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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 24 April 2019

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:30]

Brexit and Scotland's Future

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Our first item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on Brexit and Scotland's future. The First Minister will take questions at the end of her statement. I encourage all members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak button.

13:30

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Presiding Officer, before I make my statement, and with your permission, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of journalist Lyra McKee, who was killed in Northern Ireland last week and whose funeral is taking place right now.

I did not know Lyra, but everything that I have read by and about her makes me wish that I had. Talented, passionate and courageous, she was a symbol of hope for Northern Ireland's future. Her death is a harsh reminder of the fragility of peace in Northern Ireland and how important it is that that peace is nurtured and protected.

I also express my shock and sadness at the horrific attacks in Sri Lanka on Sunday. Senseless loss of life on such a scale is difficult for any of us to comprehend, and my heartfelt condolences go to the bereaved and injured, including, of course, the British citizens who were so tragically affected. To launch indiscriminate attacks on innocent people as they attended Easter services or enjoyed a holiday is barbaric beyond words. Christian churches, like mosques, synagogues and all places of worship, should be sanctuaries of peace and safety.

As we condemn unreservedly those acts of terrorism, we must again express our determination that hatred and violence will be defeated by love, compassion and our common humanity.

My statement will consider the implications for Scotland of recent Brexit developments. As members know, two weeks ago, the European Council extended the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union until 31 October, with a right for the UK to leave earlier if the House of Commons agrees terms of withdrawal.

The extension granted by the EU rescued us from the nightmare scenario of a no-deal Brexit on 12 April. As a result, I can advise Parliament that the Scottish Government has, for the time being, scaled down our no-deal planning. My thanks go to all those across Government and the public sector who have worked so hard to make sure Scotland is as ready as we can be for what would be a catastrophic outcome. However, I also want to express my regret and anger at the money and effort that has been spent preparing for an outcome that the UK Government should have ruled out.

As things stand, if an agreed way forward is not found quickly, the risk of no deal will rise again as we approach the October deadline, with the potential for yet more money, time and effort to be wasted. The UK Government could remove that risk now by making it clear that, if the only alternative is a no-deal exit, it will choose to revoke article 50 instead. I hope that members across the chamber will join me today in calling on the UK Government to do exactly that.

However, the extension afforded by the EU presents the UK with an opportunity to find a positive way forward and an opportunity for me to update Parliament about the implications for Scotland.

The Scottish Government's view is that the best way to break the deadlock for the UK is to put the issue back to the people, with an option to remain in the EU. The Euro elections will also give voters a chance to back a party, like the Scottish National Party, that wants to keep Scotland in the EU.

Of course, almost three years on from the referendum in 2016, it is impossible to predict with certainty what will happen next. The UK might still leave the EU before October, it might leave in October, it might seek another extension or it might not leave at all.

That chaos is not an inevitable consequence of the vote to leave the EU—it is down to a toxic combination of dishonesty and incompetence. Those who campaigned to leave in 2016 failed to set out what Brexit would mean in reality. To the extent that they made any attempt at all, they misled people. The UK Government triggered article 50 before it had answered that question. The Prime Minister then boxed herself in with a series of self-defeating and contradictory red lines. Instead of trying to build consensus across Parliament or country, she claimed the right to interpret the result in the most hardline way possible.

As a consequence, those who voted to remain question the legitimacy of the whole process; those who voted to leave feel, with justification, that promises that were made to them have been

broken; and faith in democracy has been damaged. Throughout all this, the Scottish Government and our party colleagues at Westminster have worked tirelessly to help to find the best way forward for all of the UK. Whatever Scotland's constitutional status in future, it will always be in our interests for all of us on these islands to have the closest possible relationship with the EU. We therefore proposed the compromise option of single market and customs union membership; we back a public vote to break the deadlock, even though it offers no guarantee that Scotland will not be outvoted all over again; and we are working with others in an effort to remove the risk of a no-deal Brexit. In fact, we have done everything possible to help to avert the Brexit crisis for the whole UK and we will continue to do so.

However, we must also consider the best way forward for Scotland in the event that the UK does leave the European Union. To ensure that all options remain open to us, the time to do that is now. Of course, as we do so, we must learn the lessons of the Brexit mess. Whether we like it or not, the continued lack of clarity around Brexit has implications for Scotland's decision making—a point that I will return to later. However, one point of clarity has surely emerged over the past three years, even for the most ardent opponent of Scottish independence: the Westminster system of government simply does not serve Scotland's interests and the devolution settlement in its current form is now seen to be utterly inadequate to the task of protecting those interests. In other words, the status quo is broken.

Scotland's 62 per cent vote to remain in the EU counted for nothing. Far from being an equal partner at Westminster, Scotland's voice is listened to only if it chimes with that of the UK majority; if it does not, we are outvoted and ignored. The Scottish Government's efforts to find a compromise that might mitigate the damage to our economy fell on deaf ears. Cross-party votes of this Parliament have been disregarded time and again. The agreed constitutional principles that have underpinned devolution since its establishment 20 years ago have been cast aside by the UK Government and vital powers were in effect taken from this Parliament without our consent. Even our financial settlement, which already leaves us vulnerable to austerity and with too few levers of our own, was openly breached by the UK Government's bribe to the Democratic Unionist Party. There is no denying that Brexit has exposed a deep democratic deficit at the heart of how Scotland is governed. Whatever our different views on independence, that should persuade all of us in this chamber that we need a more solid foundation on which to build our future as a country.

The consequences of inaction would be severe. If we are unable to stop or even mitigate Brexit, we will find it harder to export our goods and services across the single market. Scotland will become less attractive to inward investors; a risk that will be compounded if the Northern Ireland backstop takes effect. The result will be fewer jobs and an economy that is smaller than it should be.

The Tory and, I am sorry to say, UK Labour obsession that drives the desire to leave the EU—ending free movement—will restrict the opportunities of our own young people to live, work and study across Europe, and it will send our working age population into decline.

I know that the issue of migration is not an easy one for politicians to address, but I am proud that parties across the chamber are willing to take on the many myths that surround it. In Scotland, we know and understand that the Westminster approach to migration, as well as being deeply inhumane, poses an almost existential threat to our future prosperity. So, the Brexit outlook for Scotland is a smaller economy, restricted job growth, fewer people, narrowed horizons and greater pressure on our ability to fund the public services and social contract that we value so highly.

Let me put it in simpler language. Brexit and all that flows from it will affect the ability of Scottish Governments now and well into the future to do the day job—to support businesses, combat poverty, fund the national health service and public services, and work with other countries to tackle the defining challenges of our time.

At a time when most people in Scotland would, I think, want to see the Scottish Parliament having more influence on the decisions that shape our future, there is a risk of the reverse. As the UK scrambles to do trade deals with Donald Trump or whoever, the inclination to impose uniformity—even in devolved areas—will lead to more Westminster centralisation. It is my judgment that, for the first time in 20 years, there is a risk of devolution going backwards, not through the blatant, wholesale removal of powers—although, on recent experience, more of that cannot be ruled out—but by an increasing use of Westminster's powers to override the decisions of the Scottish Parliament and constrain devolved decision making.

The question that confronts all of us now is this: if the status quo is not fit for purpose—I know that even some of the most committed believers in the union find it hard to argue that it is—how do we fix it? Can we do so in a way that maximises consensus rather than amplifies our differences?

Those are not easy challenges, but all of us who sit in this chamber are elected to represent the

national interest. We have a duty to rise to the challenge, stand in each other's shoes and find a way forward. No one expects any of us to abandon deeply held beliefs. Just as Labour and Tory MSPs will continue to believe that remaining in the union is the right option for Scotland, I will argue that independence offers the best future.

The case for independence is even stronger now, given the profound changes that have taken place in the UK since 2014. In that time, we have seen the limits of Scotland's influence within the UK and, in sharp contrast, the power that independent nations have as members of the EU. While Scotland's interests have been ignored by Westminster, independent Ireland's interests have been protected by the EU. Of the 27 independent countries that decided the UK's future at the European Council two weeks ago, around a dozen are smaller than or similar in size to Scotland. Many of those countries are also more prosperous than Scotland. With all our assets and talents, Scotland should be a thriving and driving force within Europe. Instead, we face being forced to the margins and sidelined within a UK that is itself being increasingly sidelined on the international stage.

By contrast, independence would allow us to protect our place in Europe. It would enable us to nurture our most important relationships—those with the other countries of the British Isles—on the basis of equality, and it would mean that decisions against our will and contrary to our interests could not be imposed on us by Westminster. It would put our future into our own hands, with the decisions that shape our future and determine our relationships with other countries taken here in our own Parliament. That is the essence of independence.

Let me turn to the issue of when I think people in Scotland should be offered a new choice on independence. My party was elected with a mandate to offer that choice within this parliamentary session should Scotland be taken out of the EU against our will. There is also a majority in the chamber for that position, and polling evidence suggests that a majority in Scotland want a choice on independence, although opinions vary on timing. There are some who would like to see a very early referendum; others want the choice to be much later. My job as the First Minister is to reach a judgment, not simply in my party's interest but in the national interest.

In doing so, a key priority is ensuring that we learn the lessons of Brexit. To rush into an immediate decision before a Brexit path has been determined would not allow an informed choice to be made. However, if we are to safeguard Scotland's interests, we cannot wait indefinitely.

That is why I consider that a choice between Brexit and a future for Scotland as an independent European nation should be offered later in the lifetime of this Parliament. If Scotland is taken out of the EU, the option of a referendum on independence within that timescale must be open to us. That would be our route to avoiding the worst of the damage that Brexit will do.

However, that intention does not mean that we should cease trying to build as much agreement as we can on the best way forward; nor should we cease our efforts to avoid any Brexit at all. In all our actions, we must also try to avoid the mistakes that have caused so much division over Brexit and bring people together to focus on finding the common ground between us. Our aim must be to act in a completely different manner to the UK Government and Parliament. The fact is that, based on the evidence of the past three years, Westminster has failed. It has failed to protect Scotland's interests, it has failed to reach a consensus and it has degenerated into chaos. It is now time for this Parliament and for all the parties represented in this Parliament to take charge.

There are therefore three specific steps that the Scottish Government intends to take now. I confirm that the Scottish Government will act to ensure that the option of giving people a choice on independence later in this session of Parliament is progressed. We will shortly introduce legislation to set the rules for any referendum that is, now or in the future, within the competence of the Scottish Parliament. We will aim for the legislation to be on the statute book by the end of this year. Mike Russell will set out the details next month. We do not need a transfer of power such as a section 30 order to pass such a framework bill, though we would need it to put beyond doubt or challenge our ability to apply the bill to an independence referendum. As members are aware, the UK Government's current position is that it will not agree to transfer power, but I believe that that position will prove to be unsustainable.

By making progress with primary legislation first, we will not squander valuable time now in a stand-off with a UK Government that might soon be out of office. We will seek agreement to a transfer of power at an appropriate point during or shortly after the bill's passage, on the basis that it will be exercised when this Parliament—and no other—considers it right to offer the people of Scotland a choice.

In 2014, the Scottish and UK Governments and Parliaments—to our collective credit—set the gold standard. Two Governments with very different views on the outcome came together to agree a process that allowed the people to decide. That is what should happen in the future. It is how we will secure unquestioned legitimacy not just here at

home but, crucially, within the EU and the wider international community. It respects the principle that is enshrined in the claim of right that the Scottish people are sovereign. Those who oppose independence are, of course, entitled to argue that case, but it must be for the people to decide.

Finally, on this point, let me offer these words:

“With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.”

Those are the wise words of Abraham Lincoln, who was an ardent defender of a union, albeit in a great moral cause. For those of us who support independence, his lesson is obvious. If we are successful in further growing the support and demand for independence—I will say more, later this week, about how we will build that case—no UK Government will be able to deny the will of the people or stop that will being expressed.

Let me now turn to two parallel processes that I want to outline today. The first is directed at the parties in the chamber that do not support independence. I might not—as people might have noticed—agree with that view, but I do respect it.

However, what I hope that we might all agree on after the past three years is that serious change is needed. To those who believe that independence is not the right change for Scotland, I say that they should bring forward their own proposals to equip our Parliament with the powers that we need to better protect and advance our interests.

For example, we could have more powers to boost trade and strengthen our economy; more powers to tackle poverty and inequality; powers to protect the public finances that our NHS and public services rely on; powers that will allow us to grow our population; and powers that will give us a stronger voice in the UK, enable us to determine our own future and better protect our interests here at home and internationally. I welcome, for example, the recent signals from the Scottish Labour Party that it now supports the devolution of employment law.

This Parliament was almost unanimous in opposing the Brexit power grab, and I know that many share our deep concerns about migration and recognise that we do not currently have the tools to solve that problem. Perhaps there is already more common ground than we like to admit there is and a starting point that we can build and expand upon. The fact that we do not agree on Scotland’s ultimate destination should not stop us travelling together as far as we can.

I have therefore asked Mike Russell to explore with other parties, perhaps with the help of a respected and independent individual who can broker such discussions, areas of agreement on constitutional and procedural change, and to take

the views of stakeholders on such issues. I will write to party leaders today, and Mike Russell will be in touch with their nominated representatives thereafter to consider how those discussions might be progressed.

This exercise should not start with our taking any fixed position—if parties can find it in themselves not to do that—but should openly consider the challenges that Scotland faces and the solutions that might help us address them. If serious and substantial proposals emerge, this Parliament could present them to the UK Government in a unified and united way. If other parties are willing, I give an assurance today that the Scottish Government will engage fully and in good faith.

The last aspect of my statement is also about how we confront the change that our country needs but in a way that tries to build agreement. None of us can fail to be concerned about the polarisation of political debate caused by the Brexit experience. The answer, though, cannot be to ignore or suppress the differing views about the best future for our country. We should try to find ways of debating our choices respectfully and in a way that seeks maximum areas of agreement, and we should lay a foundation that allows us to move forward together, whatever decisions we ultimately arrive at.

I have been struck recently by the Irish example of a citizens assembly to help find consensus on issues on which people have sharply divided opinions. Of course, the circumstances here are different, as are the issues under consideration, but the principle is sound, and I believe that we should make use of it.

I therefore confirm that the Scottish Government will establish a citizens assembly that will bring together a representative cross-section of Scotland, with an independent chair, and which will be tasked with considering, in broad terms, the following issues. What kind of country are we seeking to build? How can we best overcome the challenges that we face, including those arising from Brexit? What further work should be carried out to give people the detail that they need to make informed choices about the future of the country? Again, Mike Russell will set out more details shortly, and he will seek views from other parties on the assembly’s operation and remit.

Brexit was neither the choice of this Parliament, nor the choice of our country. As I said at the outset, the immediate opportunity that we now have is to help stop Brexit for the whole UK; we should seize that opportunity, and my party will certainly seek to do so.

However, if that cannot be achieved, dealing with the consequences of Brexit and facing up to

its challenges will be unavoidable. I am aware that the debates that flow from that will provoke differences of opinion. I believe that the case for independence is now stronger than ever and I will make that case. As I have set out today, I will also do all in my power to protect Scotland's right to choose. To do anything less would risk consigning the next generation to the damage of Westminster decisions that are not in our interests.

However, I know that others take a different view so, as the necessary legislative steps are taken over the next few months, I will also seek to open up space for us to come together and find areas of agreement, as mature politicians should do. In so doing, I will try to set an example of constructive, outward-looking and respectful debate. In recent times, we have seen in Westminster what happens when parties fail to work together, when leaders take a "My way or the highway" approach and when so many red lines and inflexible preconditions are set that progress becomes impossible. Tensions rise and tempers fray.

Twenty years on from the establishment of this Parliament, I believe that we can do better than that. Brexit makes change for Scotland inevitable, but our fellow citizens will judge us on how we lead debate on the best way forward and the efforts that we make to come to a common mind about it. This place was established with the hope that it would be a new type of Parliament. I think that we are, but we can prove it anew by the way in which we respond today to the challenges that lie before us. We can show that we have already begun to learn not just the lessons from Westminster's failure but those that Scotland has taught us as devolution has grown and strengthened. We can show that we are able to put the interests of the people first.

If others across the chamber are willing to move forward in that spirit, they will find in me an equally willing partner but, if all they have to offer the people of Scotland is a failed and damaging status quo, the process of change will pass them by and support for independence will continue to grow. It is time to look to Scotland's future. Let us do so together, with confidence in the potential of our country and of all those who live here. I commend this statement to Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister will now take questions.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): I begin by offering my condolences and those of all Scottish Conservatives to the family of Lyra McKee. Her death at the hands of the IRA is a tragedy and a waste of a talented young life. We all stand united to condemn the cowards who took her life and to ensure that peace prevails in Northern Ireland.

Following the shocks of Pittsburgh and Christchurch, we also yet again join all those who are appalled at the horrendous attack on Sri Lanka and give our sympathies to all those who have been horribly affected. It was an outrageous attack on us all. Perhaps the First Minister will confirm later whether we know of any Scottish citizens who were caught up in the events.

I turn to the substance of the statement. Whatever the First Minister claims, and for all the warm words about being inclusive, her statement is inherently divisive. Astonishingly, the First Minister thinks that the way in which we come together is for the people of Scotland to be plunged into another divisive referendum within the next 18 months. That is just absurd. It is a ridiculous and even disgraceful skewering of her priorities with the real priorities of the country. Frankly, when told of its delivery, as Scotland was enjoying the Easter celebration, my first reaction was to ask why on earth the First Minister felt it necessary to float a dark cloud over Scotland's sunny spring by updating us on her plan for a second independence referendum. Then of course I remembered: there is another SNP conference coming this weekend.

The only thought of the SNP, which has been amplified today, is how to justify its plans to divide families, workplaces and communities all over again and for the foreseeable future. Well, that is not in the name of the majority of Scotland. Whether we voted to remain or leave in 2016, the past few weeks have fallen far short of what we all wanted to see. In a Westminster of minorities, competing interests have prevailed. There is of course a way to sort that: it is to respect the result of the 2016 referendum and support an orderly Brexit. I want that to happen, and I urge everyone at Westminster to work in a spirit of compromise and co-operation to achieve that. That way, the country can move on. Instead of that, however, today we see a First Minister who, once again, is focusing on her own priorities, rummaging around to create a shopping list of continued constitutional initiatives, however weak and divisive.

There is a big difference between now and 10 years ago. Then, the request for a section 30 order, which led to our once-in-a-lifetime independence referendum in 2014, was supported in this place with the votes of all the political parties here represented. We all agreed then that the question deserved to be answered. That was the process then.

No such coalition exists for more constitutional politics today. For the majority of Scotland, the last decade of constitutional politics and division has been more than enough. The majority of the parties here believe that by using the existing powers of this Parliament and the potential of our

people, we can succeed. We believe in disavowing more constitutional division and focusing all our energy on things that we all agree are important: delivering better education, health and economic growth for Scotland now.

I am afraid that the depressing reality is this: independence, and the means to try to deliver it, is the SNP's central purpose. For the SNP, it is a prerequisite—the essential step to Scotland being all that it can be. The SNP simply does not believe that we can succeed as we are. Nicola Sturgeon confirmed that again today. She baldly stated that the devolution settlement is, in her words, “utterly inadequate”.

No, First Minister, it is not. But that makes the choice clear. Scotland has had enough of constitutional politics and division. With the SNP, more of that is utterly and clearly inevitable. We say: no more. Enough is enough.

The First Minister: I fear that that was a lot of sound and fury, signifying not very much at all.

Jackson Carlaw referred to “a dark cloud”. May I point out to him that there is, right now, a dark cloud over Scotland? It is not in the name of the majority of the Scottish people, and devolution is incapable of protecting Scotland from it. That dark cloud is Brexit.

I can understand—I really can—why the Tories want to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that this Brexit mess is not happening, because it shines a very, very harsh light on both the ideology and the incompetence of the Conservative Party, but it is not fair or good enough to expect Scotland to pretend that Brexit is not happening. Nor is it good enough for Jackson Carlaw to say, in effect, to Scotland, “Wheesh!” about it all, “Don't say anything.”

Given the damage that all of us—even the Tories, in their hearts—know Brexit will do to this country, we have a duty to protect those of us who live in Scotland now and generations to come in Scotland from it and to find a way of building a future that is better and more prosperous and that keeps us at the heart of Europe. That is what my statement today is focused on doing.

Jackson Carlaw seems to be saying that there is nothing wrong with the status quo, although it has not protected and cannot protect Scotland from Brexit. Murdo Fraser seems to take a different view. Only a couple of days ago, he was saying that the current system has to change and was putting forward proposals for change—proposals that, as it happens, I do not agree with but, credit to him, they were proposals for change.

I will end my answer on a note of—again—attempted consensus. The Scottish Conservatives take the view—and I respect this—that

independence is not the right way of fixing what is broken about our current system. If it is not, in their view, let them bring forward the proposals for change that they think are right. That is the open offer that we make to the Conservatives today. Over the days, weeks and months that lie ahead, we will find out whether the Conservatives really have any interest in protecting Scotland, or whether all that the Scottish Conservatives will ever do, when their Westminster bosses tell them to jump, is ask, “How high?”

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I add the support of the Scottish Labour Party to the First Minister's comments on the shooting of Lyra McKee and the Sri Lanka terror attacks.

Timing is everything in politics, and the timing of this statement is nothing to do with where we are in the chaos of Brexit. It has nothing to do with where the polls are on the creation of a separate Scottish state. In other words, it has nothing to do with where Abraham Lincoln's “public sentiment” is on the falling demand for a rerun of the 2014 referendum. The timing of the statement has everything to do with the First Minister's party conference taking place in just three days' time. The First Minister is using this parliamentary platform as a party platform and, in doing that, she is devaluing the office that she holds.

Responsible political leadership means that I will work with the First Minister on stopping a no-deal Brexit. It means that in the event of Brexit, we will act to ensure that powers are repatriated to the right level of Government, and I will continue to argue for more powers for this Parliament. However, responsible leadership also means getting out of Parliament and listening to, and thereby better understanding, the daily lived experiences of people across Scotland.

The First Minister knows that this debate is a distraction from the real and serious problems that Scotland faces: a low-pay economy, exhausted public services and one in four children living in poverty. What is worse is that the First Minister knows fine well that there is no evidence whatsoever that the people of Scotland want another independence referendum, and that is no wonder when the chaos of Brexit throws into sharp relief the challenges of leaving a political and economic union.

Despite her protestations, is the First Minister today not plainly putting the interests of her party before the interests of this country?

The First Minister: On the issue of timing, I am prepared to bet that given that the European Council agreed an extension to the UK's EU membership the week after this Parliament went into recess, if I had not offered to make a statement about the implications of Brexit, the

Opposition would have been demanding that I did so. Equally, had I chosen to go to my party conference and say what I have just said here today, the Opposition would have been queuing up to accuse me of disrespecting Parliament. That is the reality.

On the substantive issues, as I said a moment ago, I understand why the Conservatives want to pretend that this Brexit mess is not happening. I do not understand why that is the case for Labour, and as an aside, nor will I ever understand why Labour seems to support independence for countries all over the world, but opposes it so strongly for its own country here in Scotland.

Where I agree with Richard Leonard is on two things. I absolutely agree about testing public opinion. Of course, the last test of public opinion in Scotland was a by-election in this city, just a week or so ago. The SNP won it with an increased vote, the Labour vote went down and independence-supporting parties won a majority of the vote. There are plenty of tests of public opinion that I am happy to trade with Richard Leonard.

The substantive issue of powers for this Parliament comes back to the heart of my premise today. Nobody with the interests of Scotland at heart—and I believe that that is everybody in this chamber—can look at the situation and conclude that it is working for Scotland. We face being taken out of the European Union against our will, with all of the consequences that flow from that. Surely, we must come together and decide what to do in response.

My view, as Richard Leonard and everybody knows, is that we should become a normal independent country like the other independent countries of the European Union, and come together to work with them on the basis of equality. If Richard Leonard believes that that is not the best future, he should come forward, not just with a vague call for more powers, but to sit and talk to us about the specific powers that we think that this Parliament should have. That offer is open to Richard Leonard, just as it is open to Jackson Carlaw and those in other parties in this chamber.

The question for the parties that oppose independence, as they have every right to do, is this: are they going to rise to the challenge of bringing forward real proposals about how we put things right and ensure that this country, in the future, cannot have decisions that damage our interests imposed on us by Westminster? That is the question, and we will see over the coming weeks whether other parties in this chamber can rise to that challenge.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): With fellow members, the Scottish Greens pay our

respects to Lyra McKee. Our thoughts are with her family and friends, and with all who have been affected by the shocking bombings in Sri Lanka.

Greens believe that Scotland's future should be in the hands of Scotland, as an independent nation at the heart of Europe. The Brexit shambles confirms our belief that we would be far better off governing ourselves. Therefore, we welcome the First Minister's statement today.

Support for independence grew over the course of the previous referendum campaign in part due to the breadth of inspiring visions of what our nation could be. The economic vision that is currently being considered by the Scottish National Party looks more like the failed model of the United Kingdom than the bold vision for independence that the Greens believe in. Therefore, my question to the First Minister is this: will the citizens assembly, which we welcome, inform the prospectus that is put forward by the Government in the referendum, and will the offer that is put to the people of Scotland be one that is shaped by the people of Scotland?

The First Minister: I welcome the support of the Greens for the statement today, and I welcome their support for Scotland becoming an independent country. Actually, what has just been demonstrated is the essence of independence. People can have different views on policies and on the direction of the country, but the key point that unites us is that those decisions should lie in the hands of the Scottish people and should not be imposed on us by Westminster. That is the reality that independent countries all over the world take for granted.

On the citizens assembly, as I said in my statement, we will discuss the remit and operation of that with other parties, if other parties are willing to have that discussion. That is very much about opening the process up to people who are not politicians—a representative section of the Scottish population who can start to consider these big questions about the future of our country. I hope that the Greens will take part in that in the spirit in which it is intended. The issues that we are discussing are not easy and there is no inevitability about them, but all of us—withstanding the differences of opinion that we have, which are valid in any democracy—can try to come together and see whether we can find areas of agreement and consensus.

Particularly now, given all that has happened in the past three years, there is a real responsibility on politicians not to put aside those things in which we believe passionately but to come together to find a consensus, notwithstanding those passionate disagreements. I am willing to do that, I trust the Greens will be willing to do that and I hope that, once they have had some opportunity

to think about the proposal and reflect on it, the other parties will be willing to do that as well.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): My thoughts are with the friends and family of Lyra McKee, and also those who have been affected by atrocities in recent days across the world.

The First Minister pleads for consensus, but how can we take seriously her proposals about consensus on the issue of more powers when John Swinney, who is sitting right next to her and who was a member of the Smith commission, trashed that commission within minutes of its report being published? How can we take seriously the SNP's pleas for a consensus when it treats a well-established process like that?

In her statement today, the First Minister has not done the one decent thing that people in Scotland want her to do, which is to make it stop and take her campaign for independence off the table. With all the division and chaos of Brexit, with all the wounds still open from the previous independence campaign, with all the problems with schools, hospitals and social care, the last thing that this country needs is to repeat the mistakes of Brexit. The last thing that this country needs is more division and chaos, which is what would surely come with a new independence campaign. Will the First Minister listen to Scotland? Will she just make it stop?

The First Minister: The first part of Willie Rennie's question was such an utter mischaracterisation of what John Swinney said and did that I will not engage seriously with it.

There is a contradiction—some would say “hypocrisy”, but I will stick with “contradiction”—at the heart of Willie Rennie's position. I know that he opposes independence, and that is absolutely fine. The issue is not about his or my views but about who decides. Willie Rennie thinks that the people of the UK should have the chance to change their minds on Brexit, and I agree with that.

However, Willie Rennie is adamantly opposed—no matter all that has changed in the past few years—to the people of Scotland getting the chance to change their minds on independence. *[Interruption.]* Willie Rennie is saying that that is because he opposes independence and Brexit, but that is like a Brexiteer saying, “I don't want people having a second referendum on Brexit, because they might take a decision that I disagree with.” Willie Rennie, the Brexiteer, strikes in this chamber. It is not about the views of politicians but those of the people. Until Willie Rennie can somehow reconcile the contradiction at the heart of his argument, I am not sure that many people in Scotland will take his views on that seriously.

I will repeat to Willie Rennie the offer that I have made to other parties. He does not think that

independence is the right way forward, but—surely even more than Jackson Carlaw—he cannot defend the situation in which Scotland faces being ripped out of the European Union against our will.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Federalism!

The First Minister: Mike Rumbles is shouting, “Federalism”. Fine. He should come forward, sit down with us and let us discuss that. But do you know what? Federalism has been talked about in the UK for 100 years or more, and we have not yet found the UK Government that will deliver it. That is the difference between federalism and independence: federalism depends on a UK Government delivering it; independence depends on the people of Scotland taking that decision for themselves.

The Presiding Officer: All the party leaders have had a chance to speak, so we now need to make speedy progress through the remaining 25 or so members who wish to ask a question. *[Interruption.]* Was that a groan? I call Keith Brown, to be followed by Adam Tomkins.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): A former Tory MP made the statement that if a union of free members sought to punish one of its members for wanting to leave it, the union would lose its claim to moral legitimacy. A Tory minister said that, “Once you've hit the iceberg”—the iceberg being Brexit—“you're all in it together.”

In that context, does the First Minister agree that Scotland has bigger things to deal with, and that the parties in this Parliament need to rise above the vicious and vacuous party in-fighting that we see at Westminster and the unfolding disaster of the UK Government's handling of Brexit? Not least among the things to deal with are the stability and prosperity of Scotland and its future as an independent nation in the EU.

The First Minister: The comment from an unnamed Tory—I am not surprised that they were unnamed—that we should all hit the iceberg together says a lot about the mindset of the Conservatives with regard to Scotland. Nobody in the UK should want to hit an iceberg and, in Scotland, we should do everything that we can to prevent any part of the UK hitting one. However, if the only option is to hit an iceberg, we in Scotland should consider how to get off the boat, rather than sailing into it.

There is a view, which surely extends across all parties here, that we can do better than this right now. We might have different views on how to do it, but we should not accept the situation in which Scotland's fate is decided by Westminster against the democratic wishes of the people of Scotland.

If those on the Tory benches—and Labour and Liberal Democrat members—believe that the Scottish people do not want independence, why are they so scared to ask them the question? That is the question. Let the Scottish people decide. If that were to be the case, I am confident that the Scottish people would decide for Scotland to be a normal, equal, independent country that is able to play its full part in the EU and stop the damage to this and future generations that Brexit will undoubtedly do.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): The First Minister said that we will not squander valuable time. She also said that her Government will shortly introduce a framework bill to this Parliament, paving the way for an unwanted second independence referendum, and that her Government will do that without first seeking a section 30 order. As she said, a section 30 order would be necessary to put beyond doubt the legality of any future independence referendum, yet she proposes now to act without one.

Therefore, my question to her is: how is plunging Scotland into yet more constitutional wrangling about legislative competence and constitutional process a sensible use of parliamentary time? We lost weeks over the failed UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill. Now we face losing months over an indyref 2 framework bill. How is that doing anything other than squandering valuable time?

The First Minister: Adam Tomkins argued that the continuity bill was not within the legislative competence of this Parliament when it was introduced. The Supreme Court took a very different view. It was only because Westminster subsequently changed the law that parts of that bill were then found to be incompetent. For all his undoubted expertise on those matters, I am not sure that we should be listening too closely to Adam Tomkins on issues of legislative competence.

I have no doubt that the bill that we will propose will be within legislative competence. If there is to be an independence referendum, we require to legislate for that, as we did in 2014. In 2014, we got a section 30 and then we legislated. This time, I propose that we do it the other way around. Why are we doing that? So that we protect the ability of Scotland to avoid Brexit. If we cannot do that through our efforts to stop the whole of the UK leaving the EU, Scotland must have the opportunity to protect itself from the damage that Brexit will do—damage to our economy, to our public services and to the opportunities and horizons of this and future generations. I do not call that squandering time. I call that standing up for vital Scottish interests.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Not a single patient will be treated better or quicker as a result of the statement. Not a single family will be lifted out of poverty and not a single child will receive a better education—the issue that is supposed to be the First Minister's top priority. We have powers over all those areas, so when will we hear a half-hour statement and see rushed legislation from Nicola Sturgeon on those issues? What has been sidelined from the planned legislative programme to deal with Nicola Sturgeon's real priority of independence?

The First Minister: I will be here again tomorrow at 12 noon for 45 minutes, answering questions on health, education, justice, the economy or anything that the Opposition wants to ask me about.

I disagree with Neil Findlay on his central premise about the impact of the decisions that we take now on patients who rely on our NHS and on children who rely on our schools. If we allow the damage of Brexit to happen to this country, we will face a smaller economy, reduced revenues, a shrinking population and narrowed horizons for this and the next generation. That will hamper the ability, not just of this Scottish Government, but of Scottish Governments to come, to protect our health service, our economy and our public services. That is why we must act.

It is not this Government that needs to be reminded about the day job. We do that day in and day out. Substantial policy work means that more than a dozen substantial pieces of legislation are before this Parliament. By contrast, the Westminster Government has produced not one piece of non-Brexit legislation, the Queen's speech is indefinitely postponed and the only policy idea of recent times—the one about no-fault evictions and housing—the Scottish Government has already implemented. We get on with the day job every single day and we will continue to do so.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): As the First Minister mentioned, the Westminster system is so broken that even Murdo Fraser admitted this week that big parts of it should be abolished. Given that most of this chamber will be in agreement that the current system is not working for Scotland, does that not demonstrate how important it is for all parties to come forward with ideas on how to fix it?

The First Minister: Yes, it does.

There will be a lot of sound and fury in this chamber about these issues today, tomorrow and no doubt on many occasions. In a democracy, that is as it should be. However, I repeat the point that I made in my statement. We also have a duty to try to come together to get over those disagreements and to see whether there is

common ground. It will be very telling in the next days and weeks whether any of the other parties are prepared to do that. The offer is there; it is open and sincere. The other parties should bring forward their proposals. If they think that my prospectus for Scotland is wrong, they should bring forward their proposals and let us see how much common ground can emerge from that.

However, if all they have to offer people in Scotland is a broken status quo in which Scotland can be ripped out of the EU against our will with all the damage that that does, they should expect the process of change to pass them by completely, because support for independence will continue to grow.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

The First Minister mentioned in her statement the 62 per cent of Scots who voted for the UK to remain in the EU, a figure that she describes as an “overwhelming majority”. The latest poll on support for independence, commissioned by her party colleague Angus Robertson, shows that an even more overwhelming majority of Scots support the union and reject independence. Given that the First Minister is previously on record as saying that she would not pursue another referendum unless there was demonstrable public support for independence, why is she now proposing to take us down the route of further division?

The First Minister: The party manifesto in 2016, on which I was elected as First Minister, said that if Scotland was taken out of the European Union against our will, the people of Scotland should have the option to choose independence. We are not yet out of the European Union and I hope that we will not be taken out of the European Union, but if we are, then, in my view, the mandate in that manifesto should be honoured and people in Scotland should have the right to choose. If Murdo Fraser is so sure that Scotland would choose not to be independent, that again begs the question that I asked earlier: why are the Tories so reluctant to allow people in Scotland to have that choice?

I have mentioned Murdo Fraser a couple of times today and I will praise him again, which would be utter death to his career prospects if they had not probably pretty much died some time ago. However, I give credit to Murdo Fraser because he accepts that things as they are are not acceptable—they are not good enough. As it happens, I do not think that his proposal, which is to put more powers in some new chamber in Westminster, is the answer. I think that the answer is to bring powers to this chamber in Scotland. That is fine; we have different views.

However, given that Murdo Fraser accepts that constitutional change is needed, I hope that he will persuade his party to take part in the process that

I have set out today and come forward with its own proposals—the one that Murdo Fraser has already put forward and others. In that way, perhaps we can build some consensus on how this Parliament can be equipped with powers that allow us to grow our economy, better protect our public services and, crucially, grow our population, because the Tory approach to migration at Westminster is the biggest threat to this country’s prosperity that we face. I hope that Murdo Fraser will prevail in his party for once and get some common sense into them over the next period.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): In 2014, Ruth Davidson said:

“It’s disingenuous to say No means out and Yes means in, when actually the opposite is true. No means we stay in. We are members of the European Union.”

First Minister, that has been shown to be completely untrue. Is it not the case that we simply cannot stand by and watch the dysfunctional Westminster system ruin Scotland’s future?

The First Minister: The reality that those who were in the no campaign in 2014 do not like to have pointed out to them is that they told Scotland that the way to protect our membership of the European Union was to vote against independence, yet here we are, finding that, because we are not independent, we face being taken out of the European Union and that our future is being determined by a dozen countries that are of the same size or smaller than us, with the UK out of the room. That is the reality that we face.

Adam Tomkins is not listening right now, but it was he who said, in 2014, that there was very little chance of the UK voting to leave the European Union. That is the “material change” in circumstances that has happened since 2014, and that is why people in Scotland should have the ability to choose whether they want to be part of Brexit Britain, with all the damage that comes with that, or whether they prefer to have a future as an independent country that is part of the European family, building those relationships on the basis of equality and building our prosperity on that basis, as well. I think that, given the choice, the people of Scotland will choose the latter—to become a normal independent country.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

The First Minister cannot ask for genuine dialogue when she is already setting out her direction of travel. This is a “My way or the highway” statement. She cannot expect people to engage in honest dialogue in a citizens assembly when she has already stated that she will hold an independence referendum before the end of the parliamentary session. She is ignoring the settled will of the Scottish people and creating further chaos and uncertainty. Will she remove that threat

in order to allow all parties to engage openly and honestly on what is best for our country?

The First Minister: I will respond to Rhoda Grant in a very genuine way. If she had listened to my statement, she would have heard me say—I will say it again—that, if we are to protect Scotland's option to choose, we have to put the plans for that in place in this parliamentary term. That is why I have set out the plans for legislation today.

I have also openly invited other parties to come forward with their proposals. If we could agree on change that could be made more quickly and in a different way, I would be open minded on that. That offer is made in a genuine way, and it is for the other parties to decide whether they wish to engage with it. I hope that the Labour Party will do so, but I am less confident about the Tories. I am pretty confident that the Greens will engage with us, and I hope that the Liberal Democrats will do so, as well.

In a democracy, we should not expect any of us to put to one side or abandon the principles that we hold dear. However, notwithstanding those deeply held convictions and the differences between us, the public should expect us, as politicians, to try to come together to see where the common ground is. I am willing to do that, but we will make progress on that only if the other parties are also willing, so time will tell.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the First Minister confirm that the significant point in her very welcome announcement is that, while we await any remote sense of clarity on Brexit from the Tory UK Government at Westminster, in contrast, here at Holyrood, we can begin preparations now for a referendum on Scotland's future, in order to keep our options open? Would a sensible and reasonable Government of any persuasion not do so in any such circumstances?

The First Minister: It is incumbent on any Government to act in a way that best protects the interests of the country that it serves, and my Government will continue to seek to do so. The Brexit situation is not of the Government's choosing—or of the choosing of the Parliament or, indeed, the country—but we have to respond to it in a way that protects our interests as best we can, and what I have set out today does that. It keeps open the option of this country's having the right to choose, within this session of Parliament, a different future to that offered by Brexit, in line with the mandate that we have. It also opens up space for others to come forward with different suggestions. I hope that all of us in the Parliament will move forward on that basis.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): The First Minister wants to establish a citizens

assembly to help us to find consensus. Does she really think that that is possible when her nationalist agenda is driven by grievance and division?

The First Minister: I have to say that a sense of “grievance and division” dripped from every syllable that came out of Maurice Golden's mouth there.

Over the next period, we will find out whether there is any willingness on the part of all the parties in the chamber to try to find agreement. I am willing to do that, and, as I have said many times before, the offer to other parties is there. All parties should be enthusiastic about the prospect of a citizens assembly and should be prepared to discuss the details of it, because it will involve people from across Scotland helping us to shape the decisions that we take on behalf of the country.

Notwithstanding the tone of that question, I hope that, when the Conservatives have had the time for calm reflection and have got over having to talk again about Brexit—which I know they hate so much, for obvious reasons—we will find them, Labour and the Liberal Democrats coming to the table to see whether we can find common ground amid the disagreements that we have.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Unlike some others, I very much welcome the proposal for a citizens assembly. I echo the comment of an Irish citizen, who said that having such an assembly

“got balanced and truthful information out among the people of Ireland”.

Can the First Minister assure Parliament that that will be the case with the citizens assembly in Scotland and that lessons will be learned on how not to conduct ourselves in the way that has been demonstrated so disastrously by Brexiteers in the collapsing Westminster system?

The First Minister: Yes, I give those assurances. We will seek to discuss with others, and with the Parliament as a whole, the remit and the operation of the citizens assembly.

It will not surprise the Parliament to hear that I think that the experience of the 2014 referendum was very different from the experience of the 2016 referendum. We had a prospectus that people agreed or disagreed with, but people had a wealth of detail with which to inform themselves before the decision was taken in 2014. That detail was completely absent from the Brexit referendum.

I think that we can go even further and use a citizens assembly, among other things, to really understand the detail and the information that people want to have in order to make truly informed choices about the future of the country,

as well as to lay a foundation so that, whatever decisions we ultimately take as a country, people feel a sense of engagement and buy-in, so that we can move forward in a unified manner.

It is about trying to do things in a markedly different way from the whole Brexit process, which has caused so much division and angst. I think that we can rise to that challenge in Scotland, and I hope that all parties will help us to ensure that we do.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): People in Scotland do not want a second independence referendum. Why is the First Minister making the pursuit of independence her number 1 priority when there are record numbers of children in poverty, when people are working in two or three jobs because of low pay and when patients are stranded on national health service waiting lists, waiting for treatment?

The First Minister: James Kelly asserts that people in Scotland do not want the choice of independence instead of Brexit. I just do not think that he has the evidence for that claim.

He also asks me why I think that that choice is important when children are living in poverty. An increasing number of children are living in poverty because of the welfare cuts that are being imposed by a Tory Government that Scotland did not vote for. That is one reason for independence. He talks about people on low pay. Of course, employment law remains reserved to a Government in Westminster that the people of Scotland did not vote for. Bringing powers back to this Parliament is how, or partly how, we will resolve and address the challenges that James Kelly has outlined.

Although James Kelly and his colleagues do not support independence, I hope that, in the spirit of the question that he has just asked me, we will see Labour come forward with proposals. It has said—I have already welcomed this today—that it now favours the devolution of employment law. If it had favoured that during the Smith commission, we might already be some way forward on that. Nevertheless, let us hear more proposals from Labour, and we might find that there is actually more agreement between the SNP and Labour than any of us likes to admit.

For the Labour Party's supporters, seeing it side with the SNP on a few things would make a welcome change from seeing it side with the Tories on most things.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Even many Tories are alarmed at the prospect of an extreme Brexiteer such as Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister. Is that not another example of why it is essential that this Parliament keep Scotland's options open in the

face of a clearly broken Westminster system that could inflict even more damage?

The First Minister: When I set out the implications and consequences of Brexit for Scotland, I did not factor in the prospect of somebody like Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister. If that happens—there is apparently now a distinct possibility of its happening—the consequences that I outlined today would get even worse for Scotland. Yes—I do think that that makes the case for Scotland being independent, taking charge of our own decisions and being in control of our own future all the stronger.

Interestingly, I have read voices from within the Scottish Conservative Party saying that, in the event of Boris Johnson becoming Prime Minister, the Scottish Conservative Party should become independent from the UK Conservative Party. It seems that independence is good enough for the Scottish Conservative Party. Why on earth would it want to deny the people of Scotland the same opportunity?

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Given that the Brexit vote will lead to more powers being transferred to this Parliament and in light of the fact that the Scottish Government is not using all the powers that it already has—for example, it has handed back welfare powers to the Department for Work and Pensions—how can the First Minister seriously contend that the status quo is broken and one answer is further devolution?

The First Minister: Powers have been taken away from the Parliament as a result of the Brexit process. Frankly, it ill behoves the Tories to deny that that is the case; with the exception of the Tories, the Parliament was unanimous in opposing that Brexit power grab. I take the view that we should have more powers in this Parliament so that we can take our own decisions, which is better than having those powers in the hands of Conservatives who Scotland, by and large, does not vote for. I hope that we will hear proposals to that effect from the Scottish Conservatives.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): In its desperation to stay in power, the Westminster Government has proved itself to be profoundly unworthy of trust in negotiation. Considering the recent direct attacks on devolution and the deep inadequacies of the joint ministerial council structure, what safeguards and conditions has the Scottish Government considered to ensure that talks with the UK Government are conducted reasonably, respectfully and without the risk of undermining Scotland's interests?

The First Minister: Right now, there are no assurances of that, I am sorry to say. I do not want to speak for the Welsh First Minister, but I am

pretty sure that he and his predecessor would say the same thing: we can have talks with the UK Government until we are blue in the face, but it does not listen and it does not act in a way that protects or advances Scotland's interests. That is an example of the democratic deficit that I spoke about. The views on Brexit of not just the Scottish people but the Scottish Parliament and the views on the best way forward of not just the Government but a cross-party consensus in the Parliament have been cast aside. In my view, that has underlined and illustrated strongly the need for the Parliament to have more powers, to have more control over the decisions that shape our future and ultimately, of course, to be an independent country.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The First Minister has confirmed that, if Scotland is taken out of the EU by a failed Westminster system, we will progress to an independence referendum before the end of the parliamentary session in 2021. How will she take forward the mandate that was given to the Government in 2016 to ensure that Scotland can vote to secure its re-emergence as an independent sovereign state?

The First Minister: As I have set out in my statement today, we will introduce legislation to protect the right for Scotland to have that choice within this parliamentary session. At an appropriate time, we will seek the transfer of power from Westminster that would allow us to apply it to a choice on independence. Whatever our views on independence, the fundamental point is this: if Scotland is faced, as it is, with Brexit against its will, Scotland should have the choice as to whether it wants that or to choose the alternative of being a sovereign independent country that is able to play full part in the European Union. That is the fundamental issue here. It should not be for any of us in the Parliament to determine that issue; it should be for the people of Scotland.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): The First Minister has said that she is open minded and looking to build consensus and agreement. If she is genuine in her sentiments, will she be open to dropping this bid for a second independence referendum during this parliamentary session?

The First Minister: I have said that I am open minded to people coming forward with proposals for change. If we can have serious and substantial proposals that deliver perhaps not all the change that I want to see but change that will help to protect the Parliament, I am open minded on that. I say that without preconditions. The onus is on the Conservatives; will they come forward in good faith and have that discussion? If they do, they will

find me willing to have that discussion in good faith.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): It is less than five years since I spent weeks on the Smith commission engaging in good faith with all the parties here to find agreement on constitutional and procedural change. That agreement included significant tax and welfare powers, yet the First Minister has handed some of those powers back and refused to use others to tackle poverty and inequality. If she can organise another independence referendum by 2021, why will it take until 2022 to pay low-income families the income supplement that she promised them? Should she not rise to the challenge of using the powers that we all agreed in 2014 before we trust her to sit down and discuss what new powers we might need and want now?

The First Minister: We will bring forward our proposals on the low-income supplement in June, which is what we said we would do. It does not do Iain Gray's case any good for him to stand up and say that we have handed powers back when that is not true. There are carers across Scotland right now who have extra money in their pockets because of our use of welfare powers. There are low-income families who are getting the best start grant when they have a child because of our use of the welfare powers, and the process of completing that will benefit low-income individuals and families the length and breadth of the country.

Labour has changed its mind since the Smith commission met. In the Smith commission, Labour firmly opposed the devolution of employment law, but it has now changed its mind, which I welcome. We are in changed circumstances. One of the biggest risks that our country now faces is Westminster policy on immigration, which threatens to put—[*Interruption.*] Someone is saying "Tory policy", but Jeremy Corbyn seems to agree with Theresa May on ending free movement. That will send our population into decline. We are in different circumstances, and that is why we have to look afresh at the powers that our Parliament has. I believe Labour when it says that it has ideas on that, so let us bring forward those ideas and see what consensus we are able to build.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): As the First Minister will be aware, the desire for independence is born not out of Brexit alone but out of anger at decisions that are taken at Westminster by a Government that we did not elect and which are increasing poverty, food bank use and inequality in Scotland. Does she agree that it is those issues, along with Brexit, that underlie the need for Scotland to have all the powers to end poverty and for Scotland to be independent?

The First Minister: Yes, I agree very strongly. Brexit has illustrated many of those points sharply and it has illustrated the democratic deficit whereby Scotland can vote overwhelmingly to stay in the EU and yet still face being removed, with all the consequences that flow from that.

The essence of independence is not just about Brexit but about putting decisions about the future of our country into the hands of people who live here in Scotland. That is what happens in countries all over the world and that is what should happen in Scotland, too, so that we can work with other countries in the British isles on the basis of equality but not have decisions that damage children and the interests of this country imposed on us by Westminster. That is why I want Scotland to become an independent country.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In her statement, the First Minister said very clearly that the politics of Brexit have been highly divisive. Does she accept that one reason for that division is the fact that the public feel that the result of their vote has not been implemented, and does she accept that the First Minister would be falling into exactly the same trap by running a second independence referendum to try to overrule what was a very decisive vote in 2014?

The First Minister: I am slightly confused by Liz Smith's question when she says that, because we have not yet left the EU, the decision of the country has not been implemented. The decision of Scotland, which is the country that all of us in the Parliament are here to represent, was to remain in the EU. So far, that decision is being implemented and I hope that it continues to be so.

A legitimate point that I have heard the Conservatives, including Liz Smith, make many times is that, although the majority in Scotland voted to remain in the EU, more than 30 per cent voted to leave the EU and we should do more to understand and respect that. I agree, and that is a responsibility that is on all of us. However, I never hear the Tories say that there is a need to understand the 45 per cent who voted for Scottish independence, and the growing number of people who, in the light of Brexit, want Scotland to be independent. Things have changed, and they have not changed for the better for Scotland in the UK. That is why it is right to look again at the powers of the Parliament. It is right to become an independent country, to give people in Scotland that choice, and not simply to sit back passively while Brexit—a policy that we did not vote for—does untold damage to the interests of the country now and for many decades to come.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): I welcome the First Minister's proposal for a citizens assembly. I believe that it is a concept that could have a wider applicability in the future. What steps

will the Scottish Government take to ensure that the assembly captures the widest possible range of voices from within Scotland—particularly from minority communities and communities of disadvantage and poverty, whose voices are all too often not heard loud enough in the debates that we have in the chamber and in the country as a whole?

The First Minister: That is an important point to raise. By its very nature, the citizens assembly model works when it is as representative of the country as possible. It is important to stress that that does not simply mean being representative of the different sides of a constitutional argument: it means being representative of the glorious diversity of the country. That will be an important part in constituting the citizens assembly.

I do not want to say any more about the detail, because it is important that we take time to discuss with other parties and stakeholders how it will best be taken forward, but I give an assurance that that diversity will be very much at the heart of what we seek to do.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Ever since it was announced that the First Minister would be making this important statement, the Tory and Labour parties have been squawking about the Government getting on with the day job. For the avoidance of doubt, will the First Minister set out what actions the Government is taking to deliver for the people of Scotland?

The First Minister: We do the day job every single day. This month alone, we have extended free personal care to the under-65s, we have introduced the new ground-breaking and world-leading Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, we have signed contracts on the Laurencekirk junction and the Maybole bypass, and we have invested millions of pounds in schemes to tackle fuel poverty and to fund low-carbon initiatives. In recent days, we have invested money to make sure that children do not go hungry during the school holidays. Just this week, I think, we extended free tuition to European students who live in Scotland. The list goes on and on. Getting on with the day job is our responsibility: we will continue to discharge our responsibilities day to day.

The debate today, however, is in fact about the day job. When you listen to the Tories, Labour and the Liberals, it is almost as though they think that we should be oblivious to the Brexit juggernaut that is coming towards us. Our sitting passively and allowing it to hit us will have implications for our economy, our population and our revenues. All that, and the ability of this and future Scottish Governments to do the day job effectively, will be affected. It is very important that we do not let that happen, and that we allow people in Scotland the

choice to have a better and more prosperous future.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): On getting on with the day job, a few weeks ago we learned that Scotland's police officers are chasing criminals in cars held that are together with duct tape. [*Interruption.*] Why is—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Liam Kerr: Why is endless constitutional wrangling—and using resources to draft legislation that might not even be competent and which hinges on an event that might not even occur—more important to the First Minister than resourcing police constables on the front line?

The First Minister: This Government is increasing the police budget. We have just agreed a pay award for our police officers, which is—according to the Scottish Police Federation—the best police pay award in Scotland in 20 years. The commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in London described the UK Government's pay award to its police officers as

“a punch on the nose”.

There is a bit of contrast for Liam Kerr.

It is not this Government that needs to be reminded about the day job. At Westminster right now—this is a point that the Tories should reflect on—there is not a single piece of non-Brexit legislation before the House of Commons. There is no policy agenda on any issue except Brexit, and they are making a complete and utter hash of it. The Queen's speech will apparently not happen, because the Tories do not think that they can get it through the House of Commons. By contrast, we have a policy reform programme under way, and a dozen or more pieces of substantial legislation before the Scottish Parliament.

We will get on with delivering on health, education, the economy and justice. We will also do everything that we can to protect the interests of Scotland from the actions of the incompetent Tory Westminster Government.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): There is a contradiction in the First Minister's statement. She talks about there being so much division over Brexit. Does she recognise that, for many, that was the experience and the legacy of the 2014 referendum? When there is little appetite in the country for another referendum in this session of Parliament, is she really prepared to cause greater division in our public discourse by pursuing the bill?

The First Minister: That was not my experience of the 2014 referendum. [*Interruption.*] I accept that other people feel differently. [*Interruption.*] Somebody is saying that that is because others

were on the receiving end of abuse. One need only to go to my social media accounts to see that I am daily on the receiving end of a fair amount of abuse.

What is more important is this: all of us should try to do things better, differently and in a way that accentuates agreement rather than disagreement. The answer to worrying about division or disagreement cannot be simply to ignore the Brexit juggernaut or to suppress the differences of opinion about the future of the country. The answer has to be for all of us to rise to the challenge—to confront the challenges that our country faces in a more unified way. That is why I have made my offer today. I hope that people such as Claire Baker in the Labour Party—who I know wants to consider how we might do things more consensually—will prevail on her party leadership to enter those discussions in the spirit in which they are offered.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The First Minister may have seen comments from the Prime Minister's office today that crumbling Westminster has

“bigger things to deal with”

than Scotland. Will the First Minister join me in reaffirming that the interests of Scotland are—and always will be—at the top of the SNP's agenda?

The First Minister: I have to say that I have some sympathy with the Prime Minister and the UK Government, because there is no denying that the utter mess that they have made of Brexit is a pretty big thing for them to have to deal with. They are certainly not dealing with anything else in the UK—whether in health, education, justice, the economy or anything else. It is a big thing for them to deal with.

However, if I was in the Scottish Tories, I would be despairing at that comment from this morning, because it drips with contempt for Scotland and for the idea that Scotland might not be entirely happy with the direction in which we are being taken by this Brexit-obsessed UK Tory Government. That is a big problem for the Tories, because it backs up the experience that we have had over these past three years, which is that the Tories want Scotland just to wheesht, keep quiet and go along with whatever they want. I do not think that that is right for Scotland. That is the difference between those of us in the SNP and the Conservatives. We think that Scotland should stand up for its own interests and that Scotland should have the right to choose its own future.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): The First Minister asked the question: if the status quo is not fit for purpose, how do we fix it? Does the First Minister not understand that the Liberal Democrats and others in this chamber support a

renewed federal democracy for our United Kingdom, and that her insistence on legislating with the aim of breaking up and dividing our United Kingdom totally undermines her siren calls for reaching agreement with other parties across the chamber?

The First Minister: I accept and respect the longstanding view of the Liberals on federalism. I often wonder why, when the Liberals were in Government at Westminster in recent years, they did not lift a finger to deliver the federal Britain that they claim to back.

I am absolutely willing to sit down with any party in this chamber to talk about our different visions for how we fix what is wrong with our current system. However, the question for those who propose federalism is where is the UK Government that will deliver it? We cannot unilaterally turn the UK into a federal country; it would require the UK Government to act, and no UK Government in the history of the UK has shown any interest in delivering a federal Britain.

The difference with independence is that it is within our control. If the people of Scotland choose to be independent, we do not have to rely on a Westminster Government; it is a decision that we can take for ourselves. Therefore, I will leave Mike Rumbles to continue to beaver away, trying to—at some point—persuade a UK Government to deliver federalism. If he ever manages it, I will be the first to congratulate him.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I welcome the orderly and inclusive path towards a second independence referendum that has been outlined this afternoon. Given that deprived areas tend to have lower electoral turnouts, will the First Minister consider the opportunities that a citizens assembly may present to boost democratic participation in some of our most deprived communities?

The First Minister: Yes. It is not the case that we have no experience of the citizens assembly model in Scotland—the work that we did in advance of establishing Social Security Scotland used a not dissimilar model, although we do not have the same experience as Ireland, for example. I believe that the model could be powerful in engaging people in all our communities in the democratic process and in how they can influence that democratic process, which is one of the reasons why I look forward to discussing with parties how we take it forward.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The First Minister talked about a busy legislative programme. If she wants the framework bill to be on the statute books this year, as she says she does, there is bound to be an effect on that

programme. Which bills or proposed bills are likely to be delayed?

The First Minister: I do not expect it to have an effect on any of the other bills that are before the Scottish Parliament. I am sure that all MSPs across the Parliament are capable of working hard enough to deliver the legislative programme that is before us with another bill added in.

Portfolio Question Time

15:01

Justice and the Law Officers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Time is tight, so we will move on. The next item of business is portfolio question time. As usual, in order to get in as many members as possible, I would like short, succinct questions followed by short, succinct answers.

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

1. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 will change the way in which domestic abuse is tackled. (S5O-03120)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 creates a specific offence that covers not only physical abuse but other forms of psychological abuse and controlling behaviour that were previously difficult to prosecute. The act creates a course of conduct offence for the first time, which will make it easier for the police and prosecutors to investigate and prosecute domestic abuse as a single offence and enable physical, psychological and controlling behaviour by a partner or ex-partner to be prosecuted at the same time.

The 2018 act reflects the fact that children are harmed by domestic abuse by creating a statutory aggravation in relation to children, and it will enable courts for the first time to use a non-harassment order to protect children as well as the adult victim of the offence.

Bruce Crawford: In preparation for changes in the legislation, how much has the Scottish Government provided to Police Scotland in order to support police officers to understand the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships and to help them to recognise the signs of coercive and controlling behaviour?

Humza Yousaf: Bruce Crawford has raised a really important point. As members will know, the legislation came into force at the beginning of the month. That was to allow training on that to take place.

To answer Bruce Crawford's question directly, we gave funding of £825,000 to Police Scotland to support the development of the training of 14,000 police officers and staff. Police Scotland has developed a self-completion e-learning package on the new legislation, which was made available to 22,000 staff.

In addition, the Lord President has committed to ensuring that all members of the judiciary receive training on the 2018 act, and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has developed a package of training for our prosecutors. We have also provided £166,000 to Scottish Women's Aid to develop training on the new offence in the act.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): In response to the Justice Committee's report on the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, the Scottish Government accepted that it was possible that the creation of the new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour could lead to an increased cost for local authorities with an increased demand for criminal justice social work services. Given that the CJSW budget for the previous two years has remained static, will the cabinet secretary confirm that the necessary funding to cope with the anticipated increased costs will be made available to local authorities?

Humza Yousaf: Margaret Mitchell has asked a very important question. It is important to note that we have, of course, ring fenced that budget for local authorities. My conversations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities on the matter are continuing, and we have made additional budgets available for any additional pressures that they may face with the passing of the presumption against short sentences. I will continue those conversations. I am very aware of the budget pressures that might exist but, as I said, my conversations and engagement with the local authorities on the matter are very constructive.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Training is important in tackling domestic abuse—indeed, in some jurisdictions, specialist officers are trained to degree level. What discussions has the cabinet secretary held with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority regarding the possibility of specialist officers receiving higher training to degree level?

Humza Yousaf: Neither Police Scotland nor organisations that represent female victims of domestic abuse, such as Scottish Women's Aid, have raised the need for additional training on top of the training that we have funded and the training that Scottish Women's Aid has provided. In my next conversations with Police Scotland and the organisations that represent victims of domestic abuse, I will certainly raise the issue of further training and take the conversation from there.

Vulnerable Witnesses (Support)

2. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take to support

vulnerable witnesses before, during and after criminal court proceedings. (S5O-03121)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): The Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced measures to support vulnerable witnesses and requires criminal justice agencies to set and monitor standards of service. The Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill aims to improve how child and other vulnerable witnesses give evidence, through the enhanced use of pre-recording.

We are providing £18 million in 2019-20 to fund a range of services that victims and witnesses can access before, during and after criminal proceedings. The victims task force, which I co-chair with the Lord Advocate, is considering additional actions to improve end-to-end support for victims and witnesses throughout the criminal justice process and beyond.

Fulton MacGregor: I welcome the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill, which recently passed stage 2 in the Justice Committee.

I have been contacted by constituents whose children were witnesses and gave evidence in court on a crime of which they were the victims. Although there was a successful conviction, which was very welcome, the families feel that neither the justice system nor the local authority provided the children with emotional support, particularly in the period following the conviction. Will the cabinet secretary advise how children who are both victims and witnesses can be better supported emotionally and helped to better understand the court processes and possible outcomes? Will he consider meeting those families to hear their experiences first hand?

Humza Yousaf: I express my sympathies to those families and particularly the young people who had to go through the court process. From everything that Fulton MacGregor has said, I have no doubt that it would have been a traumatic experience and not easy at all. The matters that he raises are exactly the kinds of issues that the Lord Advocate and I, as co-chairs of the victims task force, are exploring.

As a member of the Justice Committee, Fulton MacGregor will be able to input into the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill, which is going through Parliament. The bill will make a big difference to children who need to go through a court process in the future.

In the first instance, I ask Fulton MacGregor to write to me with the details of the case. I will then judge whether it is appropriate for me, as the justice secretary, to act. I have no fundamental objection to doing so, but the issues might come

under other people's jurisdictions or remits. However, I will look at that case very fairly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I know that you wish to be polite, cabinet secretary, but I ask you to face the microphone so that we can hear your answers.

Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 (Implementation)

3. **Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the way in which the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 has been implemented. (S5O-03122)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 provides local authorities with powers to impose dog control notices when a dog is deemed to be out of control. We are aware that some local authorities have imposed a considerable number of dog control notices, whereas others have not. That might reflect the fact that some local authorities choose to make greater use of informal warnings to dog owners.

As the member will know, the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee is undertaking scrutiny of the 2010 act, and we will carefully consider the committee's findings when the review is complete.

Finlay Carson: Because the 2010 act is not Government legislation, it appears that little has been done to promote it. It is claimed that even police officers do not all know about the dog control legislation that was introduced almost a decade ago. The current law on dangerous dogs and sheep worrying is fragmented between various acts and statutory instruments at devolved and United Kingdom levels. Does the minister agree that we need an all-encompassing bill, with clear powers outlined, to ensure that enforcers and the public are clearly aware of their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to the control of dogs? The 2010 act—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Finlay Carson: —provides the tools to consolidate the legislation and to cover multiple members' bills.

Ash Denham: The member has raised a number of different points. First, on the issue of awareness, the Scottish Government is always very keen to assist with awareness raising. Obviously, the dog control notice system is run by local authorities, but we will be very happy to take part in further awareness-raising work that might be helpful to communities.

As for livestock worrying, we are aware of concerns about the fact that dog control notices

are not generally used for incidents of worrying—or livestock attack, as it is sometimes called—because such incidents are normally dealt with by the police rather than local authority officers. I am sure that the member will be aware of Ms Harper's bill proposal and that it is out for public consultation, and I encourage people to respond to and offer their views on its proposals.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That provides a segue to Emma Harper.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 does not refer specifically to livestock worry or livestock attack; instead, it uses the word “apprehensiveness”, which is not strong enough. Does the minister agree that we need to encourage people to feed into the consultation that she has referred to so that we can get better legislation that better protects our farmers' livestock from attacks by out-of-control dogs?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please, minister.

Ash Denham: The Scottish Government recognises the impact of dog attacks on livestock and we are committed to working with all our partners on tackling the issue. However, I agree with Emma Harper that all those with an interest in the matter should look at her consultation and contribute their views on how livestock can be better protected.

Courts (Support for Breastfeeding Mothers)

5. **Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what support is given to breastfeeding mothers when attending court. (S5O-03124)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): This is an operational matter for the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, which has fully embraced its responsibilities under the Breastfeeding etc (Scotland) Act 2005 by making facilities available in court buildings. Breastfeeding within courtrooms themselves is also welcomed.

More broadly, the member will be aware that the 2005 act makes it a criminal offence to try to stop a woman or prevent her from feeding a child under the age of two in any place to which the public has access and where the child under two is entitled to be. However, although legislation is in place to support public breastfeeding, we recognise that more needs to be done to address the negative cultural attitudes that can undermine that choice, and last summer, we announced an additional £2 million investment for breastfeeding support.

Elaine Smith: As the author of the 2005 act, I am well aware of its provisions. I appreciate that there is policy to accommodate breastfeeding in

courts, but I was recently made aware of the case of a breastfeeding mother cited as a witness who was advised by the fiscal's office that she would not be permitted to bring her baby to court. Does the cabinet secretary agree that clearer, non-conflicting guidance and information must be provided to all breastfeeding mums who have to attend court? Moreover, if it is also considered somehow impractical to support breastfeeding mums on jury duty, should breastfeeding not be added to the list of excusals for such duty?

Humza Yousaf: I do not know the specific case that Elaine Smith is referring to—although, that said, I might do. If she wants to chat to me offline about it, I will see whether I can help address the issue or facilitate a conversation with the SCTS.

There are some complications with regard to courts. In the public area, there must be no bar to a mother wishing to breastfeed; however, conduct in the courtroom itself is the responsibility of the presiding judge or sheriff, and I would also point out that there is a statutory bar on children under 14 being in a courtroom during a criminal trial, except where they are witnesses or a party to proceedings. In addition, a judge will consider the interests of justice and the normal requirements for ensuring proper conduct of proceedings, which might not necessarily be conducive to a small child being in the court environment.

Notwithstanding all that, I fully accept Elaine Smith's point that, particularly as far as jurors are concerned—I think that I know the case that the member is referring to—facilities must and should be made available. If she wants an introduction to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service to facilitate a conversation, I will be more than happy to make it.

Power of Attorney

6. **John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether there is a need for greater accountability to reduce the risk of people abusing power of attorney status. (S5O-03125)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): Arrangements for powers of attorney, which are set out in the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, include protections for those who may be vulnerable. It is for the granter to select someone who they trust to act as their attorney. The office of the public guardian has a statutory duty to investigate reported concerns regarding the actions of a financial attorney, and the relevant local authority has a similar duty in respect of welfare concerns.

The Scottish Government has consulted on aspects of the adults with incapacity legislation. We are working on improvements, including

revision to the current code of practice for attorneys in order to set out as clearly as possible the rights and responsibilities of attorneys as well as the safeguards that are in place to protect individuals and the sanctions that can be imposed for misuse.

John Mason: I feel that the safeguards are not very great. I recently took over power of attorney for my mother, and I now have complete access to do whatever I want with her house and all her other financial investments and so on. I do not even have to return an annual report on what I have done with the money. I do not plan to abuse my mother's money, but there are tremendous possibilities to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have all these witnesses now.

Ash Denham: I am glad that the member made that clarification of his intent.

The arrangements for appointing an attorney, which are set out in the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, make it clear that it is a private matter for the granter of the power to consider who they trust to make decisions on their behalf in future. As it is a private matter, there is no statutory supervision of financial attorneys by the office of the public guardian. The OPG supervises financial guardians, but that is a separate process in which applications are made to the sheriff court. If financial concerns are reported to the public guardian, the financial attorney will have to account for their decisions and actions.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Back in 2017, I wrote to the minister's predecessor on concerns that had been raised with me about the restrictions on who can sign applications for power of attorney. At that stage, Annabelle Ewing confirmed that consultation on changes to adults with incapacity legislation was taking place. Will the minister commit to writing to me with an update on what changes, if any, have been made to the rules on that?

Ash Denham: I am happy to commit to writing to the member with an update on that matter.

Secure Care Units

7. James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met local authorities and the Scottish Prison Service to get an update on secure-unit accommodation. (S5O-03126)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was not quite the question as drafted, but it was close.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Scottish Government officials are in regular contact with key organisations that are

involved in the delivery of secure care in Scotland. Officials met local authorities regarding the matter on 5 November 2018 and 21 January 2019, and they met Social Work Scotland on 19 February 2019. There have been no meetings with the Scottish Prison Service, as it has no involvement in the provision of secure care, and we have had no discussions with it on that specific matter.

James Kelly: The latest update states that there are no vacant beds in Scotland's five secure units. What would happen over the next 48 hours if a young person was remanded and the judge recommended that they be placed in a care unit?

Humza Yousaf: My understanding is that a secure emergency bed is available, although that of course has limitations—it is for short-term use, of normally only 72 hours. However, James Kelly is absolutely right to ask the question. The Government, and in particular the Deputy First Minister, has been taking forward the issue after the tragic case of William Lindsay or Brown, which the member knows about.

As James Kelly will appreciate, the issue is complex. With the exception of the City of Edinburgh Council's provision, the secure units are run by independent charities, so they have to be kept at approximately 90 per cent capacity because, otherwise, as many of those independent charities have said, they would not be able to sustain the units. We have to find a balance between keeping space available, which is important, and making sure that the secure units are sustainable. I expect an options paper from officials to come to me and another Government minister shortly. Once we have an update to provide, I will ensure that James Kelly is made aware of it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will squeeze in question 8, which is from Alex Cole-Hamilton.

New Age of Criminal Responsibility

8. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what the impact on the justice system will be of a new age of criminal responsibility of 12 coming into force. (S5O-03127)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Raising the age to 12 through the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill will remove children who are under that age from the criminal justice system. That means that children under 12 will no longer be arrested or charged and nor will they be referred to the children's hearings system on offence grounds. However, where children have engaged in serious harmful behaviour, that still needs to be investigated appropriately, so the bill sets out detailed police powers to make clear how and when the police and other agencies in

the justice system can act to investigate such incidents and the boundaries within which that can happen.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Your supplementary must be brief, Mr Cole-Hamilton.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The change is coming into force as a result of an international imperative. Another international imperative is to end the use of police cells for the incarceration of children, albeit under the guise of providing a place of safety. Will the cabinet secretary undertake a review of the use of police cells for children, including in the context of providing a place of safety, given that such an experience is recognised as an adverse childhood experience?

Humza Yousaf: My colleague Maree Todd, who is leading on the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill, has said publicly that we do not want to see children in police cells. There might be reasons why that is the only option, but it should be the absolute exception and certainly not the rule. Maree Todd will continue discussions in that regard in advance of stage 3 of the bill.

Government Business and Constitutional Relations

Brexit Consequentials (Glasgow)

1. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it has received any representations from Glasgow City Council seeking additional funding in relation to the £92 million of consequentials resulting from European Union exit preparation funding. (S5O-03128)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): As a responsible Government, we are preparing for all European Union exit possibilities. As part of that work, we are working closely with our partners in local government to help them to identify and prepare for the potential impacts of EU exit.

I am aware that Glasgow City Council and other local authorities have expressed concerns about the possible costs of leaving the EU. As things stand, we have not received a specific request from Glasgow City Council for additional funding. That said, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has written to the Scottish Government, seeking additional funding for councils to help to meet Brexit-related costs. That request is being considered.

Johann Lamont: Given the scale of cuts to Glasgow's budget and the impact on local services and local communities, I am surprised that more specific demands have not been made to the Government.

Can the minister clarify and confirm how much of the £54.7 million in EU exit consequentials for 2019-20 will be spent by local government, given the importance of local government in delivering local services? If the minister cannot tell me that now, will he provide a written response as soon as possible, to give local government confidence that councils will get funds to address the budget shortfalls that they are experiencing?

Graeme Dey: The £54.7 million to which the member referred has been allocated to the Scottish budget across all relevant budget areas, including local government.

One of the few certainties of Brexit is that it will cost Scotland more than the amount of the consequentials that have been delivered by Westminster. Of course, local government is one victim of that. I understand that Glasgow City Council has been undertaking financial modelling to identify the costs of officer time and the need for additional services, which will inform its next steps.

The Scottish Government is alive to the burden that is placed on councils by a Brexit for which Scotland did not vote and has made clear that we will seek moneys from Westminster to meet incurred costs. I hope that we will have the support of Johann Lamont and other Labour members in making the case to the UK Government for a further and appropriate financial settlement with which to address that burden.

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

2. **Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill. (S5O-03129)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): I wrote to the Presiding Officer on 5 April to set out the Scottish ministers' next steps in giving effect to the decisions that this Parliament took when it passed the continuity bill.

Those decisions were within the Scottish Parliament's powers to take at that time, but in many cases powers were retrospectively taken away from this Parliament by an act of the Westminster Parliament. The Scottish ministers have reluctantly come to the conclusion that, given the effect that the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 has had on the competence of this Parliament, the best way of giving effect to the decisions is through further legislation, tailored to the circumstances of EU exit and to the newly limited powers of this Parliament, rather than by seeking to have the Parliament reconsider the continuity bill.

As I set out in my letter to the Presiding Officer, I am happy to answer questions on the matter here or in any parliamentary setting.

Gordon Lindhurst: After months of rhetoric, threats, big talk and using emergency procedures to rush the continuity bill through, the Scottish Government is now scrapping the bill. Surely, all along, this was no attempt at constructive law making but just another Scottish National Party grandstanding event.

Michael Russell: Mr Lindhurst may believe what he wishes, but it is a complete travesty of the truth and he should recognise that.

The reality is that the bill was lawful when it was passed by this Parliament. The Supreme Court was very clear about that matter. What happened was that the UK Tory Government—members of the same party as Mr Lindhurst, so I am sure that he will want to take some responsibility for this—then passed legislation to damage and destroy the bill. That was an anti-democratic action, and one which Gordon Lindhurst, as an elected member, should speak against. However, if he is willing to accept anything, even that kind of anti-democratic action from his own party, he is not worthy of the place that he occupies.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): For the avoidance of doubt, can the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government, in its ongoing work, will respect, to the maximum extent possible, the choices made by the Scottish Parliament when it passed the continuity bill, and that it will introduce new legislation to bring back provisions on keeping pace with EU law?

Michael Russell: The keeping pace powers, which survived even the Tory assault on the bill, are important and I think that the Parliament will want to look at them again. The choice was clear. Indeed, it was a choice that was discussed with all the parties, including the Conservative Party, which was part of those discussions. However, the conclusion—I believe that it was the right one—was that to take the bill into reconsideration, which would have been the first time that those powers had been used in this Parliament, would have been a risky and narrow thing. It is quite wise that we look at the keeping pace powers again, because we may wish to expand those powers to enable us to do some of things that we otherwise could not have done.

We will take this opportunity, and I think that it will have support across the chamber; that was the indication in the cross-party talks. Although I am never sure whether that will hold with the Conservatives, I think that it will hold with others.

Progress of Bills (Timetable)

3. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the expected timetable for current bills to progress. (S5O-03130)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): Legislative planning continues to be impacted by the unwelcome requirement to divert resources to prepare for a no-deal Brexit. As a consequence, individual bill timetables are subject to continual review. As minister with responsibility for parliamentary business, I discuss that with the Parliamentary Bureau and relevant committee conveners on a regular basis.

However, I can advise Mr Greene that, as things stand, the Scottish Government is on course to introduce all the bills in the current programme for government ahead of the announcement of our next programme.

Jamie Greene: The minister has no sense of shame in that answer, given the incredible strain that today's announcement for an independence referendum bill will have on this Parliament.

Last year's programme for government announced 12 bills. How many of those bills will have been published in this Parliament before summer recess, and how many of them will have been passed before the end of this session of Parliament?

Graeme Dey: Sometimes in Government we feel that we cannot win. A few moments ago, we were being accused of bringing in one bill too many and now we are accused of not introducing enough. Let me offer members a degree of context and assurance on the issue: despite the significant and growing impact of Brexit, the work of Government and this Parliament continues. We anticipate that more bills will achieve royal assent in 2019 than did so last year. Furthermore, when Parliament returns in September, this Administration will have a full programme of fresh and exciting new legislation to announce.

That stands in marked contrast to Westminster, where Mr Greene's party is in power, and where they have run out of non-Brexit business to consider. It is reported that they are so paralysed by Brexit and ravaged by the divisions that it has caused that they are struggling to put together a sufficient programme of bills that they can agree on to present in a Queen's speech.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Given the First Minister's statement, the Government's plans have changed. What will be taken out of the Government's plans in order for the First Minister's plans to be put in?

Graeme Dey: There are no plans to remove anything from the Government's programme of business. We intend to introduce all the bills that we previously intended, and I have every faith in the Parliament's ability to work its way through that programme and to see those bills to a conclusion.

Local Government Elections (Mailshots)

4. **Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Electoral Commission regarding the provision of a free mailshot for local government election candidates. (S5O-03131)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government has not had any discussions with the Electoral Commission regarding the provision of a free mailshot for local government election candidates in the past five years, although I understand that the issue was discussed previously.

Miles Briggs: I put on record our thanks to councillors from all parties and none who serve our communities.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that more consideration should be given to providing council candidates with a free mailshot during elections, as is the case for all parliamentary candidates? That would help not only to recognise the importance of local elections, but to make sure that we increase the diversity of candidates and encourage those who are currently deterred from standing because of concerns about campaign costs.

Michael Russell: I would be very willing to discuss the issue with people if they could bring to the table actual evidence of people being deterred because of campaign leaflet costs. I think that it is much more likely that people are deterred for a range of other reasons, including the salaries that are paid and whether they believe that they will be able to do an effective job.

I think that I would want to see evidence of the issue brought to the table rather than supposition. If the member has that evidence and wishes to bring it to the table, I will certainly look at it and discuss the matter with the Electoral Commission. However, I suspect that any evidence is of other matters.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

5. **Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last held discussions with the Prime Minister. (S5O-03132)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The First Minister and Prime

Minister met on 3 April in Downing Street to discuss the United Kingdom Government's plans for European Union exit. However, the UK Government has so far refused to show any willingness to compromise in relation to membership of the single market and the retention of freedom of movement, which are essential for Scotland's future.

Following the extension of article 50 until the end of October, the First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister to call for on-going talks over EU exit to include the devolved Administrations, and for any deal that is agreed by the UK Parliament to be put to a second referendum. The Prime Minister has yet to reply. I raised the same issues in a phone call with David Lidington the day after the decision was made by the European Council, and I hope to speak to him again this week.

Linda Fabiani: I thank the cabinet secretary for that fulsome answer.

I suggest that the next time that anyone from our Government meets the Prime Minister, they ask whether she considers herself a democrat and, if so, whether she will recognise people's right to decide on their constitutional future and the right of Scotland's Parliament to represent its electorate. Will they also ask whether she will explain to Scotland how a democrat can deny such rights?

Michael Russell: I think that that is a fair and accurate point. [*Laughter.*] It is funny that, when we talk about Scottish democracy, the response of the Tories is to laugh. It always strikes me as significant that that is the case. The Scottish Tories wish to jeer at the concept of the sovereignty of the Scottish people.

The issue that the Prime Minister and the Scottish Conservatives need to address is the issue of the sovereignty of the Scottish people. They need to listen to the Scottish people instead of laughing at them, or, in the case of the Prime Minister, contemptuously refusing to listen to them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 6 has been withdrawn.

European Parliament Elections (Planning)

7. **David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Electoral Commission regarding planning in Scotland for possible European Parliament elections in May 2019. (S5O-03134)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): Scottish Government officials take part in meetings of the Electoral Commission's advisory board, where planning for the possible European Parliament elections has

been discussed. Those meetings are attended by returning officers as well as Government officials from all four United Kingdom Administrations. Recently, meetings have taken place on a weekly basis. The Scottish Government's clear view is that European Parliament elections should not be cancelled and should go ahead.

David Torrance: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the European elections will see the election of six Scottish MEPs. Can the cabinet secretary reflect on what Scotland's position would be if it were independent at the time of the elections? Does he share my hope that, at subsequent European Parliament elections, Scotland will take part as an independent member of the European Union?

Michael Russell: I do hope for that.

I say to the UK Government that it is a very bad look to be involved in cancelling elections. It should look around the globe and see the record of those people, usually in dictatorships, who rejoice in the cancelling of elections, and it should think about that carefully.

There is a huge cost in organising elections, and that money would be wasted. Of course, a great deal of money has been wasted by the UK Government in relation to Brexit, and it would simply add to that.

The experience of Brexit makes the case for independence within the European Union even stronger. When we contrast the treatment of Scotland with that of independent nations, the case is clear. Further, the contrast is absolutely clear in terms of representation in the European Parliament. The Republic of Ireland, with a population that is comparable to that of Scotland, has 11 MEPs. Denmark has 13, as has Finland. Scotland currently has an allocation of six MEPs as part of the UK's total of 73. We are being forced to the sidelines and the margins. Independence would allow us to protect our place in Europe and conduct our relationships with the rest of the UK and the EU on the basis of equality.

Brexit (Impact on Labour Supply)

8. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what impact it anticipates Brexit having on the supply of skilled labour. (S5O-03135)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): "No Deal Brexit—Economic Implications for Scotland", which the Scottish Government published on 21 February, clearly demonstrated that Brexit would be catastrophic for jobs and investment in Scotland.

Brexit creates risks around the confidence and competitiveness of our businesses, their ability to

plan and invest with certainty, and potential drastic increases in unemployment levels. When combined, those issues would cause significant disruption to the supply of skills to businesses in this country. That is why we are working with a range of partners, including Skills Development Scotland, to understand the potential impact of Brexit on regions and sectors.

We are preparing to respond as fully as possible to any resulting skills shortages and gaps, building on the strengths of our current skills system, should the United Kingdom Government decide to see through its plans for Brexit. However, as Mr Gibson will recognise, we cannot fully mitigate the unmitigatable.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the minister for his comprehensive reply. It is the first time ever that I have heard the word "unmitigatable".

Does the minister agree that the labour supply will be disproportionately impacted in the key sectors of the economy in which European Union nationals form a significant part of the workforce? Will he outline which sectors are most likely to be adversely affected, and what the resulting effect will be on economic growth?

Graeme Dey: There are a number of sectors that will be particularly affected. For example, agriculture, hospitality, care services and the national health service all stand to be adversely hit. If we consider the role of agriculture in Scotland and the massive success story of our food and drink sector, we can see that it is self-evident how damaging Brexit will be in that key growth area.

By way of a specific, detailed illustration, my constituency is home to a soft-fruit industry that turns over more than £50 million annually. It requires access to more than 4,000 seasonal migrant workers to pick and pack its products and, even before Brexit kicks in, it is already finding difficulty in accessing that workforce. Mr Gibson is absolutely right to highlight the threat that is posed to the Scottish economy by Brexit.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio question time.

I see that some members who are to take part in the next debate are not present. Please remember that business just follows on and if we gain time in one session, we have more time for the next. I will start the next debate, notwithstanding that all the relevant members are not yet present in the chamber.

General Practitioner Recruitment and Retention

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17011, in the name of Alison Johnstone, on addressing Scotland's general practitioner recruitment and retention challenges.

15:37

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Nobody in the chamber would deny that Scotland's GPs are facing considerable pressures. Those pressures impact practitioner wellbeing and also have huge ramifications for the recruitment and retention of GPs.

The results of a survey that was commissioned by the Royal College of General Practitioners in 2018 revealed that more than a quarter of GPs in Scotland are unlikely to be working in general practice in five years' time. Of those who reported being likely to leave general practice in the next five years, one in three said that that was because it was too stressful. Those figures are a stark warning that Scotland's GP workforce is teetering on a cliff edge.

I recognise that the Scottish Government has taken steps to tackle low recruitment, by introducing the new GP contract and through initiatives such as the Scottish graduate entry medicine programme—or ScotGEM—and by increasing training places. I applaud those efforts, but retention must be addressed urgently. We must take care of those who are already on the front line, or we might struggle to retain our workforce.

The chair of the British Medical Association's Scottish general practitioners committee, Dr Andrew Buist, said that the contract was aimed at making general practice more attractive, but noted:

"Of course, these deep-seated problems—such as there simply not being enough GPs—were never going to be solved in a single year."

That poses the question of how we can make things better for GPs while changes are being implemented. I acknowledge that the expansion of practice teams is a means of lessening the GP workload, as other health professionals will now deliver aspects of patient care that were previously the responsibility of GPs, such as vaccinations and pharmacotherapy. However, it will take time to grow and develop those teams.

Extra strain is placed on GPs when patients are not informed of changes. I have previously mentioned in the chamber that 35 per cent of GPs surveyed by the RCGP spent consultation time

explaining to patients why they were offered appointments with other healthcare professionals instead of with a GP. That places strain on GPs and patients, who are becoming distressed, confused and, at times, angry, as GPs have reported. I urge the Scottish Government to hold a national conversation on changes to services to relieve the burden on practice teams to deliver that message. That must be an urgent priority for the Government. I am happy to work with the cabinet secretary on the form that any such information campaign might take.

The GP contract acknowledges that speed is not the only aspect of access that matters to people, and that being able to see a practitioner of choice also matters to some groups. Therefore, it is extremely important that patients are still able to see a GP when they need to, and that the workforce is in place to enable that to happen. However, the same RCGP survey showed that, of those who were likely to be working in general practice in one year, 20 per cent expected to work reduced hours. That represents a culture change within general practice. There has been a continued decrease in the proportion of GPs working eight or more sessions per week, from 51 per cent in 2013 to 37 per cent in 2017. Given the stressful working conditions that have already been mentioned and the fact that GPs frequently report that they work 12-hour or more days, that culture change is understandable, but until an appropriate workforce is in place to support that change, patients might find that they wait longer and longer to see a doctor. It is significant that the 2017-18 health and care experience survey showed that 67 per cent of respondents highly rated the arrangements to see a doctor, compared to 81 per cent in the 2009-10 survey.

The Scottish Government has pledged to provide an extra 800 GPs over the next 10 years. I welcome that commitment, but that figure refers only to head count. The RCGP estimates that Scotland will be short of 856 whole-time equivalent GPs by 2021, so the Government's pledge falls short of what is needed, so I urge the cabinet secretary to introduce more ambitious recruitment targets in line with the Royal College's recommendations.

The Royal College also says that there is a serious funding deficit for general practice. General practice carries out the vast majority of patient contact within the national health service. Given that Scotland has an ageing population and that GPs are seeing patients with increasingly complex health conditions, it is perhaps surprising that the RCGP's latest figures show that general practice receives just 7.35 per cent of Scottish NHS funding, falling well behind the average funding of general practice in the United Kingdom, which currently stands at 8.8 per cent. The RCGP,

supported by the BMA, has consistently called for general practice to receive 11 per cent of the NHS budget. That would represent approximately a 1 per cent rise every year for three years.

The “National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan” states that

“the primary care workforce is uniquely placed to influence the level of demand for other care settings”

and lists cost-effectiveness as one of the many benefits of strengthening primary care.

Investment in general practice is therefore an investment in Scotland’s entire healthcare system. Investing in general practice is investing in preventative measures. Lack of access to primary care often results in patients seeking assistance at hospitals. A better-equipped, well-funded general practice would relieve some of the strain on busy accident and emergency departments and beyond.

One of the aims of health and social care integration is to shift care towards preventative and community-based services. Why, then, is proportional investment in general practice consistently below what is needed? The Royal College says that such an investment would result in an increased GP workforce, modernised, fit-for-purpose surgeries, widened access to training and improved information technology systems. Those are the resources that are needed to support integration and for GPs to continue to deliver the very best standards of care for patients in Scotland.

Funding must also be targeted to tackle health inequalities. Scotland still has among the lowest life expectancies in western Europe, and GPs have expressed concern that no extra funding has been allocated to those practices that serve the most deprived populations in Scotland. Affluent practices with the most elderly patients continue to receive the highest GP funding per patient per annum. The RCGP has called for additional GP clinical capacity, with appropriate funding, for areas of high deprivation, in recognition of the specific workload that is associated with socioeconomic deprivation and in order for community link workers to be prioritised for practices in those areas of high deprivation.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): Will Alison Johnstone recognise, as the BMA does, that, with regard to how the funding is allocated, the new contract is weighted towards areas of social deprivation and those practices that care in particular for the elderly?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Johnstone, please move towards closing.

Alison Johnstone: I appreciate that every member of Scotland’s population has an entitlement to the very best of care, but the cabinet secretary will be aware, and I am sure that the debate will emphasise, that there are still concerns around particular areas of the contract. That concern has been expressed to me by GPs.

In conclusion, Presiding Officer, with proper funding and a bolstered workforce, general practice can make significant strides in tackling health inequalities, lessening the strain on other NHS services and continuing to provide excellent care to Scotland’s population.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland is facing considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining GPs, with almost a quarter of GP practices reporting vacancies, leading to temporary and permanent surgery closures; notes that the number of whole time equivalent (WTE) GPs has been declining, from 3,735 in 2013 to 3,575 in 2017; agrees that WTE is a more appropriate measure than headcount in fully appreciating the recruitment and retention challenge; is concerned by warnings from the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) that there will be a predicted shortfall of 856 WTE GPs in Scotland by 2021 at the same time as demand on Scotland’s healthcare system is growing; agrees that health and social care integration cannot be delivered without adequate resources and capacity in community services; welcomes Scottish Government action to improve recruitment and retention of GPs but agrees that more urgent progress is required; notes that general practice carries out the majority of patient contact in Scotland yet has received a declining share of the total NHS Scotland budget since 2005-06; notes RCGP’s call, supported by the BMA, for general practice to receive 11% of the total health budget, and calls on the Scottish Government, given the importance of general practice to tackling health inequalities and improving the health of people in Scotland, to undertake an urgent review of GP recruitment, resources and funding.

15:45

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about the significant progress that is being made to reform primary care and general practice and to acknowledge the challenges that we continue to face. More than 90 per cent of healthcare in Scotland starts and stays in primary care. It is a vital part of our health service, and I know that everyone in this chamber offers their thanks to the staff across the many different professions who deliver those indispensable services, day in, day out, in every community in Scotland.

We are working hard to deliver on our strong commitment to primary care, but there are challenges and I am keenly focused on them. It is important to recognise that those challenges are not only the recruitment and retention of GPs, but the recruitment and retention of the wider primary care team with all the multidisciplinary skills that

patients need them to have. The guiding principle is the right one—that people should see the right healthcare professional at the right time and in a way that suits them. The new teams—including practice and district nurses, health visitors, pharmacists, allied health professionals, mental health professionals and link workers—enhance patient care, provide the support that our GPs need and deliver on that guiding principle.

The new GP contract—Scotland's first—has been in place for one year. It is a landmark contract that was developed and negotiated in partnership with the BMA, receiving support from 71 per cent of its members. Increased business risk and workload were identified as key reasons that prevent people from wanting to be GPs and encourage them to leave the profession prematurely. Therefore, the new contract reduces risks around premises and staffing, and the creation of the multidisciplinary teams of healthcare professionals ensures that the GP's workload is focused on those patients for whom the GP's particular clinical skills are needed.

The new GP contract, in its widest sense and in its critical application, sits at the core of our reform of primary care. Central to the new contract is developing the leadership role of GPs locally. That includes the development of locally agreed primary care improvement plans covering all 31 integration authorities.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): What does the cabinet secretary say to my constituents in Stoneyburn, who do not have a GP practice for the first time since the creation of the NHS, in 1948?

Jeane Freeman: I met representatives of the community council at the start of the Easter recess and was able to assist them in making sure that some of the services that they are concerned about can be made available to them in a sustainable way. I will continue to monitor and secure that engagement for exactly those purposes.

All GPs—urban and rural—need to see the benefits of the new contract: that it brings reduced business risk, improves workload and, critically, delivers the care that a patient needs from the right health professional. The way in which services are delivered should fit local circumstances, so the scope for local flexibility in the national contract is a central aspect of the work that we have commissioned from the working group that is chaired by Professor Sir Lewis Ritchie. We have asked the working group to agree exactly what the scope for that flexibility is. The group involves the BMA, representatives of rural health boards and integration authorities and, critically, rural GPs.

We are investing substantial sums in our reforms of primary care and general practice, and we have committed to increasing annual expenditure on primary care by £500 million a year by the end of this parliamentary session, with £250 million of that increase being invested in direct support for general practice.

Although our focus is on developing the multidisciplinary teams that we need to deliver enhanced services, we also need more GPs.

Alison Johnstone rose—

Jeane Freeman: I do not have time to take an intervention. I am sorry.

We have committed to recruiting at least 800 more GPs by 2028. However, we need to train, recruit and retain. Between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the Scottish Government will have increased the number of medical places in Scottish universities by 190, with the majority being focused on primary care. Those include places on ScotGEM and 60 additional places for the academic year 2019-20 at Aberdeen and Glasgow universities.

We have set up bursaries for harder-to-fill posts, in which we have seen a steady increase from 60 in 2017 to 101 in 2018. We are also taking specific steps to improve the recruitment and retention of GPs in remote and rural communities. Last April, we published the first-ever workforce plan focused on primary care. We have introduced and expanded practical services that aim to support GPs, including coaching and mentoring. We have also introduced special financial packages to encourage the relocation and retention of rural GPs, and we have developed a targeted GP recruitment marketing campaign. At the RCGP conference last year, we addressed another practical problem that it had raised with us when I launched the national GP recruitment website: GPjobs.scot. We will work to ensure that all existing vacancies are picked up and advertised there.

We are seeing early signs of success in meeting our commitment to increase the number of GPs, with the latest figures indicating a record number of GPs working in Scotland. In 2018, the GP headcount was 4,994, which was 70 more than in the year before.

I believe that all the actions that I have outlined—and the others that time prevents me from covering—are the right ones for us to take. However, I am also listening to primary care professionals, patients and members in the chamber. If more steps need to be taken to ensure that those essential services are not only protected but helped to flourish, we will take them. I know that, across the chamber, all members recognise that enhanced primary care services,

with general practice at their heart, are the bedrock of the NHS.

I move amendment S5M-17011.3, to leave out from “is concerned by” to “total health budget” and insert:

“notes the aim of the Scottish Government to recruit 800 additional GPs; welcomes that funding for primary care and general practice will be increased to 11% of NHS Scotland frontline funding by the end of this parliamentary session; believes in the multidisciplinary approach that recognises the GP role as that of an expert medical generalist supported by expanded multidisciplinary teams that include practice and district nurses, health visitors, pharmacists, allied health professions, mental health professionals and link workers; understands that the GP contract, designed in partnership with the BMA, gives flexibility on aspects of delivery to reflect the needs of rural Scotland; notes that all aspects of GP support and re-imburement will be considered in partnership with the BMA and GPs as phase 2 of the new GP contract is developed.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is a little time in hand for interventions, for which members will get their time back.

15:52

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I thank Alison Johnstone and the Green Party for securing this important debate.

Parliament last had the opportunity to debate the GP crisis in Scotland in November 2017, when Scottish Conservatives brought to the chamber their own motion, which called for 11 per cent of funding to go directly to general practice. Since then, we have seen no progress on that becoming reality. Over the Easter recess, I spent time in the Highlands, Moray and Aberdeenshire, where I met rural GPs. Their overwhelming message was that they feel that the new GP contract is not working for them and that their concerns have not been listened to.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I accept Miles Briggs’s point that rural GPs face particular challenges. Does he also accept that deep-end GPs, who deal with the 100 most deprived areas, also face big challenges?

Miles Briggs: Absolutely—I was just coming to that. The Government’s ability to unite both sets of doctors has been amazing, in that deep-end GPs are equally unhappy with the contract.

Despite being responsible for delivering the vast majority of patient contacts in our health service, general practice in Scotland continues to face considerable underinvestment. A fall has taken place since its 9.8 per cent share in 2005-06; the latest figures show that general practice in Scotland receives just 7.35 per cent of Scottish NHS funding, well behind general practice’s average funding across the United Kingdom, which now stands at 8.88 per cent.

We will be able to boost the GP workforce only by investing sufficiently in general practice and ensuring—as Alison Johnstone said—that manageable workloads can be put in place. A serious funding deficit exists for general practice, which the Government must recognise. Without funding, the area cannot fulfil its potential and achieve its goals, as we all want to see it do.

In the face of more than a decade of cuts in the percentage share of NHS Scotland spending that is made available to provide general practice services, the RCGP has consistently called for 11 per cent of NHS Scotland’s annual budget to be delivered for general practice. As the RCGP briefing for the debate makes clear, the funding gap in general practice is unsustainable and urgent action should be taken to preserve patient safety by resourcing general practice with 11 per cent of the budget.

There has perhaps never been a greater need for clarification of the funding for general practice in Scotland and for the roles and capacity in the wider multidisciplinary teams. There is great potential if we fund general practice properly. As the RCGP briefing points out, it would enable new roles in general practice; support for practices; teaching and training development opportunities; and digitally enabled care across our communities. We should all be looking to deliver those things.

From the outset, Scottish Conservatives have raised concerns—with both the former health secretary and the new one—about the new GP contract’s unintended consequences for rural GPs.

The truth is that when general practice works well, our national health service works well. We should all look towards that and never more so than in relation to recruitment. Over the past 12 years, SNP ministers have launched several schemes to try to recruit to general practice. In 2015, the SNP created a programme that aimed to take forward proposals to increase the number of medical students who choose to go into GP training as well as to encourage them into rural practice and economically deprived areas. However, in two years and at a cost of £2.5 million, we have seen the recruitment of only 18 GPs. That is simply not good enough and it continues to fail our communities.

Rural GPs in particular have serious concerns about the proposals for the future contract, which is something that my amendment looks towards. Phase 2 of the GP contract must be agreed across the parties and there must be an opportunity to highlight the concerns and get the contract right, especially as we face an election year. I know that the Rural GP Association of Scotland has already put the concerns to the cabinet secretary.

For some time now, it has been clear that SNP ministers have not truly understood the crisis facing general practice across Scotland, especially in our rural communities. As I said almost two years ago, it is important that we take time to get this right. Tonight, Parliament can send a united message to ministers that they need to take urgent action on general practice and funding in Scotland and to do far more than they are currently doing to prevent the crisis from growing even further. Until the Government fundamentally addresses the complaints and concerns that GPs are putting to all members of this Parliament, general practice will not be able to flourish in Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-17011.2, to insert at end:

“; and to take consideration of the concerns of rural GPs with the GP contract as well as allowing them flexibility to provide vaccination services”;

15:57

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I believe that we all appreciate the hard-working staff in our NHS, and because we appreciate them, it is incumbent on all of us to address Scotland's GP recruitment and retention challenges. I am grateful not only to Alison Johnstone for bringing the debate to the chamber, and to the Royal College of General Practitioners and the BMA for their briefings ahead of the debate, but to the many members of the public who get in touch with me, my colleagues and us all to share their views and experiences.

It is right that we show our appreciation in debates such as this one but, at the end of the day, it is action that counts, and the role of general practice in our NHS cannot be overstated. It is on the front line of healthcare, with GPs carrying out the majority of patient contacts and acting as gatekeepers to other parts of our health service. GPs dedicate their working lives to the health and wellbeing of others. It is an admirable commitment but, with our NHS facing crisis, a challenging one, and increasingly so. GPs tell us that they are under unprecedented pressure amid GP shortages and that they face increasing levels of stress and burn-out. That should worry us all.

The evidence that GP recruitment is in crisis is clear and is mounting. There has been a failure on the Scottish Government's part to address workforce planning properly. Steps to remedy the challenges are welcome, but we know that change will not happen overnight and, in the meantime, GPs and their patients are paying the price. In the past three years, more than 200 doctors have chosen to leave general practice due to significant workload pressures. It is a sad fact that our valued GPs feel that way and one that is difficult to

accept. The bottom line is that Scotland cannot afford for it to continue.

Out-of-hours GPs provide an invaluable service in all our communities that has the potential to ease the pressure on A and E departments. Cuts to out-of-hours services and a shortage of GPs mean that more people have to take themselves to A and E, putting more pressure on the service. However, hospitals and medical centres in Glasgow were left without staff covering emergency out-of-hours GP services more than 200 times last year. Easterhouse, which has high levels of deprivation, has had a shocking 977 per cent increase in the number of shifts that were not covered. Before 2017, there were no examples of shifts that were left unstaffed in Glasgow, so those figures require further scrutiny and attention.

Jeane Freeman: I am not about to disagree with Monica Lennon about the challenges that we face in our out-of-hours services, but does she recognise that it was the 2004 GP contract, not one that was negotiated by this Government, that removed the requirement on GPs to provide out-of-hours services and that means that the participation of GPs in those services is now voluntary? As GPs retire and with many of the newer GPs wanting a different kind of work-life balance, as a member said earlier, we are seeing fewer GPs volunteering for out-of-hours services, so we need to think differently about how we provide them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you your time back, Ms Lennon.

Monica Lennon: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for that input and commentary, but I do not think that it really cuts it when we have people in Easterhouse and other deprived parts of Glasgow who are wondering why they had out-of-hours access before 2017 and now have problems with it. We have to deal with 2019 and, as we heard from Neil Findlay, the challenges that his constituents face in Stoneyburn. The GP contract that was introduced last year was meant to ensure that GP recruitment and retention problems were alleviated, but its implementation has been criticised—it has been slow, and the BMA has called for an increased pace of change.

The Scottish Government has had difficulty with regard to rural GPs. Last month, Dr Hogg, vice-chair of the Rural GP Association of Scotland, walked away from the Scottish Government's task force due to a lack of progress, saying that it had

“fallen by the wayside”.

That is another cause for concern. I welcome some of the action that the cabinet secretary has outlined, but we need to see promises being delivered—that has not always been the case under this Administration.

The Scottish Labour Party supports the Scottish Green Party motion and we can support the Scottish Conservative Party amendment. We cannot support the Scottish Government's amendment, because we do not believe that it adequately addresses the concerns of rural GPs, and because it fails to acknowledge the serious issues with GP recruitment.

We must value and support GPs across Scotland, because a robust, well-resourced GP service will ease pressures on other parts of the NHS and, ultimately, provide people in Scotland with a better health service. We must all value GPs and look out for their health and wellbeing; we cannot have GPs experiencing burn-out. We are highly concerned about the increasing problems with out-of-hours GP provision across Scotland and the particular challenges in our rural communities. For those reasons, we call for any review of GP resources to include a specific focus on out-of-hours coverage and rural service provision.

I move amendment S5M-17011.1, to insert at end:

“; is concerned about the increasing gaps in out-of-hours GP service provision across Scotland, given the value of this service to local communities and its importance for relieving pressures on A&E departments; acknowledges the significant challenges faced by rural GPs and their critiques of the new GP contract, as stated by Dr David Hogg when he resigned from the Scottish Government's Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group, and believes that any review of GP resources should include a specific focus on out-of-hours coverage and rural service provision.”

16:02

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I thank the Greens for securing time for today's debate. We do not discuss this matter enough in this place, but it is of great importance. I was appointed as my party's health spokesperson on my second day here and within hours I became aware of the breadth and depth of the crisis. GPs are often our first port of call but so often are the last to be given consideration in this place. That has to change.

On the metrics of the crisis, by the end of this decade we may have 800 fewer GPs than we require as a country. A freedom of information request by my party has revealed the depth of the recruitment crisis. In NHS Forth Valley, a post has gone unfilled for the past few years; on Shetland, a position has been advertised eight times with only one application; and Dumfries and Galloway NHS has had a 22-month wait for a post to be filled. Those stories are replicated the country over, with many reasons for them. In my constituency, in west Edinburgh, we have not had a new doctors' surgery established for 45 years,

despite a year-on-year proliferation of new homes and populace. All the GP surgeries in my communities are on their knees; some have had to restrict their lists or close them entirely. That is down to the fact that while housing development in the constituency proliferates, no consideration is given to who will treat patients. Thousands upon thousands of new homes are on stream right now, with no thought being given to whom the patients will turn to when they fall ill.

We are not promoting general practice to our medical students as they progress through their degrees and we are not recognising the pressures on general practice that we could easily alleviate right now. I have raised time and again the fact that one quarter of all appointments made with our GPs are for an underlying mental health condition and that GPs are ill equipped, or do not have the time, to bottom out the psychological reasons for the appointments being made.

We know that there are workforce planning problems. It takes seven years to train a GP, but workforce planning cycles in Scotland happen only every five years, which, in turn, leads to a problem of attrition, where we fail to plan effectively for the cohorts of retiring GPs by backfilling them with new GPs coming up through the ranks.

I believe that retired GPs offer part of the solution. In my constituency surgery, I have visited retired GPs who said that they would be very happy to undertake one or two sessions a week if it was made easier for them to come back into general practice and keep their hand in. We need to box clever and listen to the good will of our retired general practitioners.

I commend the Government for the new contract; aspects of it have proved to be elegant and have been well received by the community. The issue around premises was a particular millstone around the necks of new entrants to general practice partnership—the idea that people would have to take on a mortgage of £80,000 just to become a partner in a GP surgery was an inhibiting factor for many; and the solution that the Government, along with the BMA and the RCGP, has offered to address that issue is very elegant. However, some issues around the contract will begin to bite only as phase 2 comes in at the start of the next parliamentary session. In particular, there are issues around financial recompense for GPs in areas of profound rurality—areas that, as I said at the beginning of my speech, are struggling to recruit GPs first and foremost.

As I said at the start, GPs are the first port of call for many of our constituents when they fall ill but, all too often, are our last consideration in the Parliament. That needs to change.

16:07

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It is clear from members' comments in the debate that the GP crisis continues to have a big impact across Scotland. Just this week, the *Dunfermline Press and West of Fife Advertiser* reported on a local father who had to phone his surgery more than 100 times in one morning to get an appointment.

Of course, it is not only primary care services that have been impacted by the GP shortage: delivery of out-of-hours care has been limited by a lack of GPs and the contractual changes that have taken place over a number of years. In my region, two NHS boards—Forth Valley and Fife—have been carrying out major service changes to out-of-hours primary care. Their approaches have been very different, however, and there are serious lessons to be learned for other NHS boards.

In 2017, NHS Forth Valley implemented interim measures by concentrating its out-of-hours service in one location, at Forth Valley royal hospital in Larbert. Understandably, that caused concern and disruption for many people, especially people in rural Stirlingshire, who were facing journeys of up to 40 miles to access services.

On the back of that measure, NHS Forth Valley instigated a recruitment drive for a significant team of allied health professionals to complement and support GP provision, including the out-of-hours service. Earlier this year, 80 new advanced nurse practitioners, prescribing pharmacists, paramedics and other health professionals joined the NHS Forth Valley team—the first of more than 200 new staff who will deliver a multidisciplinary model of primary and out-of-hours care at locations across the area. I emphasise that the model continues to be led by GPs. It is important that GPs display strong leadership and are supported by those multidisciplinary teams, which they, in turn, support.

In contrast, NHS Fife implemented emergency out-of-hours provision last year, limiting services to just two locations—in Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy. That was followed by a consultation that proposed a very limited set of options and no discussion about the role of GP-led multidisciplinary teams.

It has taken two participation requests by communities under the community empowerment legislation and a whole new series of consultation workshops for a new option to be developed in Fife that uses the same multidisciplinary model that Forth Valley and other NHS boards have been adopting. The latest proposals that have come out of that participation will see the retention of an evening and weekend service at St Andrews community hospital, using a mixture of GPs and health professionals, with home visits to the most

vulnerable and remote patients. Work is—I hope—on-going to design a similar model for Glenrothes.

I have serious concerns about the ability to deliver an effective multidisciplinary model with the current staffing levels in Fife. There has been no recruitment drive comparable to that in Forth Valley NHS, and there are only five urgent care practitioners and 5.4 full-time equivalent advanced nurse practitioners in the training pipeline. There are 10.5 staff for Fife, versus 300 for Forth Valley. That is a worrying difference in our workforce planning, and I am deeply concerned that it will put our GPs in Fife under further pressure. Meanwhile, what was supposed to be a temporary centralisation in Kirkcaldy has continued for more than a year, with no date set for the new model to be rolled out.

I have raised that issue in the chamber before, and was heartened by the cabinet secretary's response that specialist funding is available for training advanced nurse practitioners and prescribing pharmacists.

As today's motion states, we need

“an urgent review of GP recruitment, resources and funding.”

That has to include health professionals, who are so vital to delivering a successful multidisciplinary model for primary care. Multidisciplinary team models are popular: patients report high satisfaction levels, and communities such as Bridge of Earn in my region are lobbying their local health boards to have multidisciplinary health and wellbeing centres built in their communities. However, the inconsistency and lack of staff recruitment in some NHS boards needs to be addressed right now.

16:12

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate as a nurse with more than 30 years' experience, and as the deputy convener of the Health and Sport Committee.

The new GP contract for Scotland, which came into force in April 2018, aims to cut doctors' workloads, provide a minimum income guarantee for GPs and allow general practice to become a more attractive career. The contract is still in its infancy—we are now embarking on year 2 of its implementation. In 2018-19, the Scottish Government invested more than £110 million to support the new GP contract and wider primary care reform, which was extremely welcome.

Last year, I attended the Royal College of General Practitioners' annual conference in Glasgow, where I spoke to GPs including Dr Carey Lunan, who is the RGCP Scotland lead,

and heard first hand about apprehensiveness about whether the contract will work for rural GPs. Following those conversations, and after discussions with former colleagues in the primary care sector, I wrote to all GP practices in the NHS Dumfries and Galloway area to ask for feedback on the contract and on any other issues that they wanted me to relay to the Government. I am pleased that, to date, more than six practices have responded. I am in the process of meeting them to hear their thoughts about how we can further improve the contract.

Last week, I met staff at the Charlotte medical practice in Dumfries. It was clear to me that the GPs there agree with much of what the contract has to offer, but they made clear their concerns about some of its timescales, including in respect of the length of time that it might take to integrate pharmacists into practices.

It was clear that many of the GPs whom I met at the RCGP conference and locally believe that the way to recruit GPs, particularly to rural areas such as the south-west, in my South Scotland region, is to improve road and rail transport infrastructure. I am sorry that this is Ms Harper harping on again about the A75, A76 and A77, but the GPs said that if people who have studied in the central belt and who live and have families there could have easy access to Dumfries and Stranraer—and all the places in between—by fast train or road links, they might be more inclined to work in bonnie Galloway.

I am aware that the Government is working on recruiting and, indeed, retaining our GPs. In 2018-19, it invested £7.5 million on that, which included £850,000 for remote and rural areas. For all 160 remote and rural practices, the Scottish Government has made available “golden hello” payments for GPs who are taking up their first post in a rural practice, and relocation packages of up to £5,000.

GP recruitment concerns are not unique to Scotland. However, this Government’s commitment, which includes expanding the remote and rural incentive scheme and relocation funds, should have a real impact. The investment of £7.5 million has allowed the Scottish Government to invest in the ScotGEM programme, which will benefit NHS Dumfries and Galloway in my South Scotland region and is the result of a partnership between the University of St Andrews, the University of Dundee and NHS Scotland. The course is oriented towards current NHS Scotland workforce requirements, particularly in remote and rural GP practices.

In August 2018, a total of 55 students were matriculated with St Andrews university. I am pleased that the first group of second-year students will arrive in Dumfries and Galloway in

August this year. Happily, five GP practices across Dumfries and Galloway are set to take part in the pilot year of the project. I look forward to seeing its outcomes.

I thank the exceptional specialist GPs across Scotland and welcome the positive steps that are being taken by the Scottish Government to help with recruitment and retention of GPs.

16:16

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): General practice is the front line of the NHS, but it has been seriously let down by the SNP. After nearly 12 years in charge of Scotland’s health service, GP recruitment and retention are only getting worse. We know that there is a longstanding problem, about which the SNP has repeatedly been warned.

Demand on the health service is growing and the role of GPs is becoming more important. As the Royal College of General Practitioners points out,

“General Practice is the frontline of the NHS ... carrying out the vast majority of patient contact”.

GPs act as gatekeepers to the entire NHS. Despite that, the Royal College of GPs has estimated that there will be a shortfall of 856 GPs by 2021. More than 500 GPs have taken early retirement since the SNP came into power, and the number of doctors in training in Scotland has sunk to a five-year low.

Jeane Freeman: Will Annie Wells cite the evidence that she has for the assertion that the number of doctors in training has sunk to a five-year low? Those are not the figures that I am working with.

Annie Wells: I will send the figures over to the health minister.

Jeane Freeman: Do that.

Annie Wells: I will.

The Scottish Government has highlighted the measures that it has taken to combat the crisis. However, although I welcome schemes such as ScotGEM, it is concerning that it has taken so many years to reach this point—even more so given that in 2008 the BMA warned of severe GP shortages.

When it comes to retention, talks about the new GP contract between the SNP Government and rural GPs have revealed on-going tensions. The contract is still widely opposed by rural doctors, who state that due to its focus on workload, it unfairly benefits practices in wealthy urban areas in which there are large elderly populations. Only last month, Dr David Hogg, the vice-chair of the Rural GP Association of Scotland, resigned from a

working group that was set up by the Scottish Government because of what he sees as a failure to suggest any pragmatic and realistic proposals to counteract the impact that the contract will have on rural services.

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly made calls to counteract the problems that general practice is facing. We have called on the SNP to spend more of the NHS budget on the GP front line, and to meet the 11 per cent target. Our save our surgeries campaign makes clear the importance of properly funding general practice. As we have heard, in recent years, Scotland's general practice has continued to face considerable underinvestment, having fallen from its 9.8 per cent share in 2005-06. The latest figures show that general practice in Scotland receives just 7.35 per cent of NHS funding, which is the lowest share of NHS spend in the UK.

The additional funding that we have called for would equip general practice for the future, allow surgeries to invest in improved IT systems and help GPs and patients to save time and resources. It would also allow surgery premises to modernise and become fit-for-purpose buildings that act as community hubs in which social prescribing becomes the norm.

The Scottish Conservatives have also called for more medical school places to be made available to Scotland-based students, and for GPs to be given more time for appointments—up from 10 to 15 minutes—to assist patients who have more complex needs. Those changes can be made only by properly funding general practice.

I reiterate our calls for the SNP to spend more of its NHS budget on the GP front line. At a time when demand on the health service is greater than ever, it is vital that general practice receives the correct level of funding. It acts as the gateway to the entire NHS, and it is in dire need of our support.

16:20

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): General practice, and the relationship that patients have with their doctor, is key to the way our NHS operates and the trust that we place in it. People—including me—have great respect for and show great deference to their doctor, and anything that negatively impacts on general practice ripples across the rest of the NHS, resulting in more and longer delays at A and E, treatment time guarantees being breached, delayed discharges, more pressures on staff, fewer students entering general practice, greater reliance on locums, which costs the NHS more, fewer appointment times, closed lists and, ultimately, poorer patient care. All that is happening in Scotland now.

General practice is therefore crucial to the wider NHS, and it is being failed by poor planning and financing and mismanagement at the governmental level.

Over the past decade, the number of people entering GP training has fallen; it is down to around 300. The Royal College of General Practitioners has said that we are 850 short.

Two years ago, I held a drop-in session for GPs in my area in the summer. I spoke to people from 14 different practices, and all of them raised with me the crisis in recruitment. The crisis is worse now than it was then. Some of them said that they were a resignation away from closure. They are long-established practices that sit in communities in which doctors are highly valued. Others were completely reliant on locum GPs just to keep the doors open.

Across Scotland, locums claim up to £1,400 a day. In Lothian, locums claim over £500 a day. Also in Lothian, around 50 practices are operating restrictions on their waiting lists. I say to the cabinet secretary that that is not good enough. A quarter of practices have reported vacancies and a third of advertised GP posts took six months to fill.

Only last week, NHS Lothian announced that, this May, nine out of 23 days cannot be covered at the St John's hospital out-of-hours GP service because of staff shortages.

Jeane Freeman: Does Neil Findlay accept that, as I said to Ms Lennon, the reason why there are those challenges in out-of-hours services is the 2004 GP contract, which was not negotiated by the SNP Government?

Neil Findlay: Come on.

Jeane Freeman: It is not a matter of saying, "Come on." That is the case. Ask the British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners and Sir Lewis Ritchie. They will all point to that and to the removal of the requirement of GPs to undertake out-of-hours services. That plus the cohort who are ageing and retiring have combined to produce the problem. Rather than rehearsing the problem, will Neil Findlay say where Labour's solutions to it are? I am still waiting.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Mr Findlay, I will give you extra time.

Neil Findlay: The SNP has been in power since 2007, and it is getting round to addressing the problem only now. I do not think that the cabinet secretary will get away with that one.

The NHS could not staff the children's ward at my local hospital for six years, and we are now told that it cannot staff the out-of-hours GP

service. I do not know what the cabinet secretary finds amusing. There was turmoil there for six years, with three closures. The cabinet secretary should look at the record. Given the closure of the out-of-hours GP service, patients are being advised to contact NHS 24. That is not good enough. Patient care will be compromised.

On several occasions, I have raised the situation at Stoneyburn health centre. The community has had a GP since the creation of the NHS in 1948, but it no longer has one thanks to the crisis that is taking place on the Government's watch. That must be a proud achievement for the cabinet secretary. The elderly, the unemployed, the disabled and the low paid now have to use a very poor public transport system to travel to appointments. For a young mum with two children, the minimum cost of travel is almost £7. Previously, she would have been able to walk up the street to her local surgery.

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

Neil Findlay: What does the cabinet secretary say to the young mum who came to me and said that she struggled to take her children to the doctor because of the cost? That is the health service of the 19th century, not the 21st century.

16:26

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I begin by reflecting on the general state of the national health service in Scotland. I suggest that we have a health system to be proud of. Since I became an MSP in 2011, the NHS budget has gone from £10 billion to more than £13 billion. Unlike those who like to complain, particularly in the chamber, we get on with the day job and resolve issues through local health boards, not in the chamber.

Alison Johnstone: Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: No, I have no time.

Like many others in the chamber, I have constituents who come to my surgeries with health inquiries, which we resolve. Yes, with any organisation there will be delays and complaints, but it is solving each and every complaint that gives me satisfaction. That is what we do for constituents.

Miles Briggs: Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: No, I do not have any time.

Our health service has to cope with many issues, too numerous to mention in the time that I have available. The health service deserves more credit than it gets, and I regularly contact my local

GPs when required. I get annoyed because, time and again in the chamber, there is political criticism of our health service. Rather than trying to get resolutions at local level through the health boards, some of the main parties maximise their opportunity to take a pop at the Government or the cabinet secretary.

Miles Briggs: Will the member give way?

Richard Lyle: I have no time.

Miles Briggs: You do have time.

Richard Lyle: No, I do not have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is quite clear that Mr Lyle is taking no interventions.

Richard Lyle: The SNP has the most significant investment plans for the NHS. The other parties have no answers to the recruitment and retention of GPs, which is what we are discussing today.

I value each and every one of our GPs. I had the good fortune of having a part-time job as an out-of-hours driver for NHS 24 before I became an MSP. I drove doctors, who worked at night and at weekends, to house calls and saw how they coped with the health needs of the population. I saw at first hand the work that GPs do and the work that goes on in our local hospitals.

To be clear, the SNP greatly values the contribution that GPs make to the nation's health, and I am sure that the Government wants to ensure that GPs have the support that they need. That is why the new GP contract for Scotland, which came into force only in April 2018, helps to cut doctors' workload, ensures a minimum income guarantee for GPs and makes general practice an even more attractive career.

In its briefing, the BMA states that there has been considerable progress over recent times. Indeed, we are now embarking on year 2 of the implementation of the new GP contract. Figures from 2018-19 show that the Scottish Government invested more than £110 million to support the new contract and wider primary care reform. Dr Andrew Buist, the chair of BMA Scotland's Scottish general practitioners committee, has said:

"At the heart of the new GP contract introduced last year was a clear aim to make becoming a GP a more attractive career choice and encourage more people into working in this part of the profession."

That is absolutely correct, and that commitment has been matched by the Scottish Government's announcement that GP premises will be able to access loan funding of £50 million through the GP premises sustainability loan scheme over the next three years.

The scheme, which is in direct response to concerns raised by the BMA, aims to ease the financial burden that is associated with owning a

practice and will, in turn, help improve recruitment and retention. GPs who own their premises can apply for long-term interest-free loans worth up to 20 per cent of the practice's value, thus reducing the risk of premise ownership, which has been raised by GPs as a common concern. It is all part of a move towards ensuring that GPs are no longer required to own a property. A total of 172 practices—or around 50 per cent of the total that are eligible—have successfully applied for loans, and I am delighted that a number of them are in Uddingston and Bellshill and elsewhere in Lanarkshire.

The Scottish Government has committed to recruiting 800 GPs over the next decade. By the end of this session, it will be investing an additional £500 million in primary care. I believe that the SNP Government has a record to be proud of, and the political parties opposite should stop carping from the sidelines.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I point out that we have no spare time left.

16:31

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Alison Johnstone and the Green Party on securing this afternoon's important debate on Scotland's GP recruitment and retention challenges.

This has been, in my view, a well-informed and insightful debate about crucial players in the delivery of primary care—our GPs. As the BMA has rightly argued, problems with GP recruitment and retention are deep-seated, and there is no quick fix for them. According to current surveys of GPs, about one in four practices are reporting vacancies. As many members, including Neil Findlay, Miles Briggs, Monica Lennon, Alex Cole-Hamilton, Mark Ruskell and Annie Wells, have argued, increased workloads have certainly been to blame for some of the vacancies. Excessive workloads have been cited as a major reason for some either leaving the profession or—which is equally important—not entering it in the first place. In the 2018 BMA survey, over 70 per cent of GP partners said that they work substantial hours per week beyond their surgeries' opening times.

Many members have also spoken of the risks that are associated with working as a GP, including in respect of owning the practice premises and employing staff. In fairness, I say that the GP premises sustainability fund, which is intended to make general practice more workable, is a good concept and is designed to reduce the risk to which practice partners are exposed.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Will the member give way?

David Stewart: I will give way very briefly, because I am quite tight for time.

John Finnie: Does David Stewart recognise that there is a place for the introduction of salaried GPs, as has happened in my region?

David Stewart: Yes. Salaried GPs are an important part of the model; indeed, I have visited some myself in Wick and Thurso.

I have no time to debate the matter now, but I have also raised at the Health and Sport Committee concerns about the 6 per cent increase this month in employer contributions to pensions. The increase, which has been caused by a technical issue—a change in the current discount rate—will hit GPs and general practices, and might result in GP staff being made redundant. The issue is, of course, reserved, but I hope that the Scottish Government will get the full funding from the UK Exchequer to deal with it. Other wider pension issues, such as the lifetime allowance, also affect retention of GPs—especially those aged over 55.

As we have heard, another key element in recruitment and retention of GPs is the effect of the new contract in remote and rural areas. As has been said—and as our amendment makes clear—Dr David Hogg, who is the vice-chairman of the Rural GP Association of Scotland, resigned last month from a Scottish Government working group, saying that rural GPs are “despondent” about the new contract. Concerns were raised about the new funding formula: it is based on the number of appointments, so it fails to recognise the challenges that are faced by rural GPs, who often have to travel much longer distances to treat patients or get to their practices.

General practice is a crucial linchpin of the NHS because of their delivery of services in the community and because they reduce pressure on acute and emergency services. I believe that we have a workforce crisis in the NHS. As many members including Alex Cole-Hamilton have pointed out, we are facing a shortage of 850 GPs over the next 10 years.

Out-of-hours services are vital if we are to ensure that access to urgent care in the community is there when it is needed. However, we have seen cuts in out-of-hours services across Scotland.

I will turn to the big picture. We know that the reasons for the loss of GPs are demographic changes, the demands of rural areas and the social and economic challenges of disadvantaged communities across Scotland. Although there is no quick fix, Scottish Labour supports the RCGP's call to increase to 11 per cent the proportion of NHS spending that is allocated specifically to general practice, in order to grow and maintain the

workforce and to support fully the highest possible standard of patient care. As Nye Bevan famously said—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hope that he said it quickly.

David Stewart: Nye Bevan said:

“The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it.”

16:35

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank Alison Johnstone and the Green Party for bringing the debate to the chamber and for giving us the chance to discuss an issue that the public are really concerned about. I wish that we had more time to explore the issue, because it deserves that.

The debate has been well rehearsed in Parliament, and we all know the numbers. As many members have stated, we are heading towards a shortage of more than 850 GPs. I am glad that Emma Harper is sitting down, because I want to say well done to her—it is not like me to do so—for getting the A77, the A75 and rail infrastructure into her speech. That is important, because the environment has an effect on where people work.

We have been talking about recruitment and retention, but in my view we have them the wrong way round. We should talk about retention and recruitment, because it is much more difficult to fill a bucket of water when it is full of holes. We know that more than 500 GPs have taken early retirement since 2007, and that a third of GPs are aged 50 or over, as Alison Johnstone said. It would make more sense to create an environment in which healthcare professionals can deliver the care that they are trained to deliver in the manner in which they would like to deliver it. We should be cognisant of their need to have a healthy lifestyle.

First and foremost, we should look to retain the experience that resides in our GPs while we look to backfill the shortage. That is all the more relevant given that the BMA has reported that pressure on our GPs is increasing and that their mental health is in decline. As Annie Wells mentioned, GPs need more time in which to deliver their service.

The shortage has been highlighted consistently to the Scottish Government by various experts, including the RCGP. A number of years ago—I think that it was back in 2008—the BMA said that a “workforce crisis” was imminent because too few GPs were being trained to replace those who were retiring or leaving. We should therefore not be surprised by the current situation. Meanwhile, in the time since then, the percentage of indigenous

students in our medical schools has dropped dramatically. It is reasonable to assume that the place in which a qualified medic will practise is most likely to relate to the address on their Universities and Colleges Admissions Service form. We have just heard from Richard Lyle. When I was a member of the Health and Sport Committee, I used to hear him mention that young constituents of his could not access places in medical school.

The aim of having 11 per cent of the total health budget going directly to general practice should be the minimum target, especially given the drive towards community-based delivery and away from delivery in acute settings. The RCGP has expressed concerns about the lack of clarity on the Government’s commitment to invest £500 million in primary care, and has warned that

“if the long-standing underfunding and confusion that we are currently experiencing is to continue, we will keep witnessing a considerable number of general practices closing”.

Neil Findlay mentioned issues in his constituency. In East Ayrshire, the surgery in Fenwick has closed and a surgery has closed in Troon in South Ayrshire. We cannot deny that there is an issue. However, the solution is not easy, and a multifaceted response is required, including in relation to student places for Scottish students. We need to review that.

We also need a review of the GP contract, given its unpopularity in the rural GP community. We must accept that, as members including Alex Cole-Hamilton, Miles Briggs and Monica Lennon highlighted. Inevitably, technology will play a major role in the development of a solution, but that is a discussion for another time.

The Green motion sets out an obvious first step in addressing the current crisis, so we will support it.

16:39

Jeane Freeman: I thank members for their speeches. In particular, I thank Mr Whittle for his welcome recognition that this is a multifaceted issue that will require a multifaceted response.

I make it clear that I understand completely that there are key challenges to do with how phase 1 of the contract is interpreted and understood, as we address issues that some GPs in rural practices are raising with us. As I hope that I made clear in my opening speech, we will look specifically at that matter. That is what we asked the group that Sir Lewis Ritchie chairs to consider.

I hope that we will make quick progress on some of those key issues. We will then look at phase 2 of the GP contract and begin

negotiations, informed by the conclusions of Sir Lewis Ritchie's working group and discussions with the BMA about what more we might do. Of course, that work will begin shortly.

I thank Alison Johnstone, not just for bringing the debate to the Parliament but for raising the issue of the national conversation, which has been raised directly with me by the RCGP and by Emma Harper. I confirm to members that we are actively working with the RCGP on how we will take forward the national conversation, to ensure that many more of our citizens understand the positive changes that not just the GP contract but our reforms to primary care are bringing.

As a recent edition of the *British Journal of General Practice* reported, over a two-year period patient satisfaction has increased. That is not to deny that there are areas where there are difficulties. However, we are seeing improvements in some areas and the national conversation should help us significantly.

I do not think that there is any basis for saying that members of the Government and I do not understand the challenges that face GPs and GP practices. That is not the BMA's view.

Although funding alone will not get us past some of those challenges or overcome the time that it takes to train, produce and recruit GPs, I hope that members accept that the Government's commitment to increasing investment in primary care by £500 million over this parliamentary session will take spending in primary care to at least £1.28 billion, which is 11 per cent of the front-line NHS budget, and that, by 2021, more than half of front-line NHS spending will be in community health services.

Alison Johnstone: Of the £500 million that the cabinet secretary talked about, £250 million will be spent on direct support for general practice. May we have some clarity on what the other £250 million will be spent on?

Jeane Freeman: The rest of the funding goes to all the other areas of primary care that I talked about—the other healthcare disciplines that are required to create a multidisciplinary team, such as allied health professionals, mental health services, health visitors and district nurses, all of whom combine to create the important multidisciplinary team that is a core part of primary care reform.

There are undoubtedly challenges with out-of-hours care. There is no use in any member of this Parliament rehearsing those challenges for me; I understand them very well indeed. We are trying to address them in the context of the new GP contract.

Neil Findlay: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister must close in a minute.

Jeane Freeman: I would like to be able to address those challenges on the basis of the work that we are undertaking and additional ideas that come forward from colleagues across the Parliament.

I am happy to take an intervention from Neil Findlay.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No. You are closing, cabinet secretary.

Jeane Freeman: Oh, I am closing, so I am not happy—

Neil Findlay: I am not happy, either.

Jeane Freeman: I will make two quick points.

I am grateful to Emma Harper and look forward to receiving detail about the practices that she is engaged with.

Mark Ruskell made a strong point when he compared NHS Forth Valley and NHS Fife. I will look further at the matter that he raised. The recent review of integration authorities commits us and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to work actively in the next 12 months to improve consistency.

There are challenges, but we have made significant progress, including on our commitment to increase GP numbers by 800. I hope that members recognise that.

There are issues for us to address in some of our GP practices in remote and rural areas, but the principle, in the contract, of addressing workload is the right one. However, it is clear that no services should transfer out of a GP practice unless it is safe for them to do so, and that the locality decisions are the most important decisions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close. I call Alison Johnstone to wind up the debate.

16:45

Alison Johnstone: I thank all members for their contributions to today's debate. I also thank the RCGP and the BMA for their briefings, and the GPs from across Scotland who have contacted me after learning about this afternoon's debate.

The cabinet secretary has confirmed that she understands the issues. She spoke about our rehearsing those issues in the chamber, but I think that it is important that GPs know that this Parliament is listening to them.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Alison Johnstone: Very briefly.

Neil Findlay: I return to the point that I was going to raise with the cabinet secretary. Does Alison Johnstone agree that it is the duty of members of this Parliament to raise those issues time and again, whether the cabinet secretary likes it or not?

Alison Johnstone: I agree whole-heartedly that that is our duty.

Monica Lennon and Miles Briggs raised concerns regarding the impact of the GP contract on particular GP groups, as did Emma Harper, and their engagement and action on behalf of GPs is welcome.

Annie Wells spoke of the role of the GP as a gatekeeper, and Neil Findlay spoke about the knock-on impact of insufficient numbers of GPs across the NHS. He also spoke of the many closures in the Lothian region that both he and I represent, but the issue clearly applies Scotland-wide.

I think that it is fair to say that Richard Lyle left us in no doubt that he is a loyal member of the governing party. I do not want to waste time, but Emma Harper and Brian Whittle are becoming known as the A75 appreciation society in the chamber. However, I really do thank all members for their contributions to the debate.

In my colleague Ross Greer's region, Bargarran medical practice in Erskine was left with no permanent GPs after the lead doctor resigned because recruitment issues had made his position unsustainable. He was the fourth GP to quit the practice in 18 months. In the chamber today, we have heard about similar cases across Scotland. The number of GP practices in Scotland has decreased by 8 per cent since 2008, and we all know the impact that that is having on patients. Will a departing GP be replaced? Who will patients be seen by the next time that they make an appointment? Will the practice have to close altogether? Has it already closed?

The RCGP tells us that

"Patients who receive continuity in general practice have better healthcare outcomes, higher satisfaction rates and the healthcare they receive is more cost-effective"

because they have built a trusted relationship.

The RCGP acknowledges that new methods of working, including multidisciplinary teams, are part of the solution for falling levels of continuity for those who need it most, but we need those methods to be successfully implemented as well as significant investment to produce more GPs.

My point is that the expansion of the multidisciplinary team is welcome, but it is vital that GPs are available to work alongside other health practitioners. That is the holistic, person-centred care that Scotland's people deserve.

We have also heard about rural GPs' concerns over the contract. The Rural GP Association believes that the contract fails to take into account the workload of and services provided by GPs in rural settings. A survey of the association's members showed that 82 per cent believed that the outlook for rural healthcare was worse under the contract, and a third reported that they anticipated that services would need to be curtailed. Concerns have also been raised in the media about the change in the way in which vaccinations are delivered in rural areas, which might lead to a fall in immunisation as patients make longer journeys to attend special clinics, rather than their local surgery. That is the epitome of the fragmentation of care that might occur.

Rural practices clearly operate differently from those in urban centres. I appreciate that the cabinet secretary has said that she is in talks with the BMA about how to take account of those concerns in phase 2 of the GP contract, but 98 per cent of Scotland is considered rural, and a fifth of its population lives in a rural area, so the matter is urgent.

As I have previously discussed in the chamber, there was once fierce competition for GP positions and several applicants for each post, but now there are practices with no permanent GPs, and the increased number of training places are not being filled. We need to make general practice in Scotland an attractive career that appeals to people, and one to which GPs who have taken career breaks will return.

The health and care experience survey that I mentioned earlier reported that 83 per cent of people gave the overall care that was provided by their GP practice a positive rating. The service that is provided in our GP practices remains outstanding, and I am sure that members have no doubt at all that that is down to the efforts of our fantastic practice teams. We should therefore make every effort to promote the fact that general practice in Scotland is a challenging, competitive, worthwhile and rewarding career that will offer the opportunity to deliver excellence every day.

However, we live in a modern world in which people desire more flexibility in their working patterns. General practice is not immune to that. There is an increasing number of GPs who do not work full weeks, and although practices have worked on a small-business model since the 1960s, that might be the preference of many GPs, because more and more of them do not want to be partners. New ways of working could make being

a GP a more attractive career to a greater number of people. We should take care to promote the many different forms that working in a GP practice can take.

Working with and listening to Scotland's health professionals will enable us to develop and deliver a healthcare model that will better support those who work in the NHS and will help them to keep our growing and ageing population well. We need to listen to GPs when they tell us what will improve conditions and patient care, including the need for at least 11 per cent of NHS funding to be allocated to general practice, the need for sufficient numbers to secure enough whole-time equivalent GPs, the need for targeted funding and the need for a national conversation. Those are all calls that are coming from the front line, and I sincerely hope that the cabinet secretary will heed those messages and implement a review of GP recruitment, resources and funding as soon as possible.

Green New Deal

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17000, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on a green new deal for Scotland.

While members are quickly taking their seats, I say that we have absolutely no time spare in the debate. I might even have to cut time off some of the speeches in the open debate.

16:53

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): In recent months, the concept of a green new deal has gained more recognition and been subject to more debate, particularly because of the work of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the US, which has sparked wider discussion in and beyond the Democratic Party in that country. However, the concept of the green new deal did not begin there. In fact, as far back as 2008, the New Economics Foundation put together the green new deal group, which included my colleague Caroline Lucas as well as respected individuals such as Ann Pettifor. It produced a report that was a response to the financial crash that happened that year. That was far more than just a green jobs strategy; it was an economic agenda that addressed the reregulation of finance, issues around debt and stimulus and corporate tax avoidance, and which featured a heavy emphasis on human wellbeing and quality employment. That work has informed the work of the Scottish Green Party, from our "Jobs in Scotland's New Economy" report to discussion papers that have been produced by the Green yes campaign on issues such as the necessity for a post-oil future for Scotland's energy system.

I want to thank the many people who took part in our round-table event yesterday in Parliament. Among the participants were MSPs from a number of different parties, campaigners, researchers and people from the public and private sectors. It was clear from the discussion that there is an appetite for an ambitious approach to applying the green new deal agenda in Scotland. One of our guests from a non-governmental organisation said:

"We clearly need a new approach ... that ... has to be accompanied by a massive acceleration to see the scale of change we need across every sector."

A representative of the renewable industry said:

"We need something that can build investor confidence and also leverage investment. We need to know the policies supporting renewables will still be there decades down the line."

Another representative of the renewable industry said:

“The industry is only capable of making evolutionary steps; radical steps won’t be taken by industry.”

That comment was echoed by a range of people around the room who recognised the need to emphasise the role of Government and institutions such as the Scottish national investment bank, because markets and competition alone will not achieve the transformation that is needed.

The green new deal is not a single list of prescriptive policies. It comes under a set of key principles that would not only create the conditions for private investment, but mobilise the power of the state through regulation, fiscal and monetary powers and public and community ownership to address in a coherent way the ecological and social crises that we face, and build an economy that is fair, sustainable and fit for the 21st century. Taken together with the concept of a just transition, it offers a clear platform not only to achieve the radical and rapid economic transformation that is needed, but to ensure that it works for everybody.

The green new deal is a concept that applies differently in different contexts. The situations in the US, the United Kingdom and Scotland are different. Programmes such as universal healthcare, which many in the Democratic Party are arguing for as part of a US green new deal, are already in place here. Federal and state relationships in the US are different from the relationships between Scotland, the UK and the European Union and from the balance of regulatory powers in those jurisdictions. In Scotland, we would need to act within our current limits, as well as seeking to overcome them, as we discussed earlier this afternoon. However, we have a high level of public support for climate action and social justice, and we have an abundant renewable resource. Those conditions should allow us to act.

Looking at the amendments to our motion, I acknowledge that there are merits to some parts of the Scottish Government amendment, but other parts clearly weaken aspects of our motion, especially regarding the amendments that we think are necessary to the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill. Given the need for clarity and consistency to achieve long-term investment, how could Parliament have confidence in this agenda remaining central to the bank’s objects and missions except by setting it out clearly in the legislation? All ministers sometimes behave as though their own political priorities will persist forever, but ministers and Governments change and new ones are often tempted to create change for its own sake in order to make their mark.

We are not impressed by the Scottish Government’s amendment, but if, in the minister’s speech, a clear and explicit commitment can be

given to making amendments to the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill that will put this core purpose in the legislation and ensure that it cannot be removed at the whim of a future Government, we will listen to what the minister has to say. I regret that the amendment cuts that principle out of the motion.

The Labour amendment makes similar arguments about the nature of the decisions that we should be making about the just transition commission, placing it on a statutory footing to give it the long-term role that it needs. We will support that amendment, although we have a concern that we must not downplay the current value of the jobs in the green economy.

I recognise that the report that was presented recently to the Scottish Trades Union Congress has an important contribution to make to the debate, but it should be acknowledged—including in that report—that there are already more than 46,000 direct and indirect jobs in the low-carbon and renewable energy industries in Scotland. I acknowledge that there have been missed opportunities to do more, but we should take care not to feed the narrative that is promoted by the anti-wind power and climate-denial movements. The potential is real if we have the political will to commit to it. The alternative to this agenda—business as usual—is simply not viable.

Obviously, we will oppose the Conservative amendment not only for what it deletes but for the Conservatives’ continued attachment to the idea that everlasting economic growth is the way to achieve either a sustainable economy or a fair, just and equal society. Let us be clear: the right-wing agenda of growth-obsessed, free-market capitalism is what has brought about multiple social, ecological and economic crises. We cannot expect the ideas that brought us to this point to offer the necessary solutions to the problems that they created.

We are in a moment of recognition of the scale of change that is needed—not just in deploying new, greener technologies such as renewables, but in rejecting the idea that our current economy can continue, while individuals are told to make different consumer choices. Individual choices matter, but if we make those choices within the context of the economic status quo, with corporations given a free pass to keep extracting and hoarding wealth and Governments prioritising immediate growth over long-term survival, we will fail. The Greens are not willing to watch that failure and, increasingly, neither are the wider public. We put forward the concept of a green new deal and we encourage all parties to embrace that opportunity positively.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the growing interest in Scotland and across the world in a Green New Deal, which is an agenda that requires the mobilisation of regulatory, fiscal and monetary powers to achieve a rapid and just transition to a zero carbon economy; welcomes the reduction in Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions to date and believes that a Green New Deal policy would offer a delivery vehicle for more ambitious climate targets in the next decade while creating quality jobs, achieving a sustainable economy and addressing the severe inequalities in the economy; further welcomes the work of the Just Transition Commission and the First Minister's comments that "a Scottish Green Deal" will be a key mission of the Scottish National Investment Bank, and calls on the Scottish Government to develop a Green New Deal policy for Scotland that establishes a 10-year economic and public investment strategy that priorities decarbonisation, community and employee-led transition away from high- to low- and zero-carbon industry, the eradication of inequality and the restoration of Scotland's environment, and for it to publish amendments to the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill to make this agenda a central part of the bank's core objects.

17:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I welcome today's opportunity to debate enhanced mechanisms for the transition to a carbon-neutral Scotland. It is important to challenge ourselves, learn from others around the globe and work together to deliver carbon neutrality.

Climate change is a global challenge and there is a growing international focus on how to meet that challenge. As I have said many times before, delivering a carbon-neutral Scotland might be difficult, but there are also huge opportunities. The Scottish Government recognises the urgency of the call to action on climate change. We are already a recognised world leader with our climate change ambitions and we intend to maintain that level of ambition.

I welcome the fact that, just before recess, the Parliament constructively supported the principles of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1. During today's debate, it is important that we recognise that the bill both maintains Scotland's place

"among those at the forefront of global ambition on climate change"

and makes

"target setting more transparent and accountable".

The Scottish Government has been absolutely clear that we want to achieve net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases as soon as possible and that we intend to set a target date for that in law as soon as it can be done credibly and responsibly.

The 2017 advice from the Committee on Climate Change proposed the most ambitious statutory emissions reduction targets of any

country in the world for 2020, 2030 and 2040. We were happy to take that advice and we drafted our legislation accordingly. It will mean that Scotland is carbon neutral by 2050. The world-leading nature of the bill's targets has been recognised by a number of leading international figures, including Laurent Fabius, architect of the Paris agreement, who described the bill as

"a concrete application of the Paris agreement".

However, the special report that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published last October represents a significant step forward in the scientific evidence that underpins the Paris agreement. Responding quickly to the IPCC's report, the Scottish Government joined the Welsh and UK Governments in commissioning further independent expert advice on targets from the CCC. That advice is scheduled to be published on 2 May. If the CCC advises next week that higher targets for Scotland are now credible, the Scottish Government will, as we have said consistently, amend the bill accordingly at stage 2.

At the STUC conference last week, the First Minister was clear that ushering in the carbon-neutral age should not just make Scotland a greener nation but must make us a healthier, wealthier and fairer nation. We believe that a just transition to carbon neutrality will create jobs through new sustainable industries, be good for communities and help to tackle inequalities and poverty. The benefits of transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy need to be shared widely. We must be mindful not to leave anyone behind, whether they be businesses, industry or domestic consumers.

That focus on a just transition builds on our approach to maximising the opportunities of a low-carbon economy. As Patrick Harvie acknowledged, in 2017, the Scottish low-carbon and renewable energy sector supported more than 46,000 jobs and generated more than £11 billion in turnover. That is significant. Together, across the chamber, we have a responsibility to promote what Scotland is achieving.

Of course, we can always strive to do better, and the Government has long been committed to ensuring that Scotland maximises the economic opportunity of the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. We need to work together to plan for and invest in socially and environmentally sustainable jobs, sectors and economies. We have never said that we hold all the answers to this. We have been open to advice, sought the opinion of others and looked widely at best practice. That resulted in the establishment of the just transition commission—we were the first country anywhere to do that. The commission brings together 11 independent members and is

chaired by Professor Jim Skea. The remit is to advise on continuing the transition in a way that promotes social cohesion and equality. Work started in January and independent advice on the opportunities and challenges of moving to a carbon-neutral economy will be provided within two years.

I hope that the chamber will support the proposal of a Scottish green new deal to secure the economic and social benefits for everyone of delivering our climate change targets. The early core principles of the green new deal—job creation linked with decarbonisation, tackling inequality within communities and ensuring access to finance to accelerate the transition—are not new. In fact, they are consistent with many of this Government’s policies and with our programme.

I look forward to hearing views from across the chamber on these areas today. We are listening and if we need to reshape or refocus existing activity to maximise the benefits for Scotland, we will. However, of particular interest to me are the views of members on the additional regulatory, fiscal and monetary powers that the Scottish Government would need to implement such a new deal fully. As our amendment recognises,

“the main fiscal and monetary policy levers”

to support action in this area remain

“reserved to the UK Government”.

I have made many calls on the UK Government to increase its ambition to tackle climate change and to better align with the level of ambition in Scotland. While regulatory levers remain reserved, we need the UK Government to do its bit in order for Scotland to achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is just closing.

Roseanna Cunningham: Therefore, it is hard not to refer members back to the content of the First Minister’s statement earlier, in which she reiterated our commitment to pursuing Scottish independence. We need to have all the necessary tools and levers at the disposal of this Parliament to deliver for Scotland. That will allow us to work together to promote Scotland’s success, the skills of its people and the level of ambition in this area.

I move amendment S5M-17000.3, to leave out from “zero carbon economy” to end and insert:

“carbon-neutral economy, recognising that the main fiscal and monetary policy levers are reserved to the UK Government; calls on the UK Government to increase its ambition to tackle climate change and to work with Scotland towards net-zero emissions as soon as possible; welcomes the reduction in Scotland’s greenhouse gas

emissions to date and believes that a Green New Deal policy would offer a delivery vehicle for more ambitious climate targets in the next decades while creating quality jobs, achieving a sustainable economy and addressing the severe inequalities in the Scottish economy; calls on the Scottish Government to develop a Green New Deal policy for Scotland that establishes a 10-year economic and public investment strategy to promote an inclusive and sustainable economy that prioritises decarbonisation, the eradication of inequality and the restoration of Scotland’s environment in a way that supports community and employee-led actions; welcomes the work of the Just Transition Commission and the First Minister’s comments that the transition to a carbon-neutral society will be a key mission of the Scottish National Investment Bank, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with other parties to ensure that this agenda is a central part of the Scottish National Investment Bank’s core activities.”

17:07

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): We agree with much of the sentiment in the Green motion, but we will not be able to support the text of the motion in its entirety. Indeed, having heard Patrick Harvie’s articulation of extreme socialism, I can say that that is no way in which to tackle climate change.

Nevertheless, whether we call it a green new deal, the circular economy or anything else, successfully tackling the breakdown of our climate can be achieved only by building a more sustainable economy. Business as usual is not an option. Therefore, the Scottish Conservatives stand ready to work with any proposals in this area and we will take an evidence-based approach with regard to our support.

The public appetite for such change is growing, and the Parliament is at its best when members work together to deliver on that, putting the needs of our planet and the next generation ahead of party politics. We have already seen that on individual policies, for example when Scottish Conservative and Green MSPs alike called for a moratorium on new incineration capacity in Scotland or when the Scottish Conservatives led cross-party support to introduce energy efficiency targets to tackle fuel poverty.

However, co-operation can be difficult when some people indulge in making unrealistic promises or peddling utopian fantasies. Consider the Scottish National Party’s claim that renewables would create 20,000 jobs, only for those jobs not to materialise in Scotland. False dawns erode the public trust that we need to transition away from some of the older industries, yet the Greens are now promising 10 times as many jobs from a rapid low-carbon transition. With livelihoods at stake, many people—particularly in the north-east but also throughout Scotland—will be sceptical of such claims and will wonder how those fanciful scenarios will work in the real world.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): What does the member have to say about those working in solar energy who saw the UK Government's policy erode that industry overnight?

Maurice Golden: Temporary market interventions are to be welcomed but, ultimately, the business case for renewables, or for any intervention on climate change, must stack up. I urge John Finnie to think about the economic realities of today, and to use the business case that we have to promote the circular economy. However, I appreciate that such advice is often lost on Green Party members, as can be seen from their actions over consecutive budgets. Each time, the Greens could have pressed for transformational environmental policies in return for backing the SNP but, instead, all that we got was a tax on people driving to work.

I welcome the ambitions of both the UK and Scottish Governments. The UK Government is a world leader in tackling climate change and transitioning to a sustainable economy. Greenhouse gas emissions are down by a quarter from 2010, while the share of our electricity needs from renewables is up from just under 6 per cent in 2009 to a third now. That has been brought about by a £52 billion investment that did not just promise low-carbon jobs but delivered 400,000 of them.

Scotland has made progress, too, thanks to public and private sector action. We lead the UK in emissions reductions, with a drop of almost half, and our renewables electricity share is over two thirds. However, Scottish Conservatives are determined to continue pushing for practical, evidence-based policies so that real change can be delivered. For example, establishing urban consolidation hubs and switching public procurement to electric vehicles, where possible, by 2027 would help to tackle transport emissions, reduce air pollution and promote positive economic and health outcomes. Projects such as an electric arc furnace and a new plastics recycling plant would also help to deliver the low-carbon jobs that we need, while boosting recycling. Underpinning all that is the circular economy—

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Will the member take an intervention on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Golden is just closing.

Maurice Golden: We would embed the circular economy across all Government departments, to ensure that protecting the environment, reducing waste and creating opportunities for all are at the

heart of future Scottish Government policies. That is the type of green new deal that Scotland needs.

I move amendment S5M-17000.1, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"recognises that prosperity and economic growth should be positively aligned with tackling climate change and environmental protection; welcomes the reduction in Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions to date; notes that a forward-thinking industrial strategy and sustainable public procurement practices can aid a just transition, and believes that implementing a circular economy strategy for Scotland is an effective way to bring about this transition."

17:12

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): Scottish Labour members welcome the debate. We want to reinstate full employment as a goal of public policy. We want to see real economic change and a new kind of society—a caring society in which the whole economy is a social economy and every job is a green job.

Of course, it is important that the debate starts with the subject of renewable energy jobs, but we must recognise that there is a need for a green new deal across all sectors of the economy. I say, in all sincerity, that we will not attain the transformative change that we need by leaving it up to market forces, or to the mitigation of market forces through defensive rescues. Anyone who doubts that should look at the powerful oral evidence that was submitted to the Parliament's Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee yesterday morning. They should read the hard-hitting report entitled, "Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs", which was presented to the Scottish Trades Union Congress in Dundee last week. They could also go and ask the workers at BiFab in Methil and Burntisland, and at Arnish Point. The introduction to the new STUC report is very clear on that, so I will quote from it. It states:

"the STUC is absolutely committed to building a low-carbon economy and meeting climate change targets. However, we are criticising the failure of industrial policy".

I would go further: we are not merely

"criticising the failure of industrial policy",

but are criticising the Scottish Government's failure to have such a policy in the first place.

When, as leader of the Scottish Labour Party, I addressed the STUC last week, I called for trade union involvement not just in sectoral collective bargaining but in sectoral economic and industrial planning, because we need to transform our institutions.

If we are to repurpose not just the Michelin Tyre site in Dundee or the Caley rail works in Glasgow, but the whole Scottish economy, it cannot be done according to the central tenets of neoliberal economics—the old ideas of privatisation,

austerity and rolling back the state. It cannot be done, either, through a continued overreliance on imported goods and services, on foreign direct investment or on multinational financial and corporate interests.

Instead, we need an innovative state. That means using the powers that the Scottish Government has in procurement, planning, licensing and investment to ensure that low carbon and renewable energy developments bring far greater economic benefit to communities across Scotland, and it means establishing a properly capitalised national investment bank in order to secure by public investment the economic rebalancing that we need and the building up of our manufacturing base that must go with it. It also means investing in new forms of common ownership—co-operative ownership, municipal ownership and public ownership.

There is a growing restlessness out there, with school pupils striking and young people, some of whom have no vote, raising voices that need to be heard and listened to. Across all generations, there is a rising determination, which this Parliament needs to reflect better, on the need for new urgency of action and renewed vitality on the need for change.

I am optimistic that we can make the leap and the transformative change that we need with a planned transition—a democratic transition and a just transition—so that the very economic foundations of society become much more democratic, much more accountable and much more sustainable, because the struggle that we face to halt climate change and save the planet is, in the end, a struggle for social, economic and environmental justice. It is a struggle that not only can be, but must be won.

I move amendment S5M-17000.2, to insert at end:

“; believes that it is vital that these ambitions are met with actions, and notes the concerns raised in the report, Broken Promises and Offshored Jobs, published by the STUC, which exposes the consistent failure to deliver jobs in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy; further notes the need to actively support community, cooperative, municipal and public ownership models; agrees with the calls of young people for urgent action to deliver both jobs and skills opportunities in this climate emergency, and calls on the Scottish Government to consider establishing the Just Transition Commission on a basis that is statutory, long-term, well funded and independent of government.”

17:17

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I can agree with much of what has been said so far. Building a fair and sustainable economy requires change, and that change must be fair and just. It must mean not greater concentration of wealth, but fairer distribution. That means jobs and

opportunities for local communities, which often feel left behind, and it requires investment, regulation and incentives by Government.

However, recent evidence is not encouraging. I wish it was not the case, but there is real anger in Fife about BiFab. Keith Brown, when he was the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, said that the takeover of BiFab by D F Barnes was “a very good day” for employees, and he assured Parliament that the firm had no intention of shedding more staff. Just 21 days later, many of those employees lost their jobs. Weeks later, the company failed to win contracts for fabrication of turbine jackets and floating platforms for the Moray East and Kincardine wind projects.

Gary Smith from the GMB has spoken much sense on the subject and has captured the sense of betrayal in local communities. He said:

“To working class communities in Burntisland and Methil this doesn't look ... like a just transition or a green jobs revolution”.

When Mainstream Renewable Power was lobbying for the Neart na Gaoithe wind farm in the outer Forth estuary, it said that it would create hundreds of jobs during construction and operation, and

“generate significant local economic impact across the country, in particular on the east coast from Dundee to Eyemouth”

It specifically lobbied for the support of working-class communities on the basis that they would see a return for their communities in terms of jobs.

The former First Minister, Alex Salmond, promised that Scotland would be a Saudi Arabia of renewables manufacturing. Now is the crunch time for the Scottish Government to deliver on those promises to the BiFab workers and workers across the country, in order to make sure that we have that just transition.

I support renewables. Our record on renewables is strong, but we need to make sure that we take everyone with us, which means making sure that the communities in Fife that I have talked about get a return for the investment. They have an interest in the long-term survivability and sustainability of our planet, but they also need those jobs right now. Today's debate enshrines the importance of building a fairer and more equal society, while transitioning away from carbon-dependent industries.

Liberal Democrats have consistently forced the pace in countering climate change threats. In Government, we have a proud record—from nearly tripling electricity from renewables to making more than 1 million homes warmer and cheaper to heat, to securing an ambitious EU-wide

agreement on tackling climate change. We delivered in the face of almost daily battles with the Conservative Party in Government. Today, we oppose the opening of a new front in terms of carbon-based fuels with fracking, just as we opposed the Scottish Government's proposed subsidy for the open-cast coal industry and the SNP's plans to slash air passenger duty.

We urge the Scottish Government to get a grip of its waste strategy, which only yesterday was heavily criticised by a report that highlights the problem of having a million tonnes of waste. How on earth can sending Scotland's waste to England for landfill meet our environmental obligations? That shows that speeches in the chamber are insufficient to tackle climate change. It is action that counts.

17:21

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It is very clear that we are now standing at the crossroads in the climate emergency. There is an ambitious path that we can take with vision, courage, dynamism and a commitment that we will leave no one behind in the transition that is necessary.

We can start the journey by setting a net zero emissions target in our Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, which will send the strongest signal to everyone—from the climate striker to the banker—that Scotland's mission is to meet the climate emergency head on. As Greta Thunberg said to MPs yesterday,

"Sometimes we just simply have to find a way. The moment we decide to fulfil something, we can do anything."

That is what industry voices are demanding, too. Aviva has said that

"A net zero ... target would give us the confidence we need to scale up ... investments and help to deliver a zero carbon economy".

The Scottish Government needs the clear vision, the mission and the confidence to tackle the climate crisis, even though the solutions cannot be mapped out with certainty by either the UK Climate Change Committee or this Parliament. A change in mindset is needed across the whole of Government in order to tackle the challenge. Setting a net zero emissions target is the first step, but a green new deal is essential to enable industries to make the big transformative leap to doing things differently and better.

The economist Keynes wrote that the role of

"government is not to do things which individuals are doing already ... but to do those things which at present are not done at all."

There lies the strongest tool in the box that we have to drive transformation and transition. The state has provided the foundation for our biggest breakthroughs. The technology behind the internet, the iPhone and pharmaceuticals all came through a confident and risk-taking state that invested in innovation not just to fix markets but to help to create entirely new ones.

Leading industry voices came together in Parliament yesterday to discuss a green new deal. They have a thirst to deliver the change, but they alone cannot develop the solutions to the climate crisis when the solutions are at their most risky stage of development. That is where the Scottish Government must up its game, starting with a stronger national investment bank that has a clearer statutory purpose, alongside a bold public energy company that is set up to share directly in the financial rewards of progress.

Simply hoping that the free market will find the path on its own, when fossil fuel corporates are investing more than \$200 million every year in climate change lobbying, is at best naive. Government needs to lead the mission with an energy policy that is not based simply on there being more of everything. The Scottish Government has funded the Oil & Gas Technology Centre: its mission can only be decommissioning and transition, not gunning for extracting every last drop of oil by 2040.

One tragedy of the BiFab situation, which was mentioned by Willie Rennie, is that the state did not take a direct stake earlier in the offshore wind supply chain. Instead, yards at Methil sat waiting for much-needed private investment that never came, which affected the competitiveness of the company.

Government must take the lead in growing markets in which we have an advantage, such as wave and tidal energy, while championing new low-carbon opportunities that are not yet off the drawing board.

We can draw inspiration from history and from great doers like Tom Johnston, who wielded the transformative power of the state to deliver our first great renewables revolution. At the same time, we can ensure that no worker, from the oil and gas engineer to the farmer, is left behind.

Our chances of walking out of the crisis get slimmer every day. The alarm bells rang a long time ago. It is time to get up and run; it is time for a green new deal for Scotland that tackles the climate emergency, creates hundreds of thousands of jobs across Scotland, and makes Scotland a fairer and more equitable nation.

17:25

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I welcome the debate and thank the Greens for bringing it to the chamber this afternoon.

The Greens and my party share a number of common goals, as well as having some differences. One of the common goals is that a glass ceiling should certainly not be placed on Scotland and that independence is the way forward to deliver a better Scotland. Patrick Harvie touched on that in his speech, as did the First Minister in her statement earlier this afternoon. Some members in the Parliament do not agree with that position, which is legitimate from their perspective. However, if the Scottish Government developed green new deal proposals that required either support from the UK Government or the devolution of powers in order to deliver them, would the Scottish Tories support its efforts in principle? In his speech, Maurice Golden said that they will look at any proposals. If that is the case, I welcome the Tories' support of the Scottish Government in that regard.

I have a genuine comment for the Tories: we can all agree that we want to see a cleaner, greener Scotland and help to deliver our carbon-neutral economy, but the Tories' amendment mentions a "circular economy strategy". Clearly, we could have been further down the line and progressed on the journey to carbon capture and storage if the UK Government had not cancelled the CCS competition in 2015.

Maurice Golden: Rather than blaming Westminster for one particular aspect, does Mr McMillan not accept that the SNP Government's household recycling target, which will not be met for 12 years after the deadline was set, is a real indictment of the SNP Government?

Stuart McMillan: I accept that the Parliament does not have the full range of powers to deal with many of the issues that Scotland has to address. I will touch on something else that Mr Golden commented on: how do the Tories explain nuclear waste in regard to the circular economy or the environment? Storage of the waste is not something that the vast majority of the population see as a positive.

I am not sure whether the Tories recognise that the circular economy is one of the headline themes of Scotland's manufacturing action plan. It sits alongside skills, innovation and all the other things that we would expect to find in a manufacturing plan.

As the cabinet secretary highlighted, the Scottish low-carbon and renewable energy sector supported more than 46,000 jobs and generated more than £11 billion in turnover in 2017. The just

transition commission has been established to provide ministers with practical advice on promoting a fair, inclusive jobs market as we move to a carbon-neutral economy. On the face of it, Labour's amendment, which proposes a statutory footing for the just transition commission, sounds reasonable, but surely Labour members will agree that the best course of action is to wait for the commission to report back, then base decisions on what is needed for subsequent years.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: I am just about to finish. I am sure that they will also agree that the landscape might have changed by then—it might be different in two years' time, and the commission might not be the most appropriate body for the work that is required then.

The just transition commission is an important addition to delivering a carbon-neutral economy. I welcome constructive dialogue being a central pillar of its approach.

Presiding Officer, I am conscious of the time, so I will conclude. I want the Scottish Government to develop a green new deal policy that promotes an inclusive and sustainable economy that prioritises decarbonisation.

17:30

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest as a farmer and food producer.

Although I agree with much of the sentiment of what has been said today, I take a less radical and more cautious approach than the Greens in building on what we have, always bearing in mind that Scotland is responsible for only 0.1 per cent—or one thousandth—of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

We can offer leadership and play our full part, but in doing so note that every option costs money. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill's financial memorandum guesstimates that a net zero by 2050 target will cost £13 billion. Who will pay for the transformational change that is likely to be required to take us to a low-carbon economy?

Much is made by WWF and others of the opportunities for innovation and the potential to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and that is certainly an objective that I would like to see fulfilled, but I just do not think that it will happen.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

John Scott: I am really pushed for time—I am sorry.

Let us look at onshore and offshore wind, which is our most successful low-carbon industry. So far, it has provided fewer than 10,000 jobs. Although developing completely new industries not yet thought of that will deliver a bonanza of almost 200,000 jobs is a laudable aim, it is not yet supported by the facts, experience or Scotland's track record, as far as I can see.

If innovative and start-up companies are—with the best will in the world—unable or unlikely to provide the investment to create or sustain tens of thousands of new jobs, the knee-jerk reaction here in Scotland has always been to look to Government to do so. However, based on the track record of the past 14 years, the Government has neither the money nor the ability to develop new industries that will create tens of thousands of jobs and produce a worldwide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Put simply, the Government's capital investment moneys are, will be and should be used to build new hospitals, schools, roads, railways and housing. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, Derek Mackay, never tires of telling us there is not enough money to do that.

The question remains: who will finance the necessary infrastructure changes? The answer is those with the research and investment budgets—namely, the current fossil fuel energy providers, as they transition to providing energy in a low-carbon way. Scottish Power is a shining example of what I mean.

It is a similar situation with transport. Existing train, bus and car manufacturers will, in reality, be the deliverers of real change. As Simon French cogently argued in *The Times* on Saturday,

“it will fall to private sector groups to build the infrastructure necessary for a low-carbon economy”,

to which we all aspire today.

The same will be true for agriculture. Landowners, land managers and farmers will have to provide the capital, supported by a more holistic appraisal of what agricultural land delivers, to create a low-carbon rural economy.

Maurice Golden's amendment helpfully points us in the direction of a circular economy, which, again, builds on what we have, with those who are already doing the business continuing to do so in a low-carbon way.

It will be for the Government to declare its level of ambition, following advice from the Committee on Climate Change, and set responsible and achievable targets that will, in large part, be delivered by the private sector. Of course, local authorities, health boards and other Government agencies will have a part to play, but the big shift in innovation to low-carbon infrastructure in energy

provision, low-carbon agriculture and low-carbon transport will come from the private sector, and we must encourage it to do all that it can by creating a fiscal climate here in Scotland that encourages it to deliver the better future that we all seek.

17:34

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The motion before us today refers to

“a rapid and just transition.”

As Richard Leonard said, most of us will sign up to that. The challenge is how to strike the right balance between speed and fairness in that transition. Getting that balance right is vital for many sectors of our economy and for the jobs and livelihoods of those who work in them. It is particularly important that we get the balance right from the point of view of our energy industries and energy workers.

North East Scotland has one of the largest concentrations of energy expertise anywhere in Europe. Aberdeen—the oil capital of Europe for the past 40 years—aspires to be the energy capital of Europe for the next 40 years and beyond. How to make a just transition is therefore not an abstract issue; it is a matter of vital and personal interest to tens of thousands of people in the area that I represent and, indeed, across Scotland.

Mark Ruskell: Would Lewis Macdonald acknowledge that it is important that the Oil & Gas Technology Centre that has been set up becomes an all-energy technology centre that addresses the needs of emerging technologies, including renewables?

Lewis Macdonald: Mark Ruskell is absolutely right to make that point—that is what the Oil & Gas Technology Centre is. I am sure that, when he visits, he will find that it is doing many good and innovative things in offshore renewable energy. I am glad that he mentioned that, because although it is not on my list, it is a critical part of energy transition.

Other big steps have already been taken. Aberdeen has the largest fleet of hydrogen buses in Europe; the world's largest wind turbines generate power in Aberdeen bay; the largest domestic district heating scheme in Britain has cut both carbon emissions and fuel poverty for thousands of council tenants; and the Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group provides an outstanding model of municipal leadership in working towards a low-carbon economy. Indeed, Aberdeen bay is only one of a large and growing number of wind farms in North East Scotland, onshore and offshore, and the Acorn project at St Fergus has

the potential to lead Britain and Europe in enabling carbon capture and storage in the North Sea.

Those many projects are crowded into the north-east not just because we have innovative universities, enterprising councils and a world-class workforce—although it is true that we have all those things. The projects are there because we have energy industries and energy workers who have been delivering for a generation, working in some of the toughest environments in the world and developing successive new technologies to overcome technical challenges that would once have been seen as insurmountable.

Public policy and expectation now look to our energy industries and energy workers to make different things happen. Those industries and workers are already adapting, seeking to deliver both low-carbon energy and successful carbon sequestration in those same challenging offshore environments. The choice that we now have to make is whether to seek to deliver energy transition through partnership with the energy sector and energy workers, or to do it in opposition to existing energy businesses and those who work for them. We should choose to develop a strategy to deliver real change, not simply to virtue signal at the expense of the people who work in our energy industry.

Labour is clear that we want real change, and that we want to deliver it in partnership with workers in energy. We need to see real action by Scottish and UK Government ministers to secure real jobs in the renewable energy sector, as an essential precondition of a just transition for our existing energy workforce. Many oil and gas workers are fully engaged with the debate. They are clear that energy transition must start with the creation of high-quality, highly skilled new energy jobs, not with getting rid of those that we already have.

A generation ago, Scotland failed to capture the economic benefits of onshore wind, despite having led the way in developing the technology. We must not let that happen again. Government must find new ways to secure those future energy jobs, and it must do so in partnership with our people who work in the energy industry.

17:38

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I thank the Green Party for bringing this important debate to the chamber. We hear the term “green new deal” being used a lot right across the world. More than ever, we see the mobilisation of not just pressure groups—as was once the case—but citizens and businesses towards a carbon-neutral economy. Indeed, we

see our young people leading the way by taking part in the school strike for climate movement, with pupils choosing to take part in demonstrations to demand that action is taken to prevent further global warming and climate change.

Like others, I commend the Swedish environmental activist, Greta Thunberg. At just 16 years old, she is showing not just her fellow young people but everyone how activism and taking a stand can make a difference, regardless of age or background.

I also thank the many young people in my Coatbridge and Chryston constituency who have contacted me about the issue over the past couple of weeks and, indeed, the couple of folk who have emailed me during the debate. I thank them for all the work that they are doing.

We—not just as a country, but as a planet—are facing the potential for a state of environmental emergency. There is not much dispute about that. The time to take meaningful action is passing us by, but we must also ensure that measures are in place so that we are fully prepared for the economic challenges that come with transitioning to a greener and healthier Scotland. There is no reason why we cannot be both green and prosperous—after all, the low-carbon and renewable energy sector generated more than £11 billion in 2017.

In some ways, Scotland’s natural environment is almost perfect for us to become green, and it is no surprise that it is worth £20 billion a year to our economy, sustaining 60,000 direct jobs. Rural Scotland covers 98 per cent of Scotland’s landmass, and three of Scotland’s key growth sectors—food and drink, energy and tourism—are reliant on Scotland’s natural resources. We must therefore ensure that protective measures are in place and that our rural economy is safeguarded. There is consensus that Brexit is one of the main threats to our rural economy at the moment.

We also know that our industrial sector accounts for more than half our exports and sustains a significant number of high-value jobs across Scotland. That is why I agree with the cabinet secretary’s comments. We cannot make the transition to a low-carbon future without ensuring that domestic industries continue to thrive, as opposed to meeting targets through diminishing the industrial base across Scotland and risking industries relocating to areas in which climate regulation is less stringent. I am sure that Richard Leonard and other members of the Labour Party agree that we do not want to put our workers in difficulty or at any disadvantage. That is why I believe that the just transition commission, which will report back in two years, is a very important factor in our move towards a carbon-neutral economy. We must look at all the different aspects

in that regard—for example, increasing active travel and the new jobs that other members have mentioned.

I urge local authorities to take action. I am glad to see that carbon management plans are being followed across the country. North Lanarkshire Council, which is the local authority for my constituency, has come to the end of its current plan and will propose its new plan to committee within the next few weeks. I have been assured as recently as today that substantial measures are being put in place and that funding for pilot projects to work towards lower carbon emissions is being sought. I urge the local councillors who will be at that committee to guarantee that the new three-year plan is rigid and substantial enough to ensure that we see real change by 2022.

In putting that challenge to North Lanarkshire Council, I thank it for its strong support for the local community in Coatbridge, who are against an incinerator in a situation that has gone on for 11 years. The council has responded to environmental concerns in the past, and I hope that that will continue.

17:43

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the Scottish Green Party's lodging the motion for debate. Scottish Labour will support Patrick Harvie's motion.

A green new deal could be the way to root our climate ambitions in systematic economic transformation for the public good with the right criteria. However, at this stage in the debate, it is worth reflecting on the opportunities in the low-carbon and renewables economy that have slipped away from Scotland because of poor planning and the failure to support Scottish industry. The STUC's report is right to lament what could have been as we see European neighbours reaping the benefits and contracts slipping through our fingers.

Scottish Renewables has also spoken about historic underinvestment in UK yards compared with investment in Europe, but it caveated that by saying:

"There are certainly things that can be done ... and the issues are fixable."

A green new deal could certainly be the way to focus attention on those issues across all sectors, pulling together the just transition, the Scottish national investment bank, an industrial strategy, new forms of ownership and our climate targets.

The just transition commission must be at the very core of a green new deal. Yes, we need investment and strategy, but equity must remain the final test. The commission will have that role,

and Scottish Labour is adamant that such a provision must be written into statute in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill. To fulfil its remit, the commission must be long term, independent of Government and well resourced.

Although the need for a just transition in the energy sector is an imperative for Scottish Labour, support across a range of other sectors is equally important. One such sector is the farming and land use sector. Many farmers work in isolation, meaning that the consequences of climate mitigation and adaptation are less visible than they are in communities where such measures are concentrated or in the energy sector. The farming and land use sector also needs forward planning in terms of policy, accompanied by advice and support from the commission and skills training.

If support for change is provided across all sectors, we will continue to discover new areas for improvement, which will bring innovation and jobs. One such area is the textiles sector, which currently produces 65,000 tonnes of waste for landfill every year. A new circular economy approach would also help to tackle clothing poverty.

The Labour amendment calls for the green new deal to support alternative forms of ownership in the public interest. We know about the offshore wind industry in my colleague Lewis Macdonald's region, and there are Scandinavian and other models under which publicly owned offshore wind industries operate. If the Scandinavian countries can do it, so can we in Scotland, and we must support that work.

There are other forms of energy that are provided in the public interest. On a smaller scale, the Edinburgh Community Solar Co-operative is climate friendly, and the surplus can be reinvested for social good. Worldwide, municipalities are forging their own path. As Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York city, says:

"One of the best steps national governments can take to fight climate change is to empower their cities with the tools and autonomy they need to act."

Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group has taken a lead on that issue, as have others across Scotland and the UK.

There is also community ownership. The Galson estate on Lewis has three 900kW wind turbines, the net profit from which is distributed to the community via the Galson Estate Trust's community investment fund, which has provided support for community and social events. Taking into account other funds that have been leveraged in, the total support for such initiatives amounts to £2.3 million.

Scotland can create stable jobs, strengthen communities, wipe out fuel poverty, do its bit to stem climate change and localise economies. As Richard Leonard said, we need an “innovative state”. The green new deal, supported by the just transition commission, must get this right for the people of Scotland.

17:47

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

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests in connection to a smart meter business in England.

The debate deals with one of the most pressing and critical challenges that this and future generations face: how to address climate change by transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy and society.

Our amendment to the Green motion highlights the increasing recognition in Scotland and across the world that future economic growth must be aligned with environmental protection and tackling climate change. As other members have said, taking a business-as-usual approach is no longer viable.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Dean Lockhart: I am sorry, Mr Wightman—I have only four minutes, and I have quite a lot to cover.

Scotland has made significant progress. Emissions have gone down by 49 per cent in the past 30 years, but progress has been mixed across sectors, and more robust action is required to deliver the transition. Whether we call the transition delivery mechanism a new green deal or otherwise, the transition to a carbon-neutral economy will require a whole-of-Government approach. It will require investment on an unprecedented scale, a fundamental review of the skills and training that are necessary for the future workforce, a balance to be struck between energy security and energy costs, and the transition to be delivered in a structured, co-ordinated and just manner, so that no one is left behind.

The reality is that a number of delivery mechanisms are already in place that can help to achieve those outcomes. The UK Government's industrial strategy has made clean growth a central part of its sustainable economic policy. It provides the massive scale of investment that is required to support the transition, with £37 billion of investment available to promote sustainable economic growth. It includes £2.5 billion for investing in low-carbon innovation, the announcement of a new offshore wind sector deal

and plans to make the UK the global leader in green finance to support clean growth.

As a result of that strategy, the UK's low-carbon economy is expected to grow by 11 per cent each year in the next decade. We want Scotland to benefit from that low-carbon growth, which is why we have repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to work closely with the UK Government to make sure that Scottish business can capitalise on those low-carbon opportunities.

The Scottish Government can progress the transition by introducing a dedicated circular economy strategy for Scotland. In his opening remarks, Maurice Golden referred to an ambitious programme that could create 40,000 jobs if the Scottish Government were to embed such an approach in all its portfolio areas. Such a programme would include the creation of new institutions such as an institute of reuse and microplastic recycling facilities and the promotion of best practice across Scotland. We therefore encourage the Scottish Government to follow our policy recommendations in that area.

Another delivery mechanism that members have mentioned is the Scottish national investment bank. We agree in principle that the bank should be focused on transition, but every proposed project must be evidence based to ensure that it is viable and sustainable. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the recent past, when £40 million of taxpayers' money was lost on failed investments such as Pelamis and Aquamarine Power; that cannot be the focus of the bank.

Finally, the Scottish Government's own climate change plans must play an important part in transition, but the plans must address concerns that were raised by witnesses to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee. They cannot simply be wishful thinking and must be backed by credible policies, resources and more specific targets.

All those policy platforms can help achieve a carbon-neutral Scotland, but any policy in this area will have to be prioritised and implemented through a whole-of-Government approach. Unfortunately, as we heard earlier from the First Minister, the priorities of this Scottish Government are focused elsewhere, not on climate change, sustainable economic growth or training the workforce of the future.

I support Maurice Golden's amendment.

17:52

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): In this debate, we have covered many of the opportunities offered by the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. In addition

to tackling climate change, Scotland's ambition to drive down emissions can help us achieve social and economic gains such as increasing investment, creating employment and tackling inequality, and we will want to continue this debate in the weeks and months ahead with a focus not only on the challenges but very much on the opportunities that such a move presents to Scotland.

The issues that we have been discussing are not new, and we should acknowledge the significant progress and achievements that have already been made. Scotland has a well-deserved reputation for recognising and tackling climate change issues and demonstrating a proactive approach to innovation in the green economy. The Scottish Government has provided significant investment to businesses, communities and the public sector through our suite of low-carbon support programmes, which include our low-carbon infrastructure transition programme as well as our community and renewable energy scheme.

In my time as minister, I have been fortunate to visit many overseas countries, including Ireland, Norway and Denmark, and everywhere I go, Scotland is seen and recognised as a world leader in renewable energy innovation and adoption. Provisional figures show that, in 2018, the equivalent of almost 75 per cent of Scotland's gross electricity consumption came from renewable sources, an increase from 70 per cent the year earlier. It was another record year. Moreover, in the past year, over £18.5 million in community benefits has been paid by the renewable energy sector to local communities across Scotland. That money has been transformational for some communities, allowing them to support a number of social and economic projects.

Scotland is already a global leader in floating offshore wind, with the world's first floating wind farm—Hywind Scotland—located off Peterhead. Indeed, on Richard Leonard's comment about the evils of FDI, I would just point out that Equinor put the money into getting the Hywind project up and running, and the value of that kind of investment needs to be recognised. Not only are we investing Government money in this, but we are making investments with others that have the technology that can make Scotland's renewable energy sector all that it can be.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the minister take an intervention?

Ivan McKee: I do not have time, unfortunately.

We are committed to maximising the offshore wind sector in Scotland. At the start of May, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, Derek Mackay, will co-host an offshore wind

summit with the UK Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth, Claire Perry.

Decommissioning presents another distinct and clear opportunity for innovation, growth and economic development. The Scottish Government wants to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to allow the world-class Scottish supply chain to continue to develop competitive capabilities. Our work through the decommissioning challenge fund is providing direct support to the supply chain to ready it for the opportunities in decommissioning, thereby creating growth and employment. As Mark Ruskell should know, the Oil & Gas Technology Centre is focused additionally on renewables and is a key part of the transition. I suggest that he visits the centre in Aberdeen, as I have done, to understand what it is engaged in.

The circular economy is also a priority. Yesterday, I visited MacRebur in Lockerbie and was impressed with its innovative technology, which involves using recycled plastics to manufacture roads. Creating the conditions for a successful and powerful circular economy means making it easy for businesses such as MacRebur to develop and roll out their technologies in Scotland and across the world.

Maurice Golden talked about the great number of 400,000 low-carbon and renewable jobs across the UK and how much of a success that is. He will therefore recognise that the 46,000 low-carbon and renewable jobs in Scotland, which represents a significantly higher percentage of the population than the figures in the rest of the UK, are also an achievement of the Scottish Government.

The Scottish national investment bank has the potential to transform Scotland's economy by providing capital for businesses at all stages in their investment life cycle and for important infrastructure projects to catalyse private sector investment. The bill that will create the bank was introduced in February and will support the establishment of the bank in 2020. The bank will take a mission-based approach to investment, with Scottish ministers setting the strategic direction. That approach will help to create and shape future markets, support innovation and tackle socioeconomic challenges.

As the First Minister set out in her speech to the STUC, supporting the transition to a carbon-neutral society will be a key mission for the bank. That recognises the important role that the bank has to play in supporting future low-carbon and carbon-neutral industries and infrastructure, and in financing improvements to existing industries. We welcome the consideration of the bill, which is now under way, and we will carefully consider proposals for improvements to it. Where changes can be made to ensure that the bank is better able to meet the ambitions that have been set for it, we

will work with partners across the chamber and beyond to deliver those.

With our natural and human resources and our political will, Scotland is well placed to not only lead the way globally on carbon neutrality but develop the industries and innovations that will help to shape that future. We can do that to the best of our ability with the limited powers that we have, but we should recognise that, to invest to the level required, we will need control of all the economic levers in Scotland, which can come only with the full powers of independence.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I ask members to keep their conversations down, as some members were struggling to hear Mr McKee speak.

17:57

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank everyone who has spoken in the debate. I welcome the broadly constructive and positive tone that nearly all members have adopted. Despite differences in approach, it is clear that the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party and the Greens share elements of the ambition, even if we perhaps disagree on some matters to do with urgency and emphasis.

A green new deal is not, as the SNP amendment claims, just a policy or a different set of interventions; it is a mission-driven, time-constrained and ambitious new economic paradigm. The mission is outlined in our motion, which also sets out the timescale as well as core elements of the means, such as making the agenda the object of the Scottish national investment bank. Although the minister, Mr McKee, said that he would listen carefully, he did not say anything in response to Patrick Harvie's invitation to follow up the commitment that the First Minister made at the STUC conference by ensuring that the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill incorporates climate issues in the bank's mission.

Shortly, I will reflect on contributions from members, but I first want to highlight a discussion that took place yesterday in the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, which Richard Leonard referred to. We convened a round-table meeting to discuss recent events relating to BiFab, as well as wider questions around the offshore supply chain and what the future holds.

Clearly, offshore, onshore and, indeed, all renewables play a key part in and are the core of any green new deal, but policy decisions have been made historically at UK level that have meant that we have missed much of the opportunity to become the world leader in offshore

technology, wind technology and renewable technology in general.

Therefore, I recognise the disappointment that is expressed in the STUC report to which the Labour amendment refers, about the opportunities that we have missed to develop a stronger local economy around offshore. However, although we have missed opportunities, the key is how we move forward.

Willie Rennie, too, outlined the broken promises that Government has made on renewables.

Yesterday, we heard from the chair of BiFab and the chair of D F Barnes about their alleged difficulties in securing a contract for the Kincardine and Moray East wind farms, when a state-owned entity—a Spanish state-owned shipbuilder—undercut them with a 35 per cent-loss-making bid.

That raised questions about state aid rules. The fact that other countries have, through state action on investment and procurement, supported the development of renewable technology and, thus, the economic benefits for workers and communities was also highlighted.

We need a much more joined-up approach in procurement and in the supply chain and between the Crown Estate, for example, which owns the sea bed and grants leases, Marine Scotland, which provides planning and licences, and the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which provides contracts for difference.

A green new deal means learning from the mistakes of the past to move forward.

There has not been much discussion of finance in the debate. Billions of pounds were made available through quantitative easing following the financial crash, which did nothing to transform the economy and only enriched asset holders. Pension funds around the world are investing: a Canadian pension fund is investing in shopping malls in Edinburgh, for consumption by the masses. We should be securing disinvestment in fossil fuels and greater investment in renewables by pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, as well as through crowd funding.

We should also secure investment through state-owned companies. Claudia Beamish and Lewis Macdonald mentioned Sweden's Vattenfall, a wholly owned state company, which operates the European offshore wind deployment centre.

The cabinet secretary talked about joined-up policy, and she is right about that. We welcome the just transition commission, but it must be aligned with the infrastructure commission for Scotland, the energy strategy and, most important, Scotland's economic strategy. The cabinet secretary hinted at that.

Maurice Golden accused us of “extreme socialism”. I am not really sure what that is, but it has nothing to do with the green new deal. I do not think that even Richard Leonard is an advocate of “extreme socialism”; he told us this afternoon that he wants the whole economy to be a social economy, and we agree with him. If our economy is to become a social economy, we need to repurpose and redesign it; it cannot be done within the paradigm of neoliberal economics. We agree with Richard Leonard on that.

My colleague Mark Ruskell highlighted the potential of publicly owned energy companies and the Scottish national investment bank working together. It is not widely known—it was revealed in the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee yesterday—that the Scottish Government is a 28 per cent stakeholder in BiFab. It is also perhaps not widely known that the Methil yard is in public ownership; it is owned by Scottish Enterprise. Of course, none of that is unusual—I just mentioned Sweden and Vattenfall.

Lewis Macdonald and Ivan McKee claimed that the Oil & Gas Technology Centre serves all sectors. I have the company’s objects here.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Andy Wightman: Object 1 is to be

“Recognised as one of the top three centres globally for innovation and technology development and deployment for the oil and gas industry.”

Object 2 is to be

“Recognised worldwide as a leading oil and gas hub with particular focus on subsea production, mature basin asset management, maximising economic recovery and ensuring decommissioning excellence.”

I will take an intervention from Lewis Macdonald.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Wightman, but there is no time for interventions at this point.

Andy Wightman: I am sorry about that.

We are at an important moment in history, and a number of members talked about the imperatives of the climate crisis. Rapid changes are unsettling, which is why I agree with the many members who said that a green new deal is imperative. However, we need to bring everyone with us. This is a deal, a contract, an understanding and a commitment that we are all in this together to create a pathway to a clean, green and peaceful future.

The time has come for a green new deal for Scotland. I commend the motion to the Parliament.

Business Motions

18:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-17027, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 30 April 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Education and Skills Committee Debate: Instrumental Music Tuition

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 1 May 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills; Health and Sport

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 2 May 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister’s Questions

followed by Members’ Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Ministerial Statement: The Scottish Government’s Response to the Sturrock Review

followed by Portfolio Questions: Communities and Local Government

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 7 May 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 8 May 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Social Security and Older People;
 Finance, Economy and Fair Work
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 9 May 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 1 May 2019, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer";

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 2 May 2019, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister"; and

(d) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 29 April 2019, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S5M-17028 and S5M-17029, on the stage 1 timetable for two bills, and S5M-17030, on the

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

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill at stage 1 be completed by 27 September 2019.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 11 October 2019.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill at stage 2 be completed by 17 May 2019.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Point of Order

18:05

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Last week, the chief executive of the Parliament issued advice to all MSPs on the European elections that made it clear that parliamentary resources should not be used for election campaigning. In her statement earlier, Nicola Sturgeon said:

“The Euro elections will also give voters a chance to back a party, like the Scottish National Party”.

Can the Presiding Officer—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order please. Let the member finish.

Alexander Burnett: Can the Presiding Officer give us his guidance on whether, given that she used a parliamentary statement in her role as First Minister to make a party-political statement that explicitly appealed to voters in an upcoming election, Nicola Sturgeon has kept to the spirit and letter of the advice that was given to MSPs?

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Burnett for the advance notice of his point of order. As he noted in his comments, advice covering the European elections has been issued. It looks, in particular, at the operation of the members' expenses scheme and the wider use of parliamentary resources more generally. However, it does not cover the content of political comment in political proceedings in the chamber such as statements, questions or debates.

Having said that, I will take advantage of the opportunity to remind all members to observe the distinction between political debate and blatant electioneering or campaigning, and to refrain from the latter over the next few weeks.

Decision Time

18:07

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): On that note, we turn to decision time.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-17011.3, in the name of Jeane Freeman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17011, in the name of Alison Johnstone, on addressing Scotland's general practitioner recruitment and retention challenges, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 60, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17011.2, in the name of Miles Briggs, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17011, in the name of Alison Johnstone, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17011.1, in the name of Monica Lennon, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17011, in the name of Alison Johnstone, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-17011, in the name of Alison Johnstone, on addressing Scotland's GP recruitment and retention challenges, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland is facing considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining GPs, with almost a quarter of GP practices reporting vacancies, leading to temporary and permanent surgery closures; notes that the number of whole time equivalent (WTE) GPs has been declining, from 3,735 in 2013 to 3,575 in 2017; agrees that WTE is a more appropriate measure than headcount in fully appreciating the recruitment and retention challenge; is concerned by warnings from the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) that there will be a predicted shortfall of 856 WTE GPs in Scotland by 2021 at the same time as demand on Scotland's healthcare system is growing; agrees that health and social care integration cannot be delivered without adequate resources and capacity in community services; welcomes Scottish Government action to improve recruitment and retention of GPs but agrees that more urgent progress is required; notes that general practice carries out the majority of patient contact in Scotland yet has received a declining share of the total NHS Scotland budget since 2005-06; notes RCGP's call, supported by the BMA, for general practice to receive 11% of the total health budget, calls on the Scottish Government, given the importance of general practice to tackling health inequalities and improving the health of people in Scotland, to undertake an urgent review of GP recruitment, resources and funding, and to take consideration of the concerns of rural GPs with the GP contract as well as allowing them flexibility to provide vaccination services; is concerned about the increasing gaps in out-of-hours GP service provision across Scotland, given the value of this service to local communities and its importance for relieving pressures on A&E departments; acknowledges the significant challenges faced by rural GPs and their critiques of the new GP contract, as stated by Dr David Hogg when he resigned from the Scottish Government's Remote and Rural General Practice Working

Group, and believes that any review of GP resources should include a specific focus on out-of-hours coverage and rural service provision.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17000.3, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17000, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on a green new deal for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)

Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 60, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17000.1, in the name of Maurice Golden, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17000, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on a green new deal for 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)
Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
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)
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)
Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
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)
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)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

(SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17000.2, in the name of Richard Leonard, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17000, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on a green new deal for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (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)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 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)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)

Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 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)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)

Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 31, Against 90, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-17000, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on a green new deal, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 92, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the growing interest in Scotland and across the world in a Green New Deal, which is an agenda that requires the mobilisation of regulatory, fiscal and monetary powers to achieve a rapid and just transition to a carbon-neutral economy, recognising that the main fiscal and monetary policy levers are reserved to the UK Government; calls on the UK Government to increase its ambition to tackle climate change and to work with Scotland towards net-zero emissions as soon as possible; welcomes the reduction in Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions to date and believes that a Green New Deal policy would offer a delivery vehicle for more ambitious climate targets in the next decades while creating quality jobs, achieving a sustainable economy and addressing the severe inequalities in the Scottish economy; calls on the Scottish Government to develop a Green New Deal policy for Scotland that establishes a 10-year economic and public investment strategy to promote an inclusive and sustainable economy that prioritises decarbonisation, the eradication of inequality and the restoration of Scotland's environment in a way that supports community and employee-led actions; welcomes the work of the Just Transition Commission and the First Minister's comments that the transition to a carbon-neutral society will be a key mission of the Scottish National Investment Bank, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with other parties to ensure that this agenda is a central part of the Scottish National Investment Bank's core activities.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16088, in the name of George Adam, on multiple sclerosis awareness week, which is 22 to 29 April 2019. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes MS Awareness Week taking place from 22 to 29 April 2019; understands that more than 11,000 people in Scotland live with multiple sclerosis, which is a neurological condition that can affect the way people walk, move, see, think and feel; welcomes the MS Society's commitment to funding research into new treatments and a greater understanding of the causes of MS; understands that the MS Society has invested over £218 million in real terms into research since its inception in 1956, including into the MS Society Edinburgh Centre for MS Research and numerous research projects across Scotland; notes the progress that has been made in research in recent years and the role that Scottish-based scientists have made in this, and celebrates the work being carried out by researchers and charities, such as the MS Society, to ultimately stop MS.

18:15

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I thank all members who signed the motion and who have supported the various events that the Multiple Sclerosis Society Scotland has held this week in the Parliament. One event—for which the Presiding Officer's permission has already been given—is for all the members who are speaking in the debate to have a picture taken in the chamber after the debate.

It has almost become a parliamentary tradition to welcome everyone to what has become known as Stacey Adam's MS awareness week debate. As everybody knows, I am involved with the MS Society Scotland because my wife battles with the condition every day of her life. I say that she "battles" and not "suffers" with MS, because those with MS do not class themselves as sufferers; they tend to battle on. People in the MS community, as a rule, tend to be very positive about how they go about things. The fact that they tend not to moan can make a difficulty for the MS community because, as we politicians know, those who shout the loudest and moan the most tend to get the most. However, what is important is that people in the MS community are proactive and get on with their lives, because they know that life is far too short.

When I first met Stacey, she said that she was going to live every day as if it were her last. Some might think that that is a negative attitude, but it is not, because she drives herself forward every day

and MS has never stopped her doing anything. Those in Parliament who have worked with her over the years have seen that nothing will stop her.

Ironically, many people do not see the scooter, wheelchair or mobility aids that Stacey uses; they see Stacey and her personality. She is a force of nature; when she wants something, she makes sure that she gets it—after 22 years of marriage, that can get quite challenging at times. It is not just Stacey, though—people who live with MS, and their families, think that way. There are many of them, because multiple sclerosis affects more than 11,000 people in Scotland and more than 100,000 in the United Kingdom.

Symptoms usually start in a person's 20s or 30s, which are the key working years, and that is sometimes when they get a diagnosis. Stacey was diagnosed at 16, but that might be more to do with her health professional mother, who decided that she was going to find out immediately what the issue was and what her daughter had to deal with.

Three times as many women as men have MS. In people who have MS, the coating—or myelin—around their nerve fibres is damaged. Nobody with MS has exactly the same symptoms, which causes difficulty when people try to deal with the condition.

At present, there are 13 disease-modifying therapies in Scotland that are licensed through the national health service. Other treatments are coming through, but there is an on-going issue with profiteering by some pharmaceutical companies. At the event that we held last night, I spoke to a number of neurology consultants who gave me examples of a drug that, when used for other conditions or diseases cost, say, £1,000 per treatment. One neurologist asked me how much I thought the same drug cost when made and used for MS. I said that it would be around £5,000 or something, but he said that it was £50,000. Many pharmaceutical companies profit from people's conditions; licensed products should not cost the amount that they cost.

If people are looking at the issue and talking to pharmaceutical companies, they should question them on it, because the practice must stop. People should not be fooled by the argument of some pharmaceutical companies that they research the drugs and that they must pass on the cost of that. In many cases, that is simply not the case. Such drugs were developed many years ago and are now used for another reason. The problem is that the companies pitch the price far too high for things that could make a difference to the lives of many people dealing with MS.

However, one of the good things that we heard last night was when Professor Chandran from the

University of Edinburgh said that Scotland has a strong record on research, on which we must build. He also commended the Scottish Government for its investment in various research programmes and tried to encourage the MS Society to invest in one particular programme, on the basis that the Scottish Government is already investing in it. The MS Society currently funds 10 research projects in Scotland, with an investment of more than £350 million.

There is an on-going debate within the MS community about the role that vitamin D might play in MS. At the University of Edinburgh, Dr Anne Astier's project aims to find out how immune cells move from the brain into the spinal cord, where they can cause damage, and whether vitamin D is involved in that process. That might explain why, per head of population, we have more people with multiple sclerosis than anywhere else. Dr Astier said that

"MS is a very complicated condition, with a number of factors determining whether you might get the condition."

She added that

"It is thought that one of those factors is vitamin D, which might play a role in why prevalence in Scotland is so high."

We must continue with that work because, although many disease-modifying treatments are available, we must take the research to a stage at which we know exactly how to tackle the disease.

Yesterday, Professor Chandran said that he wants to get to a stage with MS that is similar to when someone is diagnosed with cancer, so that doctors can say, "This is the type that you have got, this is how we will treat it and this is how it will affect you." In the past, people with MS have never had a plan for how they can cope with their disease. The MS Society has decided to embark on a campaign, which it will launch later in the year, to raise £100 million to ensure that we can fund more of that type of research, so that people and families who are dealing with multiple sclerosis have the opportunity to hope for a better future.

We can find a cure for the condition and we can ensure that those who are living with it have better opportunities in life. Members have all met Stacey; they know what she is like. I often wonder what, in a world without MS, that incredible force of nature would have achieved. Paisley and I are lucky, because I have a partner who supports me, works with me in the Parliament and represents my constituents and me. In Paisley, we have two MSPs for the price of one.

Let us think about that world with no MS; together, we can rid the world of multiple sclerosis.

18:23

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I congratulate George Adam on securing this debate on MS awareness week, which runs from 22 to 28 April.

I commend the MS Society for its organisation of this important awareness-raising event, for its excellent service, year in and year out, to all those who have MS and for the help that it provides to their families.

When carrying out some research prior to this evening's debate, I was struck by the statistics on the number of people in Scotland who are affected with MS—there are more than 11,000. As we are all too well aware, the incidence of MS in Scotland remains sadly the highest in the world per head of population. That is why research is all the more important, and it is encouraging to note the progress that is being made in that regard in Scotland and other countries.

The MS Society is to be congratulated on its unswerving commitment to funding research, with considerable sums having been invested since the inception of the society in 1956. Importantly, the research focuses on the causes of MS as well as on treatments and the care of people living with MS.

The approach of the MS Society to commissioning research is worth noting. It has come up with a top-10 list of MS research questions, which were formulated by working with people with MS, their families and healthcare professionals. The list includes: consideration of which treatments are effective at slowing, stopping or reversing the accumulation of disability associated with MS; consideration of how MS can be prevented; consideration of which treatments are effective for fatigue in people with MS; consideration of how people with MS can best be supported to self-manage their condition; and consideration of whether vitamin D supplementation is an effective disease-modifying therapy. I do not have time to mention all the questions on the list, but it can be found on the MS Society's website.

Researchers at any UK university or hospital can apply for support through the MS Society open grant round, but research can also be commissioned by the MS Society into priority areas that it does not think are being adequately addressed. It is reassuring to note that every proposal is rigorously reviewed by both scientific experts and people living with MS, so that only the very best research is funded.

That inclusive and rigorous approach to research has attracted a lot of praise from people with MS, including, in a case study published by the MS Society, Ruth White who is from Lochgelly

in my constituency. I understand that Ruth was diagnosed with remitting MS in 2004 and has gone on to have the secondary, progressive form of the condition. Ruth was quoted as saying:

"My gran also had MS and the progress in treatments since she was living with the condition to now is startling. It gives me a lot of hope."

She went on to say:

"I'd love to think there will be a cure in my lifetime and I certainly think we will be a fair way down the road in the coming years."

I wish Ruth, and all those who have MS, all the very best.

For many, of course, MS is a devastating condition and, if my experience is replicated across Scotland, there will be few families who do not have in their lives a relative, friend, work colleague, fellow student or community resident who has MS. We still await the day when we make the crucial breakthrough but, as has been said, the research takes us further down that road. We will continue to support investment in research into MS to ensure that, one day, those 11,000-plus people in Scotland, others right across the world and those still to be diagnosed with MS can see hope for a better future.

18:28

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I give a huge thank you to George Adam and his wife Stacey for all their efforts in securing this debate, and to the charities that sent briefings. Multiple sclerosis can be a hugely debilitating disease, and with more than 11,000 people in Scotland living with the condition, as we have heard, today's debate is vitally important.

MS awareness week, which takes place this week, provides a perfect opportunity to improve public understanding and to highlight and push for further research into ultimately stopping MS. We owe it to those who are affected to make the most of this opportunity, in the hope of making a huge difference to the lives of people with MS and their families.

MS awareness week is, of course, about raising awareness and understanding of MS, which is a complex condition that is often misunderstood. Affecting the nerves in the brain and spinal cord, MS is a neurological condition. The word "sclerosis", which means scarring or hardening of tiny patches of tissue, is added to "multiple" because of its occurrence at more than one place in the brain and/or on the spinal cord.

Common symptoms at the time of diagnosis are fatigue, stumbling more than before, unusual feelings in the skin, slowed thinking or problems with eyesight. MS charities are keen to dispel the

myths that surround MS; although it is a lifelong condition, it is not a terminal illness. As we heard from George Adam, most people with the condition are diagnosed in their 20s or 30s and will typically live to the same age as the rest of us. Everyone experiences MS differently, so no two people will have the same range and severity of symptoms. Each individual's symptoms can come and go, and they vary from day to day. Many people with MS do not experience symptoms that are severe enough to prevent them from working, and the vast majority do not need to use a wheelchair regularly.

As women are three times more likely than men to have MS, charities have been keen to stress that pregnancy has no long-term effect on the course of the condition, and that a woman with MS is no more likely than anyone else to experience miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects or infant death.

Contrary to what was advised previously, this year the MS Trust has stressed that it is vital for people with the condition to stay active. With the backing of paralympic swimmer Stephanie Millward MBE, who was diagnosed with MS at just 18, the charity is calling for people to get moving regularly, no matter which activity they might do.

At the moment, the cause of MS is unknown, and there is no cure. Although MS is a lifelong condition, treatments can help sufferers to manage their symptoms. Disease-modifying therapies can help to reduce the number of relapses that sufferers have, and their severity. However, such therapies are currently effective only for people with relapsing-remitting MS, which makes research all the more important. For some people with MS, there is no way of getting round the fact that the condition can be hugely debilitating; again, that makes research vital. Charities such as the MS Society have led on such research, and currently fund more than 10 projects in Scotland. I give my thanks to all the charities and donors who make such research possible.

I again welcome MS awareness week, and urge all members to spread the word and raise awareness through social media or by word of mouth. I hope that, by pushing for further research, we can change the lives of many and, ultimately, stop MS for good.

18:32

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, thank George Adam for securing the debate. I declare an interest in that my brother, a few of my close relatives and many of my constituents have MS, or had it during their lives. I also thank the MS Society for its commitment and the vital work that it does in raising awareness about the condition,

raising funds for research and highlighting the impact of MS on many people's lives.

It is easy to overdramatise the impact of certain conditions in order to make political or emotional points but, having listened to and observed patients with MS, I suspect that it must be one of the most frustrating and exasperating of conditions. For some, it is the variability and suddenness of attacks, after periods of being well, that have such a devastating impact and often lead to periods away from work or even end a career altogether. MS can leave people feeling floored through physical and mental exhaustion, because living with it is a truly exhausting experience.

For those with progressive MS, the downward spiral, the lack of respite and the absence of effective drugs to help or cure it add to their physical frustration. Each time that patients hear of a breakthrough, it never appears to be for progressive MS. That is not to take anything away from the development of treatments for relapsing-remitting MS and the superb research that goes on in this city, which are to be celebrated loudly. However, it is only honest to express other frustrations. George Adam is right to say that people with MS battle on, get on with their lives and do not shout loudly about their conditions. However, I think that they are wrong to do so: they should shout much more loudly about MS. As everyone knows, Scotland has some of the highest incidences of the condition in the world. Despite that, there are just three specialist nurses in the NHS Lothian area, which means one for every 856 patients.

At the reception that we had last night, campaigners from the Borders told me that there is 0.6 of a post to cover their entire area, which has more than 240 patients. The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing spoke at the reception, but not a word was said about the lack of MS nurses and not a word was said about the fact that there are only a handful of specialist MS physios in Scotland and that access to their expertise is almost impossible to get.

There was not a word about the only specialist MS social worker in Scotland, who I met at the reception either last year or the year before—a man who previously covered the minister's constituency in Dundee, but who is no longer in post; there has been no replacement for him, which means that we have no specialist MS social worker in the whole of the country that has one of the greatest incidences of MS in the world. Remarkably, there was not a single word about how MS patients are to access social care, or even be assessed for free personal care following the introduction of Frank's law.

If we are truly to improve the quality of life for people with MS, we must give them the tools, the support and the assistance so that they can live as independently as possible for as long as possible. There is nothing for them in warm words or warm wine and canapés at a parliamentary reception. They need action and they need hope.

We have this debate every year, and every year we make the same speeches and the same issues come up. I make no apology whatsoever for raising these issues. We all want better treatment for MS patients, but we do not bring about change by pretending that all is well in MS treatment when clearly it is not. I pray every day for a cure, but in the meantime we want the best possible treatment for MS patients in this country, and I am afraid to say that I do not think that they are getting it.

18:36

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

I thank George Adam for bringing this debate to the chamber. He attributed it to Stacey and described her as a driving force. I think that they are a collaborative driving force, given their teamwork, and that is what it is all about.

Neil Findlay is quite right. I sense his frustration and I share elements of it.

I jotted down a few notes the other day, but I am probably not going to refer to them, because I want to talk about last night's reception. When George Adam introduced it, he talked about the stoicism that is displayed by people with MS. Just before that, I was talking to two lots of researchers—one from Glasgow and one from Edinburgh—and I was asking all the daft laddie questions, because I am not remotely scientific. I did not think that I was going to an MS reception to talk about fish, but we talked quite a lot about fish and the role that they play in our understanding, and it was absolutely fascinating.

I do not have the technical information to hand, although I have it here somewhere. It was fascinating to hear about myelin, examination of the movement of fat within the brain and other issues. I found particularly compelling a gentleman who spoke who suffers—George Adam does not like that word, so I will say instead “a gentleman with MS”. He said that, when he was diagnosed in the 1990s, there was nothing. I spoke to him later and said that I thought that he had spoken particularly well. I think that his name was George—hopefully that is right.

There are now 13 disease-modifying therapies. I found particularly uplifting—indeed, I could have listened to him all night—Professor Chandran from the Edinburgh centre for MS research, who laid out with enthusiasm how impressive Scotland's work on MS is. It was not about patting himself on

the back. It is important, sometimes, to attribute praise where it is due, and he said that it is a perfect combination of the knowledge in the universities, some benefactors and indeed Government money. He also talked about the MS Society directing some money into that work.

As we know, the MS Society has a research strategy, and my colleague Annabelle Ewing touched on the 10 research programmes. I will not go through the list, but the one that jumped out at me is about how people with MS can best be supported to self-manage their condition. Of course, although empowerment is very important, we forget at our peril the carers who provide a lot of support to people.

Members have spoken about fact that there is a disproportionate number of people with MS in Scotland, which is the case in the islands and is particularly profound in Mr McArthur's constituency. Sadly, the society has a great number of centres across the Highlands and Islands, from Kirkwall to Lochgoilhead and all points in between, some of which I have visited. It is important to thank not just the MS Society for its work but the volunteers at those centres, who play a pivotal role.

It is an unfortunate reality that pharma's obligation—and that of any multinational corporate or limited company—is to maximise profit for shareholders. We need to take a patient-centred approach. I have spoken several times in these debates about medicines being given free for trials, then suddenly the medicine is not free. We need to address many of those issues and the issues to which my colleague Neil Findlay referred.

I have to say that members should take a look at the MS Society website. Page after page is about research news and there is a lot of positive stuff. One page that particularly appealed to me said:

“Research shows hot chocolate could help reduce fatigue”.

That is a minor thing, but a lot of positive work is going on. I again thank George Adam for bringing this debate to the chamber.

18:41

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, congratulate George Adam not just on securing this debate but on hosting last night yet another highly successful and well-attended reception. I was delighted that my constituent Alan Jamieson and his sister Karen were there. Alan was diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS in 2016. I thank the MS Society Scotland for its involvement in last night's reception, the excellent briefing for this debate and the work that it does year round,

and I thank it particularly for the funding that it puts into research, which is the theme of this year's MS awareness week.

Last night, we were fortunate to hear a fascinating talk by Professor Chandran of the University of Edinburgh, as John Finnie reminded us. He talked about the exciting, world-leading developments in research into MS that are taking place in Scotland. Professor Chandran quite rightly challenged us, the Government and the MS Society Scotland to go further in pursuit of the breakthroughs that we all want to see.

John Finnie also reminded us that Stephen Ritchie—a person who lives with MS—spoke powerfully about the progress that has already been made. Neil Findlay is absolutely right that we need to be honest with ourselves about where we are, but Stephen contrasted the treatment options that were available when he was diagnosed in the 1990s with what is available now. That should give us hope for the future. It will not be easy and I am sure that there will be setbacks along the way, but Stephen and Professor Chandran's words offered encouragement about the feasibility and possibly the likelihood of a breakthrough being made.

No discussion about the importance of the research in Scotland into MS would be complete without mention of Professor Jim Wilson, who with his team at the University of Edinburgh has been carrying out world-leading work over many years. It is fitting that Professor Wilson is an Orcadian; Orkney has the highest incidence of MS anywhere in the world. There are many theories, but we really do not know why. In a population of 21,000, more than 100 people have now been diagnosed with MS, and that figure has more than doubled since the 1980s. As Professor Wilson says, whether that reflects

"improved diagnostic methods, improved survival rates or rising incidence",

we simply cannot be sure. We know that it reinforces the need to redouble efforts to support research that can identify better treatments and, ultimately, stop MS for good.

Given the levels of MS within the population in Orkney, it is no real surprise to see such strong public support for MS awareness week in the islands over recent days. The iconic St Magnus cathedral has been lit up in orange this week and many shops and local businesses have shown amazing creativity in going orange over recent days. What has impressed me most has been how active the local MS community has become, not just over the past week but over recent years.

There is a genuine partnership in Orkney. It seems invidious to single out any individual, but I want to put on record my admiration for the commitment and sheer energy of the chair of the

MS Society in Orkney, George Hannah, who embarks on every task with a good humour that never seems to flag. The increased level of activity—events, classes, outings and other get-togethers—are all helping to improve the lives of those with MS in Orkney.

As Alan Jamieson explained to me last night, providing opportunities for those with or who are affected by MS to share their experiences and feel the companionship of others who know what they are going through is crucially important. That is reinforced by the cover story of the latest edition of *MS Matters*, which highlights the risk of loneliness and isolation to those with MS. In the article, Soo Lyon-Milne talks about going from a point of

"waxing lyrical about 'being positive'"

to

"an all-encompassing, soul-destroying, bitter depression".

Mark Carey talks of MS "taking his identity", which led to his shutting himself off from everyone. Treatments are vital, but reaching out—reassuring people that they are not alone—is almost equally important.

I was therefore delighted to join a painting class last week that was organised by the MS Society in Orkney. My dad is an artist, but it is safe to say that the talent has skipped a generation. Yet, thanks to the patience and skills of our tutor, Sheena Graham-George, I managed to produce this painting. It is amazing what people can do with some coloured water, a straw and an endless supply of Victoria sponge cake.

Once again, I congratulate George Adam on helping to keep the issue at the top of our agenda, and I thank all those in Orkney and across Scotland who help support people with MS.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr McArthur. Every time I chair a members' business debate, I learn something, and now I have learned something about your dad.

18:46

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the motion on MS awareness week, in the name of Paisley's MSPs, George Adam and Stacey Adam—I have added Stacey's name, because George said that that is the case.

My first written assignment on my first placement as a nurse 35 years ago, when I was a student, was to write a care-plan essay, and I chose to write about a woman who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I clearly remember a smart, bright and feisty woman in her 40s—I will call her Freda to protect her confidentiality. Freda was confined to a wheelchair

and, when I met her, needed assistance with many of her daily living activities, including personal hygiene, putting on clothes, meals and mobility—which was absent; she was unable to transfer herself from her bed to a chair and back.

I clearly remember her competent ability to talk. In fact, she helped me. She taught me how to provide care for her, which led me to provide care for others for the next 30 years. She taught me about comfortable positioning for vulnerable heels, elbows and bahookie—which was her word, not mine. She guided me on how much food needed to be on the fork or the spoon to avoid my choking her, because she had difficulty swallowing. She did all that with a kind approach and a sense of humour.

We also talked about her MS and the need for research—this was 35 years ago—into the causes, treatment and a cure. For the remainder of my speech, I will focus on research and the positive steps that are being taken to identify the cause of MS, so that we can determine to treat people with improved drugs, and aim for a cure. I thank the MS Society and all the researchers and funders for their contributions that allow the research to take place.

MS affects 11,000 people in Scotland. It is often painful and exhausting and it can cause problems with how one walks, moves, sees, thinks and feels. It can be unpredictable, because the symptoms are different for everyone.

The Scottish Government commits £500,000 to NHS Research Scotland's neuroprogressive network every year, in order to

“promote a culture of clinical research”

in neuroprogressive conditions, including multiple sclerosis, and to

“improve recruitment to high-quality studies from both urban and rural areas”

across the country.

Through the FutureMS project, the Scottish Government has invested almost £650,000 in a Scotland-wide study that collects clinical data and samples from 440 recently diagnosed relapsing-onset MS patients.

Additionally, the Scottish Government funds the SPRINT—Scottish PhD research and innovation network traineeships in motor neurone disease/disease/MS—MS PhD programme for three PhD studentships in MS, led by Professor Chandran at the MS Society's Edinburgh centre for MS research, which others have mentioned. Overall, there will soon be 13 PhD students for neurodegenerative disease in Scotland, funded through a contribution of £430,000 over five years from the Scottish Government.

Over recent years, the research, which other members have mentioned, has allowed clinicians and patients to discover the success that chemotherapy can have on reducing relapses and potentially supporting remission. When people hear the word “chemotherapy”, they instinctively think of cancer, which can be scary. However, chemo has been proved to slow the progress of the disease. It is an immunosuppressive agent and research has shown that it can help to suppress the activity of MS. It is also interesting to read about other research on topics such as remyelination, and identification of biomarkers and susceptibility genes.

I am also interested in exploring opportunities that are presented by Sativex, which is the first cannabis-based medicine to be licensed in the United Kingdom. It has been found to help to reduce muscle pain and spasm when a person has shown inadequate responses to other treatments. I am interested to hear what the minister thinks about Sativex and how its use could be expanded across Scotland.

Again, I congratulate George Adam on securing the debate, and reaffirm the importance of research that, no doubt, would have helped Freda and many others to receive help across Scotland.

18:51

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this evening's debate, and I thank George Adam for bringing the issue of MS to the chamber and for his continued work on that topic.

I was disappointed not to make the MS reception. Certainly, from what I have heard this evening, I missed a good event. Unfortunately, it clashed with a reception that I was hosting.

I praise and thank the MS Society for its awareness-raising campaigns, particularly during MS awareness week. As many members have mentioned, MS awareness week allows us to raise awareness of a condition that affects more than 11,000 of us in Scotland. I have family who have lived with MS for most of their lives, and I have a friend who has, I am sad to say, recently been diagnosed with the condition. Few people are not touched by or aware of how disabling MS can be.

I thank the MS Society for its briefing, which highlights the extensive research and fundraising that it carries out. Like many neurological conditions, MS is complicated, and a number of factors need to be taken into consideration when determining whether a person is diagnosed with MS.

However, I was particularly encouraged by the words of Dr Anna Astier from the University of

Edinburgh about her project, which was funded by the MS Society. As we have heard, her research was on vitamin D and the role that it plays in MS. Her research will potentially provide an answer as to why we have such a high prevalence of the condition in Scotland. It could also help to deliver more and better treatment for MS, with fewer side effects. Dr Astier has a very positive view—she believes that we have come a long way in the past 20 to 30 years and that we are getting ever closer to stopping MS.

Tonight's members' debate provides Parliament with an opportunity to press for that important work to continue, and for us to work together in driving forward that research.

One way for people with the condition to improve their quality of life is to have more specialised MS nurses in our health services across Scotland, but I am sad to say that the picture that was painted by Neil Findlay is accurate. Not long after my election in 2016, I was shocked to learn that no specialist MS nurses work in Dumfries and Galloway, despite more than 300 people in the area living with the condition. I believe that one specialist MS nurse now covers the area, but it is a huge geographic area.

Unfortunately, that is not a new problem in our rural communities, which I have been all too aware of throughout the experience of my dear cousin Anne McKnight. She is one of the people whom George Adam described. She is very much like Stacey—she is not a sufferer. In all the time I have known her, I have never heard her moan, despite her having lived with the condition all her adult life. Over the years, rather than seeing an improvement in the support that she gets from the NHS, that support has deteriorated. When she lived in Stranraer, she had to take 120-mile round trip to see a specialist MS consultant in Irvine, and the situation remained the same when she moved to Dumfries. The consultant in Ayr has retired, and a replacement has not been found.

There is a real lack of specialists. There might be neurological specialists, but there are not many MS specialists, and where they exist, they are really stretched. It is clear that, across the south-west, there is a real need for more specialist MS nurses and access to consultants. Without that specialist care, we are letting down every one of the 300 people in Dumfries and Galloway who are affected.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the specific case in my constituency of one remarkable girl who is going above and beyond to provide the care that her mother needs. Darby Mitchell, who is 10 years old and from Castle Douglas, looks after her mother, Angela, who was diagnosed when Darby was just two years old. At last year's MS Society awards, Darby was the joint

winner of the young carer of the year award—quite rightly—in national recognition of her efforts.

In preparing for tonight's debate, I read a moving interview with her and her mother that was published last Christmas and highlights just some of the duties that she carries out, including helping her mum to get in and out of bed, taking her to the toilet, cooking and baking. Angela's 13-year-old son, Mickenzie, also helps out. In the interview, Angela reveals how affectionate both of her children are towards her and how understanding they are of her condition. Darby is an incredible young girl who has accepted a different life from that of many of her peers, and it has been a real privilege to have the chance to highlight her incredible care in the chamber tonight.

Unfortunately, however, not everyone has a Darby or a Mickenzie, which makes MS nurses and support from the MS Society so important. I again thank everyone who is striving for a future without MS through funding and research. Working together as MSPs and campaigners, I hope that we can achieve that.

18:56

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Government and I thank George Adam for securing another important debate on MS.

Over the past couple of days, during engagements to mark MS awareness week, I have had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with many people who are affected by MS or who support others with the condition. Yesterday evening, I was pleased to be able to attend the reception that was hosted by George Adam in the garden lobby. Earlier today, I visited the Revive MS Support centre in Glasgow, which was a really useful experience. I met some of the centre's users in the peer support area and I met the MS nurse to hear about the process that someone goes through when they arrive at the support centre and look at what the various options are. As Annie Wells said, no two people have the same MS. As part of that process, it is important that people can look at what the right options may be for them in relation to what support the centre can provide.

The Revive MS Support centre is very much a non-clinical centre, not just in terms of the work that is done there. There is a lot of different support and the centre has things such as a specialist MS physio and a pressure tank, but it is very much non-clinical in that people do not wear normal medical overalls with a name badge; they wear what would be considered casual clothes so that folk feel more comfortable. That is part of

making sure that people are empowered. It is a very good centre and I encourage anyone, particularly if they are from Glasgow, to make an appointment to visit to see the fantastic work that is done there.

At the reception last night, as well as hearing from Professor Chandran, who has been mentioned by a couple of members, including George Adam, we heard from Stephen Ritchie, who both John Finnie and Liam McArthur talked about in their contributions. Stephen was diagnosed with MS when he was in his late 20s and he was a really good speaker—like John Finnie, I could have listened to him all night. I, too, had a chat with him afterwards to hear about his very personal experience of what he went through.

Stephen spoke of the challenges that he has faced, and of how being on the trial for secondary progressive MS has had a significant impact on his physical and mental wellbeing. It was interesting that he was very clear that he does not know whether he is getting the drug—he could be on a placebo—but the very fact that he had that hope was important for his wellbeing. That was good to hear, and it is real life stories such as that one and the others that have been shared around the chamber that emphasise the importance of investment in research, and why new and effective approaches to the prevention, diagnosis, management and treatment of neurological conditions are so desperately needed.

Today, I join members and others in paying tribute to the tremendous work of researchers and charities such as the MS Society to find a cure that will minimise the effects of this devastating condition. Much progress has been made in the past couple of years, and it is important to reflect on those considerable achievements and to recognise the dedication of those with MS and those impacted by the condition who are working with us to make a difference.

I, too, commend the MS Society, which has invested over £218 million in real terms in research since its inception in 1956, including in the MS Society Edinburgh centre for MS research and in numerous research projects across Scotland. Annabelle Ewing and George Adam talked about a number of those research projects, including the work on vitamin D. That funding has resulted in the first magnetic resonance imaging scanner dedicated to MS research, which is helping people to access treatment more quickly; research into alemtuzumab, which is now one of the most highly effective treatments for relapsing forms of MS; early trials of Botox for bladder dysfunction, which is now licensed as a highly effective symptom management treatment; and the development of the FACETS—fatigue: applying cognitive behavioural and energy

effectiveness techniques to lifestyle—programme, which is a proven fatigue management programme that is being adopted around the world.

I could not see Stacey Adam in the gallery when I was looking for her, but I see that she is here. Last night, she said to me that there was one demand, as George had said that the MS Society does not have any demands. She said that her one demand was that I stand up and tell members that we have found a cure. I am sorry that I cannot make that announcement yet. However, as a Government, we are supporting a number of MS research initiatives.

Emma Harper talked about NHS Research Scotland's neuroprogressive network. We have committed £500,000 to that to promote a culture of clinical research in neuroprogressive conditions and improve recruitment to high-quality studies from both urban and rural areas across the country.

I think that Emma Harper also mentioned the PhD students we are funding.

Neil Findlay: Will the minister take an intervention?

Joe FitzPatrick: I will come on to the point that Mr Findlay made in his speech.

We have provided £430,000 to fund PhD students.

Through the FutureMS study, almost £650,000 has been invested in a Scotland-wide study to collect clinical data and samples from 440 recently diagnosed relapsing-onset multiple sclerosis patients. I think that that is the research that George Adam talked about. That study aims to model disease activity and to produce and support a more personalised approach to clinical management in the long-term.

A lot of good work is being done. I do not have time to cover all the research that is happening in Scotland, but I will cover the points that Mr Findlay made in his contribution.

The outcomes of new research and trials can be groundbreaking, but we must remember that we have a responsibility to thoroughly consider the clinical effectiveness and safety of new treatments so that people are able to make informed decisions about potential research.

I see that my time is almost up, so I will move on.

Research is just one aspect of our commitment to ensuring that people who live with neurological conditions are able to access the best possible care and support that will allow them to live well on their own terms. Neil Findlay asked about what we are doing to improve the landscape to allow

people to live better and on their own terms. We have made it a priority through our programme for government to implement Scotland's first national action plan on neurological conditions, which has been produced in collaboration with the neurological community and will be published in final form later this year. That five-year plan aims to build a sustainable neurological workforce; improve the co-ordination of services and support; improve equitable and timely access; and ensure that people and their carers and partners are involved in decisions about their care and that they experience the highest standards of care.

We worked closely with Healthcare Improvement Scotland on the revised general standards for neurological care and support, which were launched last month. They are integral to achieving our vision and clearly set out the care that people should experience throughout Scotland, regardless of the type of neurological condition that they have, their geographical location, care setting and personal circumstances.

The debate has again given us the opportunity to thank the researchers and charities, such as the MS Society, for all their hard work to minimise the effects of this devastating condition. I also thank everyone who has allowed their personal stories to be shared today. That has been particularly appreciated and has brought the issue home to us.

As Finlay Carson said, MS touches the lives of many families across the country, and this week's awareness campaign celebrates the progress in research that has been made in recent years and the Scotland-based scientists' role in it. The Government will continue to work with partners across all areas, including health, social care, welfare and housing, to improve the quality of life of people who are living, or supporting someone, with MS.

Meeting closed at 19:05.

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