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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 21 March 2019

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

General Question Time

Home Adaptations (Funding)

1. **Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how the housing minister aims to improve the transparency, accessibility and reporting of home adaptation funding. (S5O-03034)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): Integration joint boards are responsible for the planning and delivery of adaptations. We are undertaking a review of existing legislation and guidance on adaptations. That work has a practical focus, concentrating on identifying barriers and areas for development. We intend to issue revised guidance to IJBs later this year, to ensure that the tenure-neutral, person-centred approach to adaptations that I want for all older and disabled people happens consistently across the country.

The Scottish Government publishes a range of information on expenditure on adaptations.

Kezia Dugdale: The minister is aware that Scottish Government cash for home adaptations has been frozen for seven years. Now that it has been absorbed into the IJBs, it is almost impossible to track the number of adaptations that have been made or, indeed, what money has been spent. Given the clear link between home adaptations and the demand on social care, does he agree that the matter needs to be sorted out urgently and that we need to be able to follow the money? If so, when can we expect to do that?

Kevin Stewart: I agree that we need to look at the issue in more depth, which is why the review is taking place. The Scottish Government has provided £10 million a year over a number of years directly to registered social landlords for adaptations—that is additional money; primarily, responsibility rests with IJBs.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and I want to ensure that we do this right and as openly and transparently as possible, which is why we agreed to undertake the review. I am sure that Jeane Freeman or I will come back to Parliament with more in-depth information on the review once it is completed.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Kezia Dugdale is right: it is virtually impossible to

follow the money in the current system. That needs to be sorted out. She mentioned that the money for adaptations has been frozen at £10 million a year for seven years, which is a real-terms decrease of more than £1 million. Does the minister not think that it is time to increase the amount?

Kevin Stewart: As I said to Kezia Dugdale, that funding is additional money. Primary responsibility for budgeting for adaptations rests with integration joint boards; it is they that should ensure that people's needs in this area are met.

In 2016-17, which is the latest year for which we have figures, the total reported spend by IJBs was £38.413 million. I want to ensure that people know where the money is being spent, which is why we agreed to undertake and have gone ahead with the review—it is the right thing to do.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Has the minister had any discussions with the Scottish War Blinded charity? It receives various grants and has funds available to help people from the armed forces community who are blind or visually impaired.

Kevin Stewart: I am aware of the excellent work of Scottish War Blinded and other veterans charities in supporting and delivering services to disabled veterans across Scotland.

The Government's housing voluntary sector grant supports third sector organisations that are committed to helping disabled people live independently at home. For example, Housing Options Scotland operates military matters, a project that focuses on housing matters affecting service personnel, veterans and their families.

National Entitlement Card Renewal (Disabled People)

2. **Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason Transport Scotland requires disabled people to renew their national entitlement card every three years, including when their disability is permanent or progressive. (S5O-03035)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Renewal is due on the ground of disability, as documentary evidence is required to show that the person remains eligible to access the scheme. Although some conditions are permanent, in the majority of cases, circumstances can change. I appreciate that renewal may be an inconvenience for those with a condition. However, the measures are designed to ensure that only those people who are eligible have access to the scheme.

Jeremy Balfour: When we asked Transport Scotland about the policy, it said that it was to ensure that all disabled people are treated fairly. How does a costly, demeaning and unnecessary process fit with the Scottish Government's ethos of treating people with dignity and respect?

Michael Matheson: The member will be aware that the scheme does not operate on a condition-specific basis; it must operate equitably for the 1.4 million people who have access to the existing national entitlement card and is provided only to those who are entitled to it. The member should also be aware—although he certainly did not reflect this in his supplementary question—that the renewal process is a simplified process that is very different from the reapplication process, the aim being to reduce the burden for individuals who seek to renew their card; the process has been simplified to make it much easier for those who seek renewal.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I have a constituent who was born with disabilities so severe that, throughout her life, she has been incapable of work or forming meaningful relationships, so her sibling deals with everything for her. The United Kingdom Tory Government has subjected her to nine employment and support allowance work capability assessments over the years. Even at 62, she was summoned to appear at Jobcentre Plus in Ayr, many miles from her home, for another assessment.

In light of that, does the cabinet secretary agree that it takes a shocking lack of self-awareness for Tory MSPs to come to the chamber and complain about national entitlement card renewal terms?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That question is rather wide of the mark, so I ask for a very brief response.

Michael Matheson: It is an utter disgrace that constituents such as the one Kenny Gibson mentions have been put through such a degrading process. The process that the DWP has used is in no way similar to the process that we use for the national entitlement card, which is a simplified process to ensure that it is dignified for those who apply.

Police Scotland (Vietnam Visit)

3. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what information it can provide regarding the findings of Police Scotland's recent visit to Vietnam. (S5O-03036)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Since 2014, Vietnamese nationals have been the most frequently reported potential victims of trafficking under the national referral mechanism in Scotland. Labour exploitation was the most common exploitation type for adults and

children, but experience of multiple exploitation appears common both in transit and on arrival.

The national human trafficking unit was invited by Every Child Protected Against Trafficking to participate in a two-part best-practice exchange with Vietnam. Police Scotland representatives met representatives of the Vietnamese police and the Ministry of Public Security to discuss options for collaborative work, in furtherance of the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and Vietnamese Governments.

Jenny Marra: Children arrive in Scotland from Vietnam on their own, with no parent or anyone to look after them. They are trafficked here to be exploited sexually or for their labour in nail bars and cannabis farms in Scotland. Unaccompanied children are extremely vulnerable, which is why the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 provided that the Scottish guardianship service would step in to give such children legal protection. However, three and a half years on, the Scottish Government has not yet acted on that provision, and Vietnamese and other trafficked children still do not have the Scottish legal guardian that the Government promised them. Why is that? If the cabinet secretary commits today to bring section 11 into force, will he also meet me to discuss its scope, as there are concerns that the Government will interpret it too narrowly and will not fully realise the will of Parliament to protect vulnerable children?

Humza Yousaf: I recognise the work that Jenny Marra has done on the issue and the interest that she has taken in it. We are very proud of the legislation in section 11 of the 2015 act on independent child trafficking guardians, which we will take forward. I will of course meet Jenny Marra; and the Minister for Children and Young People, who is leading on section 11, will also be happy to meet her.

I take issue with some of Ms Marra's characterisation of the support: support is available for unaccompanied children through the Scottish guardianship service. I have visited the service, which is provided by the Scottish Refugee Council in Aberlour and gets £300,000 of Scottish Government funding. The service has worked with almost 400 young people since its inception in 2010, so let us not make the assumption that there is no support for young people; there absolutely is.

However, the point that Jenny Marra has raised is valid. She asked me to meet her because she has issues around the scope of section 11. Due to those issues, it has taken a bit longer to draft the consultation on section 11, but the consultation will be ready to go out in the spring. If Ms Marra wishes to meet me, or the Minister for Children and Young People, once the consultation has

gone out, or indeed before that, we are happy to do so.

Elder Abuse

4. Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle abuse of older people. (S5O-03037)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): Abuse in our communities is unacceptable. No person should ever be subject to any form of abuse.

We have made the ill treatment or wilful neglect of adults who are receiving health or social care a criminal offence, and we are currently consulting on the hate crime legislation, including on the introduction of a statutory sentencing aggravation of age-related hostility.

Alison Harris: Recently, in my region, several elderly people were abused by a member of staff at a care home facility. The abuse ranged from degrading humiliation to physical abuse. No one should have to go through that, and elderly people are particularly vulnerable. However, the culprit was sentenced to only 90 hours of unpaid work. Does the minister agree that such crimes should be treated more seriously?

Christina McKelvie: Absolutely. That is why, in my earlier answer, I explained to Alison Harris that we are currently consulting on an age-related hostility aggravation in the hate crime legislation. She will know that the Care Commission has done work around the issue and that everyone in Scotland has the right to safe, compassionate, high-quality care that meets their needs and respects their rights. On respecting those rights, we have to look at what Lord Bracadale recommended in the work that he has done for us and consult on those recommendations. I ask every member to encourage their constituents to get involved in the consultation, so that we can tackle the issues that older people face when it comes to vulnerability, hostility and hate crime that is related to their age.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The minister will be well aware that Action on Elder Abuse Scotland gave evidence to the Justice Committee in February. It believes that the real reason that older people are targeted is their perceived vulnerability. Is Scotland meeting its international human rights commitments to older people, and should there be a specific offence of elder abuse?

Christina McKelvie: My answer to David Stewart's question ties in to my answer to the previous question. Vulnerability is a clear theme that we are working on through Lord Bracadale's recommendations. Lord Bracadale recognised that

older people could be targeted by perpetrators due to their age and their perceived vulnerability. Therefore, vulnerability is a clear aspect of what we are looking at—the consultation looks at age-related hostility, including vulnerability. We are happy to hear any comments that Mr Stewart has on that issue, but we are absolutely taking the matter forward with a serious mind.

Prisoners (Assessment on Conviction)

5. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment the Scottish Prison Service carries out of prisoners when they are first convicted. (S5O-03038)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Every person who is received into a Scottish prison, whether on remand or on conviction, is subject to a multi-tiered assessment process. They will be subject to a reception risk assessment, which is conducted by SPS staff and which identifies immediate requirements and risks that relate to social care, self-harm and addictions. They will get a healthcare assessment, which is carried out by national health service professionals, and those who are serving more than seven days will get a further core screen. Individuals are also asked whether they have children or dependants, and whether they have served in the military.

Neil Findlay: The prison population is disproportionately made up of people who, on conviction, are in poverty or experiencing addiction or homelessness. Yet, neither the Scottish Prison Service nor the Scottish Government can tell us how many people were in such circumstances prior to their going to prison. How can we possibly address those serious issues when we have no idea of the extent of the problem?

Humza Yousaf: I take issue with Mr Findlay's characterisation, but the general point that he makes is a valid one. A lot of the people who are in our prisons have addictions or issues around their housing situation or their mental health. Frankly, if such issues were addressed, those people would probably not veer into the criminal justice system at all. We have a shared responsibility, and the Government takes on that responsibility by looking at interventions to deal with those issues before people get into the criminal justice system.

Neil Findlay raises a second and valid point, which is that we need to get better at information sharing between social work, the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, the Scottish Prison Service and other agencies. I assure him that I have asked for a meeting with all those agencies and our justice board, which is made up of those stakeholders and many more, to examine the issue of information sharing. The more information

that we have on an individual, the better our interventions can be; the better our interventions, the more chance there is of rehabilitation; and the more chance there is of rehabilitation, the less chance there is of people being victims of crime, which means that communities are safer for all.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As the cabinet secretary has acknowledged, mental health checks in our prisons are essential, yet only two mental health professionals have been added to the prison workforce since more were promised in March 2017. In the meantime, both the prison population and the number of self-harm incidents have soared. Is the cabinet secretary concerned that we may have seen a per-head decrease in access to mental health services in our prisons? How many of the 800 extra mental health workers will be allocated to the prison estate?

Humza Yousaf: I acknowledge Liam McArthur's interest in the issue, and I will try to give him a couple of assurances.

First, the SPS processes to identify self-harm practices have improved. In 2017, there was a further quality assurance process. It is fair to say that some of the rising numbers are because reporting mechanisms are better than they were in previous years. That is not to say that there are not issues around self-harm in our prisons, as we are often dealing with very complex issues and individuals. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, the Minister for Mental Health and I have regular conversations about the mental health needs in prisons.

As Liam McArthur knows, a mental health review is taking place that will look at mental health provision in our prisons. On the specific issue of young people, he will be aware that there is an on-going review of mental health provision in Polmont young offenders institution. I will report to Parliament once that review has been completed.

ScotRail (Meetings)

6. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met ScotRail and what issues were discussed. (S5O-03039)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): I last met Alex Hynes, managing director of the ScotRail Alliance on 23 January and will next meet him on 24 April. My officials remain in regular and constant liaison with ScotRail staff about the full range of operational issues that require to be addressed in order for ScotRail to deliver.

Claire Baker: The cabinet secretary may be aware of the packed public meeting in Kirkcaldy a few weeks ago, with Alex Hynes from ScotRail,

which was organised by Lesley Laird MP and at which Fife travellers strongly expressed their frustration and anger about delayed and cancelled trains. At the meeting, commuters were told not to expect the peak-time service to return to normal until at least December. Does the cabinet secretary accept that Fife commuters are being badly let down by that appalling service? Will he work with ScotRail to deliver a cut in fares until services return to normal, in recognition of the unacceptable service that Fifers are experiencing?

Michael Matheson: The member will be aware that we have raised concerns with ScotRail regarding its performance on the Fife circle and other parts of the network in Scotland. That is why we triggered the remedial notice, which was issued to ScotRail on 24 December. That notice required ScotRail to bring forward a remedial plan, and that plan has been submitted to the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to be considered. We are at an advanced stage in entering into a remedial agreement.

That process is specifically designed to address the concerns of Claire Baker's constituents and others who have experienced disruption in ScotRail's performance and to ensure that such issues are addressed continually and consistently. A key part of that is ensuring that ScotRail has access to the rolling stock, which will help to improve performance, including by providing additional capacity on routes such as the Fife circle. That has been delayed because of failures by Wabtec in carrying out the refurbishment work. There has also been a delay in Hitachi delivering the new 385 trains. All of that has had a systematic impact on the process.

Notwithstanding those things, it is important that ScotRail is held to account through its contract with us to provide rail services, and that is exactly what the remedial plan does. We will publish details of that in the coming days.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware from my regular correspondence with him that—I have to be frank and say this—my constituents are absolutely fed up with ScotRail's Fife circle service. Has the cabinet secretary received any up-to-date information from ScotRail—which is responsible for the mess—that would indicate that there is any light at the end of the tunnel?

Michael Matheson: I fully recognise the frustration of Annabelle Ewing's constituents about the period of consistently poor performance across the Fife circle. As I mentioned in my earlier response, one of the reasons why we triggered the issuing of a remedial notice to ScotRail was to develop a remedial plan to address the issues that Annabelle Ewing's constituents are experiencing. We are now at the advanced stage of entering into

that remedial agreement with ScotRail to ensure that it is effectively implemented and addresses the concerns of her constituents. We will announce more details of that in the coming days.

The Presiding Officer: Before we turn to First Minister's question time, I invite members to join me in welcoming to the gallery Talat Xhaferi MP, President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before we move to the first question to the First Minister, I invite the First Minister to make a few remarks following the tragic events in Christchurch in New Zealand.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I begin today with heartfelt condolences to the people of New Zealand after last week's appalling terrorist attack in Christchurch. I hope that people in New Zealand can take some comfort from the knowledge that people across the world stand in solidarity with them.

Events in New Zealand have been felt deeply here in Scotland, as in other countries, and perhaps especially in our Muslim community. Last week, Police Scotland arranged reassurance patrols and visits to mosques and other places of worship. On Friday, I visited Glasgow central mosque with the justice secretary.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand has said that nations around the world are engaged in a global fight against far-right, racist and extremist ideology. Regrettably, she is absolutely right. All of us have a responsibility to engage in that fight. We must tackle hatred and prejudice through the words that we use, the actions that we take and the climate that we create. I know that all parties in this chamber will play their part in doing that.

In the past week, we have also seen an attack in Utrecht and the stabbing of a teenager in Surrey. Our condolences are with all those who have been affected by those incidents as well.

Let us today express sympathy and solidarity with the victims of racist and extremist violence in Christchurch and around the world. Above all, let us make clear our determination that the proponents of hate will be defeated by the values of kindness, compassion and love. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: We turn to questions to the First Minister, the first of which is from Jackson Carlaw.

Drugs Policy

1. **Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** I associate all of us in the Scottish Conservatives with the First Minister's remarks and offer our support for any measures that are required to reassure those who attend mosques in Scotland.

Many Scots will have friends and family who live in or regularly visit New Zealand and who will have been deeply affected. However, for many in

Scotland's Muslim community, events on the other side of the world must never have felt closer to home. As we embrace them with our good wishes and condolences, we must—as the First Minister said—work together to think afresh about what must be done by us all to counter this defining 21st century scourge.

Over the past 10 years, the Scottish National Party Government has launched two major drug strategies. Tragically, during those 10 years drug deaths have doubled. We are now on course to have the largest number of drug deaths per head anywhere in Europe. Does the First Minister believe that the strategies have been a success or a failure?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): These are challenging issues and I readily concede that this Government—any Government—must remain open to fresh thinking and new ideas.

The situation with regard to drug deaths is not one that any of us would consider to be acceptable. However, as I said in the chamber last week, many of those who have died have lived with alcohol and drug use for a long time—such people become more vulnerable as they grow older as a result of their complex health and social needs. Although I do not overstate the point, more encouraging is the fact that the last report showed fewer deaths among the under-25 population. Recent reports also highlight falling heroin use—again, particularly among under-25s.

As I am sure that Jackson Carlaw is aware, work is under way in Dundee and Glasgow to consider what more can be done to tackle drug deaths. That work will be of relevance around Scotland, but we want to see the outcomes from it before we consider what further action we should take.

Jackson Carlaw: We all want to sort the crisis, but the first step is surely to admit that the current policy is not working as it should. Regrettably, it has been a failure. I have an example of that.

We know that rehabilitation services in prisons can be vital in turning around people's lives. However, my colleague Adam Tomkins has discovered in recent days that in Barlinnie, which is one of our biggest prisons, a successful voluntary project—a recovery cafe where people can go to get their lives back on track—is facing closure. How can it be right that we prioritise spending millions of pounds on methadone programmes, yet successful projects such as the cafe are put at risk?

The First Minister: First, I say to Jackson Carlaw and to Adam Tomkins that the justice secretary has received a letter on the issue, which will be responded to in due course.

It is important that I advise members that the Scottish Government has not previously funded recovery cafes. However, we provide funding for the Scottish Recovery Consortium, and the Scottish Prison Service adopts a therapeutic approach in dealing with addiction issues and provides support for those with addiction problems who are in their care.

The new alcohol and drug strategy highlights the importance of recovery communities and the need for them to be at the heart of any proposals. They help to reduce stigma, because they provide the visible face of recovery, as well as insights into addiction and harm.

Through our sustained funding of the Scottish Recovery Consortium, we will continue to do what we can to support the growth of recovery communities across the country.

We will of course give consideration to the points that Adam Tomkins made in his letter.

Jackson Carlaw: My question was not intended as a criticism of that mix of approaches.

Just a few miles from Parliament is Castle Craig hospital near West Linton, which is a drug rehabilitation centre with capacity for residential drug rehab patients, and which the Conservative health spokesman, Miles Briggs, visited recently. Hospital staff told him that Castle Craig is not receiving national health service referrals and is mostly kept going by patients who are referred from the Netherlands for treatment. Is not the First Minister, like me, concerned that Dutch patients are getting better access to that rehabilitation project here in Scotland than local Scots who are in need of the same support and treatment?

The First Minister: I am very happy to look into that specific example. We want people to have access to a broad range of rehabilitation services. The Scottish Government is providing £70 million this financial year to reduce the harms that are caused by alcohol and drugs. That includes an additional £20 million for drug and alcohol services, which is being allocated to support new approaches, so that we respond in a much more joined-up and person-centred way. Such investment is important.

I am not trying to make a party-political point about a very serious issue, but it is also important that we are prepared to take forward innovative and evidence-based new approaches, even if at first they seem to be challenging, particularly for public opinion. That is why we supported the principles behind Glasgow's proposals for a medically supervised safer drug consumption facility and heroin-assisted treatment in the city. It is important that we work with health and social care partnerships on new approaches, as well as ensuring that we invest in rehabilitation. I hope

that the Conservatives will think about giving us support on that, because we need to persuade the United Kingdom Government to do what is required.

Jackson Carlaw: I respect the First Minister's approach to that policy. We have looked at it, but, unfortunately, it is the one policy in this area on which we fundamentally disagree. We think that the policy should be to get people clean of drugs, not to provide opportunities for people to take them.

Scottish Conservatives have set out a clear plan to tackle Scotland's growing drugs crisis, which is to get first-time offenders into treatment, direct more money into rehabilitation programmes run by third sector bodies and, at the same time, at least review the failed methadone programme.

Let us admit that, in politics at the moment, we are not overrun with issues on which we can form consensus. However, on this one vital issue, will the First Minister commit today to working across the chamber—we will commit to that—to improve the drugs strategy for the next 10 years, so that we can cut drug deaths and drug addiction and come down hard on those peddling misery in our communities?

The First Minister: I reiterate my willingness to work across the chamber. I think that I have said in a couple of my responses today that I will consider the points that Jackson Carlaw has raised, and I give that reassurance again. I ask for the same in return. I am slightly concerned at the almost knee-jerk way in which Jackson Carlaw ruled out the fresh thinking around safer drug consumption facilities. If we are genuinely to try and find a consensus, we have to be open to new thinking, and that will sometimes be very tough and challenging. I appeal to Jackson Carlaw to reconsider his opposition to that policy, just as he is asking me to be open-minded to any proposals that he makes.

We will continue to ensure that we have the right strategies in place to deal with what we all accept is a challenging and complex issue. First, that involves taking a very hard line against those who supply drugs—and we saw figures earlier this week about police seizures of drugs. Secondly, it definitely involves support, particularly rehabilitation support, for those who are addicted to drugs. Thirdly, it involves being open to new ideas and new thinking. If we can all agree broadly around that approach, perhaps we can build a consensus that allows us to tackle something that we all agree is unacceptable. We want to see a considerably improved situation, and I hope that we have the support of Jackson Carlaw and the Conservatives on that.

National Health Service (Staffing)

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I add the deep-felt condolences of the Scottish Labour Party to the families and friends of all those who lost their lives in the terror attack in Christchurch last Friday. I offer our support for practical action to defeat racism and hatred wherever it occurs.

To ask the First Minister why there is a staffing crisis in the national health service.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): There is not a staffing crisis in the national health service. There are record numbers of people working in the national health service. In fact, I can tell Richard Leonard that staffing levels in NHS Scotland are now at a record high and are up by more than 13,600 since 2006, just before this Government took office. The number of consultants is up by 51 per cent; the number of qualified nurses and midwives is up by 8 per cent; and there is a higher level of NHS staffing per head in Scotland than there is in NHS England.

Our NHS staff of course work under considerable pressure, and we are grateful to them for the job that they do, but we will continue to invest in our NHS to ensure that there are record numbers of staff, so that they can continue to deliver the excellent services that they do.

Richard Leonard: This week, the Parliament's Health and Sport Committee, following the tragic events at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, began its inquiry into infection control standards. New figures released to Scottish Labour this week reveal that the number of domestic staff—that is, cleaners—who are employed at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital is falling. In March 2018, 464 cleaners were employed at the hospital. According to the latest figures, that number has dropped to 440. Why, at the very point when it is facing a rise in infection outbreaks, is Scotland's biggest hospital employing fewer people on the front line whose job it is to keep that hospital clean and safe?

The First Minister: I am sure that Richard Leonard will have heard the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport already address this issue publicly. The issue has been raised with Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board. It is absolutely imperative that all health boards in all hospitals ensure appropriate numbers of domestic and cleaning staff.

It is of course for health boards to consider the configuration of staffing. As Richard Leonard will know, and as those of us who represent Glasgow constituencies know particularly well, there has been a significant change in the configuration of Glasgow hospitals over the past number of years,

and the overall staffing numbers will undoubtedly reflect that.

We will continue to raise issues directly with health boards to ensure that they are addressed where that is necessary. Notwithstanding the very serious incidents at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, which we have discussed on many occasions in the chamber before—and I welcome the Health and Sport Committee's inquiry into these issues—infection rates are down considerably in Scottish hospitals overall.

I see that Jackie Baillie is in the chamber. She and I regularly used to have exchanges about the levels of *Clostridium difficile* in our hospitals, following the tragic incident at the Vale of Leven hospital. C diff, MRSA and infections generally are down, in some cases by more than 80 per cent.

Let us tackle issues where they arise—Richard Leonard is right to raise them—but let us not lose sight of the good work that has been done in our NHS to reduce infection and to put a real focus on patient safety.

Richard Leonard: I should also make it clear that the problem is not unique to one hospital: it is replicated right across the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area. There are fewer domestics, porters and laundry and linen staff compared with last year's levels. It is clear that we have a staffing crisis in our health service, and that it is not confined to consultants, nurses and midwives but extends to facilities staff, domestics, catering workers, porters and laundry staff—all workers without whom no hospital can operate.

We know that there is a parliamentary inquiry and that reviews are being carried out by the health board and the Government. However, these issues are serious and urgent. The public, and the staff who are under pressure, need to hear a commitment that the reduction in such vital front-line jobs will be reversed as soon as possible. Is the First Minister prepared to give them that commitment today?

The First Minister: As I said earlier, we will continue to work with health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, to ensure that they have appropriate staffing levels across all specialties in the NHS. That is important. I repeat what I have already said: record numbers of staff are working in our national health service.

Richard Leonard says that the issues are urgent, and I could not agree more. I know how devastating outbreaks of infection in hospitals are—principally for patients and their families, but also for the staff who work there. That is why the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate's report on the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, which was commissioned and instructed by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, has already been

completed, and why its recommendations have already been accepted by the health board and are being implemented.

Whatever disagreements we might have, and whatever legitimate points Richard Leonard might raise—they are legitimate points—I do not think that anybody could doubt the seriousness of the Government and the health service when it comes to tackling infections in our hospitals. Overall, the figures state that things are going in the right direction, but that does not take away from the need to tackle serious incidents when they arise. We will continue to do exactly that.

The Presiding Officer: We turn to constituency supplementary questions, the first of which is from Liam Kerr.

Cove Harbour (Access)

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Cove harbour fishing community is suffering. First, its landing was bought—and closed—by a private landlord. It went to court and won rights of public access but faced significant legal costs. Several boats were then destroyed in a fire, and now the landlord has closed access to the beach. Community representatives have written to the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, several times, requesting a meeting—even if that were to be here at Holyrood—to discuss their rights and their future, but to no avail.

Will the First Minister ask the cabinet secretary to meet those representatives, and not risk ignoring a community that faces the loss of its livelihood?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course, the Scottish Government wants to do everything possible to help any community that is experiencing difficulties. Beyond what the member has just said, I am not aware of the content of the correspondence with Fergus Ewing, but I am happy to give an undertaking to look into that and, if the cabinet secretary thinks that the Scottish Government can offer help, for him to meet those who are affected.

Transmission Link (Western Isles)

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Earlier this week, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets announced that it was minded to reject proposals for a 600MW transmission link to the Western Isles, saying that it would instead support a much-reduced 450MW link. That has been met with extreme disappointment in my constituency, because it will severely constrain capacity for future community projects and place other existing projects from the Western Isles at a potential disadvantage.

What pressure can the Scottish Government put on Ofgem, and the United Kingdom Government, to reconsider that short-sighted decision?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to unlocking the vast renewables potential of our islands and the associated economic benefits for our island communities. We are very concerned at the uncertainty over the proposed connection from the Western Isles. The Government believes that for the islands' full renewables potential to be realised, a larger link is required, so I very much agree with the sentiment of Alasdair Allan's question. We have made arguments directly to Ofgem to support that point, and we will continue to do so as we engage further with it and with island stakeholders and developers during the ongoing consultation process. I assure Alasdair Allan—and the chamber—that we will make absolutely every effort to secure the right outcome for the Western Isles.

Jagtar Singh Johal (Support)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware that my constituent Jagtar Singh Johal has spent more than 500 days detained in prison in the Punjab. There have been accusations of torture and he has now faced his 77th pre-trial preliminary hearing. His MP, Martin Docherty-Hughes, is to be commended for pursuing the matter vigorously.

Will the First Minister use her influence and speak to the Foreign Secretary and the United Kingdom Government to urge them to provide support and assistance to Mr Johal and his family?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Jackie Baillie for raising this issue. I know that she has raised it previously and she is right to say that Martin Docherty-Hughes MP has been assiduous in raising the rights and situation of his constituent.

We have raised this issue and we will continue to do so. The Deputy First Minister has raised it directly with Indian ministers on recent visits to India and with the British high commission. I believe—although I will double-check this—that we have raised the issue directly with the Foreign Office. If not, I am happy to undertake that we will do so.

Cleft Surgery

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): In recent weeks, I have received correspondence from families across Scotland who are facing unacceptable waits for cleft surgery. Two years ago, we warned Scottish National Party ministers about the impact of the closure of the Edinburgh unit and the centralisation of cleft services. This Parliament

voted against centralisation, but ministers pressed on against the will of Parliament.

One case highlighted to me just this week is that of a young man who has been waiting two years for a promised final surgery and is no further forward on when he will receive that. Families are also telling me that they are looking to NHS England in order to receive the surgery. Will the First Minister apologise to families for those waits? What will she do to correct the mistake that this Government made?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I have said many times before in the chamber, I regret it when any patient has to wait longer for treatment than we would want to be the case.

On the issue of cleft surgery, as I recall, the redesign of that service was on clinical grounds, to ensure a quality and safe service. If Miles Briggs would like to give further details of the constituents who are raising issues with him, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will look into those and, once she has had the opportunity to do that, will correspond further with him.

Brexit

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** On behalf of the Scottish Greens, I join others in expressing our shared concern for the bereaved and injured following the far-right terrorist attack in New Zealand, but also our respect for the response that that country is showing, recommitting to the values of its inclusive society and refusing to placate the far right, as far too many politicians around the world have done.

Last night, in the midst of a crisis of her own making, the Prime Minister again refused to listen to reason and instead effectively told the public that Parliament is their enemy. Scotland needs the freedom to take a different direction, leave behind this chaos and find our own way out of the crisis. That is why we need our independence. The First Minister told us that she would say something about her preferred timing within weeks. That was two months ago. I ask again, when?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I agree with Patrick Harvie that the Prime Minister's comments last night were deeply irresponsible and I hope that, in time, she will reflect on that.

The Prime Minister's comments also failed to accept any of the responsibility that she bears for the mess that the United Kingdom is in right now. She wanted to blame everybody except herself, and yet I think that most people know that it was the Prime Minister who triggered article 50 without a plan. It was the Prime Minister who drew self-defeating, contradictory red lines that boxed her in from the start. It was the Prime Minister who called an unnecessary general election and who delayed

the first vote on her deal in an attempt to run down the clock. It was the Prime Minister who failed to listen and change course after the first defeat of her deal and then again after the second. She must change course now before it is too late and she must bear responsibility for the mess that this country is in.

On the issue of independence, the frustration that people feel right now at Scotland's future being determined by the Democratic Unionist Party and a cabal of right-wing Tories is understandable, and I absolutely share it. I said that I would wait until the end of this phase of the Brexit negotiations before setting out my views on the way forward for Scotland. Having done so this long, I think that it is reasonable for me to wait to see what clarity emerges in the next few days, even if I suspect that it will just be clarity that there will be no clarity. I will then set out my views on the path forward.

Nobody can be in any doubt that change is needed. The past three years have shown that the status quo is broken. It cannot protect Scotland from the folly of Brexit and all that flows from that. Even the most ardent unionist must see that the way we are now governed by Westminster is broken. The question is how we fix that for the future, and there is no doubt in my mind that letting people in Scotland choose an independent future is the best way to do that.

Patrick Harvie: At every stage of this nightmare, this Parliament has tried to persuade the Prime Minister to change course. We have called for the narrow 2016 result and Scotland's remain vote to be respected, for our place in the single market to be protected and for the public to have the right of a final say and the chance to cancel this crisis. If the Prime Minister succeeds in closing off all those positive choices and the country finds itself being driven to the edge of the cliff at this time next week, does the First Minister agree that MPs must be prepared, finally, to put the public interest first and willing, if all else fails, to do what is necessary and revoke article 50?

The First Minister: Yes. Indeed, the Scottish National Party at Westminster and the Greens, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru issued a joint statement last night to that effect. SNP MPs will not vote for the Prime Minister's deal, because it is a bad deal that will damage Scottish interests. I do not think that any Scottish MP should vote for such a deal. However, nor will we accept the Prime Minister framing it as a choice between her deal and no deal. Just because she is not willing to contemplate the alternatives does not mean that there are no alternatives. One of those alternatives is, undoubtedly, revoking article 50. If all else fails by this time next week, that is exactly what MPs should do.

Operation Yellowhammer

4. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I associate myself and my party with the First Minister's remarks about New Zealand. The events in that country were truly sickening.

You would not think that we were in the middle of a national crisis if you just listened to the questions from the leaders of the Conservative and Labour parties, but the last thing this country needs is more division and chaos with independence to compound the division and chaos of Brexit. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Willie Rennie: The first duty of a Prime Minister is to keep the country safe but, because of the cavalier choices of this Prime Minister, emergency measures under operation yellowhammer have been triggered and medicines, food supply chains and transport are all at risk. Does the First Minister agree that no serious Prime Minister should ever threaten such catastrophic consequences, no matter how much she wants her policy to be agreed?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Before I address Willie Rennie's question, I say in response to the first part of what he said that the inconsistency in his position is this: he wants people across the United Kingdom to have the ability to escape Brexit through a second referendum—and I agree with him on that—but if that does not prove to be possible, he thinks that Scotland should just grin and bear it, and put up with the devastation of Brexit, instead of Scotland having the choice to escape Brexit and have an independent future. That is a deeply inconsistent position for him to take and I hope that he will reflect on it.

On operation yellowhammer, which is the emergency planning for a no-deal Brexit, it is beyond comprehension that any Prime Minister could knowingly allow the country to be eight days—about 200 hours—away from the possibility of crashing out of the European Union without a deal and to require that emergency planning work to be done. Yesterday, as I have done once a week for several weeks, I chaired a meeting of the Scottish Government's resilience committee that was looking at medicine supplies, food supplies and transport links in the event of a no-deal Brexit. It is outrageous that we have to expend time, energy and resources on doing that. Before any more time passes and it is too late, the Prime Minister must change course, take no deal off the table completely, look to build a broader consensus rather than pandering to the hardliners in her own party and, if necessary, dump Brexit completely. That would be in the best interests of the country.

Willie Rennie: The First Minister is wrong. The inconsistency is to believe that breaking up an economic partnership of 40 years will be chaotic but that breaking up one of 300 years will be a piece of cake. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Willie Rennie: The First Minister is the inconsistent one. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Willie Rennie: People are scunnered by this agonising Brexit process. We are three years on, with 200 hours left. Is it not time for a commonsense approach under which the Prime Minister takes a no-deal Brexit off the table instead of using it as a threat against her own citizens; all party leaders sit down and talk instead of the leader of the Opposition walking out because he does not like Chuka Umunna; the Prime Minister reaches out to MPs in Parliament rather than insulting them from behind a podium in number 10; and we admit that Parliament is incapable of deciding, so we have a public vote to let the people decide? Is it not time for that commonsense approach?

The First Minister: Yes, I agree with all that. I think that people across the UK should have the opportunity to vote again, given everything that they now know that was not known in 2016. That is why I will be calling for that public vote in London on Saturday, along with many others—no doubt, hundreds of thousands of others.

I agree with everything that the member said about the Prime Minister, and I share his despair about the leader of the Labour Party and his childish behaviour last night at a time when we need people to come together to find an alternative. Where I disagree with the member is on his view that, if all of what he has just called for fails, Scotland is powerless in the face of the disaster of Brexit. I oppose Brexit, as he does, but there was nothing inevitable about the chaos of Brexit. That is down to those who proposed it having no idea what it would look like in reality and doing no planning for it. It did not have to be that way.

I say to Willie Rennie that the inconsistency is in him standing up to rightly spell out what a disaster Brexit will be but then saying that, if all else fails, Scotland just has to put up with it. I do not think that Scotland has to put up with it and I do not think that Scotland should have to put up with it. If it comes to it, Scotland choosing independence is a much brighter future than remaining part of Brexit Britain.

The Presiding Officer: We have some additional supplementaries.

Article 50 (Petition)

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Last night, the Prime Minister claimed that the public have had enough; today, a petition on the UK Parliament website calling for article 50 to be revoked is already well on the way to 1 million signatures. Support is growing so fast that the website crashed harder than the Prime Minister's credibility. If the Prime Minister believes that the people are with her, should she not have the courage to put that to the test and call for a people's vote?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I agree. As I said, I thought that the Prime Minister's statement last night was deeply regrettable. For her to blame everybody except herself beggars belief. Now is the time for people across parties to speak out.

Last night, I watched one of the most powerful contributions that I have ever seen in the House of Commons. It was from Dominic Grieve, a moderate Tory who I think everybody would accept is an honourable person. He had the honesty to say that he was ashamed to be in the Conservative Party and that the conduct of the Prime Minister made him want to weep, yet Scottish Conservatives continue to parrot the lines of the Prime Minister. I often wonder whether Jackson Carlaw ever, in his quieter moments, thinks that it might be better for the country and indeed his own reputation for him to say what I believe he probably thinks—that this is a mess, that carrying on regardless is a profound mistake and that the Prime Minister must change course and must do so now before it is too late.

Retail Workers (Protection)

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware that the British Retail Consortium annual crime survey was published today. It records that, last year, 115 shop workers were physically attacked at work every single day across the United Kingdom. The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—USDAW—estimates that the real problem could be much greater; its estimate is that 34 retail workers are attacked every day in Scotland alone.

My bill to protect shop workers is in the final stages of drafting. What does the First Minister think needs to be done to tackle this growing problem and will her Government work with me to look at what changes in the law may be needed to do so? Everyone has the right to be safe at work, whether they work in an office or on a shop floor.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Daniel Johnson for raising the issue and the results of the British Retail Consortium's survey. It is a powerful reminder that our shop workers do

an essential job that is often dangerous to them, for which we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

We will be happy to work with Daniel Johnson and others to look at what further protections we need to put in place. He said that his bill is in the final stages of drafting; we will look carefully at it when it is published and we will be happy to consider it and discuss it with him. We will be happy to try to build consensus.

Employer Pension Contributions (Funding)

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind):

On 1 April, employer contributions to national health service pension schemes will increase from 14.9 to 20.9 per cent. Children's hospices across Scotland have estimated that the increased cost to them will be equivalent to the salaries of nine full-time nurses. The United Kingdom Government has stated that funding for charities and hospices is included in the funding that has been provided to NHS England to cover the costs of the increase, but the Children's Hospice Association Scotland says that similar commitments have not yet been made to Scottish charities and hospices. Will the Scottish Government provide funding to help charities and hospice organisations to meet the cost increase and ensure that they do not have to divert money from the vital support services that they provide?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Mark McDonald for rightly raising the issue, which is concerning generally and in particular for hospices and charities. The Scottish Government has been in discussions with the British Medical Association about how best to disburse additional funding to practices to meet the change. We will continue to discuss that, and I will ask the health secretary to look at the position of hospices and charities and to come back to Mark McDonald when she has done so.

ScotRail Franchise (Borders Railway)

5. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the First Minister, in light of the reported travel chaos on the Borders railway last weekend as a result of a number of train cancellations, whether the Scottish Government considers that the ScotRail franchise continues to be sustainable. (S5F-03189)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am disappointed that passengers across a number of routes on the ScotRail network continue to be affected by train cancellations as a consequence of ScotRail's training backlog. There is evidence of some improvement in ScotRail's performance nationally, but that will do little to reassure passengers who attempted to travel on the

Borders railway last Sunday and were faced with an unacceptable number of cancellations.

That is why ScotRail's focus must remain on delivering a robust remedial plan that puts passenger interests at the forefront of restoring performance levels. The remedial plan has been specifically designed to militate against train crew and train fleet challenges, and I fully expect ScotRail to ensure that the plan is delivered in order to reaffirm passenger confidence in the railway.

Christine Grahame: There was, indeed, a service meltdown. It was a breakdown, too—on the Borders railway on Sunday. The cancellations continued since then and continue today.

I heard the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity talking this morning about remedial notices. The second notice that was served requires that a plan be delivered soon. The plan might be delivered, but it will not deliver trains—plans do not drive trains. Is not it time that the Scottish Government told Abellio ScotRail that it is in the last chance saloon? I certainly think so, and so do my constituents.

The First Minister: ScotRail should treat the remedial plan very much as the last chance saloon. That is the nature of it. ScotRail has been left in no doubt that its recent performance levels, particularly in the Borders and Fife, have been completely unacceptable. I have said that in the chamber and I heard Michael Matheson say it a short while ago, when members including Annabelle Ewing raised legitimate and understandable concerns on their constituents' behalf.

We have used contractual mechanisms that are in the franchise agreement to require the remedial plan. ScotRail will publish its performance remedial plan on its website shortly. The commitments in that plan have been contracted as a remedial agreement. Of course, if ScotRail does not achieve improved performance, or if it fails to deliver on its contractual commitments, it runs the risk of its franchise being terminated early.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I recently received a letter from a concerned Borders railway commuter. His letter says:

"It has come to the point where there is genuine surprise that the train is running on time as opposed to it being so frequently cancelled ... The negative effects of this are significant, there is a financial penalty imposed by the nursery as a result of collecting my daughter"

late, and

"There is significant stress and anxiety because of the lateness at work".

Will the First Minister apologise on behalf of her transport secretary to the hundreds of commuters who are experiencing transport hell, and will she personally oversee the remedial plan that has been submitted by ScotRail, and which will be published in the next few days?

The First Minister: The transport secretary will oversee that, because it is part of his responsibilities. However, as First Minister, I, too, will obviously retain a very close interest in the matter.

I have made it very clear—I do not think that I can make it clearer—that some of ScotRail's recent performance levels have been completely unacceptable. That is particularly, although not exclusively, the case on the Borders railway. I could stand here and talk about some of the reasons for that, including train delivery and training requirements. There have also been problems with trains coming into and going out of Edinburgh in the past couple of days to do with Network Rail failings. However, I am not going to talk about those reasons, because it is ScotRail's responsibility to ensure that it lives up to its performance standards. That is why the remedial plan is so important and why ScotRail has to understand the seriousness of the obligation on it to deliver on the commitments that it makes in the plan.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Commuters are suffering from poor rail services across Scotland, especially in Fife. Last year, the then Minister for Transport and the Islands, Humza Yousaf, said in the chamber:

“there will be an upgrade in the rolling stock later in 2018 or early in 2019. Nevertheless, people in Fife should not have to wait for that to get an improvement in their service”.—[*Official Report*, 25 January 2018; c 2.]

Why are Fife commuters now being told that it will be the end of 2019 at the very earliest before any improvements come through? Does not the First Minister believe that it is time that she personally stepped in to take charge of the ScotRail crisis?

The First Minister: I have made my views clear, and I will do so again. Those who are charged with and remunerated for the responsibility of running our railways are the ones who have to get that right. They have a responsibility to do so and to begin immediately to deliver the improvements that passengers want. That is what the remedial plan will focus very much on.

Of course, significant investment is being made in our railways, with rolling stock being renewed and a lot of other positive work being done from which I hope passengers will start to benefit very soon. However, ScotRail must address the reasons for the dip in its performance—at least,

those that are within its responsibility—and we expect it to do so very quickly.

Mental Health (Young People and Social Media)

6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister, in light of the parliamentary reports by both MSPs and MPs, what the Scottish Government's response is to the growing concerns about the effects of social media on the mental health of young people across Scotland. (S5F-03169)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We welcome the report that was published last week by the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee on the relationship between social media and mental health. It made recommendations on the need for further research in the area.

Next month, we will publish initial research on the links between unhealthy social media use and lower mental wellbeing, in particular in girls and young women. We are also committed to developing and publishing Scotland-specific advice on how young people can use social media in a healthy way. That advice, which will be co-produced with young people for young people, will be informed by the research that we will publish next month.

Liz Smith: I thank the First Minister for that helpful answer. I am sure that the whole Parliament will be united in deep concern about the shocking statistics that say that 60 per cent of 16 to 25-year-olds believe that social media place “overwhelming pressure” on their age group, and that mental health referrals have increased by 22 per cent since 2014. Those are just some of the facts that have, quite rightly, led MSPs and MPs to state categorically that we all have a duty of care to protect vulnerable users. In addition to her previous answer, can the First Minister give us some details about the timescale that she envisages for implementing the task force delivery plan?

The First Minister: First, I appreciate very much the sentiments behind, and the detail of, Liz Smith's question. The internet and social media should be, and in many respects are, forces for good that we should embrace and welcome, but they also put considerable pressure on young people—in particular, young girls. Many of us have young girls in our families—I have a niece who is about to enter her teenage years—and it is not difficult to see that pressure. We must ensure that our young people are equipped to deal with it properly.

I have referred to research that we will publish and work that will flow from it. The task force is

taking forward a substantial programme of work. I will ask the Minister for Mental Health to write to Liz Smith with the precise timescales for delivery of the various aspects of the work. All that work is important, so that we can prevent mental health issues and provide treatment as quickly as possible, when it is required. Undoubtedly, part of prevention is encouragement of, and support for, healthy use of social media.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the tragic death of a young 18-year-old girl in Kilmarnock last weekend, which was followed only hours later by the death of another youngster in Ayrshire. I understand that there are no suspicious circumstances. A growing number of young people across Ayrshire seem to be ending their lives through suicide, which is clearly heartbreaking for their families and friends. Will the First Minister offer some hope to youngsters and their families by saying that services are there to help, and that if more can be done to help to put an end to such awful tragedies, it will be done?

The First Minister: I give that assurance. I will not comment on individual cases, beyond saying that my thoughts and condolences are with the families involved. East Ayrshire Council is already looking at the incidents with the national health service, and will want to ensure that it responds appropriately.

Across the chamber, we are committed to ensuring that, as the challenges around mental health change and develop, our responses do so, too. I have said previously in the chamber that, as the system has developed over many years, too many people are referred to specialist services because there are not services in the community for prevention and early intervention. Many of the initiatives that we are implementing through the investment that we announced recently are trying to redress that balance, so that there is a focus on prevention and early intervention, and so that we ensure that we also have specialist services when young people need them. I hope and believe that that programme of work has wide support across the chamber.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. Before we move on to the members' business debate, we will have a short suspension to allow members, ministers and people in the gallery to change seats.

12:47

Meeting suspended.

12:50

On resuming—

Men's Sheds

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-15855, in the name of Christine Grahame, on men's sheds. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the important contribution that the Men's Sheds movement makes to people's wellbeing; notes that there are now sheds running or in development across the length and breadth of the country, including in Lauder, Galashiels, Peebles, Mayfield and Roslin; understands that the activities and groups vary from community to community but that, by and large, the sheds provide a meeting place for men to undertake activities in a friendly, supportive and social environment; believes that such groups can have a positive impact on men's mental health and wellbeing by providing supportive groups that offer an opportunity for them to feel more able to open up about anything bothering them as well as helping them build positive ties in their community, and hopes that more sheds can continue to be established.

12:51

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I thank all the members who signed my motion and who are taking part in the debate, and I thank those people who are now coming into the gallery, who have come from men's sheds across my constituency and other parts of the Borders, in Peebles, Galashiels, Lauder, Hawick and Eyemouth. In fact, the Borders has 10 per cent of all the men's sheds in Scotland and 19 per cent of Scotland's members.

Because of the explosion in the number of men's sheds, it might seem that it is a new phenomenon, but it is no such thing. The first recorded men's shed was in Tongala, Victoria, Australia in 1998, and the first men's shed in Scotland was established in Westhill, Aberdeenshire in 2013.

According to the very helpful Scottish Men's Sheds Association website, there are 106 open sheds in Scotland and 58 in development. They have 1,612 members, although that figure might have been surpassed even as I speak. While I am on the topic of the association's website, it is a great place to go for those who are interested in joining or starting a men's shed. I put that information on the record for our colleague Ken Hughes, the Parliament's assistant chief executive, who is retiring today. He might want to

look at that website for something to do with his time.

The website provides a map of existing sheds in Scotland and it tells people how to start, from the moment the idea takes root in their head, through publicising locally and gathering support, setting up a steering group and developing a constitution to registering as a charity. It also tells people how to successfully access funding through what is called a “Dragon’s Den” attitude. That process involves the so-called “So what?” tests: “So what if it’s better than sitting in the pub of an afternoon drinking?”, “So what if it’s better than couch potatoing”—I made up that term—“in front of the afternoon telly?”, and so on.

I am generalising, but we know that men are not so good at sharing their worries and concerns with others. Not everyone plays golf or is a member of a club, so the sheds have given men and women—Peebles and District Men’s Shed, for example, does not bar women—but mostly men, a place to gather, make, chat, have a laugh and make plans for the shed, all of which is good for body and soul. The wife or partner might be glad of a wee break from them, too.

There are not problems with membership, but there are, of course, problems with money. Most of all, in my experience, there are problems with premises. That is the case in Lauder, where the men’s shed temporarily has a room in the Lauder leisure centre, which is not really a permanent solution; it should begin its activities there in the next fortnight. The men’s shed in Peebles has just secured the former ex-servicemen’s club, and Hawick Men’s Shed has secured a former mill at a peppercorn rent. Let us face it: unfortunately, in most of our rural towns and villages, there will be plenty of empty premises a-going.

The process takes time and effort, but I think that that is the making of a men’s shed. The fight for facilities and funding pulls the men together from the start. The shed is theirs and of their making and their shaping. Because there is no predetermined, one-size-fits-all format, it is up to the members, and that is exactly how it should be. Those members have diverse skills, and the retired accountant and the retired joiner are equally useful. What they do is up to them. Galashiels Men’s Shed has made 60 feeders for red squirrels and carried out furniture repairs for the Aberlour Child Care Trust.

The benefits to the members and the appetite for sheds is reflected in the numbers. Peebles and District Men’s Shed, which is in its relative infancy, already has 78 members. The benefits to health and wellbeing of remaining active in mind and body cannot be overstated. The sheds are good for individuals and they are good for the public purse.

The name “shed” is so appropriate. My late father, with five children corralled in a small council house, took refuge and sanctuary in his small green wooden shed at the bottom of the garden. He kept all his tools there. It is where he made our sleds and bookcases, which are, to this day—and, I believe, forever—indestructible. They are not very functional, but they are indestructible.

More important, it was his shed. With the door open, he would sit admiring the growing vegetables, with the Sunday papers—he always had to read them before the rest of us—and his cup of tea, rain or shine, taking a moment away from the hurly-burly of his five children indoors. My late mother was happy to leave him to it. Domestic friction was reduced.

Men’s sheds, though they are populated with many men, have much in common with that little green shed at the bottom of the garden. In some ways, they are a place of sanctuary, to make things; they are also a place to chat and sit idly, or perhaps to share concerns. Perhaps, they, too, reduce the potential for domestic friction—I am just saying.

On that note, to allay any rumours that, as a single woman of a certain age, I am frequenting men’s sheds with romantic intent, I assure the gentlemen in the gallery and beyond that my interest is purely professional. [*Laughter.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Grahame. I say to those in the gallery that, as much as you want to hiss, boo or clap, please do not. We would prefer it if you do not show appreciation or otherwise.

We have a shedload of people who want to speak—

Members: Aha!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: —so I will have to be very strict with the timings. Members can have no more than four minutes. I call Rachael Hamilton.

12:57

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I thank Christine Grahame for securing it. I welcome all those in the gallery, some of whom are familiar to me.

Men’s sheds have been a real success story across Scotland. From humble beginnings—from only five back in 2013 to more than 170 today—they have become buzzing centres for craftsmanship, camaraderie and community cohesiveness. They not only fund themselves, but carry out tasks in the local community such as

building flower and bird boxes, refurbishing old furniture and making garden furniture.

I was outside the men's shed in Coldstream on Monday. It was not open, but I was looking in the window at the lovely things that they are making and that I have my eye on.

I want to share a little bit about men's sheds in my constituency and the tremendous success story that they have become. I recently visited the fantastic Hawick Men's Shed, which welcomes all sorts of people. That is the main point about men's sheds—they are so welcoming and offer friendship.

As Christine Grahame said, 19 per cent of Scottish members of men's sheds live in the Borders. There are 10 men's sheds across the Borders, from Jedburgh in the west to Eyemouth in the east. Scottish Borders Council has recently appointed a men's sheds development officer, and councillors David Parker and John Greenwell were instrumental in securing funding from the council to help the men's sheds get off the ground.

The wonderful thing about the sheds is the positive change that they bring about to older members of society. Every shed is different in its make-up, but they all have the same aim: to eradicate social isolation—among men mainly—and give a purpose to people's lives.

I speak a lot about social isolation, which is a pressing issue in rural Scotland, especially among older people. It is fast becoming the biggest challenge facing older generations, and men's sheds go some way to alleviate it. According to Age Scotland, 94 per cent of members have made good friends through the shed movement. In rural areas, with the decline in rural pubs and lack of meeting places, men's sheds are fast becoming the main hub for socialising in some towns and villages.

Over the past couple of years, we have heard a lot in the media about the impact that social prescribing can have on mental and physical health. I hope that the national health service sees an opportunity in men's sheds, particularly given the positive impact that they have on mental health.

As Christine Grahame said, men's sheds are not just about men. Jedburgh men's shed has been opened up to the wider community, including women. I understand that there is a ladies day once a week. I have yet to attend, but I look forward to going, and I hope that the numbers will continue to grow. Moreover, there is an opportunity for adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities—some come along with carers and help with current projects; others have brought fresh ideas and started new projects.

The achievement to date is phenomenal and the growth rate is amazing. We should be proud of what the gentlemen in the public gallery and others across Scotland are achieving. I hope that the movement continues to grow and to inspire the younger generations to carry on the good work that others have started.

13:01

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Christine Grahame on securing this important members' business debate on men's sheds.

In July last year, I had the privilege of cutting the ribbon at the official opening of Glenrothes Men's Shed. It was on one of the strangely warm nights that we had last summer and, as I recall, it was right in the middle of the world cup, but more than 70 folk from different communities across the town gathered to mark the occasion. Glenrothes Men's Shed is on the site of an old scout hall, and the absolute transformation that has taken place there is simply remarkable. Advanced higher art pupils from Auchmuty high school helped to design the murals on the exterior of the shed walls, with the help of local artist Donna Forrester. July's event was a real community experience. As shed member John McElroy told me at the time,

"The purpose of Glenrothes Men's Shed is to be accessible primarily but not exclusively to men, 18 or over, providing a safe, friendly environment where they are able to socialise and work on meaningful hobbies and projects at their own pace in their own time."

Christine Grahame's motion specifically mentions the ability of men's sheds to improve mental health. Yesterday, with colleagues from across the chamber, I attended suicide prevention training provided by the Scottish Association for Mental Health. In Scotland, suicide remains the biggest killer of men aged 34 to 44. There are lots of reasons why that is the case, but men's sheds have a crucial role in tackling social isolation and loneliness. Men's sheds have grown in popularity in recent years because of the opportunity that they afford—particularly although not exclusively for the older generation—to socialise in a safe environment and, I think, to have a sense of purpose.

Earlier this week, I was delighted to visit the other shed in my constituency, which is in Kennoway. I am not daft enough to refer to it as a men's shed, because at least half of the attendees on Tuesday were women. In Kennoway, the shed is a community shed. It is also unique, in that it has the largest branch membership of any shed in the country. I hope that all members will agree that that is a pretty impressive feat for a small town in Fife with a population of just over 4,500.

I sat with a group of ladies who were involved in craft work and cross-stitch. I am sure that they will not mind me telling the chamber that their view was that the women do all the work at Kennoway shed—so the gender divide is alive and well in Kennoway. Despite that, they laughed and told me about the camaraderie of the shed and how it offers them the opportunity to learn new skills. One lady took me to task about a certain Nicola Sturgeon, and when I reminded her that Nicola Sturgeon is in fact my boss, she simply replied, “Yes, I know that.”

Humphrey is one of the star attendees at the shed in Kennoway. He has been going since his wife passed away last year. Someone in the church recommended it to him and he now turns up every Tuesday and Friday to tend to his jigsaws. Every week, the team at the shed carefully lift Humphrey’s jigsaw and store it away safely so that he can continue where he left off. He is provided with a hot water bottle to keep him warm and, as he sits making progress with his jigsaws, the great and the good of the shed arrive to discuss the issues of the day with him. Simply put, Humphrey is the laird of Kennoway Community Shed, and it was an honour to meet him this week.

It struck me that Kennoway’s shed is about more than bricks and mortar. It is about the favour done for someone who needs their blinds taken down. It is about someone who will pay it forward the next week with some home baking. It is about volunteers working together to put up a new wall because the woodwork area was a little noisy.

There is a strong community bond throughout Kennoway shed, where everyone, irrespective of age and gender, has something to contribute to the greater good. I asked Bob McPhail, the founder of Kennoway shed, what he thought made it work. He told me:

“Every shed is unique in its own way; ours is mixed, some are just men only. Together, we are making a huge difference to people’s lives and making them feel part of something. Some pass on the skills that they have, others will just come for a chat and a cuppa and try and set the world to rights.”

Setting the world to rights is exactly what I did on Tuesday, with the help of some of Bob’s members, and although we did not quite sort out Brexit or agree on independence, it was a privilege to be in their company and to experience the inclusive community that they have helped to create in Kennoway.

13:05

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I add my congratulations to Christine Grahame on securing this important debate.

The men’s shed movement is a little tongue in cheek—perhaps it should be, because, as Christine Grahame pointed out, it started in Australia, where irreverence about masculinity is pretty common. However, it also plays to the stereotypes of sheds and man caves, where men such as Christine Grahame’s father find somewhere to retreat from family life. Of course, the men’s shed movement is the opposite of those things. It is very serious in its intent and its purpose, and it is about the opposite of retreating—it is not about retreating at all, but about coming out into the world.

As a number of members have said, loneliness is one of the biggest problems that men, in particular, face. We know how toxic loneliness can be; it is considered by the health authorities to be the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day in terms of the damage that it does to people’s health. That is the serious issue that men’s sheds deal with by creating a network of friends for those who participate and by connecting them again with their communities—because all the men’s sheds work with their communities. We have seen the strength of that work in the men’s shed movement in East Lothian—indeed, all our towns in East Lothian have men’s sheds at different stages of development. Musselburgh has one, as do Dunbar, Tranent and North Berwick. In Prestonpans, the men’s shed is becoming a part of the Lighthouse central community hub, which is a very successful community development in the town. In Haddington, the shed members have been doing some very useful work, including producing furniture for Meadowpark school for children with additional support needs.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): What efforts are the men’s sheds that Iain Gray is talking about, which are opening up throughout East Lothian, taking to encourage armed forces veterans to join them?

Iain Gray: I will answer the question to a degree by turning to the doyens of the men’s shed movement in East Lothian: the members of the Macmerry men’s shed. David Dickson and his redoubtable shedders in Macmerry claim to be the second men’s shed in Scotland, and it would be foolish to argue with them. The shed has 60 members, 35 of whom are active and a good many of whom are, indeed, veterans—a group that the men’s shed has reached out to. Macmerry men’s shed was started five years ago by Leslie Kidd—the founder of the movement in East Lothian—with just four men. They started with nothing but they now have everything, including a power tool workshop, and they make lots of things—they made the name plate for my house, which is on my garden gate. However, I have been told that, since the last time I was at Macmerry men’s shed, someone has donated a pool table,

and I believe that productivity has taken a significant dive. Members do not have to take my word for it, because Macmerry men's shed, along with Age Scotland, made a tremendous short film, which tells their story and shows why the men's shed is so important to them. The film can be found on YouTube—there is a link to it on my Facebook page.

We are all here to praise the men's shed movement, but I say gently to the minister that the movement needs support. It has had support from Age Scotland. In East Lothian, Strive, the local third sector organisation, supports it, too. The Government could do more to support the movement.

The cabinet secretary is the exception that proves the rule—Government ministers are usually middle-aged men in suits. They should understand that they will soon become old gits in cargo shorts and they will need a men's shed to go to, so they should support the movement.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not think that there is any way to segue from that to Bruce Crawford. [*Laughter.*]

13:10

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I have got my cargo shorts, and I am certainly an old git. From experience, I say to the members of the Borders men's shed that, if Christine Grahame is coming your way, run or get on your bike as fast as you can.

Most people need a sense of purpose or belonging in their lives, whether that is achieved through their family or work, supporting the local football team, volunteering, taking part in sport themselves or—dare I say it?—political activism. That sense of purpose can fuel us to get through the day and carries us on from one day to the next.

However, as we all know, as we get into our retirement years—

Members: Oh!

Bruce Crawford: I am not retiring—no chance—but we are all getting a bit older. I might get thrown out, but I am no retiring.

It can be a difficult phase in a person's life: a pair of hands and a mind that were once used productively every day are now looking for their next purpose. That change of direction can sometimes take a serious toll on the mental wellbeing of people in such a situation. It can also have a potentially serious impact on relationships in a household.

I would like to share a short story about a man I know. He is a man about my own age, who had

gone through the transition from working life to retirement and, like many people in such circumstances, he had found it incredibly difficult to come to terms with no longer having the routine of the working day. I could say that his sense of purpose was lost—an issue that other members have mentioned. The situation was having a serious impact on the man: he was becoming more and more depressed within himself and, at home, he barely spoke to his wife. It was a dangerous cycle in his mind of just existing in the world and no more.

Then, as luck would have it, the man fell ill and was admitted to hospital. Members might ask why I would describe such circumstances as lucky, but, in that short time in hospital, he was able to meet other men of his age on the ward. They had a good blether together and played cards and other games. By the time that he was discharged, he did not want to leave.

The impact of that male company on the man's overall wellbeing was profound. When he got home, he was a much happier man and his relationship with his wife greatly improved. The spark had reignited. Knowing what it was that had lifted his spirits, he signed up to his local men's shed. There, the man spends time with other men—and women—who are mostly around his age, using materials and tools to put their hands and minds to productive use. He has a renewed sense of belonging and has regained a sense of purpose.

I tell that story because it is what the men's shed movement is about at its core: a way for men to find a sense of purpose with other men and women who are in the same situation. We have talked a lot about mental health and how best to tackle mental health problems. The men's shed movement offers at least some answers to the problem by tackling the causes of mental ill health, particularly among men of retirement age.

Earlier this year, I was honoured to officially open the men's shed in Stirling. I would like to thank a remarkable man, Tipp Maher, for all the fantastic work that he has done in establishing the men's shed in Stirling. I am proud to say that I am now a member of the Stirling men's shed—I became one a few weeks ago, because of my great age. I am just preparing for when I am 80 or 90 and decide to slow down. The shed is situated in Creative Stirling's creative hub on King Street, and it is a brilliant space for socialising and for building, creating and fixing not just objects, but people. It has instilled a sense of purpose and belonging in its members. I hope that that brilliant organisation can reach out and have the same impact on many more men in the future.

13:14

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I, too, congratulate Christine Grahame on securing the debate. Men's sheds are vital in creating the socially connected society that we want and need. Men's shed are places—whether sheds or otherwise—where members can meet and pursue practical interests such as woodwork, refine their skills, play pool or simply put the world to rights.

Although men's sheds are largely based in a shed or other building, through them, people can also go on outings and meet other men and women. Men's sheds are whatever their members want them to be. In essence, their success is that they are not a top-down model; they are very much a model whereby people decide what would help and benefit them in their community.

Loneliness does not discriminate on the basis of economics or age. We were recently told that more than 100,000 older people in Scotland are suffering from loneliness right now. That could be because of retirement or because of a change in an individual's medical condition or physical health. I talked to one men's group in Edinburgh, who told me that, when they were getting going, they could not find many men to come along, so they encouraged the wives and partners of the men to send their men out.

In our society, it is still difficult for men—particularly older men—to talk about bereavement, loneliness or other issues that they would not want to discuss in the family. That is the importance of men's sheds, which needs to be stressed: they provide meaningful community and real friendship.

In May 2017, Age Scotland produced a report that was based on a survey of members of multiple men's sheds across Scotland. The survey found—overwhelmingly—that the men valued having banter with fellow shedders and people they could simply spend an afternoon or an evening with. They valued the individuals rather than the activity, because they felt needed and loved.

An example of a local shed here, in Lothian, is Mayfield men's shed, whose members meet on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The shed is just one of the many that we are fortunate to have here, in Edinburgh and Lothian. Activities include refurbishing community benches and making and selling wooden chairs. They have been able to sell what they have made, adding further value to their work. Indeed, many shedders describe having a new lease of life because a local shed has helped them to embrace and enjoy that stage of their life.

I encourage every one of us to look into men's sheds, whether for ourselves or for someone we know. They are a fantastic way of connecting with others in the community and might, for some, even

be a lifeline to keep them going as the years progress.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: In view of the number of members who still wish to speak in the debate, I am content to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Christine Grahame to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

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

Motion agreed to.

13:19

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate to raise awareness of the work and value of men's sheds, and I congratulate my colleague Christine Grahame on securing it. She aptly described what men's sheds are all about. I, too, welcome the shedders to the public gallery this afternoon.

Men's sheds respond to men's need for camaraderie and provide opportunities for them to work together in a way that contributes meaning to their lives. There are endless benefits to those who attend, from health to educational benefits.

The Scottish Men's Sheds Association says on its excellent website that the organisation

“will strive to lobby our MSP's, Councillors and Scottish Councils to support our Scottish Men's Sheds Movement both financially, in kind and in policy making.”

Today, I will focus on the funding aspect. It continues:

“This grass roots, community empowerment Men's Sheds model is a new way of supporting the desired Scottish Government's National Outcomes and the Community Empowerment and Engagement Asset Transfer Bill.”

I agree that men's sheds are one of the best ways for Scottish councils to save money, and they should allow buildings to be transferred to the community to be used as men's sheds.

The Scottish Government has recognised the efforts of the Scottish Men's Sheds Association, and it allocated start-up funding in September 2016. In addition to the funding from the Scottish Government, men's sheds have found a wide variety of potential funds. Age Scotland's small development grants can be used for men's sheds. The charity has up to 15 grants of £1,000 to award to men's sheds in Scotland.

The big bike revival in Scotland will give organisations tools to engage with the community and funding to repair old bikes, and it is looking for 100 organisations across Scotland to run a range

of bike revival events, with grants of up to £1,000. Tesco's bags of help programme has already funded 780 projects in Scotland, sharing more than £4 million between them. The programme funds a huge variety of projects that bring benefits to communities.

The Royal Voluntary Service, with funding from the Asda Foundation, has given out grants worth more than £84,000 to 100 sheds over the past three years. Big Lottery Fund Scotland has a range of funding programmes that can support men's sheds and similar activities. The main fund that it advises men's sheds to apply for is awards for all Scotland, which can provide funding of between £500 and £10,000 for up to 12 months.

The men's sheds movement is a growing phenomenon and it is fantastic to see the work that everybody is doing. In my South Scotland region, the number of men's sheds in Dumfries and Galloway has grown steadily since Dalbeattie Men's Shed first opened its doors back in 2011. There are now six men's sheds in the local authority area, and I am pleased to hear that there are plans in place to develop more over the years to come.

Dalbeattie Men's Shed was named the best in the United Kingdom at the UK Men's Sheds Association's shed of the year awards in 2017. Last summer, Sir Billy Connolly popped into the shed when he was filming a new TV project. He was very interested in the Skeoch utility car replica that members of the shed were building.

I hope to visit the Rhins Men's Shed in Stoneykirk and Glenkens men's shed in Balmaclellan in the near future. I was happy to speak at the open day of Dumfries men's shed in Noble Hill last summer.

Good health is based on many factors including people feeling good about themselves, being productive in and valuable to their community, connecting with friends and maintaining an active body and mind. Becoming a member of a men's shed gives men—and now women as well—a safe and busy environment without pressure. I encourage men around the country to attend men's sheds because of the education that they can receive on health matters, the friendships that they can build and, most important, the positive contribution to their mental health.

13:23

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): I congratulate Christine Grahame on securing this debate and on opening it in her usual inimitable style. There are two men's sheds in my constituency. I will say a little bit about each of them, because their stories are somewhat different with regard to the progress that they have made.

Following the election in 2016—after going home, then dropping my kids off at school—I went straight to Dyce community centre, where Dyce men's shed was formally opening its workshop. It had been granted sole use of a room in the community centre to develop that. When Dyce men's shed was formed in July 2014, it was initially allocated two rooms for social activities such as darts, pool and board games for its membership of eight to 10 local men, but the rooms were shared with other groups at different times of the day. After discussions with the local authority, it was allocated sole use of one room, in which it has established a workshop, which is mainly for woodwork.

Davie Walker, the secretary of Dyce men's shed, advises me that its membership has grown to approximately 30 people from Dyce and the surrounding communities. They meet three mornings a week with, usually, 18 to 20 individuals attending on at least two of the three mornings. Their activities have expanded and now include indoor bowls and a musical group. Those who partake in the workshop activities, although they generally make items for their own use, have occasionally made outdoor play equipment for local children's nurseries and planters for the local shops in the community.

The men's shed in Dyce is also about giving back to the community and being involved in community efforts. The strapline of the men's shed is "making friends", and Davie advises that the friendship formed among the members is particularly evident among those who have lost their partners. The point has been made about how retirement, the loss of partners, isolation and loneliness can impact on men, and about how men's sheds act as an antidote to that.

Bridge of Don and District Men's Shed is the other one in my constituency. It began two years ago, although it does not currently have premises. It has about 30 members, but it is struggling to offer activities on a regular basis as a consequence of that lack of premises. It has been gifted a storage unit by Jim Wright of Securastore, which is a business in Bucksburn in my constituency, but it is currently trying to secure £2,000 in order to move the unit, and it is seeking planning permission for it to be based behind the Alex Collie sports centre in Bridge of Don. Those at the men's shed have advised me that they have had a difficult journey to get things moving and that it could take up to four years to get the shed up and running properly.

One of the members of its board is a local general practitioner, who believes that consideration ought to be given to how national health service funds could support and fund the work of men's sheds. There is perhaps a case for

some of the additional finance that is being directed towards mental health to be considered in relation to men's sheds. A report that Age Scotland highlights in its briefing to us shows that, for every £1 that is spent on men's sheds, there is a social return of about £9.

The potential for men's sheds to be viewed as a form of social prescribing should not be underestimated. They can encourage men to become more active or to remain active and they can tackle isolation and loneliness, bringing greater benefits as a result. I hope that that will be given greater consideration in relation to how finance is directed to support the work that men's sheds do and that, when local general practitioners are faced with individuals who are suffering from loneliness, isolation or stress, they will be enabled to see men's sheds as an option to address that, rather than following the traditional medical model.

13:27

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, congratulate Christine Grahame on securing this debate. Given her remarks, I suggest that the men's shed in the Borders investigates securing its premises with closed-circuit television cameras, if not checking the locks on the doors and windows. *[Laughter.]* I, too, wish Ken Hughes well as he takes up Christine Grahame's encouragement to join a men's shed following his imminent retiral this evening.

Despite their growth in popularity and geographic reach over the years, men's sheds remain a largely unsung success story, and we should be doing more to shout about them from the rooftops. Before I offer some thoughts on the positive impact that Orkney Men's Shed in my constituency has had under the stewardship of Morgan Marcus and an excellent committee, I am tempted to declare an interest. On each and every occasion that I have visited Orkney Men's Shed in Finstown, and when popping along to its stalls at various agricultural shows last summer, I seem to have come away with a raffle prize. Unlike those of recent EuroMillions lottery winners, my cumulative winnings are not yet life changing, but they have helped to break a losing streak in local charity raffles that went back many years.

It is no exaggeration to say that men's sheds have proved to be life changing. There is certainly tangible evidence, including in Orkney, that they can help to improve the quality of life for shedders, whether through reducing the risk of loneliness and isolation as Iain Gray, Jenny Gilruth and others have identified, or by helping individuals to enjoy better mental health. That was borne out by Age Scotland's survey of shedders in 2017. The overwhelming majority of respondents pointed to

the same benefits that they got from their men's shed, with responses such as "more active", "made friends", "gained a sense of achievement", "feel more involved in the local community" and "learned new skills". That all adds up to physical and mental health improvements. That is something that we should be making more of a song and dance about. It demands greater recognition and should have greater value attached to it than seems to be the case at present.

As Mark McDonald reminded us, the Scottish Men's Sheds Association found that for every £1 spent on Westhill and District Men's Shed in Aberdeenshire, there was a return of more than £9 in health and social care and community learning outcomes. That cannot be atypical, yet we still hear about problems that men's sheds have, not least in securing premises.

Orkney Men's Shed is fortunate in that it now has a permanent home in Finstown thanks to the generosity of local fisherman Tam Marcus. *[Interruption.]* However, that came only after lengthy and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations with the local council over another site. Such has been the growth in membership and demand since Orkney Men's Shed moved into its premises in 2017 that it is already looking at extending its building. As well as creating much-needed extra space, an extension would facilitate better disabled access.

Unfortunately, the local group will need to cover the full planning costs in addition to the cost of the work. Such fundraising pressure is relentless for voluntary organisations such as men's sheds. Thankfully, the Orkney public have responded with consistent generosity to appeals for donations and funding. In return, the shedders have provided support to local schools, charity shops, the guides and individuals in the community. However, as I said in Parliament earlier this month, and as Mark McDonald rightly said, there is a strong argument for looking at whether men's sheds should be able to bid for health and wider social care funding. That approach has been taken in Australia and it certainly seems to merit consideration here, too.

Meanwhile, Orkney Men's Shed goes from strength to strength: its membership is up to 140 and is growing at a rate of three or four a month. The shed is open two days a week and attendance at sessions averages about 35. It is making a real difference and there is ambition and appetite to do more.

All men's sheds are different, but they share an ability to foster friendships and enhance wellbeing. As Andy Swain of Orkney Men's Shed put it, for many local shedders,

“the Shed has improved their life ... and given them a sense of purpose”.

For that alone, I offer my thanks to the men’s shed movement. I wish all current and future shedders as well, as the shed movement, every success in the future.

13:31

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Presiding Officer, I apologise to you and to Liam McArthur for my pill alarm going off during Mr McArthur’s contribution.

I, too, thank Christine Grahame for lodging the motion and securing the debate on this interesting subject. I do not know whether Ken Hughes has already bought his cargo shorts; I suppose that we can ask him later, at his retiral do.

Men’s sheds have been in Scotland for a relatively short time but, as we have heard from other members, they are already playing an important role in the lives of men in communities around the country. Like other members, I commend the work of men’s sheds in the area that I represent. No two men’s sheds are the same. In Grangemouth, men’s and hens’ groups meet at different times at the Jupiter urban wildlife centre. They are part of a wood recycling project, which makes planters, bird boxes, stools, spice racks and many more items out of recycled pallet wood.

Coatbridge men’s shed was formed about six months ago, since when its members have met twice a week to play dominoes, do woodwork or gardening or simply socialise. However, recently, I was saddened to hear that the club’s premises had been destroyed in a fire. Although the emergency services believe that the fire was accidental, the building’s loss has been devastating for the shed’s members. Local member Jim Gallagher said in the *Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser*:

“There are eight pensioners who have found refuge in this Men’s Shed that’s now been destroyed. If we don’t keep meeting every week the club will fall apart and members will just go back to staring at four walls in their homes every day.”

I very much hope that a suitable temporary meeting place can be found, and I wish the club luck in re-establishing its premises.

When men’s sheds first began to be formed in Australia in the 1990s, a number of men’s health issues that were not being addressed, and which are common among men in many western countries, were identified. One key societal issue was that men of all ages were not being encouraged to discuss their feelings and wellbeing. That point has already been mentioned today—it was well made by both Iain Gray and Jeremy Balfour. For a lot of men—particularly

older and retired men—that has had a serious and detrimental effect on their physical and mental health. As Jenny Gilruth mentioned, men have been affected by a cultural expectation that they will not discuss their feelings or have consideration for their wellbeing. Countless men’s lives have undoubtedly been lost to such a macho interpretation of how they should or should not act. I commend the positive role that men’s sheds have played in addressing that issue. The positive effects of men’s sheds are becoming ever more well known.

In a survey of members of the men’s sheds in Australia in 2007, 99.5 per cent said that they felt better about themselves, 97 per cent said that they had a place where they felt that they belonged and 79 per cent felt that they got access to men’s health information.

There are similar percentages in the briefing “Here at Home” that we have received from Age Scotland. Like Liam McArthur, I thought that it was interesting that, for every £1 spent on a men’s shed, more than £9 has been returned in health, social care and community learning outcomes, which adds to Iain Gray’s points about more Government support being needed.

I hope that men’s sheds continue to grow all around the country so that more men in Scotland can benefit from the improvement to their health and wellbeing for years to come. I again congratulate Christine Grahame on securing the debate.

13:35

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank Christine Grahame for securing the debate and allowing me the opportunity to talk about the positive impact of men’s sheds on their members’ health and wellbeing in general, but especially in Fife’s communities.

Men’s sheds are

“community spaces for members to connect, converse, and create”.

They are open to all aged 18 and up, but the majority of shedders are pensioners. That is incredibly important, because one in five of the UK population is an older man aged over 65 years. According to the National Institute for Health Research, men’s mortality rates are higher than those of women, and loneliness and social isolation, which are associated with poorer health outcomes, are highly common among older men.

Older men find it more difficult than women to make friends later in life and are less likely to join community-based social groups. Men’s sheds help to tackle mental health issues and social isolation among men and the elderly population by granting

members the chance to spend time outside the house to meet members of the local community and socialise with people who have similar interests.

Moreover, men's sheds help to boost the confidence and self-image of participants by engaging shedders in meaningful and productive work that gives them a sense of accomplishment about each and every craft that they work with. Age Scotland reports that 84 per cent of shedders have gained a sense of achievement as a result of projects in their shed that they have been involved in. It is obvious that the sheds play a vital and valued role in the lives of their members.

Fife is proud to be home to multiple men's sheds, including Kennoway Community Shed, which in 2018 was announced as being the largest men's shed in Scotland. My constituency is home to the Kirkcaldy and District Men's Shed, whose founders I had the pleasure of helping to get the shed set up and running and acquire the necessary funds. Last Monday, I had the opportunity to visit the shed, where I met members who showed me the quality and detail of wood pieces, paintings and other works that they had produced. I got to witness first hand the positive impact of the shed on my community through my conversations with those men and women.

It is with much sadness that I say that, last week, the Kirkcaldy and District Men's Shed was the victim of a robbery in which its equipment, tools and electric generators were stolen. Currently, the shedders do not have the heat, equipment or electricity that they need to craft their masterpieces. Now, more than ever, that shed needs the support of the community—especially the business community—to help build it up again and replace the items that were stolen.

The impact of men's sheds reaches far beyond those who are helped to the rest of the community by promoting hospitality, citizenship and civic engagement and creating a more unified and engaged society. Men's sheds are not only workshops where members can work on projects, crafts or repairs; they are active community hubs in which members can showcase their handiwork, teach an old skill to a fellow shedder or learn a new one, socialise with old friends or meet new ones, gain confidence, boost their self-esteem, and improve both physical and mental health.

For those reasons, it is no wonder that 93 per cent of shedders report feeling at home in their local sheds. Men's sheds are homes that are built on a foundation of camaraderie and compassion, supported by a network of community and painted with a promise that members will live healthier, happier and more connected lives.

13:38

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I thank Christine Grahame for bringing the debate to the chamber. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the topic of men's sheds, because I am very much a supporter of their creation and expansion across the country.

In my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, men's sheds operate in Dalbeattie, Balmacellan and Stoneykirk. As others have mentioned, men's sheds are hugely beneficial in a number of ways to the communities we represent. As we have heard, social isolation is difficult to tackle anywhere in the country, but there are additional barriers to overcome in rural communities, where people often struggle to integrate into social situations, simply because the resources are not there to deliver activities that suit their needs.

However, having paid a visit to the award-winning men's shed in Dalbeattie last year—I am scheduled to go again this Easter—I have seen the hugely positive role that men's sheds can play in creating friendships and providing men with activities that result in the benefits that are derived from working on projects with an identifiable goal. That goal might involve learning a new skill, using existing skills to create something new or passing skills on to others. It is important that these community organisations know that their contribution to society is very much welcomed and that support will be there for them. I welcome the fact that the Scottish Government has provided £75,000 to the SMSA to provide practical support and guidance to existing and new sheds that have health and safety and organisational issues.

I know that the debate is largely about celebrating men's sheds. However, having listened closely to local organisations in recent weeks and to people in Dalbeattie, it is fair to say that some shedders have concerns about the potential for the SMSA to overly influence the future direction of men's sheds. We must never forget the reason why we have so many men's sheds and why they work so well at the moment, which is because they are self-sufficient and are completely run by the shedders themselves. They are unique, bespoke projects focusing on the priorities in their local communities. A few weeks ago, I raised those concerns in the chamber with Christina McKelvie. I hope that she remains committed to working closely with MSPs who, like me, have a shared interest in promoting and encouraging new men's sheds, and I welcome her positive responses to my questions.

As Christine Grahame has said, the last thing that the men's shed operation needs is a one-size-fits-all approach that is burdened by red tape. Although I have no doubt that all such

interventions are well intended, shedders do not need potentially restrictive good practice obligations placed on them by the Scottish Government or anyone else, and they should not need to meet them in order to secure funding and support, whether that comes from the Government or other funding bodies. Although there is a recognition that support should be given to individual sheds to help with policies on areas such as insurance, health and safety and fire risks, they should not have to operate to a standard blueprint that is based on another shed in a completely different part of Scotland.

I welcome Glasgow Caledonian University's three-year project, funded by the Big Lottery, which is looking into the developmental challenges of men's sheds in Scotland and the health and wellbeing impacts of shed activities. However, it is concerning that the research involves analysis of only six sheds across Scotland out of the 170 that are in operation, and that the research appears to be looking at only the sheds that have been established successfully rather than including those that, for whatever reason, have not been successful. That is important, because we need to learn the lessons from those that have failed. Part of ensuring the success of new projects will involve being aware of mistakes that others have made. I hope that, over the next three years, the project's research will not be limited to a mere six successful sheds.

I thank men's shed organisations across the country and give them my full backing. However, I think that it is only right that we have an open and honest discussion about the future direction of the SMSA and ensure that we all work together to address the concerns that have been raised. Like other men's sheds, through being self-sufficient, the Dalbeattie Men's Shed has grown to more than 50 members, and we do not want to stifle that growth by adding additional red tape around funding. I very much look forward to my upcoming visit to the Dalbeattie Men's Shed, and I know that its members are taking a keen interest in today's debate.

Men's sheds have come a long way since they started 14 years ago. Indeed, as we have already heard, the concept has travelled across the world. I hope that we continue to build on their success, especially in rural communities, where they have been a great social and wellbeing focus point for many people.

13:43

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): This has been quite a debate, with images of Iain Gray, Bruce Crawford and Ken Hughes in cargo shorts fresh in our minds—perhaps for the benefit of us

all, they should find a shed to hide in—as well as discussions of Christine Grahame's love life. I was not quite prepared for those topics.

I thank Christine Grahame for bringing the Scottish men's sheds movement to the attention of Parliament. As other members have done, I welcome the Borders shedders to the gallery.

It is important and right that we recognise the importance of the men's sheds initiative, which transcends health and wellbeing and provides many wider community benefits. Christine Grahame was right to point out that men's sheds are not new. The movement started in Australia, and has roots way back in the 1980s. They were originally set up to advise on and improve men's overall health. Some have since expanded their remit to include anyone, regardless of age or gender.

Here in Scotland, men's sheds were established a little later: by 2013, we had five pioneering sheds. Today their number is close to 170, which is a massive jump in a short space of time. That has, in no small part, been down to the hard work and generosity of the sheds themselves, and has been helped by the expert support that is provided by the Scottish Men's Sheds Association, which the Scottish Government works closely with and funds. It has been lovely to hear about the growth of the movement, as it has been articulated through the wonderfully varied and diverse sheds in constituencies across Scotland. Rachael Hamilton pointed out that diversity in her remarks.

The men's sheds in Kennoway in Fife, Aberdeenshire, Orkney, Dumfries and Galloway, and Stirlingshire for example, are all doing very different things and responding to their local communities. I am, however, vexed to have heard about examples of problems from Elaine Smith and David Torrance.

Nonetheless, we know that men's sheds have proven positive effects on the physical and mental health of those who attend them. They also benefit their wider communities in the wide range of ways that we have heard about today, such as in building buddy benches for primary schools, making planters for hospitals, and providing the wider community with educational classes in operating tools or on craft projects.

However, men's sheds are not just workshops. They can also be places to practise printing, to try out arts and crafts and to play pool, cards or darts, or they can be simply places where people can drop in for a cuppie and a blether.

Like other members, I am a supporter of men's sheds. In December, I visited the mobile men's shed that is run by South Lanarkshire Council, while it was at Carluke. That innovative project involved the transformation of a council vehicle—I

think that it was formerly a mobile library—into a mobile men’s shed. It regularly visits communities throughout Lanarkshire. It brings the men’s shed to the communities, and it encourages and inspires communities to start their own shed. It is a great example of partnership working to support communities, so I thank Christine Calder and Paul Creechan at South Lanarkshire Council for getting behind that innovative project.

Members have also acknowledged that men can be at risk of social isolation and loneliness, particularly during key life transitions such as retirement or the loss of a partner. In our recently published “A Connected Scotland”, which is the national strategy for tackling social isolation and building stronger social connections, we recognised the important role of men’s sheds, where people—typically older men, but often younger men and women, too—meet regularly for company and camaraderie.

Men’s sheds are a really good example of community-led projects that help to foster relationships and contribute to building resilient communities. The positive mental and physical health benefits are backed up by strong evidence, so we will continue to work with our partners to develop this important health intervention nationally, including providing support to the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association.

Although I am responding on behalf of the Scottish Government and men’s sheds technically fall within my portfolio, the truth is that many Government ministers could be standing here and responding to the debate, such as the reach and impact of men’s sheds across many portfolio areas. That is why it is important that we take what they do seriously. The seriousness of what is delivered by men’s sheds was pointed out by Iain Gray.

What evidence do we have here in Scotland to support the growth of men’s sheds? Our evidence base is growing rapidly and corroborates the established international evidence on men’s sheds. Men’s sheds provide positive views of ageing and later life, as is referenced in the “The Shed Effect: Stories from Sheddors in Scotland” study that was carried out by Age Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government. That report highlights that 76 per cent of those who were surveyed agreed that their physical health improved as a result of being involved in a shed, and 79 per cent felt that their mental health had improved as a result of involvement in a shed.

Those benefits are also felt in the wider community, through savings to our health and social care systems. As Mark McDonald pointed out, research that was carried out in Westhill by the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association highlighted that, for every £1 that was spent through Westhill

Men’s Shed, there was a return of £9.34 in health and social care and community learning outcomes. That is a social return on investment that no one can ignore.

Moving forward, we know that it is not just a case of supporting the growth of the movement and creating new sheds. We understand that, as sheds establish themselves, their needs can change and they need support with sustainability. The Scottish Government is working closely with individual sheds on issues including achieving sustainability, and we have fed into the three-year sheds for sustainable development project, which Finlay Carson spoke about and is led by Dr Danielle Kelly of Glasgow Caledonian University. That important study is exploring the health and wellbeing impacts of shed activities on users of sheds, and will identify the key development challenges that sheds face. That will enable the Scottish Government and our partners to remain ahead of those challenges, and it will inform us on how best to respond.

I emphasise to Finlay Carson that none of this is about attempting to provide a blueprint for how men’s sheds should operate. We want to support the growth of men’s sheds, while recognising that they are community-led and very diverse grass-roots initiatives. That is why we want to support their sustainability as well as we can.

Emma Harper: Does the minister acknowledge that the funding mechanisms in Scotland, through the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association, are different from Ireland’s and from the UK Men’s Sheds Association?

Aileen Campbell: Absolutely. Men’s sheds reach into many policy areas, which provides an incredible opportunity to explore different funding streams. We provide core funding of £75,000 to the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association. We are the only Government in the world that provides strategic national support in that way. We therefore view our role in supporting men’s sheds growth incredibly seriously.

I take on board the points about premises and finding premises, which have been well made. In fact, the men’s shed in Biggar, which is in my constituency, is currently looking for a home, and I know how challenging that has been for it. Those points probably require us to work out how we can provide much more support to address the practical issues that men’s sheds face and the funding issues that others have raised.

To conclude, I think that we all agree that men’s sheds are brilliant things. They are safe places in the hearts of our communities throughout Scotland, from Shetland to the Borders, that bring people together and enable people to support each other through friendship and trust. They are

simple but impactful, and they tackle serious issues that vex Government and society, including wellbeing, mental health and loneliness, to name but a few.

Getting behind the men's sheds movement is therefore in all our interests. That does not mean the Government alone; a partnership approach will be required. I am grateful for the support that the Government receives from Age Scotland, the Scottish Men's Sheds Association and Glasgow Caledonian University, to name but a few organisations.

We can go further. I urge all our partners—local authorities, the third sector, the NHS and community workers—to get behind sheds so that we can all together play a role in developing and supporting that important initiative. Social prescribing is particularly important: with an ageing population, it is absolutely in all our interests. These simple projects help us to create the connected and resilient communities that contribute to the betterment and wellbeing of our country.

Many members have mentioned Ken Hughes. I acknowledge his role—not in cargo shorts—and his contribution to Parliament over a number of years, and wish him well in retirement. I hope that he finds a good shed near him when he retires.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate. The meeting is now suspended until half past 2. If people in the gallery wish to show their appreciation, I am happy for them to do so. *[Applause.]*

13:53

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time. I would like to get in as many people as possible, so I ask for succinct questions and answers, please.

Post (Delivery)

1. Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what steps it is taking to ensure that offices receive post before the start of parliamentary business. (S5O-03045)

Kezia Dugdale (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): As members will appreciate, for security reasons it is important that we screen all mail that comes to the Parliament off site. In 2011, it was agreed that we would no longer pay Royal Mail for the early extraction of the Parliament's mail and that we would bring the sorting in house. That means that screened mail from Royal Mail is now delivered to Holyrood at about 9.30 am. After time is allowed for our mail team to sort the mail, the first postal delivery is at 11. Those changes enabled us to operate one shift instead of two, which freed up a member of staff, who was redeployed in the facilities management team. We have no plans to reintroduce an early mail delivery, which could involve significant additional costs.

Mike Rumbles: The Parliament's posties do a fabulous job, and I do not want anyone to think for a moment that my question is a criticism of their work, because it is not.

The member mentioned shift changes, and the first post is now much later than it was before. That change is only recent—it did not happen a long time ago—so is there a possibility of restoring the earlier postal delivery, so that we can give our constituents a good service from the start of the day?

Kezia Dugdale: I appreciate that the member is a keen bean and that he wants to get to work as quickly as possible. However, returning to the old system would have an additional cost of about £100,000 every year. I ask him to carefully consider whether the additional time would be worth a cost of £100,000 to the Parliament. We made a saving and we managed to redeploy staff in the building. If the member is desperate to see the newspapers, for example, they are available in the Scottish Parliament information centre from 8

in the morning—he does not have to wait until 11 to access them. The corporate body is pretty confident that taking this approach is the right and proper thing to do.

Car Park (Booking System)

2. **Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will carry out a review of the car park booking system. (S5O-03008)

Kezia Dugdale (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The car park policy is aimed at maximising the number of spaces that are available to members on business days, and the car park booking system has been in place since we moved to Holyrood. We have reviewed the system several times and have found the current process for booking a parking space to be the fairest and most flexible way of allocating the limited number of spaces that are available. We appreciate that technology is continually evolving and we would be happy to look again at other booking options, including an online booking system.

Annie Wells: That is exactly what I suggest—an online booking system that would allow MSPs and parliamentary staff to make and cancel bookings outside normal parliamentary working hours and to see spaces as and when they became available. Will the SPCB look into that?

Kezia Dugdale: We are keen to look at the option of an online booking system. We have looked at it before; the software does not currently exist for what we want to do, but we will continually review that.

A lot of people do not know that they can book spaces for half a day—people automatically think that they might be required to book a full day. There is more flexibility than members might think, but we will continue to review the position.

Passholder Entrances (Delays)

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, following the installation of new security devices at passholder entrances, what action it is taking to address queues forming and delays to entry. (S5O-03046)

Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The question is of interest to a number of people. We are all aware that, during busy periods—mainly between 8.30 and 9.30 on business days—queues have been forming, particularly outside the Queensberry house entrance. Three reasons are driving the delays. The Parliament has experienced a software issue that has resulted in the entry system occasionally resetting, which has caused a delay; engineers

are on site this week to implement an agreed fix. The other causes are the volume of people who arrive during peak times and the fact that some passholders have not yet perfected their technique, so they present their pass and finger too quickly to the reader, which means that the pass has to be presented again.

To address those issues, we will remind all pass users that, alongside the single entry turnstile at Queensberry house, there are two turnstiles at the Canongate entrance, which offer direct access to the garden lobby, as we all know. We have security staff on site to offer support, and we encourage anyone who is having issues with accessing the Parliament to schedule a follow-up appointment with the pass studio.

We are also discussing with the manufacturer of the turnstiles the possibility of changing the exit turnstile at Queensberry house, where there is both an entrance and an exit turnstile, to a bi-directional turnstile, allowing it to be used to alleviate queues during peak times.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Bi-directional! [Laughter.]

Jackson Carlaw: All that fancy language means that we are still establishing the technical fix and the costs and timescales of the initiative.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That will be one of those succinct answers, then. [Laughter.] I call Patrick Harvie.

Patrick Harvie: I am resisting the ample opportunity for innuendo here. [Laughter.]

Look—I might be prejudiced and biased on this issue, because when I am expected to have my fingerprints taken and to present biometrics to go into my place of work, my natural instinct is to feel that it is something of a dystopian nightmare. However, this system is more “Brazil” than “1984”; it does not work, and it takes ages. I am all in favour of technology that makes things easier, but this technology makes getting into and out of the building worse, more difficult and more time consuming. If it does not work, can we just rip it out?

Jackson Carlaw: I hear what Patrick Harvie has said about the difficulties that have been experienced in facilitating the new system, but he will know that the problem with the old one-factor authentication system was that many people were, quite inappropriately, handing their passes back to others who did not have a pass to allow them into the building. It is obvious, when one thinks it through, that that presented serious security risks.

Two-factor authentication is designed to make access to the building more secure. The biometrics are contained exclusively within the

card and are not held anywhere else, so Mr Harvie need not be concerned that there will be any breach of personal data. It might well take some time for us to perfect the system and ensure that it works efficiently, but it is there to ensure that all the public access points into the building are as secure as they have to be so that we can all operate safely in the building at all times.

Payroll Deductions (Credit Union Take-up)

4. Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): First, I remind the chamber that I convene the cross-party group on credit unions.

To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what the take-up is of the credit union payroll deduction. (S5O-03044)

Sandra White (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I thank the member for her very interesting question. At the moment, 35 individuals have chosen to make a payment into their credit union account through the payrolls managed by the corporate body. Of those 35, 19 are SPCB staff, 10 are MSP staff and six are MSPs, and that is from a total of 1,399 people who are served by our payroll service.

Ruth Maguire: The role of credit unions in reducing poverty and the impact of financial worries is well recognised. Everyone will know that the membership is based on a common bond, and it seems a wasted opportunity not to offer staff and members the benefit of direct wage deduction to one of their local credit unions. For example, I would love to be able to offer my staff or, indeed, anyone from Ayrshire the opportunity to make deductions to 1st Alliance Ayrshire Credit Union. Will Sandra White meet me to see how we can make that happen for everyone?

Sandra White: I agree entirely with the member that access to credit unions is very important. She will be aware that the SPCB advertises the fact that we facilitate payments to a credit union, but the idea that she has proposed is an excellent one. Obviously, I cannot give an answer on my own behalf, but if the member is content, I will take the matter to the next SPCB meeting for discussion. I am also more than happy to discuss the matter with her.

Twentieth Anniversary (Marking Contribution of Staff)

5. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body how it will mark the contribution to the Parliament of staff past and present who were here in 1999. (S5O-03049)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): In our 20th anniversary year,

the corporate body wishes to express our thanks to those staff past and present who helped establish the Parliament in 1999. Christine Grahame might be interested to know that around 80 members of the current parliamentary service staff group joined before the first election in May 1999 and a total of around 120 started at some point during that year. The corporate body values the contribution made by all staff and contractors in the Parliament from all parts of the organisation, regardless of how long they have worked here.

Throughout 2019, staff will reflect on their time at the Parliament in the in-house newsletter, and that will be an opportunity for those who joined in 1999 to share their memories from that year and their reflections on how the Parliament has evolved over the past two decades.

Christine Grahame: I associate myself with the member's remarks about congratulating staff, past and present. Here is my wee plan: if we are to have a modest 20th birthday bash and ask former MSPs to attend, I ask that we also invite former members of staff, because the Parliament very much operates as a team.

Liam McArthur: I reciprocate by echoing the sentiments that Ms Grahame has expressed. As she will know, our intention is for the Parliament to celebrate its 20th anniversary at an event on 29 June. All members of staff, past and present, will be encouraged to attend the event, and further announcements will be made later in the spring. I understand that the chief executive, Sir Paul Grice, will write to current and former staff to that effect.

Members' Staff (Contract Variation)

6. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it is possible to vary contracts of employment for MSP staff in order to give flexibility to suit local circumstances. (S5O-03047)

Andy Wightman (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The SPCB recognises—as, I am sure, the member does—that members are the employers of their staff. To help members to fulfil their role as employers, the corporate body has provided a minimum set of terms and conditions on which members' staff should be employed. Provided that members ensure that their staff are employed on terms and conditions that are no less favourable than the minimums that are set by the corporate body, they are free to vary the terms as they see fit, as long as they do so within their capped staff costs provision.

John Mason: I will not get into all the details, but I am trying to get a contract adjusted for a new member of staff. I have asked for five changes to the standard contract, but the human resources

department is resisting two of them. It seems to me that, year by year, there is less and less flexibility and more and more rigidity, so I would like an assurance from the corporate body that it will maximise the amount of flexibility that staff and MSPs have.

Andy Wightman: As I indicated, it is for members to determine the terms and conditions on which their staff are employed, provided that they are no less advantageous than the minimums that are set by the corporate body. We are not in a position to discuss the particular details of the contract of Mr Mason's member of staff. If he wishes to raise the matter with any of us, I will be happy to meet him to discuss the particular issues that he is having, and to find out whether they are issues that pertain to the standard terms and conditions on which members' staff are expected to be employed. I am not aware that the conditions have become tighter over the past few years, but if Mr Mason wants to present evidence in that regard, we can have a look at that issue. We want to ensure that members have flexibility, because we all expect them to be able to employ staff on terms and conditions that meet their circumstances.

Car Park (Barrier System)

7. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will provide an update on the on-going issues with the car park barrier system. (S5O-03007)

Kezia Dugdale (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The car park barrier system was installed in 2007. In January this year, we experienced a series of component failures that led to the car park barrier system being out of service for 10 days. Following those component failures, a comprehensive root-cause analysis of the equipment and controls was carried out by the manufacturer, and measures have been put in place to prevent a similar incident from happening again.

Alexander Stewart: When there is a fault with the barrier system, staff need to be deployed outside in all weathers. Surely there is a greater risk to the building because the barrier system is down. What further measures can be put in place to reduce the risks to staff and the building?

Kezia Dugdale: There is no increased security risk when the barrier system is out of service, because there are roller shutters in front of the car park entrance.

I share the member's concern about asking security staff to be out in the cold, which is why we try as much as possible to avoid that.

The barrier system is not out of service as often as the member might think it is. In any given year, there are three periods for scheduled maintenance. Beyond that, there were seven instances during 2018 when the system was out of order. Many of the issues that caused those problems have now been resolved, and we look forward to a more positive future.

Scottish Parliament Staff (Support for Carers)

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body how it supports staff who are carers. (S5O-03048)

Kezia Dugdale (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body recognises that many staff face significant caring responsibilities and is committed to helping them to balance their home and work lives. We appreciate the demands that that might place on staff and that, at times, it might be difficult for them to combine their work and their caring responsibilities.

As an employer, we are committed to providing an inclusive working environment in which carers feel valued and supported. To help us to meet that commitment, we have put in place a range of support options for carers, including access to carer-friendly policies and working practices that offer staff the flexibility and support to manage their time when care at home is needed.

Tom Arthur: Kezia Dugdale will be aware of the carer positive initiative, which recognises employers that promote carer-friendly policies in the workplace. The Scottish Parliament is a carer positive employer, but it is currently at the entry level, which is "engaged". How does the SPCB see the Scottish Parliament progressing to become an "established" and, eventually, an "exemplary" carer positive employer?

Kezia Dugdale: We are, indeed, a carer positive employer. The SPCB continues to demonstrate its commitment to staff with caring responsibilities and, more widely, to supporting staff to lead independent, healthy and active lives.

I can reassure Tom Arthur that we are committed to achieving the highest level in the award scheme by becoming an exemplary carer positive employer by 2020. That means providing exemplary support to carers by enhancing our workplace policies. Our carers staff network, which is led by carers in the building, will have a key role to play in helping us to achieve the highest possible standard.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes SPCB question time. I remind all members that the SPCB question slot is considered in the same way as portfolio question time, which means that, if

anyone asks a question or attempts to ask a question, they should stay for the full session.

Portfolio Question Time

Health and Sport

14:47

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is portfolio question time. Today, the theme is health and sport. I make another plea for succinct questions and answers.

Specialist Endometriosis Unit (Glasgow)

1. **Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it can confirm that the new accredited specialist endometriosis unit will open in Glasgow in April 2019. (S5O-03026)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I am delighted to confirm that the west of Scotland specialist accredited severe endometriosis service is expected to be operational from April this year.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that heartening answer.

Despite the fact that endometriosis affects one in 10 women, it still takes an average of 7.5 years for a woman to be diagnosed. Although there is no cure for endometriosis, having a diagnosis enables women to receive appropriate treatment; to stay in work, by having their condition understood and managed; and to make informed choices about fertility. Does the cabinet secretary agree that reducing diagnosis times should be a key priority for the new specialist unit?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Mr Gibson for that additional question. I agree that, for the new unit in Glasgow and for the two other units in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, reducing diagnosis times should be a key priority, and it is.

However, I also recognise that the length of the delay in diagnosis is due, in part, to the diverse nature of the symptoms, as well as a lack of reliable diagnostic tests. As yet, there is no solid evidence on what causes endometriosis to occur.

We have taken some additional steps to improve the situation. Last year, we invested £162,000 in a study by the University of Edinburgh to inform the design of a large, United Kingdom-wide clinical trial for the condition. Recently, we engaged with Endometriosis UK to discuss possible areas of mutual research interest.

I believe that research, coupled with the three specialist centres in Scotland, will go some way in raising awareness among the public and, importantly, among healthcare professionals to

facilitate access to speedy diagnostics and the best treatment available.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): In a recent written response, the cabinet secretary said that activity at the Glasgow endometriosis centre had been modelled on an expected demand of 20 cases a year. I am surprised at that low level of expected demand, given that one in 10 women have endometriosis. How was that figure reached? Will the cabinet secretary give an assurance that women in Glasgow and the surrounding area will not be forced to join long waiting lists for much-needed treatment?

Jeane Freeman: Various factors are used to estimate the number of potential patients, including the use of the services in Aberdeen and Edinburgh and what clinicians in the west of Scotland—the area that the Glasgow centre will serve—anticipate the demand will be. That is the basis on which the centre has been designed. The centre can, in fact, accommodate up to 24 patients.

I mentioned research, improved diagnostic testing and so on. I expect that, over time, as the research proceeds and the diagnostic tests are, hopefully, developed through the clinical trials, we will see a significant increase in cases. We have that increase in mind for all three centres. We will look at how the centres progress and increase the capacity, if that is something that we need to do.

Health (Role of Sport and Leisure)

2. **Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what role participation in sport and leisure plays in the health of the population. (S5O-03027)

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): Being physically active is one of the very best things that we can do for our physical and mental health, whether through sport, active forms of recreation such as walking or gardening, or active travel.

There is abundant evidence that physical activity helps to prevent heart disease, strokes, diabetes and a number of cancers. It plays an important part in helping us maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of developing depression. Sport and physical activity are also powerful means of addressing isolation, building community cohesion and developing confidence.

Gordon Lindhurst: The minister may be aware of cuts to Edinburgh Leisure's budget, which are symptomatic of the financial pressures that this Government has put on local authorities. Edinburgh Leisure has recently announced price increases and a 10 per cent reduction in the discount rate for over-65s. Does the minister agree that making sport and leisure facilities more

expensive for elderly people in particular is a false economy, especially in Edinburgh, given the crisis in social care?

Joe FitzPatrick: Obviously, all local authorities have to make decisions, in the same way that the Government has to, about how they prioritise those areas for which they are responsible—and those areas that are within the City of Edinburgh Council's responsibilities are just that. I assume that the member does not support the idea of the Government telling councils how to go about their business.

My understanding is that, when the City of Edinburgh Council was deciding its budget, the Conservatives did not make a proposal to provide further funding to Edinburgh Leisure. Furthermore, had the Conservative Party's proposals for the Scottish budget been agreed to in this chamber, £500 million less would be available across the whole budget, which would have impacted on all councils, including the City of Edinburgh Council.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): Danestone medical practice in my constituency is one of more than 700 park run practices in the United Kingdom where patients and staff are encouraged to get active at their local park run, whether by walking, jogging or running. Does the minister agree that it was great to see more medical practices taking on the status of a park run practice? Will he join me in congratulating the volunteers who put on Aberdeen park run, which will celebrate its 400th event this weekend?

Joe FitzPatrick: I agree with all the member's points. Park runs are an amazing phenomenon that have taken off across Scotland. I might be signing myself up for something in saying this, but I encourage members to go along and experience the fun. I think that I have, indeed, just signed myself up to go to the one in Dundee. [*Laughter.*]

Infrastructure Improvements (NHS Lothian)

3. **Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve NHS Lothian's infrastructure in order to cope with East Lothian's rising population. (S5O-03028)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The £70 million East Lothian community hospital is due to be complete in August, with capacity for 132 in-patient beds, along with 14 day beds for minor surgery and endoscopy patients.

NHS Lothian is developing a business case for a £2.8 million project to refurbish Harbours medical practice in Cockenzie and build an extension.

Michelle Ballantyne: East Lothian's population is the second-fastest growing in Scotland, with population projections for 2026 predicting a surge of nearly 10,000 people from regional migration alone.

Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that the new hospital has been future proofed to meet the needs of East Lothian's rapidly rising population? Has she commissioned an impact assessment of how the rising population will affect NHS Lothian's overall provision of care?

Jeane Freeman: Ms Ballantyne is correct: population figures show that East Lothian is one of the highest areas of growth, with growth of 23 per cent projected between 2012 and 2037. The highest growth in the population is projected to be among people aged over 65, whose numbers will increase by something like 72 per cent, and many of those people will be in single-occupant households.

All those are factors that boards—and health and social care partnerships, given the split in the rising population—are expected to take full account of as they plan their services. I understand that East Lothian Council and East Lothian health and social care partnership are fully cognisant of the figures—indeed, some of the figures came from those sources. With that knowledge, the board is actively engaged in the activity that I have announced and in considering what else it needs to do in relation to the provision of primary and intermediate care services.

“A Better Grief”

4. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Sue Ryder report, “A Better Grief”. (S5O-03029)

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): The Scottish Government welcomes the helpful focus on bereavement that the report brings. My officials recently met Sue Ryder to discuss some of the themes in the report, and officials are exploring with the national health service and independent and third sector colleagues how the messages in the report can shape our bereavement work, to help to ensure that people with grief can access the care and support that is right for their individual circumstances.

Johann Lamont: The minister knows from this important report that 72 per cent of people have been bereaved at least once in the past five years but only 40 per cent know what kind of help and support to offer someone who is bereaved. Will he outline the Scottish Government's plans to carry out research into the availability of bereavement support and the impact of different bereavement

services, as proposed in the Sue Ryder “A Better Grief” report?

Joe FitzPatrick: The Government is in discussion with a number of organisations, including the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care, and we have met Sue Ryder, as I said, to understand how we can better provide support.

I recognise the member's longstanding interest in supporting bereaved families. I will be happy to meet her if she wants to discuss how we can take that work forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have time for a quick supplementary.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): First, I thank Sue Ryder for the report and congratulate it and Hospice UK. There was an ask in the report about having local primary care teams identify support for people and signpost to it; that is important. Many members will have met constituents who are in the position—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you ask your question, please?

Miles Briggs: Will the Government support that approach and fund posts in general practitioners' surgeries?

Joe FitzPatrick: Access to support is important. Bereavement is unique to each individual and bereavement services have to be flexible and to connect with local networks that can provide support. As I said, officials have discussed with Sue Ryder—and are discussing with other partners, including Cruse Bereavement Care—how best to do that. Members across the Parliament can work to ensure that we provide the best possible support, which is right for individuals.

We have asked the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care to work with NHS inform to improve the online content that is available in relation to palliative and end-of-life care and bereavement.

This is an on-going process and we need to continue to do what we can to make services better.

Out-of-hours General Practitioner Services (Glenrothes Hospital)

5. **Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on GP out-of-hours closures at Glenrothes hospital. (S5O-03030)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The out-of-hours service at Glenrothes continues to be closed, often at short notice, because of on-going difficulties in securing staff for rotas. Patients who require to be seen during those periods are redirected to another

centre or might be provided with a home visit, if that is more appropriate.

However, Fife health and social care partnership has made some progress. It has recruited an advanced nurse practitioner on the GP rota and an advanced paediatric nurse practitioner, who is now seeing patients. Additional advanced nurse practitioners were appointed in January and the out-of-hours centre is now a practice placement for student nurses.

Nonetheless, I continue to keep in touch with the health and social care partnership about how much more progress it can make in this area.

Jenny Gilruth: As the cabinet secretary will be aware, both Glenrothes Area Residents Federation, which submitted a participation request, and North Glenrothes community council have been assiduous in their commitment to ensure that we do not lose our out-of-hours GP service in Glenrothes. Although I appreciate that the decision is not ultimately in the cabinet secretary's gift, will she agree to meet my constituents to discuss their concerns?

Jeane Freeman: I am sure that Jenny Gilruth will be aware that NHS Fife met to discuss the Glenrothes Area Residents Federation participation request on 15 March. It also met St Andrews community council regarding its participation request on 14 March. Those discussions are on-going and it is important that we allow the board and the community to conclude them. I will be kept up to date and I am happy to speak further with Ms Gilruth, once we know the outcome of the discussions.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Glenrothes is not the only hospital that is affected by closures; St Andrews community hospital is facing similar difficulties. Will the cabinet secretary confirm what pressures are being placed on the Scottish Ambulance Service, given the concerns from the student population that the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy is just too inaccessible?

Jeane Freeman: The ambulance service has not raised any specific issues with me in that regard. However, I have had discussions with one of the GPs from St Andrews and I have had an outline discussion with the principal of the University of St Andrews in respect of the additional steps that it is taking, in particular to look at whether there can be more co-operation between the university, our NHS and the health and social care partnership and how we can deliver an adequate service to that part of north-east Fife.

General Practitioner Services (Access)

6. **Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to address patient access issues at GP practices. (S5O-03031)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The new GP contract will improve patient access to GP practices by increasing transparency on surgery times and making a wider range of healthcare professionals available to patients.

In addition, our commitment to increasing the number of GPs by 800 in the next decade will ensure that GPs can spend more time with patients who need to see them. The latest figures show that we now have a record number of GPs in Scotland—an additional 75 GPs and GP registrars. Targeted initiatives, such as the Scottish graduate entry medicine programme, an increase in undergraduate medical education places and increasing undergraduate training in primary care settings will, I believe, ensure a sustainable GP workforce in the future.

Ross Greer: One of the welcome objectives in the new general medical services contract that the cabinet secretary mentioned is the redistribution of some of GPs' workloads to other relevant staff. The problem is that patients do not know about it, and we have a lot of anecdotal evidence that GPs are spending quite a portion of their 10-minute appointments explaining the changes. Will the cabinet secretary outline what steps she is taking to fulfil the commitment that she has made to ensure greater patient awareness of the changes?

Jeane Freeman: I would be very happy to hear from Ross Greer which particular practice areas the anecdotal evidence is coming from, because I have information that there are many patients across different parts of Scotland who are benefiting from the additional access to other professionals. There are many ways in which we can help independent contractors—and we need to remember that they are independent contractors, through our health service—to ensure that information is available to patients and through community pharmacies and so on. I would be happy to look at the particular issues that Mr Greer has raised, to see what more we can do.

Mortality Rates (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley)

7. **Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what the mortality rates for cancer, heart disease and stroke are in the Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituency, and how these compare with Scotland as a whole. (S5O-03032)

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): Information Services

Division Scotland does not routinely publish data at the constituency level, but I can provide the member with data from Ayrshire and Arran health board. The latest mortality data show that in Scotland, over the last ten years, stroke mortality has reduced by around 42 per cent, heart disease mortality by 36 per cent and cancer mortality by 10 per cent. In relation to Ayrshire and Arran health board, ISDS figures show that over the same period cancer mortality has reduced by 2.1 per cent, stroke mortality by 43 per cent and heart disease mortality by 30 per cent. Those figures show that there is a continued downward trend in that health board area.

Willie Coffey: I thank the minister for that answer, in so far as it gives us the position across Ayrshire. At some stage, I hope that the Parliament can produce data on a constituency basis, given that most members represent constituencies.

Does the minister agree that there is a clear link between poverty and ill health, which has been a consistent problem in my part of Ayrshire for many years? Can he give some indication of what the Government is doing to address that and close the gap?

Joe FitzPatrick: Scotland has seen significant improvements in public health, although there are deep-rooted, historical issues in population health that we are working hard to address through many of our strategies. We know that heart disease, stroke and certain cancers, like other lifestyle-related illnesses, are most pronounced in areas of deprivation. Tackling those inequalities can be done only by tackling their root causes, rather than their consequences. That involves ending poverty, paying fair wages, supporting families and improving our physical and social environment; and, across Government, we put an emphasis on all those areas. Such issues are made much more difficult to address by the United Kingdom Government's continued welfare reform programme.

Pitlochry Community Hospital (Care and Treatment Hub)

8. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how the provision of a care and treatment hub at Pitlochry community hospital will improve healthcare for highland Perthshire residents. (S5O-03033)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The care and treatment hub will bring together services such as phlebotomy, wound care, post-operative wound care management and suture and ulcer care and, by doing so, will increase access to appointments. The Perth and Kinross health and social care partnership intends the hub to be open from

October 2019. The provision of those services through the hub will free up general practitioner time, allowing GPs to spend longer with patients who need their particular skills.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for providing that information. There is a lot of interest in Pitlochry and highland Perthshire in what is being proposed. Will the cabinet secretary tell us how the community will be involved in designing the services that will be available? What information will be made available about exactly what will be on offer from October?

Jeane Freeman: Mr Fraser asks a very good supplementary question about how the community will know what is being made available. I am happy to ask the local partnership for its detailed plan about the various outlets—pharmacies, GP practices and so on—through which it will make that information available to potential patients in the local community and to share that with Mr Fraser. Using social media is always a good idea and might be particularly useful in this instance.

My understanding is that the original thinking and design of the hub came from feedback from patients, but I will make sure that that is the case. I will ensure that patients are involved in the feel of the new hub, through the community council or other means, and, again, will see that Mr Fraser is made aware of that.

Land Reform

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I ask members to shift their seats quickly. The next item is a debate on motion S5M-16445, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on land reform in Scotland.

15:09

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): Land reform is a subject that has been relevant to Scotland for several hundred years, and I have to say that it sometimes seems as though I have been talking about it for several hundred years. However, the pace of change has been stepped up since the inception of the Parliament. We have legislated to enable communities to buy land, to establish the Scottish Land Commission and to require ministers to set out their vision for land reform through the Scottish land rights and responsibilities statement, which was published in September 2017. It is the first statement of its kind anywhere in the world, and it sets out a vision of a strong and dynamic relationship between Scotland's land and its people whereby all land contributes to a modern and successful country and land rights and responsibilities are recognised and fulfilled.

In the foreword to the statement, I say that Scotland's land is

“one of our most valuable assets.”

That remains true. Our land is at the heart of our environment, and it makes an important contribution to our economy in countless ways. It supports the lives that we lead, whether through housing, recreation, the production of food or any one of a myriad other ways. Land is vital to Scotland's inclusive and sustainable economic growth and to social justice. Despite that, our relationship with land is unbalanced and has been for hundreds of years. Too much of our land is still owned by too few people; too much of our land—in both rural and urban areas—is unproductive; and too few of us are able to influence decisions about the use and management of land. Addressing those issues is at the core of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda.

Some people think that the statement is not strong enough, while others think that it goes too far. I believe that the statement is an ambitious encapsulation of land reform. It is right that we challenge landowners to take their responsibilities seriously and that we expect good practice from everyone who makes decisions about land. I am determined that the land reform agenda will bring about real change that tackles deep-seated problems and finally allows everyone to benefit

from Scotland's land. The land rights and responsibilities statement will be at the core of our approach.

Community ownership has long been a prime focus for reformers, and the Scottish Government continues to support communities to take ownership of land and assets. Three forms of community right to buy are already in force and a fourth is being developed, and a healthy queue of communities are seeking to acquire land and assets for the long-term benefit of the community. The Scottish land fund provides £10 million per year to support communities and is an important part of the community ownership landscape. Communities do not need to use right-to-buy mechanisms to access the fund, and, this year, it will invest more than ever before, helping communities to take ownership of the land and buildings that matter to them.

To mark the 100th award made by the Scottish land fund, I recently visited the Pyramid in Anderston, Glasgow, which is an excellent example of a listed 20th-century church. The Pyramid has long served as a community hub, and it has now been bought by the community. It is significant that that award was made to a community in an urban area, as community right-to-buy legislation originally reflected the history of land reform and applied only to rural areas. However, as the value of community ownership became increasingly apparent, the Scottish Parliament legislated to extend the community right to buy to communities in urban areas. That the 100th award was made to a community in Glasgow for a mid-20th century church shows just how far community ownership has come.

Applications to the Scottish land fund are increasingly being made for smaller, more discrete projects that have specific purposes. Especially in urban areas, those projects might cover only small areas of land but the contribution that they make to the community can be huge. For that reason, as was recently recommended by the Scottish Land Commission, we will now seek to measure the growth of community ownership primarily by the number of communities who own land and assets rather than by the amount of land that is owned.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Land ownership is totally unbalanced in Scotland. If we move towards the purchase of smaller amounts of land, how will we change the fact that 50 per cent of land in Scotland is privately owned?

Roseanna Cunningham: If Rhoda Grant listens to the rest of my speech, she will understand the direction of travel. We also want to reflect the importance of urban community ownership in the wider debate.

Historically, community ownership has been conflict driven. That is a fair estimate of how we saw community ownership beginning to develop, and conflict might continue to be a factor, particularly in the areas that Rhoda Grant is probably thinking about. However, I encourage communities to think about land ownership proactively, too. I want them to think about the kind of land and facilities that they need and to look for opportunities to acquire them. It should be the norm, not the exception, for communities to own land.

In November, the Scottish Land Commission published recommendations aimed at improving the processes for community ownership and enabling more communities to take advantage of its benefits. My officials are working with the Scottish Land Commission and other stakeholders to implement those recommendations, and I look forward to seeing the results of that.

Community ownership will always be a central goal of land reform, but we also have to tackle the deeply entrenched issues that affect the way in which Scotland's land is owned, used and managed if we are to achieve our land reform ambitions. There are no easy solutions, but we are starting to address those issues.

The scope of the issues that the Scottish Land Commission is considering illustrates the complex and interconnected nature of land in Scotland. The commission has published discussion papers on land for housing, public interest-led development, human rights and the acquisition of land by public bodies. It has considered land value tax and land value capture as ways of changing Scotland's long-term patterns of land ownership, and it is working to bring vacant and derelict land into productive use.

Just yesterday, the commission published perhaps its most challenging report so far, which looks at how we might tackle the scale and concentration of ownership of land in Scotland. The pattern of land ownership in Scotland is unlike the pattern anywhere else, for which there are complex historical reasons, and it is at the heart of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda. If we do not fundamentally alter that pattern and change the framework that allowed it to develop and exist for so long, our land reform ambitions will ultimately be thwarted.

The debate was not initially intended to be about the Scottish Land Commission's report—rather, the publication date was brought forward because of the debate. Nevertheless, the report informs the debate significantly.

The Land Commission has made a number of recommendations for tackling the scale and concentration of ownership and diversifying land

ownership. They include the introduction of a public interest test that would apply to proposed land transactions over a certain size. The test would require the public interest to be considered before such transactions could take place, helping to ensure that the negative effects of the scale and, in particular, the concentration of ownership were kept in check.

The Land Commission has steered clear of recommending a blanket ban on people owning particular amounts of land or specific residency requirements; instead, it offers the public interest test as a way of providing important flexibility. That would certainly be a powerful tool to stop and reverse the ownership pattern that has hampered Scotland for so many years, but a great deal of work would be required to ensure that any such proposal was compliant with the European convention on human rights.

My officials will work with the Land Commission, stakeholders and other Scottish Government policy areas to consider how the report's recommendations can be turned into workable policy.

In the past year or so, the commission has made recommendations that will allow us to drive forward change. Some, such as the public interest test or the proposed compulsory sale order, would need legislation. However, others are about culture change, and my officials and the Land Commission are working together with a wide variety of stakeholders to encourage new approaches to how we use and manage land.

Transparency in land ownership remains a key issue for debate. If a community does not know who owns land, it cannot influence how it is used or try to buy it, and landowners cannot be held to account if things go wrong. In 21st century Scotland, there can be no excuse for information about any type of land ownership being obscured. That is true whether the land is held by an individual who lives in Scotland or by a trust that is based in multiple countries. We are developing a new register that will make it clear who owns land and, ultimately, controls decisions about land. We have consulted on a first draft of regulations and we are considering the responses as we develop the regulations further.

I have outlined some of the key priorities for land reform, some of which we are already trying to address although it is likely to take a little longer before there is tangible change in respect of others. It is clear that, if we are to deliver meaningful change, we need to tackle a wide range of intertwined issues.

Considerations about land rarely exist in isolation; they are almost always connected to other issues, be they economic, cultural,

environmental or social. That adds to the complexity of our challenge, but it also underlines the fundamental importance of land to Scotland's future. Improving our relationship with Scotland's land will have positive effects in many other arenas.

Some of the issues that I have mentioned require culture change to break long-established ways of thinking about land, whereas others will require us to re-engineer the relationship between land and other parts of public policy. Land reform will not be easy or quick to deliver, but it is important and it is absolutely necessary.

The Parliament has been supportive of land reform from the very beginning. The bill that became the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 was one of the first pieces of legislation that the Parliament considered, and it engendered a considerable degree of support across the chamber. However, the journey is emphatically not over. The support of the Parliament remains crucial if we are to achieve the transformative change that I have described, so I call on the Parliament to continue its long-standing support for land reform.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that land is one of Scotland's most important assets; recognises the value of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement in providing a framework for land decisions and land management in Scotland; recognises the close relationship between land ownership and land use; agrees that community ownership of land should be the norm and not simply a response to market failure or disputes with landowners; recognises the importance of the Scottish Land Fund in supporting community land and asset buyouts; recognises that the work of the Scottish Land Commission is making a positive contribution to delivering the Scottish Government's land reform agenda, and agrees the importance of ensuring that land reform continues to be a key policy priority to change the entrenched and inequitable pattern of land ownership in Scotland so that everyone can benefit from land.

15:20

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Before I start, I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which says that I am a partner in a farming partnership. I also own land.

I hope that this will be an interesting debate. I believe that the Scottish Conservatives have played and always will play a constructive role in debates about land reform. In doing so, we have always been clear that we will support an individual's property rights, whether they own a house, a croft, a farm or an estate—it will make no difference to us.

We have also been clear in saying that there are elements of land reform that we are happy to see progressed. Indeed, we support the moves towards transparency—as called for by the cabinet

secretary—when it comes to who owns land and to ownership policy. It is sensible that the public should know who owns and manages the land.

We support community empowerment. Indeed, much of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is based on United Kingdom Government legislation, which gave communities the right to bid, the right to build and the right to reclaim land. Finally, we support the growing diversity of land ownership, which includes private individuals, businesses, charities and communities. There is much that we have in common.

It is disappointing that we find ourselves unable to support the Government's motion, which is because we do not believe that land reform is all about who owns what; what people do with the land that they own is more important. I recognise that land reform is a highly emotive subject. Having worked in the countryside for many years, I know that perhaps more than many others who express informed opinions on the subject from within a political bubble. I believe we can perhaps agree that if we are to address many of the issues, there is a need to be more dispassionate and to address the current issues, not the ones that existed before we started down the route of land reform in the Parliament many years ago.

Frankly, I am saddened that the Scottish Government and its agencies seem to be obsessing over ownership above all other considerations. As I said, it is not about who owns what or how much they own; it is what they do with the land that matters most. I think that the Government and all the parties represented in the Parliament should remember that.

I am saddened that the Labour Party also seems to be fixated on who owns what. As for the solution that Labour has put forward in its amendment, it is the same one that it puts forward every time: uncostered market intervention.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): Mr Mountain says that we should not obsess over who owns land, and that it is how it is used and managed that matters. Why, then, is the landed class and indeed the Conservative Party so resistant to any notion of land reform? If ownership does not matter, surely Mr Mountain, for example, would be happy to hand his land over to me.

Edward Mountain: I think that the people I employ are happy that I look after and manage my business in the way that I work it, as it gives them a job and creates prosperity and taxation benefits for the people of Scotland.

I am disappointed that Labour members have not read the Scottish Land Commission's report from yesterday, to which the cabinet secretary referred. Otherwise, they would have understood

that their amendment would not work, because the annual land market is very small, and thus would not achieve the redistribution that they propose.

We are not prepared to support the Greens' amendment, as it is based on the Scottish Land Commission's report into land ownership. The report was published only yesterday. Although we need time to review it, it is fair to say that, upon first reading, we have deep reservations about many of the recommendations, which appear to us to be based on unsubstantiated evidence and figures that cannot be checked without much more information being put forward.

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

Edward Mountain: I am going to make a bit of time. I will perhaps let the member intervene if there is an opportunity later.

I want to look at some of the comments in the Scottish Land Commission's report, because I suspect that many members who are speaking in the debate will rely on it. Let us look at some of the examples that it contains. The report suggests that all the problems in the countryside are due to the actions of landowners, by which it—conveniently—appears to mean large landowners. One example quotes restrictions on development because of high rents. As a surveyor, I know that rents in towns and in the countryside are set by the market. Is it right that landlords with land holdings should charge lower rents because they have more assets? I do not think that that argument is sustainable.

Another example is about the inability of a rural business to expand because it did not own enough land. It suggests that the neighbouring landowner was at fault because it would not sell the business the extra land. That is a problem that all businesses face when they want to expand. It does not matter to me one iota whether that is in the countryside or the town: if a business does not have the land to expand on to, it must look for new premises. As a businessman, I have faced exactly the same problem.

Another example relates to a landowner being criticised by a community for charging high fees for a transaction. The landowner had asked that the purchaser bear the professional costs of a voluntary sale. That is the way that things work. If one person approaches another to sell them land, the costs are passed on to the person who wants to buy it. Why should the position be different in a rural scenario?

Gillian Martin *rose*—

Now I will take an intervention.

Gillian Martin: My point is not the one that I was going to make when I tried to intervene

earlier. How would Edward Mountain react to another case that was mentioned in the report, in which a community received Scottish land fund money that was based on the market price for the land, but the owner later refused to sell and changed their mind because they wanted more money?

Edward Mountain: I cannot look at an example without its being substantiated. That is the problem with the report. Ms Martin will be well aware that sometimes when people are trying to buy houses and put in offers that they think will work, it turns out that they do not. Such transactions happen in the countryside, in towns and in business everywhere. However, if she cares to give me an example, I will certainly look at it.

It seems to me that none of the reasons that we have been given in the examples that I have quoted supports the premise that landowners should always agree to demands to cover costs, and subsidise land sales and transfers on the basis that they must support everyone who lives on or near the land that they occupy.

Interestingly, it is not just private landowners who are blamed in the report. In several instances, charitable trusts are blamed, too. I wonder whether that argument is valid. How many landowners have been challenged for breaching their charitable objectives—which it is relatively easy to do, according to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator? I have not yet seen any case in which that has happened.

The report goes on to blame landowners for the way in which they use their land. Examples of new forestry being detrimental are an interesting case in point. However, I seem to remember that it is the Government that wants to see more forestry in Scotland—indeed, it will be needed if it is to reach its planting targets. I do not see how landowners can be blamed for creating more forestry if it is the Government's policy to encourage it.

I am not so naive as to think that everything in the countryside is perfect. There will always be tensions in rural communities, whether they are surrounded by big landowners or small ones. That is why Scottish Conservatives support better engagement, but we need to be careful. Most farmers whom I know are delighted to engage with their neighbours, but it is unrealistic to expect those neighbours to dictate how farmers farm their land and manage their businesses. After all, farmers' hands are guided by planning law, Government policy and regulations, and fiscal good sense. That is exactly as it should be.

I look forward to meeting representatives of the Scottish Land Commission to discuss the report and to seek more information on its findings and

comments. However, at the moment, the report seems to have been written to support predetermined conclusions that do not reflect anything more than the misconceptions of some members of the commission.

I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate. I hope that it will be based on informed comment, that we will not hear the heated and divisive arguments of old and that we will focus on the good progress that has been made since land reform and land management were last discussed in the Parliament. We have all agreed that the culture around how land should be managed has improved.

In 20 years, the Scottish Parliament has passed 19 acts containing land reform measures, including two land reform acts. Many of the changes brought about by the huge sweep of legislation are still bedding in and being tested, but I believe that progress is being made. There is clear evidence of good practice, where landowners and communities are working together and making mutually beneficial decisions on how to manage land.

By returning to the issue of land reform, Parliament is starting to lose sight of the progress that has been made. I urge all parties to move the debate forward and focus on the more pressing issues affecting rural communities and businesses, which do not base themselves on who owns what.

I move amendment S5M-16445.1, to leave out from “the value” to end and insert:

“; and welcomes the increasing diversity of land ownership, which includes charities as well as communities; acknowledges the close relationship between land ownership and land use; recognises the importance of the Scottish Land Fund in supporting community ownership, and believes that both communities and landowners work better together where both sides respect the needs of each other.”

15:30

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): It is timely that the Scottish Government has lodged the motion for debate today, because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in land reform. It also allows us to set out just how much more remains to be done to bring about fundamental change to the inequitable and unjust land ownership patterns that still exist in Scotland.

I am proud that it was Scottish Labour that introduced bills, shortly after the creation of this Parliament, that opened the door to radical changes in how we consider land ownership. One bill brought changes to end the still-lingering feudal powers that were associated with land, and

the other firmly established in law the community right to buy and the right to roam freely and responsibly.

I, too, welcome the growth in community ownership that found new momentum following the passing of Labour’s Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which was supported by the Scottish National Party and other parties in Parliament. As a result of the movement towards greater community land ownership, we have heard those communities speak more confidently to reflect their experience of the law and how it has needed to develop, and to argue for further change in our land laws.

The work of Community Land Scotland in arguing on behalf of communities should be recognised today. As the minister said, there is much to celebrate in what community ownership delivers. There are signs of optimism for a sustainable future in places where it has, at times, seemed that there was no future. The growth in interest in land and other asset ownership in rural and urban Scotland is moving rapidly.

Every acre of land that has come into community ownership is a welcome acre, but at the current rate of progress, in 100 years the vast majority of land in Scotland will still be in the same ownership patterns that have endured for centuries. If we believe in greater social justice and a fairer Scotland, which many Scots claim they do, we can succeed in achieving that aim only with significant land reform.

Is it socially just that so few own so much land, that so many young people cannot find land or afford housing in their own communities, or that the whims of a few landowners can limit economic opportunity for the many? Is it socially just that so many people in our urban realm are consigned to living their lives next to vacant or derelict land with no environmental quality, or that our land markets operate such that only the privileged few and the wealthy elite can participate? Is it socially just that the land uses and environment of vast areas are decided by only one or two people, or that communities are denied the right to a sustainable future by virtue of the control that others can exercise?

For Labour, land reform is about community and about communities being empowered to take more control over their economic, social and environmental destiny. It is about the public interest. It is also, for Labour, a fundamental matter of justice: it is about the balance of power shifting from the few to the many, and the opportunity and wealth that can flow from ownership of one of our most fundamental assets—our land—being shared more equally among our people.

Land reform is one of the means through which to realise Labour's vision of wider and more radical redistribution of power and wealth. It is a sad truth that, as matters stand, neither the current nor any previous land reform minister has had the powers to ask formally whether our current land arrangements act in the public interest. Communities that want to own land have to show that their interest in the land will serve the public interest and they have to gain, by democratic means, the consent of the people in the community for the land to be owned by the community.

Given the way in which Scotland's land markets work, private owners need simply have a big enough cheque book—one man is in the process of becoming Scotland's largest land owner by buying up estate after estate in the Highlands. As the cabinet secretary highlighted, in this, as in so much else, Scotland's land laws fall far short of what other nations can do through long-established intervention powers to look after the public interest in land matters.

Land justice is part of delivering social justice. There should be limits to how much land can be owned by one person—a difficult issue, but Scottish Labour supports such a limit—or other ownership arrangement, unless it can be shown to work in the public interest and for the common good. Many landholdings in Scotland are, in effect, local land monopolies, and in many aspects of our national life we regulate monopolies to ensure that they cannot exploit their power against the public interest.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Claudia Beamish: No—I am sorry. I have not got time. I have very few minutes.

It is time for a powerful land regulator to examine whether existing ownership helps or hinders in serving the public interest, in fulfilling people's human rights and in delivering greater social justice. If it cannot be shown that actions can be taken to impact on land ownership behaviours to deliver necessary change, powers are needed that should include the potential break-up of landholdings that are exploiting their monopoly position. The minister refers in the motion to the good work of the Scottish Land Commission. It has made a promising start, but as Scottish Labour's amendment makes clear, we need it to deliver for us the detailed thinking and proposals that will allow further progress towards ensuring that the public interest is met in land ownership. In that context, we will support the Green Party amendment.

How can we provide disincentives to the creation of large landholdings in the future,

possibly through a range of fiscal mechanisms? I welcome the Scottish Land Commission's report and its recommendations that would create radical change by means of statutory change, but also through targeted policy work and voluntary collaboration. Many of the recommendations would have a huge impact in addressing land inequity.

We will support the Scottish Government motion. If the cabinet secretary acts to secure further radical progress on those fronts, she will have the support of Scottish Labour and, indeed, Labour in doing that. If she does not—although I have faith in the collective experience of most members in the chamber—Labour in Government here, and in the UK, will instruct the SLC to provide Parliament with the options that it needs to act for greater change in land ownership, in order to deliver land justice for Scotland and to end centuries of the injustice that is inherent in how our land is owned.

I move amendment S5M-16445.3, to insert at end:

“; and assets, both rural and urban, across the country, and urges the Scottish Government to support the recommendations of the Scottish Land Commission on how to deliver interventions in the operation of Scotland's land markets and ownerships that will provide disincentives to the future accrual of large privately owned land holdings and help deliver a more equitable distribution in the ownership of Scotland's land assets in the public interest.”

15:37

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for this timely debate. As she noted, land reform is a difficult process to deal with. As the Government motion hints, an entrenched set of circumstances that have been brought about by a very long history. It is a history in which men who owned land and property had the exclusive right to sit in Parliament and make the laws that govern ownership of that land. They were men who ensured that primogeniture was abolished only in 1964; that, to this day, children have no legal right to inherit land in Scotland; and that a wide range of exemptions from tax apply to land and estates—exemptions that do not apply to other property owners. As other members have said, Parliament has taken important steps to reverse that entrenched system, but there remains a very long way to go.

I will define what I mean by land reform. I take the definition from the land reform review group that the Scottish Government set up, which reported in 2014. It defined land reform as

“measures that modify or change the arrangements governing the possession and use of land in Scotland in the public interest.”

That implies a wide range of measures dealing with all land—urban, rural, marine, public and private. It is about fiscal policy, succession law, planning, land tenure and many other areas of law and policy. It is not synonymous with community ownership.

Fundamentally, this is a debate about power—specifically, about how power is derived, defined, distributed and exercised. I therefore welcome the focus in yesterday’s Scottish Land Commission report, which talks about “the concentration of power”. I am reminded of Tony Benn’s famous five questions, which he would ask of people who purported to hold power. They are:

“what power do you have; where did you get it; in whose interests do you exercise it; to whom are you accountable; and, how can we get rid of you?”

and claimed that

“Anyone who cannot answer the last of those questions does not live in a democratic system.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 16 Nov 1998; Vol 319, c 685.]

I think that that is a good test for Scotland’s system of land tenure.

The core challenge that Parliament faces is how to redistribute power over land in the public interest—in the interest of the many, not the few. In short, it is about how to democratise land. The Scottish Land Commission report is refreshingly clear, analytical and nuanced, and provides a frank assessment of the problem.

For too long, much of the land reform debate has been conducted in soundbites. I have indulged in a good deal of that myself, in an effort to be taken seriously and to attract attention. Easy slogans and simplistic analysis have too often taken the place of patient diagnosis.

I have long held the view that ownership, occupation and use of land are questions of power. As the Scottish Land Commission notes, power can be—and is—abused. It can, however, also be exercised with great responsibility and diligence. The report talks about monopolies and market power and of rent seeking as the “hallmark” of market power. It is important that it also distinguishes how power is exercised from how it is obtained, by recognising that although power can be exercised in damaging ways and in responsible ways, it is the very existence of that power that needs to change. The future of communities in Scotland should not rely on the arbitrary manner in which power is obtained through land markets or inheritance, or is exercised by way of land use.

My amendment would do two things. First, it would replace the term “community ownership” with “common ownership”. Common ownership includes community ownership but recognises that

other forms of common ownership—including common good land, parish commons, land that is held by local councils and common grazings—“should be the norm”. I hope that members can agree that that more inclusive term is helpful and would do nothing to take away from the importance of community ownership. My amendment concludes by inviting Parliament not to agree the recommendations of the report but to endorse its findings. I hope that members can support that.

This Parliament began life by enacting a wide range of legislation—as Claudia Beamish noted—dealing with tenements, national parks, crofting community right to buy, the right to roam and feudal powers abolition. By 2007, it had lost its way on the topic. Momentum declined and little more was done until the land reform review group was established.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 followed, which established the Scottish Land Commission. For some, the Scottish Land Commission was regarded as another tiresome quango. I was always very aware that land reform is difficult. The existing set-up is deep-seated and entrenched and the presence of an agency that is committed to study, analysis and advice on the topic is critical.

Opposition to change is vigorous and determined. The establishment of the Scottish Land Commission ensures that important elements of the debate are not forgotten, and it allows for detailed analysis to be conducted to inform public debate. Its latest report is a good example of that.

What we hear from the Conservative Party and the landed class is a master class in distraction. The idea that ownership of and power over land do not matter, and that, in a great clamour of whataboutery, we should look at how it is used, has been a common theme from politicians such as Mr Mountain, to whom I readily give way.

Edward Mountain: I hardly think that that is my “common theme”, Presiding Officer.

To quote the Land Commission’s report, it gives a “Summary of Macro Themes Identified in the Call for Evidence”. There are five themes. Respondents think that large landownership brings advantage under the themes of local economics and the natural environment and they are undecided on agriculture. Of the five themes, on three of them, respondents say that big landownership is not a problem, and on two, they say that it is. Does Andy Wightman accept that?

Andy Wightman: I confess that I have not read the report in enough detail to come to a conclusive view on that. I suspect that that might be a selective reading of what is written.

The report is a wake-up call. We need action, and in my closing speech later this afternoon, I will highlight a couple of examples in which flagrant abuse has arisen as a consequence of our collective failure to put in place democratic governance arrangements for land ownership.

For the moment, I look forward to hearing what other members have to say, and I encourage members to support my amendment.

I move amendment S5M-16445.2, to leave out from “community ownership” to end and insert:

“common ownership of land should be the norm and not simply a response to market failure or disputes with landowners; recognises the importance of the Scottish Land Fund in supporting community land and asset buyouts; recognises that the work of the Scottish Land Commission is making a positive contribution to delivering the Scottish Government’s land reform agenda; agrees the importance of ensuring that land reform continues to be a key policy priority to change the entrenched and inequitable pattern of land ownership in Scotland so that everyone can benefit from land, and endorses the findings of the Scottish Land Commission’s investigation into the issues associated with large-scale and concentrated ownership in Scotland.”

15:44

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate on land reform. It is still a source of pride for me that the Scottish Liberal Democrats put land reform right at the heart of the legislative programme in the early years of the Parliament, promoting rights of access and delivering the community right to buy and the crofting community right to buy through the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. That was always envisaged to be a first step, in the recognition that an incremental approach would be necessary in taking forward a genuinely ambitious land reform agenda. It began the process of addressing a policy area that had been ignored for far too long, and it signalled powerfully the positive difference that a devolved Parliament could and should make.

As the SPICe Spotlight blog highlights,

“Prior to devolution, Government policy on land reform was widely considered to be conspicuous by its absence.”

The blog concludes that

“the development of land reform as a distinctive policy area, centred on communities and sustainable development, is perhaps one of Parliament’s more noteworthy actions.”

Of course, Conservative MSPs in successive parliamentary sessions have for whatever reason felt the need to oppose almost every phase of the land reform agenda. I even recall some members referring to Mugabe-style power grabs. I agree that the case for an absolute right to buy has still not been made, but I do not accept that there is not more that we can and should do to reform how land is owned and managed, how decisions about

its use are taken and how the benefits of one of Scotland’s most important assets are felt.

Edward Mountain’s earlier comments were characteristically considered but, sadly, his amendment gives the impression that, even now, Tory members do not accept the need for further reform. After they have been dragged kicking and screaming to this point, the remainder of the journey seems likely to follow a similar pattern. That is unfortunate, not least because Mr Mountain and a number of his colleagues have a great deal to contribute to the debate.

Underlying the case for reform is the Scottish land rights and responsibilities statement from 2017, which refers to a Scotland

“where all land contributes to a modern and successful country, and where rights and responsibilities in relation to land are fully recognised and fulfilled.”

It would be difficult for anyone to disagree with that sentiment, although I recognise that people will come to different conclusions in response.

The Scottish Land Commission has done excellent work in pulling together key themes as well as offering a number of recommendations for the way forward. Edward Mountain is right to say that it will take a little time to digest the detail—indeed, the commission accepts that it will need to consult extensively on its proposals before coming to a final view.

Given the proposals’ significance, it seems inevitable that there will be a lively debate about them, and that is to be welcomed and encouraged. However, it would be premature at this stage for the Parliament to call on the Government to accept all the recommendations, so I do not support the amendment in Claudia Beamish’s name. By contrast, Andy Wightman calls on us to accept the findings of the commission’s report, and I have less difficulty with that. The commission has taken extensive evidence so far, and the analysis appears to be reasonably balanced and to take account of the wide range of arguments on the issue.

The decisions that the Government and the Parliament should take on the back of the commission’s findings are for another day, but Scottish Liberal Democrats are certainly happy to support the findings. In particular, I recognise the pressing need to bring more transparency to who owns land. That is critical, whatever decisions or approach we take. If nothing else, clarity over ownership is fundamental to accountability and to equity when it comes to paying taxes.

However, it is clear that such clarity and transparency are some way off. Andy Wightman recently described the Scottish land information system as “next to useless” and, to her great credit, Kate Forbes did not entirely dispute that

view, although she used rather more ministerial language.

It is clear that there are many aspects to the issue that are worthy of debate, but I will use the remainder of my time to focus on the valuable contribution that the Scottish land fund makes. That collaborative initiative between the Scottish Government, the Big Lottery Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise awarded more than £500 million in 2017-18, which made a significant contribution to communities across the country.

In my Orkney constituency, sizeable awards were made last November to three development trusts. More than £147,000 was awarded to Westray Development Trust for the purchase of the former harbour master's house in Pierowall, which will be transformed into four apartments for affordable rent that will help to respond to the acute shortage of accommodation on the island.

Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust was granted £260,000 for the purchase of the Trumland estate on Rousay, which took 15 per cent of the island into community hands. Community ownership will create part-time employment opportunities for a project manager and a ranger, as well as allowing the trust to explore improvements to broadband and mobile connectivity. Finally, Papay Development Trust received £187,000 to purchase a four-bedroom detached house that will help to meet the urgent need for long-stay affordable family homes for rent on the island.

The land fund was set up to help to build resilience in communities across the country, and there is no question but that those three projects will do exactly that.

From my regular visits to the isles in recent years—and having been brought up on Sanday, one of the north isles—I know how much of a priority the availability of housing has been. Without suitable accommodation, it becomes impossible to create and sustain jobs in the isles. Ultimately, giving communities the tools that they need to address the specific challenges that they face and take advantage of the opportunities that they have is absolutely the right approach.

That, in a sense, encapsulates for me what land reform should be about. On that basis, we in the Scottish Liberal Democrats are committed to playing our full part in taking forward the next phase of this important agenda.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move on to the open debate.

15:50

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Since the passing of the Land Reform (Scotland)

Bill in 2003, we have had a chance to reflect on whether Scotland's communities are thriving as a result. In the short six months for which I have been convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I have been party to a number of key land reform developments—the scrutiny of the Scottish Crown Estate Bill, for one; and, for another, the development of a register of persons with a controlling interest in land as the mechanism for identifying who owns what in all areas of the country. The first should ensure that the Crown estate exists largely for public good and will boost local economic and social potential, while the second should go a long way towards solving one of the main historical problems associated with identifying landowners. Crucially, it puts in place obligations for landowners to engage with correspondents.

A third development, which happened yesterday and which members have already referred to, is the publication of the Scottish Land Commission's report on large-scale and concentrated ownership in Scotland. In reviewing whether we still have work to do to ensure that the current pattern of ownership is benefiting us all, the report is significant and challenging. One sentence in it immediately drew my eye:

“There is an urgent need for formal mechanisms to be put in place that would enable harmful land monopolies to be identified and changes in either ownership and/or management practice to be implemented that would protect fragile rural communities from the irresponsible exercise of power.”

When asked yesterday about the Scottish Land Commission's recommendation that the Government puts in place such mechanisms, a Conservative member in this place called such a move “stealing”. Such language is unhelpful and I was surprised to hear the rights of communities to fair treatment and social justice being dismissed so bluntly.

One thing that is very clear to me is that there is a huge difference between responsible and irresponsible land ownership. I am sure that, in this debate, many colleagues will point to examples of responsible ownership, with landowners working collaboratively with communities for their mutual benefit and successful transfers of land assets into the hands of communities. There are so many good news stories that show how the 2003 act has opened up opportunities, and there are cases of large landowners putting significant effort and investment into communities, which is to be applauded.

However, it is of great concern that many respondents to the Scottish Land Commission felt strongly that their communities were being stifled through their economic and social potential being

diminished in myriad ways. They identified particular types of landowner who are still an issue. First, there are landlords who actively engage negatively with communities. One respondent highlighted a case of an excellent landlord who worked well with the community; however, he left his estate to his son, who was hostile to the community and actively undid his father's good work. Others referenced a refusal to renew long-standing tenancy agreements, and in one example a landowner refused permission for a community-run wind turbine on aesthetic grounds, only to install his own turbine later that year. The report also references problems with absentee landlords who appear only occasionally to indulge in sporting activities and show no other interest in the estate or the community around it.

What I find particularly significant is the view that a dominant landowner's ability to control the supply of housing is a key driver of depopulation and economic decline in rural areas. The Land Commission heard from communities that want to build affordable housing who, having secured capital from the Scottish land fund based on the market value of land after a landlord indicated that they would be willing to sell, were thwarted because he demanded much more than the market value. The report also mentions an unnamed charitable organisation refusing a crofter the right to upgrade their home to make it warm and bring it into the 21st century. The woman ended up living in a caravan.

Testimony about the tactics that some landlords have used to keep communities in line or to disempower them was quite distressing to read, from estate factors being sent to intimidate and identify those with tied housing who went to public meetings—

Edward Mountain: I remember reading that part of the report, which relates to a factor sitting at the front of a meeting and taking notes. One person found that intimidating. I have been a factor and I have taken notes at meetings before reporting back on the comments that those who were giving evidence made. Does the member accept that that might not always be viewed as intimidation? Such behaviour was viewed in one case, by one person, as intimidation.

Gillian Martin: Unlike Edward Mountain, who seems to be dismissive of some people's testimony, I have read the whole testimony—

Edward Mountain: It was one person.

Gillian Martin: When one person comes to my constituency surgery and says that they have a problem with someone, I do not ask how many other people are affected or for proof that the issue affects more people. I take the person at face value.

I am running out of time because I took that intervention, so I will skip a part of my speech.

Negative experiences might be few and far between, but we must ask how irresponsible land ownership can be dealt with and whether land monopolies are good for Scotland.

I question whether it is in the public interest for solely conifers to be planted on large tracts of Scotland's land as an investment opportunity and to attract Government grants. There seems to be a lot of that kind of thing going on. Could such land be used more productively to give livelihoods to new entrant farmers? Could it be used to provide much-needed rural housing? Could it be used to plant a range of indigenous trees that would nurture much-needed biodiversity?

We have seen how land reforms by this Government and previous Governments have benefited communities in Scotland, but the report shows that there is a need to do more. Of particular interest is the idea of having public-interest tests in order to tackle the powerful monopolies that exist in certain geographical areas. The report makes some interesting recommendations, on which I hope to be able to question the Scottish Land Commission, stakeholders and the Government in the near future.

15:56

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am pleased to speak in this debate a week after I spoke in Andy Wightman's members' business debate on who owns Scotland. The subject of land reform in Scotland has long been debated in the chamber. Indeed, since 1999, 19 acts of the Parliament have contained some form of land reform measures. Like Edward Mountain, I welcome moves towards transparency in land ownership, which was mentioned by the cabinet secretary.

However, we must be mindful of the rights of individual owners, particularly in light of the events south of the border that involved vegan protesters obtaining names and addresses online and using that information to target farms and farmers, causing damage and severe distress to those involved. I hope that the Scottish Government will commit to introducing protective measures as part of wider land reform to ensure that farmers and other landowners are not open to intimidation in relation to the land that they own or the legal use of that land.

As the MSP for the Galloway and West Dumfries constituency, I have always highlighted the damaging centralisation from the Scottish Government on a number of issues, so it is only right that I welcome steps that are taken to

empower local communities. However, we should ensure that the focus is on good land management and use, and not necessarily on who owns the land.

Yesterday's report from the Scottish Land Commission will no doubt play a significant part in this afternoon's debate. I wish to put on record my concerns about the failure of the report to recognise the huge contribution that is made by many rural landowning businesses, which provides substantial support to local economies.

I was disappointed that even the report's title—"Investigation into the Issues Associated with Large Scale and Concentrated Land Ownership in Scotland"—set an unfortunate tone. The report apparently shows how the concentration of social, economic and decision-making powers significantly impacts on communities across rural Scotland. Where is the information about the significant positive impacts on the communities that benefit from large-scale and concentrated land ownership?

Andy Wightman: The member expresses concern about the report's title. Does he accept that there are issues associated with large-scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland, or is he saying that those arguments are make-believe?

Finlay Carson: Not at all. There are some issues, but the report should have been balanced and should have recognised that there are some benefits to be gained from large-scale ownership.

We should look at the big picture and consider whether the impacts of large-scale and concentrated land ownership are significant compared with the impacts of local planning policy or, more important, Government policy in relation to forestry targets, peat restoration targets, renewable energy targets or, indeed, agricultural production targets.

There has not been a cry from the public for further land reform. Because the agenda has been driven by the Scottish Government, there is a risk that that could herald a one-sided debate when it comes to future land reform and land ownership. Quite wrongly, the idea has been planted that concentrated land ownership puts fragile communities at risk. There have been some fantastic examples of landowners and communities working closely together in my constituency. As well as the work of the Mull of Galloway Trust, there is the example of Kirkcudbright Community Trust's takeover of Barrhill woods

When I was a councillor on Dumfries and Galloway Council, I was delighted to see the benefits of concentrated land ownership in the village of Dalton. On the Dormont estate, eight new homes were created that met low-energy

standards that were well above the UK standards. Much credit should be given to Jamie Carruthers for the two and three-bedroomed houses that he built in response to his concerns about the lack of rural housing. He is not a large landowner, but he was determined to fix a problem with housing in rural Dumfries and Galloway. After carrying out surveys and fighting a long battle with local planners and road authorities, he eventually managed to get the houses built with the support of a Scottish Government grant.

Those award-winning houses benefit the community by, for example, keeping children in the village school. The question is whether Jamie Carruthers would have passed the fairness test that is supported by the Scottish Land Commission and the Scottish Government. Would they have seen it as wrong that the estate owner owned all the land and all the houses? I fear that Jamie Carruthers might well have failed that test. When, as housing minister, Kevin Stewart visited the Dormont estate in 2017, he welcomed the creation of more rural housing and recognised the role of the Passivhaus approach in helping to remove the threat of fuel poverty. Can we not celebrate the fact that such concentrated ownership works, instead of moving the goalposts at every opportunity when it comes to land reform?

Another issue to do with land reform that I would like to mention is people's rights and responsibilities with regard to accessing land and the freedom to roam. I have been dealing with a constituent who lives in the village of Ringford, where a core path has been installed at his address. He believes that that is in direct contravention of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, as well as the 2005 Scottish outdoor access code. He has raised a number of concerns to do with privacy, as the core path gives a clear view into his home, which presents a security risk. He is also unable to allow his pets to roam. Furthermore, there are issues with horses using the path and causing damage to the driveway that he owns. If the core path were to be established now, it would be considered to be unlawfully sited. Will the cabinet secretary commit to ensuring that local authorities follow the right guidelines on the siting of core paths and that, when it comes to land use, owners' rights and responsibilities are correctly respected?

Today's debate comes at a hugely important juncture in the process of land reform across Scotland. I believe that, in its approach, the Scottish Government does not recognise the good work that is being done in our rural communities by landowners and communities working together and following good land management practice. Where landowners are working with communities and making a substantial difference on a daily

basis, we must ensure that any reforms truly benefit our rural communities.

16:03

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome today's debate on land reform in Scotland and agree with the cabinet secretary that land is one of Scotland's most important assets. It is because of that that any consideration of land reform should be scrutinised in depth. We must ensure that any reforms create a more equal society when it comes to land ownership, land purchasing and land use. It will take many years to fully rectify the impact of the feudal system that was abolished by Labour in the early life of the Parliament, but progress is being made.

However, I think that we can be bolder on ownership through new policy such as what was set out this week by the Scottish Land Commission. We should also be much more open to the potential role of land value tax, wider taxation and fiscal policy on land. The redistribution of wealth has always been key to Labour's political agenda as a method for reducing inequality, tackling poverty and addressing the inherent failures in our society that allow a mass accumulation of money for a select few while others strive daily just to get by.

Land wealth is as much of an issue as monetary wealth. Indeed, with an estimated total value of about £5 trillion, land is the most valuable asset in the UK. When 432 people own 50 per cent of Scotland's private rural land, it is obvious that our modern land system has an in-built inequality. Therefore, the question of land reform is incredibly important and, if it is done in the right way, it has the potential to radically transform our society for the better by creating a more equal, fairer and even more productive country.

It is also important to raise the issue of land management as outlined by the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association. It has highlighted that two large land agency firms are factoring a significant proportion of the tenanted sector, resulting in tenants being subjected to further inequalities. The association said:

"The experiences of farm tenants in areas of concentrated land ownership within the tenanted sector demonstrate the ability for large landowners to exercise disproportionate influence and power. In contrast, in areas where the large estates have been sold and have a more fragmented ownership structure, a new tenanted sector has developed where there is a better balance of power between landowner and tenant. These areas benefit from improved fairness and equality, have more confident and resilient communities, and demonstrate increased investment and entrepreneurialism."

Therefore, the question remains: how do we best reform our land system for the benefit of the

country as a whole and not simply a select few who make vast sums of money from the land that belongs to us all?

As I said, I welcome the Scottish Land Commission's report and commend it for its work investigating the issues associated with large-scale ownership and concentrated land ownership. The report's findings and recommendations are an excellent starting point for looking at ways to address the inadequacies of current land ownership and land management.

It seems strange to me that we have a system whereby there is no obligation to use land in the public interest. I agree with the Scottish Land Commission's recommendation that that needs to be addressed, and having a public interest test for significant land transfers or acquisitions is a step in the right direction. That ties in with further recommendations for landholdings to engage on and publish management plans, for a new review process where there is evidence of adverse impact and for more robust mechanisms to ensure local democratic influence on and benefit from land use change.

Although I welcome strengthening community right to buy and the recommendation to investigate policy options to encourage a more diverse pattern of private ownership and investment, those changes will take considerable time to come through.

I have spoken about land value tax and general taxation. My view is that we can do something now. We can take a short-term action for the long term to address some of the issues of inequality through a model of land value taxation.

If we want Scotland's land to work for the many, we should not be timid in our approach, nor should we be put off by those who act in the interest of the few. I hope that the Scottish Land Commission's report and today's debate will generate cross-party co-operation to bring about the needed change in land ownership and how land is taxed.

16:09

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Land ownership has been contentious for centuries, but Scottish policy on land is now increasingly rooted in questions of fairness, equality and human rights.

I am proud of the actions that this Government has taken to remedy some inequities relating to land ownership, building on the work of previous Administrations. From the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, which empowered more communities to own and have a say about land, to the Scottish land rights and responsibilities statement—the first

of its kind in the world—and the Scottish land fund, important steps have been taken towards ending the hegemony of the landed gentry in Scotland.

Nevertheless, Scotland still has the most concentrated pattern of private land ownership in Europe. It is estimated that half of Scotland's privately owned land is in the ownership of just 400 individuals.

Just as the isle of Arran, in my constituency, is often described as “Scotland in miniature” because of its landscapes, the island's land ownership pattern is illustrative of a wider issue. By 2015, Brodick beach had all but disappeared, as a consequence of the rapid erosion precipitated by the practice of extracting sand for export, years earlier. Erosion also threatens the village green in Lamlash.

Both areas are important, not only for the thousands of people who visit Arran each year but for local residents, who rely on those outdoor spaces for a variety of community events and activities. However, the future of such spaces lay at the mercy of Arran Estates, the land management company that is controlled by the Fforde family, which has owned large swathes of the island for more than six centuries, since a fruitful marriage in the 15th century.

North Ayrshire Council received criticism for—supposedly—permitting the erosion of Brodick beach and the village green in Lamlash, but the council's reluctance to spend six-figure sums of public money on land that was in the Ffordes's private ownership was understandable. The family then gifted some of the most eroded areas to North Ayrshire Council, thereby wiping out its liability to deal with the erosion, which is now the taxpayer's responsibility.

North Ayrshire Council has to lease more than 50,000 square metres of land from Arran Estates, at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds each year, to access the semi-industrial area to the south of Brodick and areas of Brodick, Lamlash and the foreshore in Whiting Bay.

The situation encapsulates the environmental, economic and social detriment that concentrated land ownership can have on our communities.

Yesterday saw publication of the most substantial piece of research into the impact of large-scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland. “Investigation into the Issues Associated with Large scale and Concentrated Landownership in Scotland” throws up many issues for this Parliament and the Scottish ministers to examine, discuss and, I hope, remedy. Previous reports focused on relatively small, in-depth case studies, but for this report the Scottish Land Commission, which this Government set up in 2016, heard from 407

stakeholders, who ranged from landowners and managers to tenants and community representatives.

The evidence that the commission gathered showed that most of the disadvantages associated with Scotland's current pattern of land ownership relate to the concentration of social, economic and decision-making power, and not simply to the size or scale of landholdings.

The concentrated land ownership that we have can impede economic development. The Land Commission found that that is causing significant and long-term harm to impacted communities. For example, rural economic development relies on businesses' and housing providers' ability to access land for expansion and their confidence to invest. If ownership is too concentrated, a few landowners can control the position and the economic health of the area lies in their hands.

As the commission described in its report, “the anti-development stance of some landowners” might be

“motivated by a desire to preserve land as a ‘playground for very wealthy people’, with one respondent claiming that ‘the people who live here play second fiddle to whatever is best for the pheasant.’”

Island communities are particularly vulnerable in that regard. The book “Dr Green of Sussex and the Island of Raasay” tells the story of how an absentee landowner in the 1970s refused to allow construction of a pier. That caused huge damage to the island's fragile community. A £12 million pier was eventually built by this Government.

It is unfortunate that, as a number of submissions to the commission stated, there is little or no redress for communities or individuals who suffer adverse economic or social impacts arising from land being owned by a single individual or organisation, and the opportunity for communities to participate in decisions relating to the use of land is severely limited.

In the light of the negative effects of concentrated land ownership, the commission made recommendations, which were directly informed by the evidence that it had heard, to redress adverse impacts and stimulate a more diverse pattern of land ownership.

For example, the commission recommended that the Scottish Government introduce a public interest test for significant land transfers and acquisitions. Such an approach is used in other countries, including South Africa, and would protect the public interest and limit the negative impact on local economies and communities. Of course, the criteria for triggering a public interest test would need careful consideration, but the recommendation should certainly be considered.

The commission also recommended that all substantial landholdings publish a management plan. That is a realistic and reasonable suggestion, which would require landowners to demonstrate how their management delivers on the land rights and responsibilities statement and connects with local priorities, opportunities and public policy. The approach would improve transparency and encourage greater community collaboration, mitigating risks that are associated with concentration of ownership.

It is imperative that this Parliament considers how we foster a more diverse and dynamic pattern of private and community ownership. The report puts to bed the question whether ownership is an issue and provides us with the evidence base to enable us to understand the issues that concentrated land ownership creates, and how they can be addressed.

The monopoly of land ownership in Scotland intersects a variety of legislative and policy areas, and I am pleased that the Scottish Government will work closely with the Scottish Land Commission to consider its recommendations. I do not doubt that the recommended reforms would benefit local communities, by increasing transparency and repairing harm that has been inflicted over many generations, to many people and many communities.

16:15

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest as a farmer and food producer, and as a member of NFU Scotland.

I welcome the debate and the publication of the Scottish Land Commission report yesterday. At the outset, let me say how disappointed I am with the report. At the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee this week, Andrew Thin and Hamish Trench went to great lengths to say that the report would be evidence based. I am afraid that I do not believe that their assertion stands up to any reasonable analysis. On the contrary, the report appears to make significant recommendations that are based on subjective evidence from a small group of people who, in my view, are not representative of the majority of people in rural Scotland, and the recommendations are at odds with the Scottish Government's own research that was carried out in 2016.

As someone who has spent a lifetime among the people of rural Scotland, in some of the poorest communities, I simply do not recognise, nor have I come across, the views that are being called evidence, such as that concentration of land ownership is a problem for the people of rural Scotland. On the contrary, I have found land and

estate owners who take what they see as their duties to help and support local communities seriously, and often at considerable personal expense.

Andy Wightman: Will the member take an intervention?

John Scott: I am afraid that I do not have time, but I thank Mr Wightman for the offer.

I have heard—and the evidence in the report confirms—that there are real problems with non-governmental organisations, which do not see it as their role to consider the needs of local communities, given the narrow focus of their remits.

I know that the Scottish Government is among the largest landowners in Scotland, so I am particularly interested to hear how the Scottish Government intends to respond to the report's suggestion that large parcels of land that are owned by individuals or institutions should be split up to avoid "concentrations of power".

I am aware of land and estate owners doing all that they can to support Government policy by planting trees and taking welcome Government grants to do so, which was one of the concerns that was raised by those who give evidence for the report. I am aware of land and estate owners supporting Government policy by welcoming wind farms and small-scale hydroelectric developers on to their land, to help decarbonise our energy supply, and to help in the fight against climate change. I am sure that we look forward to discussing that at next week's Scottish Green Party debate.

I am aware of landowners' and managers' constant battles with local authorities to get planning permission to build all sorts of housing in rural Scotland, with planning policy being directed by Government policy and legislation. I am aware of the lack of available tenancies, which was raised by the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association, but even it recognises that that issue is entirely the product of Scottish Government legislation.

I am aware of growing levels of isolation in rural Scotland, particularly among the elderly, which is exacerbated by the reduction of bus services, which has also been driven by Scottish Government policy. I am aware of the increases in mental health issues, drug abuse and suicide in rural Scotland; again, little is being done to address those things.

Those are some of the real problems that the people of rural Scotland are facing. Usually, I see the blame for such problems being laid at the feet of the Scottish Government, and very rarely at the feet of the local landowner. The problems are

different completely from the perceived problems that are set out in the report, which appears to have started with a conclusion and then scratched about to find the weakest of evidence—mostly anecdotal—to support its politically driven conclusions.

I would have expected more from the Scottish Land Commission report, which appears, at its most fundamental level, to have taken a small number of long-held local grievances and used them as evidence to support the politically driven agenda of those who stand behind it. I would have expected more from the Scottish Government, which should set about addressing the very real problems of rural Scotland, rather than those that are being debated today. The report is not reflective of the reality of rural Scotland. It should be dismissed, because it does not take a balanced view of the realities in rural Scotland. Perhaps even more alarmingly, it does not endeavour to do so.

16:20

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of member's interests: I own a non-domestic property in the Western Isles, which is situated in an estate that is subject to a live community buyout attempt. Negotiations are at a sensitive and challenging stage so I will not be making any further mention of it in this speech.

I am proud to have been involved in the former Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee's work on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. The passage of that bill is the legislation that I have most enjoyed working on since entering Parliament in 2011.

Before I go any further in my speech, I note that the independent land reform review group, which reported back in 2014, in advance of the land reform bill, made 60 recommendations, but stated that there was

"no single measure, or 'silver bullet', which would modernise land ownership patterns in Scotland and deliver land reform measures which would better serve the public interest."

However, our committee, and subsequently the 2016 act, took account of some of the review group's recommendations, and I am delighted to say that we saw a significant piece of legislation created for land reform, land management and communities across Scotland. That act, coupled with the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015—another bill that I was pleased to work on—has helped to move land reform forward significantly from the early days of the Scottish Parliament and the ground-breaking land reform acts of 2003 and 2004.

At that time, the RACCE Committee paid specific attention to human rights and the bill's compatibility with the European convention on human rights and other international agreements. We understood that taking a human rights approach offered a new way in which to consider land reform—although it has to be said that the ECHR provides challenges, too; in my view, it prevented us from being as radical as I, and no doubt others, would have wished.

It always struck me as ironic that the ECHR was holding us back from righting the wrongs of the past, such as the clearing of vast swathes of the Highlands and Islands during the clearances. I make no apology for reminding the Parliament of that dreadful period in our country's history. As a Highlander and an Islander it is something that I—and we—can never forget.

That said, the motion that we are debating today looks at the here and now and to the future. This week, we were pleased to have the opportunity at the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee to take evidence from the Scottish Land Commission's chair, Andrew Thin, and chief executive, Hamish Trench. It was heartening to see the SLC doing exactly what we had intended it to do when the bill was being developed and scrutinised in Parliament three years ago.

The SLC's purpose is to provide direction, leadership and strategic thought for land reform in Scotland—in effect, it picks up where Parliament left off. The SLC's overriding vision, which contributes to six key national outcomes and guides its objectives of productivity, diversity and accountability, is of a fair, inclusive and productive system of ownership, management and use of land that delivers greater benefit for all the people of Scotland.

I was pleased to hear both the chair and the chief executive confirm that the commissioners are making good progress on implementing their strategic priorities for the period 2018 to 2021, concentrating on land for housing and development, land ownership, land use decision making and agricultural holdings—they have certainly got their work cut out for them.

As we have heard, yesterday, the SLC published its investigation into the issues associated with large-scale and concentrated land ownership in Scotland; its report is welcome. It is clear that the timing could not be helped, but it would have been beneficial if the report had been issued before we took evidence from the commission on Tuesday—that is not a criticism of anyone; it was just bad timing—and I note the cabinet secretary's comment that the report was brought forward so that we could discuss it in today's debate.

As we have heard, the SLC concluded that much of Scotland is owned by a handful of landowners who practise an “irresponsible exercise of power”. The study also concluded that many parts of Scotland are controlled by a “land monopoly”, with very little in the way of legal protection. It has recommended that to help to introduce systematic change and to stimulate a more diverse and dynamic pattern of land ownership, there should be a public interest test in any future significant land transfers or acquisitions. It also calls for a statutory framework to

“strengthen local democratic accountability of land ownership and use”,

so I think that I can perhaps feel another land reform bill coming on in the next session of Parliament. We will have to wait and see.

All the welcome proposals that are contained in the report seek to address the risks of concentrated land ownership in ways that are considered normal in other developed countries, particularly in northern Europe.

Today’s motion for debate also refers to the land rights and responsibilities statement, which adopts a human rights approach to land rights and responsibilities and signals a determination to continue leading the way in ensuring that Scotland’s urban and rural land contributes to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and social justice. It is noticeable and disappointing—to say the least—that the Tory amendment seeks to remove mention of the land rights and responsibilities statement.

Of course, much of the progress that we have seen in recent years simply would not have happened without the Scottish land fund. With just over 560,000 acres of land now in community ownership, the Scottish land fund continues to play its part in helping to get us as close to the 1 million target as possible. There are some fantastic good news stories, not least the community buyout of Ulva, which has been one of the most heartening in recent years. I have Mull connections going back a couple of hundred years, so the success of the North West Mull Community Woodland Company and its purchase of Ulva—with the generous assistance of the Scottish land fund, the Macquarie Group and hundreds of amazing donations through crowdfunding—was the icing on the cake for me. However, there is, of course, always room for more icing on the cake.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Before we move to the winding-up speeches, I note that two members who took part in the debate—Gillian Martin and Claudia Beamish—are not in the chamber. I thought that we had got over all this nonsense. I expect notes

from them and I hope that they are not sitting having a cup of tea and a cake, thinking that they can swan in when they like—especially Ms Beamish, who opened the debate for the Labour Party.

I call Andy Wightman. We have a little time in hand, Mr Wightman, so I can give you up to seven minutes.

16:27

Andy Wightman: Thank you very much, indeed. I am most grateful.

This has been a useful debate, which has been informed—as members have noted—by a helpful report from the Scottish Land Commission. If members have not yet read it, I urge them to do so—including the research review, which I will come to later.

Members might know that it was at university in Aberdeen that I became engaged with the land question. While I was there, the flow country debacle was kicking off. Members might recall that people such as Terry Wogan and Shirley Porter were getting vast tax breaks from the Government at the time to plant trees in the far north of Scotland, in Gail Ross’s constituency. I remember a visiting lecturer from the forestry industry, who came to talk about the endeavour with glowing praise. I asked them why it was felt to be appropriate that rich people living in London should get tax breaks to plant trees in the north of Scotland and whether it would not be better to spend the tax revenues that were being forgone to support the farmers, landowners and communities in Caithness and Sutherland to plant the trees—that seemed to me to be self-evidently sensible; I am sure that Mr Scott and the Conservatives would agree that it would seem to be a more sensible approach. Although I do not remember the answer, I remember my professor coming to me afterwards and saying that I should not ask such political questions. Well, I have been asking them ever since and I will not stop asking questions about the topic until landed hegemony is eliminated and the people of Scotland own the land of Scotland.

I first met the cabinet secretary in the 1990s, when she was a member of the UK Parliament. *[Interruption.]* Do not worry. *[Laughter.]* We were part of a group that was campaigning against the abandonment of tenant farms by the owner of Blackford estate, which was owned then—as now—by a company that is registered in the secrecy jurisdiction of Liechtenstein. I know that the cabinet secretary is committed to doing all in her power to advance the cause of land reform. However, I also know that it is not always an easy task within Government, and I guarantee that we

Greens will do all in our power to assist her in that endeavour.

Given that there remains so much more to do, I hope that the cabinet secretary will have a conversation with her colleagues about using the legislative opportunity that I understand is planned to reform compulsory purchase powers and introduce compulsory sale orders instead to include such measures as parts 1 and 2 of a possible land reform bill, which would allow us to deliver at least some further land reform measures in this parliamentary session.

In my opening speech, I mentioned examples of what the Scottish Land Commission is pointing to, and I will highlight a couple of examples.

The Applecross estate in Wester Ross is a 61,000-acre estate. It was owned by the Wills tobacco family, but they transferred ownership in the 1970s to a company with charitable status in order to avoid tax. Since then, the Applecross Trust has operated as a closed shop, with directors who live in the south of England and a fragile community that has struggled to secure land to meet basic needs for housing and other essential services.

In September 2012, 100 of us, including the then local MP, the late Charles Kennedy, wrote formal letters to the registered office of the charity in Edinburgh applying to become members, as was our right under the terms of the charity's constitution. All applications were refused point blank. Here was a landowner operating as a Scottish charity, exercising monopoly control over vast swathes of land and denying everyone else—even the local MP—the chance to join and participate in the affairs of the charity.

A similar situation exists on the Isle of Bute. It is owned by a charity, the Mount Stuart Trust, which was established to avoid tax liabilities for the Marquess of Bute and operates a closed shop. It not only refused applications from, among others, me and the local MSP, Mike Russell, but passed a resolution at a special general meeting to limit membership and to give the Marquess of Bute exclusive rights to appoint up to four directors. The resolution says that terms and conditions are to be dictated

“by the person holding the Title and Dignity of the Marquess of Bute”.

I thought that we abolished feudal tenure in 2000, but it lives on in the arcane, anti-democratic manner that is described in those two examples. Claudia Beamish and Liam McArthur said that we have much more to do. I agree and I have suggested one route by which we might do that.

I gently remind the cabinet secretary that opportunities have already been missed. Long-

standing proposals to give children legal rights to inherit land were rejected by Scottish ministers a couple of months ago. They also rejected the recommendation of the Barclay review into non-domestic rates that all non-domestic property and land should be on the valuation roll, which would be a necessary precondition for any fiscal reform.

John Scott asked about the Scottish ministers' land, and it is a notable feature of the Land Commission's report, which I am sure that he welcomes, that it made no distinction between private and public land. I agree with John Scott. Years ago, the historian Jim Hunter argued that

“the Forestry Commission is to Scottish forestry what collectivisation was to Soviet agriculture.”

We support decentralising management and control of the national forest estate to communities, local government and NGOs, and I hope that the member agrees with us.

John Scott: No. Since Andy Wightman is referring to historians, I wonder whether he will reflect on the fact that the historian Tom Devine has changed his view on the cause of the Highland clearances from the one clearly expressed by Angus MacDonald. That change of view has changed the perception of the land reform agenda, or it certainly should have.

Andy Wightman: I am not familiar with Tom Devine's comments in that regard.

I encourage John Scott and his colleagues to read the research review, which was done by Scotland's Rural College. It contains five pages of references, so it is a well-referenced report.

John Scott talked about the Highland clearances and I am reminded of the Napier commission. For decades after, people criticised it and dismissed the eloquent testimony that it took as being mere anecdote. It would be unfortunate if anyone were to do so today.

There is much more to be done. The Land Commission's work over the past year has been extremely useful and I look forward to working with others to bring to an end the hegemony that is associated with Scotland's pattern of land ownership.

We will support the Government motion and the Labour amendment.

16:34

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Land reform has been a focus of the Parliament from the very beginning. It has always been high on the agenda, as my colleagues Claudia Beamish and Alex Rowley have pointed out. I am proud of the achievements that have been made, but I think that we can go much further.

The Scottish Tenant Farmers Association wrote in its briefing to us that land reform had improved the lot of tenant farmers, but we need to protect them further. Some landowners have responded to land reform in a despicable way in their treatment of tenant farmers.

Why do we need land reform? One hundred and fifty people own 50 per cent of Scotland's privately owned rural land. As Claudia Beamish said, land ownership is power. It provides opportunity and wealth. The disparity of ownership empowers and disempowers. Gillian Martin talked about someone feeling very intimidated at a meeting. Whether or not that was meant, it was the balance of power that led to that intimidation and fear. If somebody is there, taking notes, and the person knows that they have power over them, they will of course be afraid. Those who have not been in that position might not understand the way in which that power can disempower somebody else.

We need to build thriving communities, and we need to ensure that the power is shared. That can lead to very simple things getting done, such as building homes, as Liam McArthur pointed out. Alex Rowley spoke about land wealth, and its worth, being as much an issue as monetary wealth. Again, that is in the hands of the few rather than the many, and we need to consider better redistribution of both land wealth and monetary wealth. Alex Rowley spoke about land value taxation, which we could consider now to ensure that land has not been used—as land often is—as a way in which to avoid tax. We see some of the large estate agents selling estates around Scotland and encouraging people to buy them, not because they would work with the community and build the local economy but so that they could use the land to avoid their own taxation.

Monopolies have always been seen and understood to be bad things. Power is put into the hands of the monopoly, which disenfranchises everybody else. Land ownership in Scotland is largely a monopoly, and that needs to change. Land is an asset from which we all need to benefit. When someone's livelihood depends on the land, they need a voice in the decisions that are taken about it. The way to ensure that their voice is heard is to ensure that they, too, have a stake in it.

I welcome the publication of the Land Commission's report. As Angus MacDonald pointed out, the Land Commission was set up to provide leadership and direction on land reform. I have not read the report word for word, although I have had a good look over it, and I like what I see. To me, the fact that Edward Mountain was critical of it is a good sign, and I think that I will like it even more as I delve into it.

I am grateful to the commission for rushing the report's publication to help inform today's debate.

The report has been an important part of the debate. To pick up on some of the commission's findings, the report says that, in some parts of Scotland, concentrated land ownership is an impediment to economic development and is causing significant and long-term harm to the communities affected. It also says that there is little or no method of redress for communities or individuals when adverse economic or social impacts arise from concentrated land ownership.

The commission makes a number of recommendations, which I hope that the Scottish Government will consider seriously. They include the introduction of a public interest test for significant land transfers and acquisitions, which has been spoken about by a number of people; the creation of more robust mechanisms to ensure local democratic influence on and benefit from land use changes; and a programme of land rights and responsibilities good practice.

John Scott pointed out that some landowners take their responsibilities seriously, which is true—nobody is saying that all large landowners are bad. Some of them work with their communities. As we have heard in the debate, however, that can change on a whim or because of inheritance alone, and the balance of power then changes. If we do not have the right balance of power, the community can quickly be devastated by the change of ownership.

We have talked about community ownership. Only 500,000 acres of land in Scotland are in such ownership. The Scottish land fund, which many members mentioned, has been involved in some community buyouts. However, as those members noted, such communities have to jump through hoops and prove that they are acting in the public interest; they have to ballot people in their communities to ensure that they are happy to proceed. None of that happens in a private land exchange in which a private buyer takes over—they do not have to fulfil any public interest criteria.

Andy Wightman spoke to his amendment, which Labour members will support, which widens the definition of community ownership to include other kinds of common ownership such as common good and common land. We must also remember the concept of public ownership: for example, land is owned by the Scottish Government on behalf of the public collectively. In that context, I pay tribute to MacNeil of Barra, who gifted the island to the Scottish Government to ensure that it would be in public ownership. We need to remember that not all private landowners act solely in their own interests.

Some members talked about transparency. I look forward to the Government introducing the subordinate legislation that will be required to enable us to look at that. I hope very much that it

will look at ownership from abroad as well as at home, because we need to know who owns the land that we live on.

There was not much mention of crofting in the debate, but I will use some of my remaining time to mention—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have 10 seconds.

Rhoda Grant: I have only 10 seconds left, so I will just say that crofters have a right to buy, which goes a long way towards fulfilling the balance of power between them and their landowners. However, that right is not easy to use, so I ask the Government to look at simplifying it in the context of the new crofting legislation that is being considered.

16:41

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): There is much in the Scottish Government's land reform programme that Scottish Conservatives can agree with, especially as some of its current position is drawn from that of the UK Government, which is laid out in the Localism Act 2011.

Finlay Carson and Edward Mountain affirmed that broad support exists for issues such as community empowerment and greater transparency, but they also identified concerns and risks in the Scottish Land Commission's current position.

John Scott flagged that the Scottish Government is one of the biggest landowners in Scotland, accounting for almost a million hectares. Indeed, Forestry Commission Scotland has 638,600 hectares under its control, and the National Trust for Scotland is responsible for 76,000 hectares.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform recognised the importance of land to the people of Scotland. I can agree with that very much. Whether it be for housing, food production or protecting and enhancing our natural environment, or to tackle climate change, the use of land is very important. I also agree that we should expect good practice no matter who owns the land in question.

Claudia Beamish appeared to isolate landowners and to treat them with disregard. She went on to advocate that the state should be able to redistribute property from legal owners to communities. If that is Labour's position, it is concerning.

Andy Wightman articulated a well-thought-out and considered argument for common ownership. The one point on which I could agree with him was that land reform is difficult—indeed it is.

Liam McArthur advocated pressing ahead with increased transparency and clarity. I certainly agree with him on that point.

I want to highlight a concern that people raise with me whenever the topic of land reform comes up, which is that there is too much focus on ownership of land and not enough on how it is managed and used. For example, I note that the Scottish Land Commission's report that was published yesterday acknowledged the positive impact that many landowners have on their communities. That is welcome recognition, but at the same time the report talked of a monopoly on land ownership that could harm communities.

Of course, we must address cases in which outcomes are poor, but I can understand why the majority of landowners, following good practice, might be worried that a stereotype is being perpetuated that simply owning a sizeable amount of land is inherently wrong and harmful.

Andy Wightman rose—

Maurice Golden: Andy Wightman.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Andy Wightman.

Andy Wightman: One of the benefits of the report is that it explicitly points out that it is power and not scale that matters. It has moved the debate on, which therefore addresses the point and Maurice Golden's concern.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is up to me to call members, but thank you.

Maurice Golden: Thank you for that clarification, Presiding Officer.

Our issue with the report is that it appears as though the Scottish Land Commission has started with the end point then looked for anecdotal evidence to get there. That is a problem. Conservative members always support an evidence-based approach, and we have clearly not seen that in the report.

Talk of compulsory purchase orders is not particularly helpful. Instead, we should look to promote better community engagement. There is a huge opportunity for communities, both rural and urban, to develop and sustain productive use of the land around them.

We should be careful that we do not operate under the assumption that community buyouts should be the default option. That misses the fact that other models, for example leasing, can be a better fit in some circumstances.

We have seen 88,000 hectares lost in the tenanted sector in just five years, and almost 30,000 hectares in 2016 alone. The Central

Association of Agricultural Valuers is clear that the Scottish National Party Government has provided “nothing in the land reform package that encourages anybody to let land”.

The Scottish Conservatives believe that the Scottish land fund should be opened to accommodate long leases, too.

Underpinning all this is the need for a transparent system that is fit for the 21st century but which does not compromise people’s right to privacy, or indeed their safety. On the latter point, I am mindful of the concerns that have been raised by the likes of NFU Scotland that providing the personal details of landowners can leave them vulnerable to protests or direct action. A case in point would be the recent vegan protests directed at English farmers, using farm details that were made available through the Food Standards Agency. Those protests have resulted in disruption, damage and distress to animals. None of us wants that to be brought to Scotland. That does not need to happen, because a transparent system does not necessarily require the publication of physical addresses. Would it not be more useful to provide contact details for relevant land managers to ensure a more practical and speedy engagement process?

I take the point, which was made by Scottish Government officials to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, that a physical address can provide greater assurance for those who are looking to engage with a landowner. However, a register that is based on such an idea falls short. It misses the point that a publicly available address is not necessary for the fundamental purpose of identifying and engaging with a landowner, and limits accessibility by disregarding digital communications.

There is support across the chamber for land reform, but the support of the Conservatives is conditional on an evidence-based approach being taken—in my view, the Scottish Land Commission has clearly failed to do that. Good practice should be rewarded with support for landowners, not the perpetuation of stereotypes. Communities should be empowered with new options and not locked into a one-size-fits-all approach. Land ownership should be more transparent, but farmers and other landowners should be able to expect their privacy and safety to be protected.

I urge members to support the amendment in the name of Edward Mountain.

16:49

Roseanna Cunningham: Today’s debate has demonstrated the importance of land. Much has been said about how we might change deeply ingrained patterns of ownership and about the

benefits that that will bring; about how we can enable more people to own land and influence its use and management; and about the value of transparency over who owns land and makes decisions about it. Everyone who has spoken in the debate has at least recognised the role that land has in supporting and promoting Scotland’s ambitions. It seems that members are united in the desire to see change, although we do not necessarily agree on the degree of that change or how we should effect it.

Inevitably, much of the debate has circled around or been informed by the Scottish Land Commission’s report, which was not the intention. I say to those who have criticised what the Scottish Land Commission has done that it has undertaken an extensive range of consultations around the country and that it has gone to communities throughout Scotland, both urban and rural. The conclusions and recommendations in the report drew on an evidence base that is published by the commission. If members wish to see that, they only need to look for it, so saying that there is no proper evidence is not a fair criticism.

Andy Wightman neatly dealt with the paradox of opposition to further community ownership in his intervention on Edward Mountain’s speech. Mr Mountain started by saying that the Tories support land reform, but I confess that I struggled to find anything in his opening speech to convince me that that was true. I note that some of the other Conservative contributions were a little more generous, perhaps reflecting a closer connection with different views among the electorate.

Claudia Beamish made, as I have come to expect, her usual generous and courteous contribution. The Government intends to accept the Labour amendment, although some of the specific proposals that Claudia Beamish discussed would create significant and complex legal and European convention on human rights issues—a matter that was also referred to by Angus MacDonald. We cannot simply wish those away, so, although we support the principles of the recommendations, we will have to do a great deal more to turn them into practical policies.

In Andy Wightman’s contribution, I was entertained by his admission that from time to time he indulges in soundbites. Heaven forbid that a politician should be so self-indulgent! He will be aware that none of the Government legislation that he referred to emanates from my portfolio, but I undertake to discuss with other ministers whether those pieces of legislation afford opportunities at this stage to be expanded into areas that might be encompassed by land reform.

With regard to the Green amendment, I say that common ownership is not our policy and I am

unclear what Andy Wightman is trying to achieve by changing the terminology. Had he not replaced the term “community ownership” with the term “common ownership”, I might have viewed his amendment differently, but I am not minded to support it because of that lack of clarity. That may just be me exercising a typical lawyer’s caution.

Andy Wightman: I attempted to explain that. Common ownership is not the Government’s policy, but I have used that term because it encapsulates existing common good land, commonies and common grazings. I am sure that the cabinet secretary is not suggesting that we should eliminate those, so the point of replacing that language was to provide something that was a bit more inclusive. I hope that the Government might reconsider.

Roseanna Cunningham: I refer to my comment about my lawyer’s caution. I am happy to have a separate discussion with Andy Wightman about that, but at the moment I am resisting the Green amendment. Liam McArthur and Claudia Beamish reminded us of the 2003 act, as I did in my opening remarks. I was the Scottish National Party spokesperson at the time and I recall that the SNP argued that it did not go far enough. That goes some way towards explaining why we have pursued, and will continue to pursue, the land reform agenda. Liam McArthur also touched on the feeling at the time that the act was a long-overdue reform. Having spent six years in the House of Commons, I can confirm my view that, if we had had to rely on the House of Commons to make any change, it is likely that we would still be waiting.

Gillian Martin rehearsed some of the specific injustices that are still being experienced, which were described in the Land Commission’s report. With respect to everybody, those bits of evidence cannot simply be swept away as though they are not relevant to the debate.

I want to briefly respond to Finlay Carson on the specific core path issue that he raised. The local access forum is the best route to resolve that issue if he has not made contact with it yet, although it is Dumfries and Galloway Council that has discretionary powers to amend the core paths plan. I will write to the member with a more detailed response on that point.

Alex Rowley highlighted that there is no obligation to use land in the public interest; that is a fair point. He also raised the issue of land value tax. In fact, the Government has asked the Land Commission to explore options for a land value tax as well as land value capture.

Kenny Gibson reminded us that we do not have to travel to the northern Highlands to find examples of problems connected to—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Just a moment, cabinet secretary. It is the usual issue—will members who are coming in for decision time please let the cabinet secretary be heard? Members who took part in the debate want to hear the speech. Also, I do not think that it is a good idea for members to stand with their backs to the chair for too long.

Roseanna Cunningham: As I was indicating, we do not have to travel to the northern Highlands to find examples of problems connected to land ownership.

John Scott spoke about the failures of NGOs as landowners. I have always been clear that with ownership comes not just rights but responsibilities, regardless of who the landowner is, and I have not been afraid to say that directly to NGOs and indeed to community landowners. Once they move into the capacity of owning land, they inherit those responsibilities as well as rights.

The subject of land is complex. It is central to the kind of country that we want to be, our economy and environment. We must remember that it is more than just a resource to which we attach a particular financial value. Land is often spoken about in terms of its cost, its value when it is bought or sold or the return that it provides each year, but, as important as all that is, perhaps the true value of land is much more fundamental. I have often said in the context of land reform that land is a resource for everyone, but we should recognise that land is more than simply a resource; it is the ground on which we stand, on which we work and on which we live. From when we are born until the end of our days, it is our world. It has historical, romantic and symbolic meanings that we should bear in mind even as we talk about the undoubted economic importance of land.

When we talk about our aspirations for land, we also talk about our aspirations for ourselves. This mixture of the tangible and the intangible is one reason why issues to do with land are so emotive and often very complex. Land is not just a commodity but a human right; it is essential to a meaningful existence, just as a true home is more than a place to eat, sleep and take shelter.

In my efforts during my time in the House of Commons, which is a considerable number of years ago now, I recall the bemusement with which expressions such as that were received by those who simply did not get it; they could not understand why land reform was such an emotive and important issue for Scotland. I shared my feelings about that with Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democrat members in the House of Commons as well as with SNP members. We all understood that at a visceral level, in a way that

our colleagues south of the border simply did not—and, I believe, to this day do not—get.

It is important for us to remember that this Parliament has to be the expression of that very singular and particular understanding of the idea of land that is so Scottish. It marks us; it makes us different; and it makes us stand apart. For those in the developing world, it is an interesting conundrum that land reform is such a fundamentally important issue for us, in what they see as a country in the developed world. It opens up a door for us to have a conversation in a way that I believe is unlike any other in any other part of the developed world.

It is important that we in this Parliament continue to express the strength of that feeling. Land reform begins with the ethical consideration that all of us have this right and we must use land wisely and fairly.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Edward Mountain is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Claudia Beamish and Andy Wightman will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-16445.1, in the name of Edward Mountain, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16445, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on land reform in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

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

Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 27, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-16445.3, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16445, in the name of the cabinet secretary, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)

Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 32, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-16445.2, in the name of Andy Wightman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16445, in the name of the cabinet secretary, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (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)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 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)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 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)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 32, Against 83, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-16445, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on land reform in Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)

McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 32, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that land is one of Scotland's most important assets; recognises the value of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement in providing a framework for land decisions and land management in Scotland; recognises the close relationship between land ownership and land use; agrees that community ownership

of land should be the norm and not simply a response to market failure or disputes with landowners; recognises the importance of the Scottish Land Fund in supporting community land and asset buyouts; recognises that the work of the Scottish Land Commission is making a positive contribution to delivering the Scottish Government's land reform agenda; agrees the importance of ensuring that land reform continues to be a key policy priority to change the entrenched and inequitable pattern of land ownership in Scotland so that everyone can benefit from land and assets, both rural and urban, across the country, and urges the Scottish Government to support the recommendations of the Scottish Land Commission on how to deliver interventions in the operation of Scotland's land markets and ownerships that will provide disincentives to the future accrual of large privately owned land holdings and help deliver a more equitable distribution in the ownership of Scotland's land assets in the public interest.

Meeting closed at 17:04.

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

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