in Clackmannanshire. I have had it confirmed that Clackmannanshire Council has provided exactly the same funding in this year's budget as it did last year. I am also aware that the leader of Clackmannanshire Council has written to James Kelly to confirm those facts, and that the manager of the citizens advice bureau in Clackmannanshire has written to the council to thank it for its support.

There can be only two possible explanations for James Kelly's statement. The first is that, in his research, he displayed the same contempt for the facts that he, his party leader and his party have demonstrated at every budget—no facts, no proposals, no effort and no credibility. The second possibility is that he made the statement in full knowledge of the facts merely to scare voters in my constituency, many of whom will vote in a council by-election in a fortnight. Those can be the only explanations for previous statements that have been made by James Kelly and, indeed, by Richard Leonard, in asserting that the council proposed to close two schools—two schools that remain open.

Presiding Officer, I would be grateful for your ruling. I respectfully request that James Kelly be given the opportunity to correct the record in the same public forum that he made his false statement: this chamber. He should confirm which of the two explanations caused him to make the statement, offer an unreserved apology for getting his facts so spectacularly wrong, and apologise to my constituents, whom he has needlessly made apprehensive through his deplorable statement that the excellent and vital services that Clackmannanshire Council's citizens advice bureau provides might be jeopardised. It would appear that he made the statement for mere party-political advantage.

The Presiding Officer: I thank Keith Brown for giving me advance notice that he intended to raise a point of order. I am sure that James Kelly will have heard Keith Brown's remarks. James Kelly is aware—as all members are—that, if any member

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-16312.2, in the name of Edward Mountain, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16312, in the name of Ivan McKee, on building on Scotland's strengths in technology and engineering to become Europe's leading space nation, 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)
 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)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (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)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 79, Against 21, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-16312.3, in the name of David Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16312, in the name of Ivan McKee, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-16312.1, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16312, in the name of Ivan McKee, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

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)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 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)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 19, Against 81, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-16312, in the name of Ivan McKee, on building on Scotland's strengths in technology and engineering to become Europe's leading space nation, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (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)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 79, Against 21, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the rapid growth of the Scottish space sector; notes that it now accounts for 18% of all jobs in the UK space industry; encourages investment in support of the ambition to deliver a full end-to-end space sector capability in Scotland, to build, launch and operate satellites; agrees that now is the time to take advantage of the strengths that Scotland has in technology, engineering and data science to realise this ambition; further agrees that Scotland's clear strengths in small satellite manufacturing and space data are starting points for success, laying the foundations for Scotland to become Europe's leading space nation, and considers that this success will be enhanced by Scotland's plan to become the site of the first spaceport in Europe; welcomes both the Space Industry Act 2018 and the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, which includes support for a £50 million programme to support small satellite launches and sub-orbital flight from UK spaceports; notes the crucial diversification to the Scottish economy that the space sector provides; considers that future commercial viability will be dependent on the European small satellite launch on demand service, and notes the comparative advantage that Scotland enjoys for spaceport location by providing access to sun-synchronous and polar orbits.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-16365, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Landfill Tax (Standard Rate and Lower Rate) Order 2019 be approved.

Meeting closed at 17:07.

Correction

James Kelly has identified an error in his contribution and provided the following correction.

At col 22, paragraph 4—

Original text—

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): The recent Scottish National Party-Green budget resulted in councils being forced to make cuts and to pass them on to local communities. Therefore, we have job cuts in Dundee, the ending of support to the citizens advice bureau in Clackmannanshire and the axing of free school bus travel in Moray.

Corrected text—

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): The recent Scottish National Party-Green budget resulted in councils being forced to make cuts and to pass them on to local communities. Therefore, we have job cuts in Dundee and the axing of free school bus travel in Moray.

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

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba