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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 21 May 2019

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Professor Arthur Lyon Dahl PhD, who is the president of the International Environment Forum.

Professor Arthur Lyon Dahl (International Environment Forum): Climate change today represents an existential crisis, with leading scientists calling for urgent action on all fronts, and our children on strike and marching in the streets for their endangered future. The rapid loss of the planet's biodiversity is equally frightening.

How can a growing, rapidly developing and not yet united global population, in a just manner, live in harmony with the planet and its finite resources? Our present economic system and consumer lifestyle are having devastating consequences for the environment. We cannot exceed the capacity of our planetary ecosystem without expecting dire consequences. The limited availability and inequitable distribution of resources profoundly impact social relations within and between nations in many ways, even to the point of precipitating upheaval and war.

Faced with such challenges, we must set aside self-interest and partisan disputation that diminish the will to act, and strive to achieve unity of thought and action that is informed by the best available scientific evidence and grounded in spiritual principles.

Baha'u'llah, prophet-founder of the Baha'i faith, warned more than 100 years ago that

"The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men."

In a globalised world, acceptance of the oneness of humankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for the reorganization and administration of the world as one country, our common home. Only strengthened global governance for peace, security and the environment can assure the national autonomy and diversity that is so important to all of us.

We are trustees, or stewards, of the planet's vast resources and biological diversity. We must learn to make use of the earth's natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability and equity into the distant

reaches of time. That attitude of stewardship requires that we give full consideration to the potential environmental consequences of all development activities. We must temper our actions with moderation and humility, realising that the true value of nature cannot be expressed in economic terms. We need a deep understanding of the natural world and its role in our collective development, material and spiritual. Therefore, we must see sustainable environmental management not as a discretionary commitment that we can weigh against other competing interests, but rather as a fundamental responsibility that we must shoulder—a prerequisite for our spiritual development as well as our physical survival.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Air Pollution (Childhood Cancers)

1. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle air pollution, in light of reports that this is responsible for the rise in childhood cancers. (S5T-01659)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): The Scottish Government takes the health impacts of poor air quality very seriously and, of course, any cancer diagnosis is devastating for a child and their family. The cleaner air for Scotland strategy sets out actions to further reduce air pollution across Scotland. An independent review of the strategy is under way and will identify priorities for additional action. We provide £2.5 million in annual funding to local authorities to support air quality improvements. We are also working to deliver low-emission zones in Scotland's four biggest cities by 2020, with the first already introduced in Glasgow.

Jenny Marra: The problem is that many of the bus companies will struggle to get their fleets to meet the requirements of the low-emission zones. I have raised the issue of the pollution from diesel buses many times in the chamber over the past few months. National Express, for example, which is the main bus operator in Dundee, still has 90 buses—a large proportion of its fleet—that fail to meet the Euro 6 emissions standards. Those buses are belching out fumes. All over Scotland, bus operators, in their wisdom, are putting the oldest, most polluting buses on school routes. Those buses are carrying children, who are the most vulnerable to air pollution, to and from school.

I know that the Scottish National Party has been reluctant to regulate the bus industry in any way, but the reports today about an increase in childhood cancers must make the cabinet secretary very worried. Can she please give me a commitment today that, in light of those reports, she will write immediately to the bus companies and ask them to put clean Euro 6 buses on every school route in Scotland?

Roseanna Cunningham: I thank the member for her question, although she will be aware that, in the main, that matter falls to my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, who happens to be sitting beside me. We are disappointed with the low take-up by the bus companies of the grants that have been made available to them. Some bus companies

have taken up the grants and it is disappointing that more have not done so. However, we continue to engage directly with the bus companies to encourage them to take up available funding and make rapid progress on reducing emissions. It feels a little odd to say that I will write to my colleague the transport secretary, given that he is sitting right next to me, but I undertake to raise with him directly the issue that has been raised by Jenny Marra.

On the question about mandating bus companies to do one thing or another, at this stage we are trying to get the bus companies on board right across the piece in respect of air pollution.

Jenny Marra: I appreciate that this is an issue that cuts across many portfolios, but, given that climate change crosses all Government portfolios, that should not be a hindrance to any action. The First Minister has declared a climate emergency in Scotland, so this should become a priority.

The scheme that the cabinet secretary referred to had very low take-up and that is because the Scottish Government was funding only up to 45 per cent of the retrofit cost. Many of our bus companies across Scotland have buses that are so old—Euro 3—that they cannot be retrofitted. The bus companies tell me that they cannot afford to do anything about those buses, but those are the buses that are on the school routes. I repeat my request for whichever minister or cabinet secretary on the front bench today can take this action to please write to all our bus companies in Scotland. Let us get those polluting buses out of the school routes and off the streets outside our schools.

Presiding Officer, if I can come to my next question, private car ownership—

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Ms Marra, I am sorry, but you have had too long and I will have to go to the next question. You have had a good go, so no further questions. If the member had not taken the whole of the time for her second question to make a speech, I would have taken a further question.

Jenny Marra: I can be brief.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but I cannot allow members to go on too long. It is unfair. Three members wish to come in on the back of the first question.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): What consideration has the Scottish Government given to air quality monitors across our school estate? What work is on-going to look towards monitoring the problems that have been outlined by Jenny Marra?

Roseanna Cunningham: Those are matters for local government to take forward. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency already provides air quality monitoring units that can be put in place where local authorities consider them to be appropriate. The matter is one for local authorities to consider. There are not significant problems at all schools, but I know that there are significant problems at some schools in places such as Edinburgh and Glasgow. I would have anticipated that local authorities would be trying to ensure that they understand the situation around those schools.

The introduction of low-emission zones will begin to have an impact on the issue that Miles Briggs raises, just as it will have an impact on the issue that Jenny Marra raised, because it will force the hand of a number of bus companies in respect of what they are doing.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): What engagement has the Scottish Government had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the use of tax powers that rest with the UK Government that would support industries and businesses to invest in more sustainable transport options that would contribute to the reduction of emissions, particularly in built-up areas?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is perhaps another aspect of the issue that Jenny Marra raised. Further to the UK Committee on Climate Change's advice, I have written to the UK Government to ask it to act immediately in a number of reserved areas, given that the CCC made it clear that that will be critical to Scotland achieving its net zero emissions target. As far as transport is concerned, the relevant issues include redesigning vehicle and tax incentives to support industry and business investment in zero emission and sustainable transport choices and committing to adhering to future European Union emission standards, regardless of our position in relation to the EU. So far, the response from the UK Government has not addressed the points that I raised in my letter.

Those examples give a flavour of the reality of how we are having to handle things from a devolved and a reserved perspective.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Scottish Government's long-term failure to properly invest in safe walking and cycling is contributing to the public health crisis?

Roseanna Cunningham: The Government has put record levels of money into active travel, the budget for which it has doubled. There will always be competing destinations for money, but we keep that under review. I do not in any way accept the

categorisation of our work in the area as a long-term failure.

ScotRail (Compensation for Delays and Cancellations)

2. Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government whether the new ScotRail timetable will alleviate delays and cancellations, in light of the 73 per cent increase in compensation payments being made by the operator in 2018-19. (S5T-01658)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): ScotRail's new timetable delivers important benefits from the Scottish Government's continued significant investment in rail network improvements. The introduction of more brand-new electric trains, alongside more high-speed trains, means that a new total of 625,000 seats are available for passengers each weekday. Alongside the benefits of shorter journey times on some routes and higher-quality new trains, that represents an increase of 115,000 seats per day, which is a 23 per cent increase since the start of the franchise.

Unlike the United Kingdom Government in England, we have set Network Rail the same tough performance requirement to meet a public performance measure of 92.5 per cent, which means that ScotRail and Network Rail must work together to deliver improvements for passengers.

Performance is now improving. Yesterday—the first working day of the new timetable—ScotRail delivered a PPM of 92.4 per cent, which was ahead of the average across Great Britain of 90.9 per cent. However, I want the performance of ScotRail and Network Rail to continue to improve, and I will continue to press them to ensure that improvements are delivered.

Mike Rumbles: Performance should improve with less compensation being paid.

The consumer watchdog Which? has described the ScotRail compensation system as “fragmented and confusing”, pointing out that passengers must produce up to 24 pieces of information to claim. How does the cabinet secretary square that with his statement that compensation from ScotRail “is straightforward to claim”, which he made in a written parliamentary answer to me on 14 May?

Michael Matheson: It is straightforward for customers to use the app that ScotRail has provided, because it holds certain information for repeat claims. However, where lessons can be learned on how the system can be improved, I would expect ScotRail to give consideration to that, particularly when it comes to the issues that Which? has highlighted.

Mike Rumbles: We have had three improvement or remedial plans for ScotRail in three years under two transport secretaries, with 249 action points and 20 improvement measures; now we have a remedial plan with nine initiatives.

If ScotRail's performance last year was the worst in 10 years, with passenger compensation rising to over £1 million, does the transport secretary expect compensation levels to fall dramatically this year as a result of those plans? If the levels do not fall, will he see that as further evidence of unacceptable performance?

Michael Matheson: I would prefer it if passengers did not have to claim compensation, but while they have to do so it is important that there is a robust and fair process in place for them to make such claims.

Clearly, if performance improves, that should reduce the need for compensation claims. However, as I have pointed out repeatedly in the chamber and at the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee just last week, when we discussed this very issue, we need to ensure that all parts of the rail network are playing their part in tackling the issues that cause delays and the cancellation of services.

For example, the most up-to-date figures that I have for the past year, which take us up to 31 March this year, show that 62 per cent of all delays were a result of Network Rail infrastructure challenges. That is not to say that ScotRail does not have its part to play, but it highlights that Network Rail also has a significant part to play in addressing the issue. That is why we need both parts of the rail network to play their part in making sure that we run the services efficiently. That will reduce the need for passengers to claim compensation in the first place.

The Presiding Officer: Four members wish to ask a supplementary question on this issue.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that if Mr Rumbles is so concerned about solving the delays, it is high time that he joined us in calling for the devolution of Network Rail so that the Scottish Government has the levers to start addressing all the issues that impact on the performance that Mr Rumbles is concerned about?

Michael Matheson: It is not for me to speak on behalf of Mike Rumbles—thankfully—but it is important to recognise that both parts of our rail network have an important part to play in delivering passenger services.

It is only right that ScotRail is held fully accountable when it fails in its delivery of the right type of services for passengers; equally, Network

Rail needs to be held to account for its failure to deliver the level of service that is expected, which then has an adverse impact on passenger services. That is why we need to ensure that we have full accountability for both parts of our railway here in Scotland.

As it stands, we have accountability in relation to ScotRail because of the franchising scheme but we do not have accountability in relation to Network Rail. It is important that the Parliament has the powers to exercise that type of decision making to ensure that Scotland's railways are run in the interests of the people of Scotland, in an effective way.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Unfortunately for the cabinet secretary, the delays at the weekend were caused by driver shortages—they were nothing to do with Network Rail. ScotRail came to the Parliament recently and reassured us that

"We have drivers to cover train services, we have spares ... We started to plan for every timetable change at the start of the franchise."—[*Official Report, Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee*, 27 March 2019; c 17-18.]

Famous last words, cabinet secretary.

Does the cabinet secretary not think that poor workforce planning is much to blame for the delays that we saw over the weekend? How confident is he that driver shortages will not affect more services and more passengers in future?

Michael Matheson: The member might want to reflect on the scale of the call-offs that took place over the course of the weekend and the reasons for them. I am sure that ScotRail will be happy to give him the details.

Where there are crew shortages, or when a crew calls off at the last minute, it can be difficult for cover to be provided. If we look at what has happened over the past two days, it can be difficult to provide cover on particular routes if the right staff are not available to take on that particular service because they are committed to another service, for example.

However, over the past two days no trains have been cancelled as a result of crew training and it has been exactly the same today. The remedial plan, with which I am sure that the member is familiar, sets out in detail the actions that ScotRail will take to address those very issues.

Mr Greene can look back at the *Official Report* to see that when I was asked about this in committee, I made the point that I was surprised that ScotRail had not taken those issues into account at the time of planning its actions. Do I see that as a failure on the part of ScotRail? Yes. Does ScotRail need to put it right? Yes. That is exactly what the remedial plan is there to do and

we expect ScotRail to do that. What have we seen as a result of the actions that have been taken through the remedial plan? We have seen improvements in service. I am sure that even Mr Greene will welcome that and recognise that ScotRail is taking the actions set out in the plan to address those matters.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): By September this year, the cabinet secretary will have to make a decision on whether to extend the ScotRail franchise beyond 2022, yet the remedial plan that he talks about does not need to be implemented until spring next year, after he has made that decision. Is it not the truth that, no matter how bad Scotland's rail services are and no matter how appallingly passengers are treated, this Government—this cabinet secretary—is so obsessed with propping up the failing franchise that it has no intention whatsoever of ending it? Is that not the truth?

Michael Matheson: In short, no it is not. As ever with Colin Smyth, facts get lost in the course of discussion. To be clear, we have taken out the remedial plan against ScotRail on the basis of its failure to meet certain parts of the contract. That is robust action and we are starting to see the benefits.

We will not take the approach that the Labour Party wants to take of creating a single UK rail network and taking away the existing powers over rail that we have in the Parliament in order to centralise it at UK level, so that it fits with Network Rail over the whole of the UK.

We want to see rail services in Scotland performing as well as they can. That is why we are making record levels of investment into rail and providing new rolling stock. We will continue to do that, while at the same time calling for the Parliament to be responsible for all parts of our rail infrastructure, so that we can make sure that it is designed and delivered in a way that reflects the needs and aspirations of the people of Scotland for investment in our public services. We will do that rather than take away powers from the Parliament over our rail network in Scotland.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): How many of the new class 385 sets and refurbished high-speed trains that were due to be delivered in December 2018 have not yet been delivered to ScotRail?

Michael Matheson: As it stands, ScotRail has accepted 61 of the 70 class 385 sets ordered. The number is sufficient to allow ScotRail to deliver significant capacity improvements across the electrified routes in the central belt and will also allow it to redeploy the diesel trains to increase train lengths in other parts of the network. For HSTs, only four of 26 refurbished units have been

accepted from Angel Trains and Wabtec Rail Scotland, alongside 14 unrefurbished classic trains, which are now operating on the seven cities routes.

I will continue to press Angel Trains and Wabtec on the issue. I met them last week to press the need for continued progress on the matter. As I have highlighted to the Parliament many times in recent weeks, there is no doubt in my mind that the delay from Hitachi in delivering the class 385s and making sure that the refurbished HSTs are delivered on time had a significant impact on ScotRail's ability to deliver on the timetable change in December 2018. We will continue to press Wabtec, Hitachi and Angel Trains to address those matters as quickly as possible.

Portfolio Question Time

Government Business and Constitutional Relations

14:23

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We turn to portfolio questions on Government business and constitutional relations. I remind members that questions 1 and 7 are grouped together.

Glasgow City Council (Funding for No-deal Brexit)

1. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what funding it is making available to Glasgow City Council to support preparations for a potential no-deal Brexit. (S5O-03256)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): I am aware that Glasgow City Council and other local authorities have expressed concerns about the possible costs of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has written to the Scottish Government, seeking £1.6 million additional funding for councils to help to meet Brexit-related costs. We will respond in due course, after the European election period.

James Kelly: Given the interest in the Conservative Party around Boris Johnson's candidacy for leader and therefore, were he to be successful, prime minister, the prospect of the no-deal Brexit that none of us wants is increasing. Therefore, it is unacceptable that none of the £92 million made available to the Scottish Government has been made available to Scotland's largest city, Glasgow, to deal with a potential no-deal Brexit. I urge the cabinet secretary to review the funding allocation and to allocate money fairly to Glasgow, in order that Scotland's largest city can prepare for a potential no-deal Brexit.

Michael Russell: I entirely agree that the issue of funding for no-deal preparations is a live one, which is why I indicated to Mr Kelly in my first answer that COSLA has made a proposal to which we will respond. I also agree with him that the prospect of a no-deal Brexit continues to grow—it is quite obvious that there are individuals in the UK Cabinet who wish that to happen and, as Mr Kelly has indicated, that prospect will also be in the minds of candidates who are bidding for leadership of the Tory party. We are aware of all that and we will continue to work closely with all stakeholders across Scotland, first, to resist a no-deal—or, indeed, any—Brexit and to ensure that

we have the maximum preparedness. However, we cannot be prepared for everything.

Glasgow City Council (No-deal Brexit Resilience Planning)

7. **Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Glasgow City Council regarding resilience planning in the event of a no-deal Brexit. (S5O-03262)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government believes that the best future for Scotland is the one that 62 per cent of Scottish voters chose, which is to remain in the European Union. However, as a responsible Government, we are preparing for all EU exit possibilities. As part of that process, we continue to work closely with our partners in local government, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and individual councils, such as Glasgow City Council, to help them to identify and prepare for the potential impacts of EU exit, which include the possible impacts of there being no deal. I am sure that Johann Lamont will be interested to know that I have just come from a meeting with the Scottish cities alliance, which includes Glasgow City Council, at which we discussed a range of issues, including preparing for a no-deal Brexit.

Johann Lamont: The cabinet secretary should be aware that, in 2016, Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow economic leadership board and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce produced a joint report, which outlined action to deal with Brexit and emphasised joint working between Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government. Will the cabinet secretary outline how that joint work has progressed? Will he explain why, despite the Scottish Government's having received an extra £92 million to deal specifically with Brexit, none of that money has gone to Glasgow and other local authorities that are at the front line of dealing with its economic consequences? Such consequences will come very shortly and ought to be addressed immediately, rather than at some point in the future, as the cabinet secretary has suggested.

Michael Russell: I have just indicated to Mr Kelly, and I am happy to do so again, that we are in discussion with COSLA and the—

Johann Lamont: There has been no discussion.

Michael Russell: I do not know whether the record will show it, but Johann Lamont keeps shouting during my answer to her question. If she were to expend as much of her energy on attacking the Tories over Brexit as she does on

attacking the Government, perhaps we would make more progress.

The reality of the situation is that we are in discussion with COSLA and the Scottish cities alliance. I have just had a very positive and constructive meeting with the alliance, which includes Glasgow City Council, at which we looked at a range of issues and agreed to continue to work together. [*Interruption.*] That should be a matter that has support from members on the Labour benches—not the shrill, continued shouting that is coming from Johann Lamont, in relation to which I again draw attention to the record. Let us try to work together to defeat Brexit [*Interruption.*]*—*there it goes again*—*rather than have such an approach.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary must be in a very sensitive mood this afternoon: I do not think that Ms Lamont is exactly shouting. However, if members from all parties would take a leaf out of the cabinet secretary's book and keep their comments to themselves, that would be good.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary confirm whether the consequential that the Scottish Government has received due to the UK Government's Brexit spending will come anywhere close to meeting the predicted economic and social costs to Scotland of our being taken out of the EU against our will? Will he also confirm that the best future for Scotland is one that is in Europe?

Michael Russell: Ms McAlpine makes a key point. The vast amounts of money, time and resource that have been spent on preparing for a no-deal Brexit will not be compensated for by any of the resources that we have received. We have tried to maintain a broad front against Brexit and to work closely with organisations and individuals, as we have done with COSLA and a range of stakeholders and are doing with the cities. Such work unifies us, so voices—whether they are shouting or not—that contradict that approach are unhelpful, and will not achieve the best for either Glasgow or Scotland.

European Union Law (No-regression Principle)

2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will integrate the principle of no regression into provisions on keeping pace with EU laws to ensure that no new measures inadvertently lead to a lowering of consumer and environmental standards. (S5O-03257)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): I thank the member for his constructive question.

As I outlined in my letter to the Presiding Officer of 5 April, the Scottish Government is determined to respect to the maximum possible extent the choices that the Scottish Parliament made when it passed the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill. Therefore, we plan new legislation to allow devolved law to keep pace with developments in EU law.

I confirmed that the Scottish Government

“is committed to no regression in standards or protections should EU exit take place, and the replacement of regulatory powers lost in consequence of EU exit will be essential to ensure that.”

I also made specific commitments on environmental principles and the charter of fundamental rights.

I am grateful to colleagues across the Parliament for the constructive discussions that all the parties have had on these matters, and we will take the issue forward in that way.

Mark Griffin: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. The Government supports a new legal duty on Scottish ministers to have regard to the four EU environmental principles in developing policies and legislation. I am not sure whether I picked it up correctly, but having regard to the environmental principles is not a substitute for protecting us from backward changes in environmental legislation and practices, even if those happen inadvertently.

Does the cabinet secretary agree with the principle of no regression? If so, will he build that into a statutory duty?

Michael Russell: I do. That is why I said in my letter to the Presiding Officer, which the parties have seen, that I am

“committed to no regression in standards or protections”.

That applies to the environment as it applies to other areas.

The issue of the keeping pace power, which includes no regression, was a significant one during the passage of the continuity bill. The Parliament decided to narrow it from the original proposal, but I would be very happy to see it expanded again.

Of course I believe in no regression on all the principles, including the environmental ones, and we will do our very best to make sure that that is achieved. I hope that we will have the support of members on the Labour benches when the legislation comes to the Parliament, because—to be fair—we had that support on the continuity bill.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): The keeping pace power was contained in the continuity bill. The cabinet secretary announced—I think during the recess—that there was not going to be an

opportunity to reconsider the continuity bill after the Supreme Court's judgment on it, which held most of it to be unlawful. When, therefore, does the cabinet secretary think that this Parliament will be given a chance to repeal that illegal legislation?

Michael Russell: I dispute the characterisation of the Supreme Court's judgment. It misses out a significant issue, which is the fact that the UK Government changed the law while—

Adam Tomkins: You lost.

Michael Russell: Again, Presiding Officer, I am trying to offer rational input without people trying to interrupt.

The situation is that the UK Government changed the law after the Parliament had passed the bill in the chamber. If people think that that is a good idea, they certainly have a great deal to learn about democracy.

We will take forward the keeping pace power and we will do so in such a way that the Parliament can legislate on the matter. We had the Parliament's support before, by and large, and I hope that we will have it again. We will also tidy up other matters as we see fit.

Brexit (Immigration Discussions)

3. **Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the impact that Brexit could have on immigration to Scotland. (S5O-03258)

The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development (Ben Macpherson): I have met the United Kingdom Minister of State for Immigration, Caroline Nokes, twice to discuss the profoundly positive impact that migration has on Scotland's economy and society, and there have been several other meetings between Scottish Government ministers and UK ministers to emphasise that, including between the First Minister and the Prime Minister.

Migration is crucial to Scotland's future prosperity, and any reduction would damage our labour market, economic growth, demographic profile and local communities. The independent report from the expert advisory group on migration and population, which was published in February, states that the UK Government's immigration proposals could lead to a reduction of between 30 per cent and 50 per cent in net migration to Scotland over the next two decades, which would lead to a decline in our working-age population of up to 5 per cent.

Therefore, in all relevant meetings and correspondence, the Scottish Government has emphasised—and will keep on emphasising—the

deep concerns that exist across Scotland about the proposals in the UK Government's white paper on immigration after Brexit.

Stewart Stevenson: I do not often join with the Confederation of British Industry, but I do so in criticism of the plans for the immigration system in Scotland. Particularly in respect of people coming to Scotland to work and to contribute economically—in fishing in my constituency, in farming elsewhere, and throughout our economy—is not it important that we have devolved powers so that we can fine tune immigration to meet our specific needs?

Ben Macpherson: Yes. As Stewart Stevenson, the CBI and other business organisations have emphasised, the UK Government's proposals in its white paper on immigration would be catastrophic for Scotland. They would send our working-age population into decline and would have a significantly negative effect on many sectors, including those that have been mentioned by Stewart Stevenson, as well as social care, tourism, construction, financial services and several others.

In opposing many of the proposals in the UK Government's white paper on immigration, and considering Scotland's distinct demographic challenges, we recognise that there is growing support for the Scottish Parliament to obtain additional powers as part of a UK framework, in order to tailor migration policy to meet Scotland's needs, so that Scotland remains attractive to migrants and so that we can deliver new solutions.

International Treaties (Devolved Matters)

4. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what role it considers the Scottish Parliament should have in developing and approving international treaties that impact on devolved matters. (S5O-03259)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): This is a crucial issue. Scotland's devolved institutions have an important role to play in the negotiation and ratification of international treaties. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament should be recognised as equals to the United Kingdom Government and Parliament in their respective areas of competence, with a presumption of interest and full, formal and early involvement in the process of making international agreements.

Formal mechanisms must be established to ensure that the Parliament can carry out its role in scrutinising the mandate, negotiation and implementation of treaties. The consent of the Scottish Parliament should be secured before

international agreements that impact on devolved matters are ratified.

Patrick Harvie: When people cast their votes to elect members of the Scottish Parliament, they have a right to know that the people who will be sitting in the chamber will be able to make decisions on all devolved matters, and will be able to hold the Scottish Government to account for its actions on devolved matters.

Is it not clear, therefore, that three things are required in respect of treaties, such as trade deals that impact on devolved areas? The first is that the negotiating mandate may not proceed without the consent of this Parliament, and that is to be made explicit in a resolution. The second is that the final text may not be adopted in respect of devolved matters without this Parliament's consent by way of a resolution. The third—which is equally important—is that this Parliament will have the legal ability to change its mind and withdraw consent, if the political balance in the Scottish Parliament changes. If we do not have the latter, we will have a Parliament and a Government that are fettered by their predecessors in respect of matters that the people of Scotland have the right to cast their votes on, in order to change policy.

Michael Russell: I do not find anything difficult or objectionable in those definitions; indeed, I agree with them. There are many problems in the UK Government, but there is a particular problem with how it looks at the issue of trade, and trade has changed greatly in the years since the UK joined the European Union.

The lesson that the UK Government is attempting to draw from, for example, the experience of the comprehensive economic and trade agreement and its final ratification is that it should keep the devolved Administrations as far away as possible. The UK Government should take the opposite lesson, because ensuring that representatives of the Canadian provinces were in the room when the CETA treaty was negotiated and were able to negotiate on their areas of competence was absolutely crucial to the successful conclusion of the process. In fact, the UK Government, in trying to exclude the devolved Administrations from such matters, is cutting off its nose to spite its face, which will make it harder to take those issues forward.

That is the practical issue, but the political, democratic and constitutional issues are as Mr Harvie has outlined. I made that point in my previous answer and it is essential that it is recognised by the UK Government. Presently, it appears to wish to ignore it, which will be—and is—utterly unacceptable.

The Presiding Officer: Questions 5 and 8 are grouped together, so we will try to squeeze them both in.

Citizens Assemblies (National Governance)

5. **Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what scope it considers citizens assemblies could have in the governance of Scotland. (S5O-03260)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): As the First Minister set out in her statement to Parliament on 24 April, the European Union exit experience has shown the weaknesses in the current devolution settlement and the UK's constitutional arrangements more widely. We must consider the best way forward for Scotland in the light of that experience and, in doing so, we want to avoid the division created over EU exit. That is why the First Minister announced that we would establish a citizens assembly to consider the best way forward for Scotland, and I will update Parliament on further developments shortly.

Last week, I went to Ireland where I met, among others, the chair and secretary of the Constitutional Convention and members of the secretariat of the Citizens' Assembly. I was impressed with what I learned.

I have invited both secretaries of the Irish models to Scotland in the next few weeks to inform our planning. I hope that parties across the chamber will welcome, and be involved in, the initiative and those discussions in particular. I will be writing to party leaders this afternoon to invite them to do so.

Alison Johnstone: A citizens assembly should represent the demographics of the whole population in a way that the Parliament has, as yet, failed to do. Will the cabinet secretary consider ensuring a diversity in the assembly that can properly consider all perspectives, and help to deliver a meaningful outcome?

Michael Russell: The member raises an important issue. The establishment of a citizens assembly should endeavour to create a body for a particular purpose, which must not be too wide. It must also be representative of society. There are a number of ways in which that can be done. It was an issue for the Constitutional Convention and the Citizens' Assembly in Ireland. How do we do that? It is a hard thing to do because we are trying to balance demography, geography, sectoral interests and a variety of minorities and majorities. It will require us to do a lot of work.

I hope that all the parties will find themselves involved in that task. I am determined that the citizens assembly that we will establish and that, I

hope, will meet by autumn this year should represent the country in that way, and there are a number of ways in which it can do so. I am happy to discuss with other parties, Alison Johnstone and others how we are trying to do that, and to seek the input of other parties on how we should do that.

Citizens Assembly (Costs)

8. **Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what the costs will be of establishing a citizens assembly. (S5O-03263)

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): As I have tried to indicate, that will depend on the design of the assembly, which I wish to discuss with party representatives. From the Irish experience, we have learned that it should be an open and transparent process. All details, including costs, will be published in full as the process goes forward.

Adam Tomkins: The Scottish Parliament is already the most expensive Parliament in the United Kingdom per head of population. It is more expensive per head of population than the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Welsh Assembly, according to the recently published report from the Institute for Government, "Devolution at 20". Given that, what is the justification for any additional expenditure, especially as the Scottish Parliament is already open, transparent and representative of the people of Scotland?

Michael Russell: One of the interesting things that we learned in Ireland was that, at the start of the process for the Constitutional Convention and the Citizens' Assembly, that view was expressed by a number of individuals. They said, "We've got a Parliament; why do we need a citizens assembly or a constitutional convention?"

As the process went on, people realised the difference between the two. For example, in considering amendment 8 to the constitution, on the matter of abortion, the Citizens' Assembly had five separate meetings at which the members heard from experts and advocacy groups, but it was all entirely factually based. That was an important development. It did away with the noise and confusion around politics. People looked at the facts of the matter and tried to reconcile views from across society.

I stand in no way critical of this Parliament or any Parliament, but it is not exactly a place that specialises in reconciling diverse views. By listening to people and creating the circumstances in which there can be a genuine dialogue, we can make progress. That is what we wish to do. The Brexit process has indicated to us why it should

happen. During that process, we have seen real division being created by the inability to consider all views and to do it on a factual basis.

I urge Mr Tomkins to come along, to meet the people involved, and have the conversations. Let us see whether we can jointly author something that will take our nation forward.

Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

Heritage Celebration (Support)

1. **Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it supports communities in celebrating their heritage. (S5O-03264)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I recognise the hard work that is carried out by local communities to protect the historic environment and to secure the future of their local heritage. Scottish Government support for heritage is channelled through our various sponsored bodies that work with communities in the area of heritage. The Scottish Government has maintained Historic Environment Scotland's external grant funding at £14.5 million per year, which is channelled into local heritage projects. For example, Bearsden Baptist church, in the member's constituency, is working to create interpretation and learning spaces in its gardens on the site of a Roman fort on the Antonine wall world heritage site.

Rona Mackay: Thomas Muir of Huntershill, who lived in Bishopbriggs in my constituency, is known as the father of Scottish democracy. His memory is kept alive by a local group called the Friends of Thomas Muir. Does the cabinet secretary believe that more could be done by VisitScotland or, perhaps, by the Scottish Government to promote figures of such historical importance?

Fiona Hyslop: VisitScotland, which receives around £48 million in grant in aid, promotes various places, events, activities and, indeed, historical figures. In my previous answer, I referred to Historic Environment Scotland, which, the Friends of Thomas Muir may be interested to know, has in recent years introduced a commemorative plaque scheme that celebrates significant people by erecting plaques on the buildings where they lived or worked. Thomas Muir of Huntershill is certainly deserving of that and of wider promotion. People are, of course, interested in places, but they are also interested in the people who have shaped our society. Thomas Muir, in his pursuit of democracy, certainly did that.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I am sure that the cabinet secretary would agree that a hugely important part of Glasgow's heritage is its

international contribution to live music, the live music business and that aspect of the night-time economy. Given the serial disasters that have hit Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow over the past year, what support is the Scottish Government giving to Glasgow to support its live music heritage?

Fiona Hyslop: Creative Scotland is the sponsored body that is responsible for promoting contemporary art projects in a number of areas. I believe that, as a UNESCO city of music, Glasgow has to promote its music and look after its venues.

On the question of applications for grants for different sites, a number of things can be done. Creative Scotland has been promoting contemporary music, although in terms of artists more than venues, and, if any specific projects come forward from Glasgow City Council or any promoters, we will provide advice and support about where they can go to ensure that those projects can progress. We should recognise the importance of our music not just for artists but for audiences, but I have yet to see any proposals come forward.

Edinburgh International Festival (Meetings)

2. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of Edinburgh International Festival. (S50-03265)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Scottish Government officials regularly meet representatives of Edinburgh International Festival. The last time they met was earlier this month, on 3 May. On 30 May, I will meet Fergus Linehan, the festival's director, and Fran Hegyi, its new executive director after the departure of Joanna Baker.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Many cultural organisations, including the fringe and international festivals, are likely to be impacted by the uncertainty of Brexit. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on how much money has been allocated through the international creative ambition programme, which was announced last September as part of the Scottish Government's 2018-19 programme and was due to be in place by May this year?

Fiona Hyslop: I am not sure where Alex Cole-Hamilton got his information from. The international creative ambition programme looks more widely than at the festivals. We have already extensively supported the festivals to remain competitive by maintaining the Edinburgh festivals expo fund. Alex Cole-Hamilton asked about the Edinburgh International Festival, and it is receiving £190,000 of expo funding for the five-concert

series celebrating the achievements of our composer James MacMillan.

He also asked about additional funding, and the place programme, which was funded as part of the discussions around the city deal, has provided additional funding, for this year and on-going, to the various festivals to make sure that they remain competitive. The international creative ambition fund will be used for things other than festivals.

It is vital that we recognise the threat of Brexit to our cultural life in Scotland. We should not have to compensate people—in the festivals or in other areas—for that, and we certainly have to stop it to ensure that we maintain the culturally vibrant international aspects of all our festivals.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): The festivals are, indeed, a wonderful time of the year, but staff who work on the festivals are often quite vulnerable to exploitation. What work has the cabinet secretary done in the past 12 months to promote the fair fringe charter?

Fiona Hyslop: The festival organisations are independent from the Government, but it is important that we promote fair work. Last week, I met the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss fair work in the cultural sector, and we can all be involved in supporting the fringe charter. It is important to recognise that it is a matter for the festivals, their artists and the venues that they use, but fair work during the festival is something that I want to promote.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the comments that were made last year by the director of the Edinburgh International Festival, who said that a no-deal Brexit would have a "disastrous" and "horrible" impact on Edinburgh's festival. For 2019, he is having to prepare a scaled-back event, which is a scandal. Can the cabinet secretary confirm the very real threat that a Boris-led no-deal Brexit, especially, would pose to our festivals and cultural events the length and breadth of Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: When those remarks were made, the UK was meant to have left in October and then in March, but it is clear that not just a no-deal Brexit but any Brexit would cause severe difficulties. With regard to immigration, non-European artists currently struggle to get access to our festivals, and quite often there are cancellations at the last minute even when we try to appeal some of the issues. If those difficulties were to be experienced by all EU artists under the UK's Brexit immigration policy, the disaster that awaits would severely damage our festivals, which is why it has to be resisted.

Tourism (European Union Countries)

3. **Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it sees tourism between Scotland and EU countries developing in the future. (S5O-03266)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The EU will remain a key market for Scotland's tourism industry. Six of Scotland's top 10 markets for overseas visitors are in the European Union, accounting for 34 per cent of overseas overnight visitors and 31 per cent of overseas tourist expenditure in 2017. VisitScotland is actively promoting Scotland as an open and welcoming nation in the face of an EU exit. The latest Scotland is now activity for Europe—"Scotland is open", which launched on 29 March 2019—is our best-performing campaign to date, with record levels of engagement and more than 79 million people reached by adverts.

Willie Coffey: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the volume of travellers who travel by air from Scotland to Dublin each year is well over 1 million and exceeds by far the numbers who travel to Paris or any of the regional Spanish airports. Does she see an opportunity to support the development of Scotland's ferry services to and from Dublin to take advantage of a route that seems to be increasingly popular with Scottish and Irish tourists?

Fiona Hyslop: Sustainable travel routes will be increasingly important to our tourism sector. I am interested in the increasing travel between Scotland and Dublin, which we are trying to probe particularly with our Scottish innovation investment hub, which is based in Dublin. I understand from transport officials that there have been discussions about European ferry services on possible new routes with a number of operators and business consortiums over the years. They have not yet been able to develop a viable service—of course, any service would need to be commercially viable—but we remain interested in different routes and in maintaining those contacts and promoting sustainable tourism.

Dance School of Scotland (Musical Theatre Course Showcase 2019)

4. **Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the Dance School of Scotland's MTC showcase 2019. (S5O-03267)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government welcomes the MTC showcase 2019 by the Dance School of Scotland at the Glasgow royal concert hall from 12 to 15 June. It provides the opportunity for young talent

from one of Scotland's six national centres of excellence to perform to large audiences. Those world-class facilities make a significant contribution to cultural life in Scotland and internationally, and the Scottish Government supports the centres through the local government funding settlement for the five councils that host them.

Bill Kidd: The Dance School of Scotland is based at Knightswood secondary school, in my Glasgow Anniesland constituency. The school admits pupils through auditions and is completely free. Does the cabinet secretary agree—I think that she does, given her previous answer—that such specialised schooling provides the opportunity for children from any background to reach their full potential and enriches the cultural life of Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: This is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the work of all six of our centres. Douglas academy, Broughton high school and Dyce academy, in Aberdeen, specialise in music; Plockton high school, in the Highlands, specialises in traditional music; Bellahouston academy, in Glasgow, specialises in sport; and there is also Knightswood secondary school, to which Bill Kidd has referred. The centres are open to young people from any background, and they work as a pipeline for identifying talent for our national performance companies. The centres further the careers of young people and are a great asset to the cultural life of Scotland.

Tourism

(Impact of Ending Freedom of Movement)

5. **Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will assist the tourism sector to attract workers in the event of Scotland being impacted by an end to the freedom of movement following Brexit. (S5O-03268)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): While continuing to make the case to the United Kingdom Government that moves to limit migration will harm our tourism sector, we are actively engaging with the industry to address the risks.

Our tourism skills investment plan and the potential tourism sector deal will focus on addressing skills gaps and promoting tourism as a career of choice for people joining the industry at whatever stage. Skills Development Scotland is proactively encouraging tourism as a career for the domestic population. We are also working to build the sector's attractiveness by ensuring that it is underpinned by fair work principles.

Gillian Martin: According to VisitScotland, the Scottish tourism sector employed 21,000 nationals of other European Union countries last year. The

UK Home Office's white paper, "The UK's future skills-based immigration system", says that work visas will be available only to people with salaries of more than £30,000 per annum. Will the cabinet secretary outline how such a system would impact on the number of workers in the tourism industry?

Fiona Hyslop: The UK Government's white paper shows a shocking disregard for the needs of our tourism industry and other sectors in Scotland. Requiring workers in the tourism sector to earn more than £30,000 per annum could result in an 85 per cent reduction in the inflow of long-term workers from European countries to Scotland. A reduction in the number of people coming to work in our tourism and hospitality sectors will result in skills shortages, which will have an impact on quality and experience and will damage our sector. I appeal to members from all parties to get behind the efforts to stop such a system, because it will have a long-lasting detrimental effect on our tourism sector and our economy. The issue is very serious, which is why we need to stop the Brexit process and, certainly, stop the measures in the immigration white paper.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee heard evidence from Stephanie Maurel, who said that agencies such as hers struggle to get people from the EU to come to Scotland to work. However, record numbers of EU nationals—2.38 million—are now living and working in the UK, despite Brexit.

Clearly, the Scottish Government's role is to make Scotland an attractive place to work; its role is also to support more Scots into the hospitality industry, particularly in remote and rural areas. We have heard—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Can you get to the question, please, Ms Hamilton?

Rachael Hamilton: Will the cabinet secretary outline how she can help more young people get into the hospitality industry in rural and remote areas?

Fiona Hyslop: As I have said, a lot of the work will come from the tourism skills investment plan. We are working with our network of colleges to supply such skills.

The issue is not only about attracting people to work in remote areas, because other sectors will be competing for the pool of available young people. The issue affects people at all stages of life, too, so we are trying to encourage older people to come back into the workforce to work in tourism.

As part of our wider skills plan, we are heavily promoting the accessibility of networks and the

number of apprenticeships in tourism. We are also working with the rest of the UK on promoting those aspects. I will discuss the issue when I meet other tourism ministers shortly.

Tourism and Culture (Resources)

6. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests in relation to tourism.

To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to develop resources to support the expansion of tourism and culture. (S5O-03269)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Scotland's cultural life, economy and international reputation are influenced by the success of our tourism and culture sectors. Against a backdrop of public spending constraints, we remain committed to supporting the growth of both sectors in a sustainable and inclusive way that will benefit all our communities.

Following the original tourism Scotland 2020 strategy, Scotland's new tourism strategy is being developed. That strategy will help the industry and the Scottish Government to address our current and future challenges, which include pressures on infrastructure, rising costs and European Union exit, and to become a world-class visitor destination. In the 2019-20 budget, we are investing £269.6 million in Scotland's culture, tourism and heritage sector.

Alexander Burnett: The past four years of published statistics show that all 114 jobs that were advertised by Creative Scotland were in the central belt. Can the cabinet secretary inform me whether any jobs have been advertised in the north-east more recently, given the considerable contribution of the north-east to Scottish culture?

Fiona Hyslop: I am not the personnel manager for Creative Scotland. However, Alexander Burnett has made his point in relation to advertising. With regard to recruitment, anybody across—and, indeed, beyond—Scotland is eligible to apply for those posts. The posts tend to be based where the headquarters are located, and Creative Scotland's headquarters are in Edinburgh, although it also has offices in Glasgow. If Alexander Burnett is suggesting that those offices should be relocated elsewhere, he can make that point to Creative Scotland.

As cabinet secretary, I expect Creative Scotland and all its staff—not just those who are being recruited—to serve all of Scotland geographically. I expect that to apply to the north-east in the same way that I expect it to apply to anywhere else in Scotland.

Waverley Paddle Steamer

7. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what support it will provide to help the Waverley paddle steamer return to sailing on the Clyde. (S5O-03270)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Waverley is an iconic part of the Clyde's history and its trips provide a unique experience for visitors to the area. Although we have not been approached by its operators, the Scottish Government—though its agencies—would be happy to provide appropriate advice and support.

Jackie Baillie: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the cost of repairs to the boiler on the Waverley could be as much as £2 million. Given that we all want to see the iconic Waverley sailing again next year, will she consider providing financial assistance to help it, and will she agree to meet me and representatives of the Waverley to discuss the issue further?

Fiona Hyslop: The Waverley's current situation is clearly of serious concern. Although the issue originally involved repairs to boiler works, I understand from statements made by representatives of the Waverley that the boiler requires full replacement, which explains the extent of the costs.

I am more than happy to arrange appropriate meetings. However, we perhaps have to identify the appropriate bodies that could support the Waverley in any application. As I said, no contact has been made to date.

As someone who celebrated her 21st birthday sailing on the Clyde from Ayr to Largs, I certainly have a great fondness for the Waverley, as does the rest of Scotland. Everyone wishes the save the Waverley campaign well. If the public get behind the campaign and donate, I am sure that we will see the Waverley sailing again.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): That the Waverley will not be sailing on the Clyde this year is heartbreaking, not least because it will not be sailing past my office in Largs, where I have regularly seen it.

Does the cabinet secretary think that organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland, which plays a vital role in preserving buildings, castles and settlements, might also have a role to play in helping to preserve our sea vessels?

Fiona Hyslop: Jamie Greene makes an important point. As we just heard, maritime vessels are very expensive to support, but they are also a very important part of our heritage.

The Scottish Government supported the Scottish Fisheries Museum in relation to the Reaper, but that was because the Reaper is associated with that museum in particular.

There are challenges. Historic Environment Scotland has responsibility for marine heritage in relation to some maritime planning zones. However, what can be given as a grant is a challenging question. Although I am happy to investigate the possibilities further, I suspect that Mr Greene is hinting at an area where we have to recognise that there is real demand—and, given that I frequently receive letters about maritime heritage, I am not sure that we can meet all the demands that exist. Nonetheless, I am happy to take the matter further.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise to Gordon MacDonald that we are unable to take his question.

Education and Skills

Construction Apprenticeships (Access to Funding)

1. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to increase access to funding for apprenticeships in the construction sector. (S5O-03272)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): We are delivering more apprenticeships than ever before. In 2017-18, the Scottish Government supported 6,104 people into modern apprenticeships in the construction sector, which tends to be the sector with the largest number of apprenticeships: 22.5 per cent of all modern apprenticeship starts are in that sector.

Work is under way to deliver even more apprenticeships this year. We have set the ambitious target of having 29,000 new starts in 2019-20, including up to 1,300 graduate apprenticeships. Construction is a priority sector, and the number of modern apprenticeship starts in the sector has risen by 38 per cent in the past five years.

Dean Lockhart: As part of its inquiry into the construction sector, the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee heard the following evidence from a sector association. It said:

“funding is difficult to access. For example, in relation to the flexible workforce development fund ... the college courses on offer do not ... meet the needs of”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee*, 19 March 2019; c 9.]

employers. Given that evidence, how will the minister ensure that delivery of courses through the apprenticeship levy is better tailored to the construction sector's needs?

Jamie Hepburn: I am always keen to ensure that everything that we offer through our skills system is responsive to industry's needs. Under the flexible workforce development fund, I expect colleges to respond to individual employer demand. If an employer feels that that has not been the case, I am always willing to hear about that.

I am inclined to be led by the evidence on apprenticeships. As I said, that evidence shows a 38 per cent increase in the number of construction modern apprentices in the past five years. The figure has increased year on year—we have gone from 4,435 modern apprentices in 2013-14 to 6,104 in 2017-18, which is the most recent year for which we have full figures. That suggests that the sector is well able to access the funding that is on offer.

Primary Schools

2. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that the primary school system is fit for purpose. (S5O-03273)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Our national improvement framework for education contains a wide range of actions to ensure that children leave primary school with the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities that are necessary for their next phase of learning. That includes our investment in leadership and professional learning for primary teachers, robust arrangements for inspection and improvement, support for regional improvement collaboratives, investment in the primary school estate and our continued support for Scottish national standardised assessments in the primary sector.

Michelle Ballantyne: Last September, the Parliament voted by 63 to 61 to halt Scottish national standardised assessments for primary 1 pupils. As a result, an independent review of P1 testing is due to report this month. Is the cabinet secretary committed to implementing that review's findings? Can the parents of children who are due to start P1 in August expect the evidence-based approach that he promised last October?

John Swinney: I am committed to implementing the review's conclusions. As Michelle Ballantyne knows, we said that we would listen carefully first to the P1 practitioner forum that I established, which set out a number of recommendations that we are taking forward for implementation.

I expect to receive the report of the independent review of P1 assessments from David Reedy shortly. The Government will reflect carefully on the evidence that that demonstrates. As I have

maintained throughout the discussion in which Parliament has been involved, I am interested in the evidence, which I will follow.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Figures that the Government released last week in response to a freedom of information request show that almost 80 per cent of the SNSA tests that primary 1 pupils sat were conducted in a single month—March. Surely that makes a mockery of the cabinet secretary's claim that the tests are diagnostic and should be taken when the teacher believes that they are right for the child, does it not?

John Swinney: It does not, because the assessment period that Mr Gray referred to is not the only period in which the assessments are carried out. He cited information about a limited time; I would expect further assessments to have been carried out throughout April, May and June. We will judge the assessments' effectiveness in making an impact on teacher judgment, and in enabling teachers to undertake the diagnostic assessment that is essential in all the analysis, which will ensure that we support young people by enhancing and developing their learning.

Teachers' Mental Health

3. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recently released National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers' survey on teachers' mental health. (S5O-03274)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): No teacher should feel that their job adversely affects their mental health. Wellbeing—both mental and physical—affects us all and should rightly be taken seriously. The survey findings are therefore extremely worrying.

Local authorities, as employers, have a duty of care to all their staff, including teachers. The Scottish Government is, with local authorities, already taking action to address conditions that affect wellbeing by putting in place additional support for teachers in order to tackle workload issues and to improve recruitment and retention rates. The recent pay deal provides certainty on pay, and sets a shared agenda on addressing workload, additional support for learning and empowering schools for the next two years, which I hope contributes to strengthening the working environment for teachers.

Kezia Dugdale: The survey is full of grim statistics for the Government, so I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for acknowledging that it is "worrying". The survey reveals that 54 per cent of teachers say that job satisfaction is in decline, and that 55 per cent have considered leaving the profession altogether. How will John Swinney

ensure that teachers stay on? What will he do if they leave?

John Swinney: The first thing that I have done is recognise the importance and significance of issues to do with staff's mental health and wellbeing. I want to work with the professional associations—doing so was the foundation of the pay and workload deal that we have just agreed—to ensure that we enhance the working environment for teachers in order to enable them to concentrate on sharing and leading on learning and teaching, which is what motivated them to enter the teaching profession in the first place.

Part of that effort must involve tackling any unnecessary tasks and work that teachers do. I made it very clear in the pay and workload deal that I will work closely with teachers and the professional associations to identify, by creating a sense of teacher agency and autonomy, the capacity in the teaching profession to make choices about how they spend their time, so that they can spend it on the productive and valuable aspects of learning and teaching, and not on unproductive and unnecessary tasks and bureaucracy.

I cannot mandate that from St Andrews house—I need to engage with the profession to enable it to deliver that, which is exactly what I am concentrating on doing.

Support for Youth Employment (Almond Valley)

4. Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting youth employment in the Almond Valley constituency. (S5O-03275)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): We have seen good progress in supporting youth employment through the delivery of the developing the young workforce scheme in Almond Valley. Collaboration between West Lothian College and the area's 11 secondary schools ensures that career education is central to the curriculum offer, as a result of joint planning exercises for each academic year. A forum that comprises schools and the college creates a strong focus on the work-readiness and training aspects of education.

In addition, the local developing the young workforce regional group has been working in partnership with schools, colleges, local authorities and employers in the area to develop innovative approaches to education. In West Calder for example, employers have supported the school to develop a six-week employment-ready programme for secondary 4 pupils who face additional barriers to employment.

Angela Constance: Will the minister join me in commending Mitsubishi Air Conditioning Systems Europe and West Lothian Chamber of Commerce for hosting the finals of the "Pump it up" schools challenge for the fifth year running. It is a fantastic example of partnership between industry and schools, which helps young people to develop a wide range of skills. Will he meet the DYW West Lothian regional group to discuss what more can be done to connect the worlds of education and work in that area and beyond?

Jamie Hepburn: I join Angela Constance in commending the activity that is taking place between Mitsubishi and young people in West Lothian. It is very important for me to engage and interact with the developing the young workforce regional groups across the country. On that basis, I would be very happy to meet the DYW West Lothian regional group. I already know that it is undertaking a range of activities, and I would be delighted to meet it, with Angela Constance, to learn more about what it is doing and what more we can do together.

Additional Support Needs (Co-ordinated Support Plans)

5. Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether the number of pupils with additional support needs who have a co-ordinated support plan in place is increasing. (S5O-03276)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Education authorities use a range of planning mechanisms to meet the needs of children and young people. Co-ordinated support plans are used where children have complex or multiple needs that require significant support from education and other agencies.

In 2018, 199,065 children and young people were recorded as having additional support needs. Of that number, 1,986 pupils are recorded as having a CSP. That represents 1 per cent of the total number of children recorded as having an additional support need, which is a small decrease from the previous year, when the total stood at 2,182.

Annie Wells: We are seeing in Scottish schools record high numbers of pupils who have additional support needs. It seems, therefore, to be obvious that we should also have seen a huge increase in the number who have co-ordinated support plans in place, but that has not happened: unbelievably, that number is falling. The onus should not just be on local authorities. Can the cabinet secretary say whether his Scottish National Party Government is doing enough to help councils to ensure that every young person who needs a plan has one in place?

John Swinney: The first point to make is that it does not follow that because there has been an increase in the number of young people who are defined as having additional support needs, there should have been an increase in the number who have co-ordinated support plans. As Annie Wells knows, there has been a significant broadening of the definition of additional support needs, which reflects the fact that a much wider cohort of young people are affected.

In my original answer, I made it clear that a range of supports are put in place to meet the needs of children and young people. The judgment about co-ordinated support plans involves consideration of whether a young person requires complex or multiple support from a range of agencies. That is the key test.

Annie Wells said that it should not be a matter for local authorities, but the law says that it is. Statute that Parliament passed says that it is for local authorities to determine the appropriateness of an individual child or young person receiving a co-ordinated support plan. Of course, if a family disagrees with a judgment that is made by a local authority, they have recourse to a tribunal to challenge it.

As I made clear in the debate last week, the Government will review the implementation and application of co-ordinated support plans to ensure that the statutory force that Parliament expected to be applied in this respect is being applied. Obviously, I will report to Parliament on that, in due course.

Skills Development Scotland Employability Fund (Stage 4 Qualifications)

6. Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how many people achieved vocational qualifications at stage 4 as part of the Skills Development Scotland employability fund for 2018-19. (S5O-03277)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): Skills Development Scotland will publish full-year statistics for the employability fund in 2018-19 next month.

Bill Bowman: The employability fund has a strong focus on work experience, but its report shows that there were no recipients of vocational qualifications at stage 4 in Dundee city in the first three quarters of 2018-19. That is because most of the fund recipients in that area were aged 16 to 24 and lacked the necessary work experience to get stage 4 reskilling. What is the minister doing to help Dundee people who are now stuck in that bottleneck to employment, and to address a potential skills drought?

Jamie Hepburn: We seek to work with a range of organisations in any area to respond to specific

demand. If there is a particular “bottleneck”—as the member put it—in Dundee, it is incumbent on us to examine that.

I have heard what Mr Bowman has said, and I will gladly take the issue away to consider what more we might have to do in Dundee. However, we will continue to invest in the employability fund this year, as last year, and it will continue to support many thousands of people across the country, including in Dundee.

As I said, I take on board the issue that the member has raised and will come back to him on it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 7 has been withdrawn.

Colleges (Support)

8. Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports Scotland’s colleges. (S5O-03279)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): Since 2007, we have invested more than £7 billion in Scotland’s colleges. In the context of a £2 billion real-terms cut to our resource block grant over the last decade by the United Kingdom Government, we have increased our investment in colleges in real terms to more than £600 million in the 2019-20 budget.

Elaine Smith: With regard to support for colleges, ministers intervened to resolve the college dispute over pay harmonisation and to ensure that national pay scales were introduced. However, Colleges Scotland’s failure to provide a fair cost of living increase threatens to unravel that agreement even as it is being implemented. Will ministers intervene now to ensure that lecturers are given a fair pay offer in the interests of staff and students?

Richard Lochhead: Like most members, I am sure, I very much regret the current on-going dispute and the fact that there was strike action last week.

As the member is aware, national bargaining was hard won and is a joint voluntary arrangement between the employers and the trade unions. I hope that she will accept that it is, therefore, the responsibility of the employers and the trade unions to resolve the dispute.

I am meeting both sides next week and I will reiterate as hard as I can the absolute urgency of getting an agreement over the line. It is very disappointing that we were so close to having an agreement in the days before the recent strike action. Surely we can now get an agreement over the line. I will be putting as much argument behind

that case as possible when I meet both sides next week.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I understand that Rachael Hamilton has something that she would like to say.

Rachael Hamilton: I refer members to my register of interests in relation to my supplementary question to question 5 in culture, tourism and external affairs questions.

[Interruption.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister has spilled her water. I will suspend the meeting briefly to allow her to sort herself out.

15:21

Meeting suspended.

15:22

On resuming—

Menopause

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Are we all okay? I have heard of delaying tactics, but that is ridiculous.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17347, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on ending the stigma of the menopause.

15:22

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): I wanted to start the debate with a splash, which is clearly what I have done.

I am pleased and proud to open the debate on behalf of the Government. I believe that it is the first ever Government debate held in the UK on the menopause. This Parliament should be proud of itself. The debate comes at a time when menopause is finally getting the attention that it deserves—that women deserve.

We would all agree that the menopause has always been, at best, stigmatised, ignored or treated as a joke and, at worst, used as a way to degrade women. Just as women are not a homogeneous group, the impact of the menopause on women varies significantly. Some women will experience menopause at a significantly younger age, either naturally or because of surgical or medical intervention, for example as a result of cancer treatment. For many women—research says 10 per cent—the negative impact on them is life changing.

In many cases, women and girls are unprepared for the changes caused by menopause, so they suffer in silence. Invisible. They feel too ashamed, inadequate or embarrassed to seek help, and many women are even unaware that help is possible. We have to change that, support women through the menopause and end the stigma that surrounds it. We need to make it—and the women dealing with it—visible. I hope that the debate, with MSPs from all parties talking about the menopause openly and recognising the impact that it can have, will help towards that. I am proud that women and men in this Parliament are here to discuss an issue in public, on the record, that all too clearly needs to be discussed. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Parliament, perhaps a debate such as this, on the menopause, shows just how much we have grown up.

To help to illustrate the impact of menopause, I thought that it would be useful to highlight some of the 34 known symptoms. The most common are night sweats, hot flushes, irregular or very heavy

periods, fatigue, inability to concentrate, loss of libido, mood swings, hair loss, insomnia, weight gain, joint pain, depression and clumsiness.

We know that those are just a fraction of the health issues that women face. Most women will deal with multiple symptoms while juggling work and a busy family life with caring responsibilities. I am not raising the issue solely as the Minister for Older People and Equalities; I know from personal experience how the menopause feels, and I am sure that many women across the chamber do, too.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Does the minister recognise that the symptoms that she mentioned are also symptoms of underactive thyroid? When women have that, often they are not tested, because they are told at a certain age that it is the menopause.

Christina McKelvie: I absolutely recognise that. I made the comment that women face a suite of health issues, and that is one of them.

During my time in office, I am determined to make a real difference to women who need help and support with the menopause. A big part of that is to get people talking about it—to get women talking to other women to share information on what works and what does not, to highlight issues such as the one that Elaine Smith mentioned, to listen to others who face issues and to offer support and reassurance. Some women have told me that they thought that they were losing their mind. We are not alone in that; many women feel the same way. It is case of sharing that lived experience.

However, women telling one another their war stories from a war that only they know about will not change their experience or the experiences of younger women who will face the same battles in the future. That is why it is so important that wider society pays attention, listens to women talk about their experiences and learns from them, whether those women are their partners, family members, employers or health practitioners, which is why I am so pleased to see the work that is being undertaken by elected members, trade union bodies, women's organisations and even the media.

I know that many members will have seen the coverage broadcast as part of the menopause-themed "BBC Breakfast" programmes last week. They showed the breadth and depth of the issues that are faced by young and older women. We have also had the groundbreaking documentary by Kirsty Wark and the insightful articles by Mandy Rhodes, editor of the *Holyrood* magazine, who have both opened up about their own experiences, which women have found to be absolutely

relatable. They have helped to make the issue and the women who are affected by it visible.

Today's debate, events such as the menopause festival that I spoke at last month—yes, we had a festival—and the menopause cafes, which were founded by the wonderful Rachel Weiss up in Perth, are vital, because they raise awareness and shine a light on a hidden, taboo subject. We are continuing to build on the momentum that has been started as a result of all that activity, which included the Scottish Women's Convention's conference that was held in February. The upcoming festival of ageing that the Scottish Government has funded, which will take place on 23 May—this Thursday—at Glasgow Caledonian University, will continue that public conversation. I am delighted that, because it is aimed at the public as well as delegates, it will extend the reach of the conversation to a much wider audience.

All that awareness-raising work will ensure that the deafening silence around the menopause is no more. Women are reclaiming the airwaves and have grabbed the foghorns. We are all prepared to make ourselves heard as well as seen. It is important to take action because women have the right to be well. The menopause affects women physically and mentally, sometimes to devastating effect. We know that most women go through the menopause between the ages of 48 and 55, that the symptoms can last for more than 10 years and that the average age at which women go through the menopause is 51. However, as I have said, it can happen to some women when they are much younger.

There is also an economic imperative for addressing the impact of the menopause. We all know that our population is ageing. On 3 April, I published "A Fairer Scotland for Older People", which considers the changes in Scotland's population demographics. The fact that there has been a 5.5 per cent increase in the employment rate of women aged 50 to 64 since 2008 means that we have more women in the workforce. Given that more than 60 per cent of women between 50 and 64 are in employment, more are now working through and beyond the menopause.

If we add to that the potential impact of Brexit on key areas of our workforce, we can see that it is absolutely essential that we keep our workers, whose skills and experience are so important, in employment for as long as they want to be. That means that we must change the workplace to ensure that it allows us to work flexibly and that employers really understand the needs of their employees. As well as making good business sense, that is the right thing to do. Despite the fact that employment law is reserved to the United Kingdom Government, which limits the actions that we can take, we are finding opportunities to

promote the agenda of fair work and workplace equality.

That agenda includes the rights of women experiencing the menopause and I can highlight some progress here. I commend the work of the Scottish Trades Union Congress women's committee, which, in October 2017, carried out a survey on the menopause in the workplace. The survey investigated the experiences of women, how Scottish employers are responding to the issue and what resources the STUC women's committee could develop for women in the workplace.

Over 3,000 women participated and the survey found that 99 per cent of respondents either did not have or did not know whether they had a workplace menopause policy; 63 per cent said that the menopause was treated as a joke at work; and 32 per cent said that the menopause was treated negatively in the workplace. The women's committee is now collating menopause policies and information from affiliate unions and members' workplaces in order to develop a best practice model for distribution, which is very welcome indeed.

It is also welcome that, due mainly to the work of depute provost and councillor Collette Stevenson, South Lanarkshire Council has now implemented a menopause policy that is supported by all the groups. That policy is now being used by many other employers, including local authorities, as a model for developing their own guidance.

I have made sure that the Government is updating its current menopause policy and providing guidance and support for women and their managers, as we should be leading by example in Government. We had five menopause cafes across Government just a few weeks ago, all of which were oversubscribed. That means that there is a need out there. We are also encouraging all employers, including other public bodies, to update and/or provide menopause awareness training and guidance for their managers.

Our recently published "A fairer Scotland for women: gender pay gap action plan" includes actions to support women affected by the menopause. The action plan sets out our commitment to fund

"a feasibility study for a 'Centre for Flexible Work' for Scotland. This Centre, a UK first, would design, test, embed and scale new approaches to increase the availability of quality, flexible work in Scotland."

We are also funding several projects through the £750,000 workplace equality fund to support the development of age-inclusive workplace practices. In partnership with Impact Funding

Partners, we supported a workplace equality fund business-to-business learning event in March to share good practice, including lessons learned on the adoption of more age-inclusive working practices. We are expanding the fund further so that, importantly, it will now seek to encourage projects that provide support to female workers during the menopause.

It is a great list, and I am not finished yet, Presiding Officer. We have also refreshed the gender and diversity element of the Scottish business pledge to give employers access to information and advice on issues such as the menopause, as we know that older women are impacted by the gender pay gap. It is clear that the menopause can be one of the contributing factors to women's lack of progression and career choices, based on their need to manage their health—both mental and physical.

We are committed to working closely with women's organisations and trade unions to gain a clearer picture of the issues involved in order to identify other areas where action needs to be taken. I am sure that many members will tell us some of those ideas today and I am looking forward to hearing them.

In conclusion, I will read out the words of Agnes Tolmie, chair of the Scottish Women's Convention, as she introduced the convention's menopause survey results earlier this year. Nearly 1,000 women took part in that survey, and they cannot be ignored. She said:

"Menopause covers much more than just a physical transition. It impacts on every aspect of our lives as women, both individually and collectively. We hear about workplace discrimination on a daily basis. But we very rarely hear about this in relation to such a crucial issue as the menopause. This is for a number of reasons"

including stigma, fear of demotion, and fear of being singled out as "too old". She added:

"These women are carers, they are workers, many are the very backbone of our communities and society. And yet, they are made to feel ostracised by a perfectly normal event that every woman goes through.

What we need is information and understanding from the outset. From pre-menopause to what comes after ... We need to listen to women with direct lived experience. Policymakers and politicians must understand the impacts of the menopause in order to effect change."

I totally agree with Agnes Tolmie. That is why I am proud to move the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges that the menopause has for too long been a taboo subject; agrees that there can often be little understanding of the symptoms of the menopause in wider society; congratulates the STUC Women's Committee on its 2018 report, *Menopause and the Workplace*; commends the awareness raising work of Rachel Weiss, who established the Menopause Cafes and

annual Menopause Festival, and the Scottish Women's Convention, which is gathering the experiences of women across Scotland who are saying in their own words that this should no longer be viewed by society as "a women's issue" and that there is a need to end the stigma of the menopause, and agrees that raising awareness of the menopause will help its impact be better understood and addressed.

15:34

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for bringing this topic to the chamber today.

Although around 50 per cent of the population will experience the menopause at some point in their lives, unfortunately the subject remains incredibly taboo. For far too long, women have felt unable to talk about the menopause openly, with the wider impact being a society that has little understanding of its symptoms. I am pleased that we are having the debate today to raise awareness of the menopause and help end the stigma that surrounds it.

What exactly is the menopause? The menopause is when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. It is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between the ages of 48 and 55, as we have heard. Most women will experience menopausal symptoms, some of which can be quite severe and impact significantly on their everyday activities. Symptoms, which can begin months or even years before a woman's periods stop and can last for up to four years after, include hot flushes, night sweats, low mood and anxiety, reduced libido and problems with memory or concentration.

The impact on women's lives is significant. A British Menopause Society survey found that over half the women who had gone through the menopause said that it had had a negative impact on their life and over a quarter said that they felt less outgoing in social situations and more isolated. A third said that they no longer felt like good company. To hear those statistics makes me feel sad and, having spoken to many women who have experienced the menopause, I know that they feel as though no one is listening to them.

If I am completely honest, over the past few months, I have felt the start of the symptoms of the menopause and I have been a little anxious about what is to come. For me, the time is ripe for this debate as I have been able to learn more about the menopause, which I am sure will make the process easier.

It is clear from the statistics that there are significant implications for women's mental as well as physical health, and those need to be addressed. For me, much of the taboo stems from

the menopause being a part of our lives that we do not necessarily want to think about, let alone talk about. However, the danger of that is that we do not normalise talking about it and we are not mentally or physically prepared for it when it comes, or not able to support or understand the experiences of someone who is going through it. Normalising talking about it is key to the debate. It is important that that is done from an early age, particularly given that one in 100 women will experience the menopause before the age of 40.

Men, too, are incredibly important to the debate, as has been raised. The BMS found that 38 per cent of men said that they felt helpless when it came to supporting their partners through the menopause and a third said that they often ended up having arguments because they did not understand what their partners were going through. Those statistics are again significant in highlighting that the menopause is not just a women's issue—it affects everyone in society.

How do we start the discussion? We do that through education, talking to one another or simply saying the word "menopause" in our everyday conversations. I was really pleased to see the BBC's coverage of the issue last week as part of its wake up to the menopause campaign. Many people—friends and family—have come to me to talk about it, and there seems to have been a very wide reach. There were segments on a variety of issues. There was the story of a young woman who began early menopause at just 15; a short film by a BBC presenter, opening up about her own menopause story; and—my favourite—a clip following a group of women in Wales who found that wild-water swimming alleviated their anxiety and menopause symptoms.

We need to keep the momentum going. There are great initiatives out there already, as we have heard. World menopause day, which is held in October every year, presents an opportunity for us to mark the progress that has been made each year and to continue to raise awareness. As we have heard, the creation of menopause cafes across the United Kingdom has allowed women to discuss the menopause with no set agenda. Those cafes give women the opportunity to talk about their symptoms and share information on what has worked for them.

At the University of Leicester, a menopause-specific policy has been introduced. As well as male and female university staff being encouraged to say the word "menopause" three times a day to help normalise it, women are encouraged to announce confidently in a meeting when they are having a hot flush. I am having one the now, so that is okay.

On that last point, it is in the workplace that we need to improve vastly the support for women who

are experiencing the menopause. In the same BMS survey, 47 per cent of women in employment who needed to take the day off because of the menopause said that they would feel uncomfortable with disclosing the real reason, and 45 per cent of women who experienced strong symptoms felt that that had had a negative impact on their work.

Yesterday, in Glasgow, I met a couple of ladies who had contacted me during mental health awareness week, which was last week. Over coffee and cake, we chatted about the menopause, which they felt was having a detrimental impact on their mental health. Although one of them had been signed off work by her general practitioner because of her severe menopausal symptoms, she was facing disciplinary action despite having been with her company for more than 25 years. At the same time, she was struggling to cope at home, which left her feeling isolated and not knowing where to turn. Hearing about that at first hand highlighted to me just how stressful the menopause can be for some women.

As we must do with any health problem—whether it be physical or mental—we need to embed an understanding of the menopause into workplace culture, so that women do not suffer alone. Again, this is where a better understanding of the symptoms would be helpful. Many women struggle with poor concentration. If employers do not understand that, it is easy to see how difficult situations might arise. The Equality Act 2010 establishes the importance of reasonable workplace adjustments, which might include anything from considerations of temperature control to the use of flexible or home working.

I welcome the work of the Scottish Women's Convention. This week, I want to ask a number of employers—in both the public and private sectors—what measures they have in place to educate their managers on the menopause and to support women who are experiencing it. I will be happy to share those responses with members once I receive them. I am keen that, in years to come, we continue to build on the progress that has been achieved in the area.

Elaine Smith: It might add to the debate to mention the importance of providing more information on how physiotherapy can help women with stress incontinence.

Annie Wells: I absolutely agree with Elaine Smith on that point. We should remember that women can receive support in lots of different ways and that we should not have a one-size-fits-all approach. We should be proactive and have better discussions.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I am pleased that it has been so consensual. For many women, the natural process that is the menopause is a time of anxiety and distress. For that reason alone, it deserves our utmost attention. The first step towards destigmatising the menopause is to talk about it in a way that normalises it, which would allow everyone in society to become more knowledgeable about what women experience during that time. I very much hope that, by the time that we reach world menopause day in October, we will be able to talk about seeing some of the changes that we have discussed happen.

15:42

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Around 400,000 women in Scotland are experiencing the menopause transition right now. It is a normal part of life but, as the motion states, the menopause has been

“for too long ... a taboo subject”.

As convener of the cross-party group on women's health, I am proud that the menopause was one of the first issues on the group's agenda. I know that it will mean a lot to women across Scotland that the minister is putting the issue front and centre. The debate is very welcome, but our actions must match our ambitions. I hope that we will see progress in the provision of menopause care across the NHS, and an end to stigma and discrimination. It is about time that we all became more clued up about the menopause. It is true that it is when women stop having periods but, through my campaigning interests around access to period products, I know that people are still embarrassed to talk about such natural processes.

The symptoms that are linked to the menopause are many—I believe that there are 34—and can last for around four years. It is important to recognise that everyone's experience will be different and that some lucky people have few symptoms, if any. Menopause is not an illness, but its effects can be damaging to health, especially if support for sufferers is lacking. Postmenopausal women can lose up to 20 per cent of their bone density because of lack of oestrogen, and they are the group that is by far the most commonly diagnosed with osteoporosis. Women can limit the effects of the menopause by taking easy steps such as staying active, making healthy nutritional choices, getting out in the sunshine to help to build up vitamin D, and cutting down on caffeine and alcohol.

Although the transition is most commonly experienced by women in their 50s, some women experience early menopause. Campaigner Katy Johnston shared her story with the cross-party

group on women's health after she voluntarily underwent the menopause in her early 20s through medical treatment to manage the crippling symptoms of endometriosis.

On some mornings last week, many members will have tuned into the BBC while the menopause was being talked about on the breakfast news programme. We should have more of that on the telly, please. I was struck by Susan, who was featured. Susan has Down's syndrome, and she talked about feeling up and down, depressed, teary and forgetful. She described feeling a bit scared that she did not really know what was happening. She was experiencing perimenopause. Women with Down's syndrome tend to reach the menopause earlier than the general population—sometimes 10 years earlier. Because of that, the symptoms can sometimes be missed or overlooked. Meeting the needs of women with disabilities is an important area of work.

More generally, a survey that was conducted by the Scottish Women's Convention highlighted that almost two thirds of women felt that not enough information was available at the beginning of their menopause and that symptoms such as fatigue and anxiety, which had been indicating perimenopause, were not linked.

As Scottish Labour health spokesperson, I have been campaigning for improved menopause care for women across Scotland, including improved access to menopause clinics. At the most recent count, only five health boards in Scotland were offering a dedicated menopause clinic. No matter where women live in Scotland, they should have access to high-quality menopause care. Perhaps the minister could give an update on that aspect later in the debate.

We should all be grateful to the many organisations that are doing fantastic work to champion the menopause agenda. The menopause conference that the Scottish Women's Convention held in February helped to increase visibility. I have been following closely the work of the STUC women's committee, and last year it published a groundbreaking report that looks at the experience of women in the workplace during the menopause. I want to echo the words of Sharon Edwards, who came along to our CPG. She and the STUC women's committee are right when they say that the menopause should not be an issue that is surrounded in secrecy and we should not resign our conversations on it to a whisper.

The menopause and the workplace survey highlighted some really disheartening figures. For example, 63 per cent of women said that the menopause had been treated as a joke in their workplace. That is unacceptable, but I wonder whether any of us is actually surprised.

The minister was right to reference journalist Mandy Rhodes, who has been refreshingly open in speaking about her experience of the menopause. She said that other women have opened up to her, saying that they have felt ignored, rejected and humiliated—and that is just by the medical establishment. Many women have said that, in the workplace, they feel disregarded, overlooked and isolated, all because of the way that other people react to the menopause. We know that we have a lot of work to do.

We have all heard the comment, "She must be on her period" every time a woman is having a bit of a bad day, and it switches to, "She must be going through the change", with jokes about hot flushes and assumptions about the menopause. I think we agree that those so-called jokes are not actually that amusing. It is almost the anniversary of the Bank of England's deputy governor apologising for describing Britain's sluggish, slow and underperforming economy as "menopausal". What does that say about bankers, I wonder?

Women who are experiencing the menopause should not be put down or written off, and neither should their contribution to our economy and society. The menopause can be challenging and tiring, but it can also be liberating, signalling a new chapter and a sense of freedom.

With more and more women working into their 50s and 60s, workplace policies and practices need to catch up. Employers are not being asked to make onerous changes, but a good menopause policy should be a minimum. My member's bill, the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill, would also help those who are experiencing the menopause to manage unpredictable and heavy bleeding.

The Scottish Parliament's women's network was instrumental in helping this Parliament to become the first in the world to make free period products available to staff and visitors, and that started from a conversation in this building about the menopause at work. I pay tribute to Sam Currie and her committee for that, and for bringing Dr Hilary Jones—also off the telly—to Parliament to educate men and women, including managers in the Parliament, about the menopause.

Like the minister, I commend Rachel Weiss, who launched her first menopause cafe in June 2017, offering women in her home town of Perth the chance to share their experiences and access peer-to-peer support. That movement is inspiring.

I am optimistic that Scotland is making progress. Only last week, North Ayrshire Council announced the development of a menopause policy, following in the footsteps of South Lanarkshire Council, which, working with the trade unions, already has

a pioneering policy. Councillor Collette Stevenson should be congratulated on driving that.

I am delighted to support the motion. I fully agree that raising awareness of the menopause is a good thing and that we should all commit to doing it.

15:49

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): In recent months, there has been increasing awareness of health issues that affect women, such as endometriosis and menopause, and some of that good work is taking place here in Parliament, including through the cross-party group on women's health. This debate is extremely timely and is a welcome contribution to ensuring that the menopause is not an invisible part of a woman's life.

We know that menopausal symptoms can range from insomnia and dizziness to anxiety and even palpitations. Those symptoms can be extremely debilitating, but the old assumptions are hard to shake off. The menopause is still seen as something that women just have to go through, like painful periods, no matter the cost to their health or wellbeing.

As the motion rightly says, the menopause has for too long been seen as "a women's issue". The STUC's 2018 report revealed that almost two thirds of women in the workplace are in the age bracket in which women, on average, go through the menopause, and yet—as has been mentioned—99 per cent of respondents reported that they either did not have, or did not know whether they had, a workplace menopause policy.

It is everyone's problem. Respondents reported having to take sick days because of symptoms, which could result in disciplinary action being taken. Given that around half of the workforce is female, and that the vast majority of women will go through the menopause while of a working age, it is incredible—frankly, it is appalling—that such a gap in provision still exists.

Nor should we assume that those who are experiencing the menopause are all of a certain age. Around one in 100 women will experience the menopause before they are 40. Some women enter early menopause because of medical treatment for conditions such as endometriosis, as a result of hysterectomies, or simply because of genetics. Transgender and non-binary people may be affected by menopausal symptoms. Therefore, it is important that workplace support is in place for all those who need it.

I thank all those who contacted me before the debate with their experiences. They welcome the debate. I was contacted by one constituent who

had a full hysterectomy at the age of 26 as treatment for endometriosis. She told me about the difference that hormone replacement therapy has made to the quality of her life, but said that it is becoming increasingly difficult to get access to a prescription, due to fears about side effects. HRT is not appropriate for everyone, and there are certain risks and side effects associated with its use. However, it can be life changing for some women. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists advises that the effects of HRT have been studied worldwide and research shows that, for most women, HRT works and is safe. The RCOG also says that healthcare professionals should discuss individual risks, based on research evidence, at consultations. It is important that potential risks and benefits are fully explained to women, so that they can make an informed choice about treatment options.

Endometriosis UK has done some great work on the issue and has developed, in conjunction with the Royal College of General Practitioners, a menstrual wellbeing toolkit that contains top tips for managing menopause in primary care.

As the minister noted, 63 per cent of respondents to the STUC survey said that the menopause had been treated as a joke at work. There needs to be a culture change, so that women feel confident and supported to talk about their experiences without fear of ridicule or dismissal. I, too, applaud initiatives such as the menopause cafe, which I believe has led to flushfest, which is a festival that is dedicated entirely to the menopause.

It is important that the message permeates workplace culture. The STUC and the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers have already produced guidelines for employers. For example, NASUWT recommends that employers provide

"awareness training ... for managers",

as well as

"paid time off for treatments such as hormone replacement therapy"

and

"flexible working patterns".

We need such provisions; they will improve working conditions for those who are experiencing the menopause, and they will allow us to retain experienced staff.

It is about equity. We cannot hope to tackle the gender pay gap until women are no longer penalised for having periods, getting pregnant or going through the menopause. The more open we are about the issues, the sooner we can dismantle old stereotypes and break down the barriers that

working women—indeed, all women—still face in 2019.

15:54

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As the minister reminded us, this is the first opportunity that we have had to debate the menopause in Parliament. Therefore, I thank her and congratulate her on bringing the debate to the chamber, thereby giving the issue visibility, as she rightly said.

As the motion rightly states, and as women themselves are rightly and clearly stating, this is not just a “women’s issue”. The problems relating to stigma, and the implications for equality, whether in the workplace or in access to health services, need to be addressed by all, no matter their age, gender, faith and so on.

If we are to bring about full gender equality, whether that is in the struggle around equal pay, gender stereotypes or menopausal stigma, we need to start by talking about it and by raising awareness.

I freely admit that men have absolutely no comprehension of what women experience during menopause, although I assure the minister that I have come to terms with my own clumsiness over the years. Those experiences can vary enormously from one woman to the next. They can have a wide range of symptoms, reactions, causes and implications. At the very least, however, we have a responsibility to listen, to support and to respond. Anything less represents failure on our part.

Seeing menopause as a normal part of life is also key to removing the stigma and lifting the taboo. It is the strong, underlying message of Louise Minchin’s video on her menopause journey and a lot of the other programmes that we saw last week.

There are strong and compelling arguments for saying that at the root of menopausal stigma lies the issue of health inequality. Health inequalities manifest themselves every day, in all sorts of ways, but nowhere are they more obvious, perhaps, than when women go to their general practitioners with symptoms of menopause and do not get the support that they need. That is not always the case, of course, but too often it can be.

We hear of cases in which women have been misdiagnosed as having depression and been placed on antidepressants. Others have presented with palpitations and have then been referred on to cardiologists. Some patients with urinary symptoms have been referred to urologists, and others have been simply told that it is “just” the menopause so nothing can be done. To make

matters worse, in certain circumstances, doctors dismiss symptoms as menopause when they are actually signs of something more serious. Clearly, that can have very grave consequences indeed.

Although the 2015 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines on the menopause are a step in the right direction, healthcare professionals need greater resources to enable them to accurately identify the menopause and better support women.

It is also fair to say that the menopause can disproportionately affect those women in our society who are already vulnerable, leading to detrimental effects on their mental and physical health. In a recent report produced by Engender that focuses purely on women who have disabilities, the overwhelming majority of respondents said that they received poor or no information about the menopause, its health implications, its symptoms or how to manage them. More worryingly, they felt that doctors were not available to give information in an accessible way or to spend time with them to discuss any reproductive health concerns that affected them. The main recommendations to emerge from the focus groups that took place highlighted how essential it is to ensure that a learning disability or specialist nurse is available to speak to women about the menopause. The lack of resources was also highlighted through that work by Engender.

Much more needs to be done in areas for which the Parliament has responsibility. To this day, GPs and health professionals remain unable to effectively support women because of a lack of training and awareness. Women who have disabilities are not incorporated into the reproductive narrative or policies and, as Alison Johnstone and Annie Wells highlighted, there is still no workplace policy surrounding the menopause. All of that can leave women feeling alone or, as the minister reminded us at the start of the debate, invisible.

We are still not doing enough to tackle menopausal stigma and it is about time that that changed. This is a shared endeavour. We all have an interest in seeing the situation improve, even if the stakes for some are higher than for others. For now, however, I once again thank the minister and congratulate her on enabling Parliament to debate this important issue and giving it the visibility that it needs and deserves.

15:59

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I am really pleased to be speaking in today’s debate and I am delighted to hear that it is the first ever debate in this chamber, and the first

in any UK Parliament, on the menopause. I congratulate the minister on bringing it forward.

For as long as I can remember, the menopause has been viewed as a bit of a joke. There are mugs, napkins, aprons, car stickers—you name it—all emblazoned with so-called hilarious slogans about “the change”.

We have heard the statistics from the STUC women’s committee and they are worth repeating: 63 per cent of women said that the menopause had been treated as a joke at work and 32 per cent said that it had been treated negatively in the workplace. That is simply unacceptable. It is certainly not a joke if you are one of the many women—more than half—who said that they had experienced negative and distressing symptoms.

Let us be clear: the menopause is not an illness. It is a natural part of ageing for more than half the population. However, as we know, it can be debilitating and affect women’s everyday lives, and the Scottish Government wants there to be a greater understanding in society of the symptoms that can cause misery for many women. That is why we need to talk about it: to raise awareness and end the taboo.

There are increasing numbers of older women in the workplace—just ask the women against state pension inequality—and many more will experience the menopause while at work. Some will sail through it; others will not. We know that stigma is worse for women in a male-dominated workplace, and 99 per cent of the women surveyed did not know whether there was a policy in their workplace.

This is 2019. Managers and employers must be grown up enough to support women and let them know what is available to them. The Scottish Government wants to set a positive example in this area and it is currently reviewing its workplace guidance, as we heard from the minister. The menopause is just one of the barriers that women can face in the workplace because of gender and age. I hesitate to use an old cliché, but if men experienced the menopause, I doubt whether we would be having this debate.

Many subjects appear to be taboo when it comes to debating women’s health issues. Menstruation—this is period positive week, by the way—endometriosis, thyroid conditions, in vitro fertilisation treatment and many more are often swept under the carpet when it comes to talking and being open about women’s health in the workplace, but we are making some headway. The Scottish Government is currently working with women’s organisations and trade unions to gain a clearer picture of the issues faced by women going through the menopause and to identify other areas where action may need to be taken. The

minister outlined those and they seem very positive.

Targeted training, awareness raising and work with employers to provide menopause-related advice are finally beginning to happen. As we have heard, the world’s first menopause cafe was held in Perth in June 2017 after the excellent television documentary presented by Kirsty Wark, which was probably the first time that the subject had been aired on a prime-time TV slot. After an inspiring debate, a resolution was passed at the Scottish National Party conference in April for employers to give menopause training. However, taking up Alison Johnstone’s point, more research needs to be done into treatment types other than HRT. HRT is fantastic for some women but has side effects for others, so we must continue to research other remedies.

It is no longer acceptable for women to attend the doctor’s surgery with a range of debilitating symptoms only to be told, “It’s just your age”, and it is not acceptable for employers to jeopardise a women’s career by showing a lack of understanding or respect about this perfectly natural process. For those employers who are not responsible enough to do that, the joke will ultimately be on them and they will be left behind as society moves on.

16:03

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): It is a privilege to speak in this debate. My wife, too, was delighted that I would be doing so. Gosh! Having to bear children and then, later in life, being subjected to the menopausal symptoms, women have to cope with a lot. I salute them, including all those who are here today, for their enormous courage.

The menopause is a transition in life that has often been easily dismissed. It has been labelled as an unimportant or uncomfortable topic of conversation, particularly among us men. However, in my humble role as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s male champion for women in Scotland—I recognise that no woman here needs me to speak on her behalf—I am keen to dispel any stigma or barrier that women may face.

In the workplace, especially, the taboo of menopause certainly exists, and it has caused a lack of understanding and sometimes even a general feeling of embarrassment. The underlying thinking is that it is solely a women’s issue and not the concern of anyone else. That simply should not be the case. I fully understand that, slightly contrary to what Rona Mackay said about men, particularly after supporting my wife during some difficult times when I was overseas with my job,

some 2,500 miles away in the Balkans. I had to fly home on some occasions to support her and my four children.

The menopause can, for some women, feel like a stage of life that is unrecognised and easily dismissed. Indeed, as the Faculty of Occupational Medicine highlighted, the menopause is a hidden health concern. We can forget that it is a natural health condition that is just as deserving of clear, practical guidance and support as any other. It is important to note that menopausal symptoms are different for each woman and can vary depending on where they live, be it in Scotland or in the Commonwealth. Those different factors can affect the severity of their symptoms. With that in mind, awareness raising needs to be attuned to the spectrum of experiences that women have.

There is zero benefit in fuelling the view that the menopause is taboo, especially as part of the problem can be plain ignorance. It is encouraging, therefore, to see more readily available advice and guidance. Indeed, only through more open communication about the symptoms can we better understand how women can feel and the support that they need, especially in a workplace environment. It is alarming to note that a quarter of women who are aged over 50 have considered reducing their working hours due to their menopausal symptoms. The danger is that, without support, more women might feel that they cannot continue to work.

One of the most important areas for awareness to start is with employers, who are the key to destigmatising the menopause, especially if they implement a workplace menopause policy. The STUC women's committee's 2018 report on the topic showed that most of those who took part in the survey said that they either did not have, or did not know whether their employers had, such a policy in place. I am sure we all agree that all employers should have such a much-needed policy in place.

Stemming from that policy, employers need to encourage training in how best to deal with the menopause in a workplace culture. That practical training for colleagues is the key to proper education on women's experiences, because it can foster understanding and awareness of the practical steps that we can take to help one another. Further options such as flexible working and small adjustments to the working day are definitely worth exploring. For example, the UK Government, through the women's business council, has implemented an employer toolkit that suggests physical adaptation options to the working environment that are designed to encourage flexible working. I hope that employers can be equipped and encouraged to do their part in that way.

Through all those efforts, organisations strive to raise awareness and start the conversation, and I welcome the number of campaigns that aim to do just that. For instance, this month, the BBC's wake up to the menopause week was an eye opener, particularly about the workplace, and world menopause day is marked every October to raise awareness of the health issues that are connected with the condition. Campaigns such as those are all about opening up the conversation and encouraging active communication about how women can feel well supported and better understood. That is how we can destigmatise the menopause.

I hope for an open and supportive dialogue about the menopause that will truly validate the condition and ensure that women are supported, especially in their workplaces, in this country and throughout the Commonwealth. Efforts to raise awareness have certainly helped to break the taboo, but it will take real and practical change in the working environment—with commitment from everyone—to truly address the issue.

16:10

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

There are a raft of subjects that are firmly in a box marked "Things your granny says you should keep to yourself". Periods are in there, although, of late, because of campaigners on period poverty and the tampon tax, among whom I count myself, the taboo around talking openly about menstruation is being eroded. The menopause is in that box, too, and, with all due respect to our grannies, not talking about the symptoms of the menopause is doing us no favours.

As everyone has said, the menopause is a natural part of life. Women in the workplace have been coping silently forever. Although we have been managing life while keeping our symptoms hidden, we can manage it even better if those around us understand them and give us an extra bit of support when we need it. I do not want this to turn into a debate that gives people more reasons not to employ older women, because we do cope—but we cope in secret.

There is limited information about the menopause and its impact on women in the workplace, yet by law all workplaces should have an effective, gender-sensitive policy that is entirely consistent with the statutory provisions in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the public sector equality duty, which was part of the Equality Act 2010. However, I wonder how many perimenopausal women, if they asked their boss about their policy on the menopause, would get

any kind of an answer. I feel for the boss who has been asked. Would they even know whether they had one?

Right now, those of us who are perimenopausal—I am, and Emma Harper has made me a fan out of the *Business Bulletin*—might have extremely heavy periods that come with no warning and that cannot be dealt with very easily. We might also have debilitating and severe hot sweats that do not happen only at night. I might need to leave a room suddenly to deal with either of those things. I might not be able to sleep, so a flexible working pattern might help me to get through a period of insomnia. All of those things do not mean that I cannot do a good job; they just mean that I might have to do things a wee bit differently from time to time. Also, the symptoms are not consistent; there are peaks and troughs.

I am lucky, though, because I am the boss in my constituency office and can work round those issues. What if I was working at a till in Tesco? What if I was working a shift or managing a petrol station?

Many members have mentioned the survey by the STUC women's committee, so I will not rehash what has been said. However, if a third of female employees feel that the menopause is treated negatively or have heard it being talked about as a joke, they are less likely to bring up the issue at work, because they do not want to be ridiculed.

I was pleased to discover that, in October last year, SNP-run South Lanarkshire Council grasped the nettle by becoming the first local authority in Scotland to introduce a menopause policy to support its female workforce. As has been mentioned, the depute provost, Collette Stevenson, said:

"It is important for an organisation of any size to recognise the support that is needed".

Her colleague Councillor Katy Loudon and Clare Haughey, the Minister for Mental Health, brought forward a motion in line with that belief at the SNP conference, and that is now our party's policy. I will write to Aberdeenshire Council to ask what policy—if any—it has in place. I know that some of my councillor colleagues have already raised the issue directly.

What might such a policy look like? It could consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the workplace environment does not make their symptoms worse. It could include paid time off for treatments such as hormone replacement therapy or cognitive behavioural therapy. It could also include flexible working patterns and making reasonable adjustments in workplaces such as the introduction of flexibility in breaks, remote working and flexible start times. It strikes me that smokers probably have more

flexibility than women who are suffering from the menopause, as they are able to take breaks whenever they want. We also need to introduce a culture in which the menopause is talked about respectfully between colleagues. Whatever we get out of the debate, it is welcome that we have opened up the box and are talking about the menopause.

I will briefly mention clinical interventions. I would like to go into a doctor's surgery and be offered advice instead of just being told to go on HRT. There are lots of coping mechanisms out there, so I would like our medical professionals to look beyond the clinical interventions to help us out.

16:12

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I was not sure whether I wanted to take part in today's historic debate. I have already spoken honestly in the chamber about my thyroid problems, so I thought it might be challenging to discuss yet another personal health and wellbeing issue. There are connections between thyroid problems and the menopause, which I will come back to if I have time.

As other members have mentioned, it was refreshing to see women on the BBC's "Breakfast" programme talking about the menopause along with their families, who are obviously also affected. There were some innovative ideas for helping with symptoms. However, as much as I like swimming, I am not sure that I fancy swimming in freezing cold water, which Annie Wells mentioned—but, if it helps, people should go for it.

Wider media and political discussions have encouraged a new culture in which the menopause can be talked about openly. Ending the stigma of the menopause should not be necessary. Why should a natural physical process that affects half the population have a stigma attached to it at all? Sadly, it does, so we clearly need more discussion, information and understanding to ensure that the menopause is everybody's issue, not just an issue for the women who are going through it.

I took some soundings about the debate and about what people think in the workplace. The comments that I received included: "My colleague is always sleeping in and coming in late," "She's tired and grumpy," "She's moaning about aches and pains," "She's too hot, then too cold," and, "She's suffering from anxiety and very emotional." Anyone who is working or living with a woman who is going through the menopause will recognise some or all of those symptoms. Instead of making such comments, it would be better if people recognised that their colleague or manager is

going through the menopause; they might then better understand what women have to deal with while they are working. It might result in more support and empathy or in adjusted workplace conditions such as cool water being available, flexible hours, the relaxation of uniform policy and the provision of fans.

It obviously does not help that, whether they like it or not, women are now having to work until they are much older. For women in poverty, there is little hope of early retirement; instead, they could be doing two or more zero-hours or part-time jobs as they try to make ends meet.

This kind of debate will help to raise awareness. It is obviously the first of its kind, and I congratulate the minister for that. However, we also need action on workplace assistance and better medical help and advice. Workplace assistance is, of course, being pushed for by the STUC.

I mentioned thyroid problems, and I will briefly touch on how the menopause can be even more difficult for thyroid sufferers, who—as we know—are mainly women. As I mentioned in my intervention on the minister, women are often not tested for thyroid disorder later in life because the symptoms are similar to those of the menopause. Yet thyroid problems can increase the risk of the complications that are associated with the menopause. For example, during the menopause, women are more likely to develop osteoporosis, a condition whereby bone density is reduced. Similarly, the risk of cardiovascular disease increases during the menopause, and thyroid conditions can increase that risk further and interact with it, resulting in complications. If women who are on thyroid medication are prescribed or choose to take HRT, they need to be closely monitored, preferably by an endocrinologist.

As an area of medicine, thyroid disorder requires much more research, including into its impact during the menopause. When I was the Deputy Presiding Officer and chairing a session, I kept a fan under the desk. However, I used it only when the camera was clearly on another member—I would sneak it out, use it and hide it again. Yet, I should have felt more empowered to use that fan when I needed to, in order to do my job more comfortably. Recently, I went out with my husband, Vann, to a local bar. I was only in the door when I suffered a terrible hot flush. Without asking or saying a word, Karen, one of the members of staff, handed me a fan. That kind of sisterly understanding and help is extremely welcome.

We need flexible working solutions, more support and practical help, and specialist women's clinics and nurses—or at least more time with the GP. What we do not need are misogynistic jokes,

a lack of understanding and predominantly male doctors telling us that it is just our age and to get on with it. At the conference, Mandy Rhodes said:

“There are some subjects that wait for a generation to catch up. The menopause has now found its time. This is Generation ‘M’. Let's get behind it. And all embrace that change.”

16:17

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I will say just a quick word to Monica Lennon. I have sat around the boardroom table at the Bank of England on a number of occasions. Of course, I left banking after 30 years to come into politics to improve my reputation.

I will also make a little point about something that Elaine Smith perhaps illustrated, on the topic of the advice that we all sometimes receive about things. The last thing that a woman wishes to do if they have a hot flush or are sweating, or if their temperature has risen, is take a cold drink. The reason for that is that a cold drink will actually boost their system and turn the temperature up, because when the cold drink hits the stomach, it is very close to blood vessels, and the body's temperature rises. That is why, in the middle east, people drink masala chai, which is warm tea, because putting something warm in the stomach lowers the body temperature—it also reduces the flush. Medical advice often does not cover such very simple things.

Of course, the menopause is not simply a medical or physical issue; it is a social and employment issue. It is also not just an issue for women but an issue for we men. I am glad that—I think—four of us will speak in today's debate. It is an issue for us perhaps simply because we are there to provide support to those who are close to us and who are affected by the issue. We may also find ourselves employed by, or employing, women who are affected by it. We will also meet, both casually and formally, women who are affected by it.

Elaine Smith very effectively concealed the use of the fan in a previous session, on which I congratulate her. However, she deserves every support.

Elaine Smith rose—

Stewart Stevenson: Forgive me, but I do not have time to give way.

We will meet premenopausal and perimenopausal women who are worried about how we men might react to menopausal symptoms. We have a duty to be part of an environment in which women feel comfortable about the menopause, because it will happen to all

our female friends and relatives and to others we meet.

Men need to learn to deal with their hormone issues, which largely lead us to respond more aggressively to circumstances that we find uncomfortable. We must learn to be much more supportive in our relationships with people we love, people we meet and people we bump into. Neither the male nor the female should be placed in a superior or inferior position to the other; we should simply recognise that differences arise from gender.

Professor Mary Minkin of Yale medical school has done interesting research on the effects of the menopause. She found that Swedish, Danish and Norwegian women were most likely to report that going through the menopause was better than they expected, whereas women in the US, the UK and Canada were most likely to say that their experience was worse than expected. That tells us that the effect relates not simply to a physical and hormonal change but to the information that people have and how society reacts to them.

We have heard references to diet, exercise and attitudes to getting older. As the only septuagenarian to speak in the debate, I would like people to like older people a bit better. In Japan, the old are revered; here, we are more likely to be pitied.

Members have talked a bit about employment. Engender tells us that the Department for Work and Pensions has reported that the largest increases in employment rates recently have been in the 60 to 64 age group and the 55 to 59 age group.

I very much welcome the debate and the opportunity to participate in it. I hope that I leave members a little better informed and a little better prepared to deal with the effects—in men and women—of the menopause.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I am tempted to thank you, Dr Stevenson, for your medical advice.

16:22

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in the debate, and I congratulate the minister on the energy that she has put into banishing the stigma of the menopause. Getting the topic into the chamber for the first time is a significant achievement, but the fact that we have not debated it before speaks volumes about where Parliament has placed female priorities. I also praise the STUC women's committee and the Scottish Women's Convention, which have done much invaluable work on the subject, as we have heard.

I highlight best practice by NHS Dumfries and Galloway, which has provided specialist menopause clinics and a helpline for more than 20 years and which regularly provides information sessions for the public and staff. This week, an edition of "BBC Breakfast", filmed in the wonderful new Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary, focused on the menopause. As part of the programme's wake up to the menopause week, the show's Jayne McCubbin interviewed clinicians, including gynaecologists, osteoporosis specialists and GPs from the region, about their excellent work. I take the opportunity to thank them for all that they do and I hope that others around Scotland will emulate them.

In doing research for my speech, I was surprised to discover that the human female menopause is almost unique. The only other comparable mammal species in which females live well beyond the child-bearing years is killer whales—I invite members to make of that what they will. I venture to suppose that that is because older women are as fierce, impressive, beautiful and determined as any pod of orcas.

A number of female academics have researched the purpose of the human female menopause and observed that the most successful societies depend on the contribution that older women make. There is even a term for that in anthropology—it is called the grandmother hypothesis. In pre-industrial societies, the presence of a grandmother vastly reduced child mortality, but anthropologists have noted that the benefits of having lots of healthy older women go beyond childcare and family responsibilities. Such women often do large amounts of physical work and other work to create social organisation and community cohesion. They were observed to be the linchpins of many successful traditional societies; of course, that observation can equally be made about our own complex modern societies.

On opening the conference on the menopause earlier this year, the chair of the Scottish Women's Convention, Agnes Tolmie, said:

"These women are carers, they are workers, many are the very backbone of our communities and society."

She is absolutely correct, which, of course, means that ensuring menopausal women are healthy is essential not just for the wellbeing of individual women, which is extremely important, but for society as a whole.

However, as we have heard, society as a whole often still does not get it. That is illustrated by the STUC women's committee survey, which found that one in three women said that menopause was treated negatively in the workplace, while almost two in three found that it was treated as a joke.

In the same conference speech, Agnes Tolmie said:

“the stigma attached to”

menopause illustrates

“much of the wider inequalities women experience in a variety of areas.”

Again, she is absolutely correct. The wider discrimination against women is on the basis of their biology. Younger women can experience discrimination because of their ability, or perceived ability, to get pregnant; they certainly face discrimination as a result of motherhood; and we now understand that discrimination persists into middle and older age because of the menopause.

Second-wave feminists writing from the 1960s to the 1980s had an analysis of patriarchal society that was based on that understanding of biology, which found that women suffered collective discrimination as a sex class. We have made considerable progress since then, but women—especially poorer and disabled women—still suffer discrimination, whether that is through period poverty or low pay because of motherhood.

Therefore, I welcome the comment made by the minister when she addressed the Scottish Women’s Convention earlier this year, in which she pointed out that the Equality Act 2010 protects women against workplace discrimination on the basis of sex and age and that we should use that legal framework more effectively to tackle the discrimination that they face as a result of the menopause. I agree. I suggest that it is very important that all organisations fulfil their public sector equality duty, and that it is particularly important that they gather information, as they are legally obliged to do, on the protected characteristic of sex. It is increasingly the case that many organisations, through poor training, are confusing sex with gender, or even with gender identity. Menopausal women suffer discrimination because of their biological sex, and it is vital that we recognise and record that.

I end on a positive note by returning to my point that the menopause can be a positive thing. It frees women from the fear of unwanted pregnancy and the inconvenience of menstruation, and, often, pain. Germaine Greer said that the menopause could be viewed as a liberation, because the pressure put on younger women to look beautiful and be attractive to men is a type of prison and the menopause opens the door and allows women to find a new stage in life.

As I have said, postmenopausal women are the linchpins of our community. My personal experience of that was having two older women, who had careers and were carers for disabled relatives, helping me to bring up my children. Menopausal women are extraordinary. They are

not a problem; they are an asset. I am glad that we have had the debate today, in which we can celebrate them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have taken a light touch to the timings of members’ speeches because we had time in hand, but allowing a speech to run two minutes over is perhaps a little bit too light touch.

16:28

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I am grateful to be given the opportunity to speak in what is the Parliament’s first debate on the menopause, which follows the success of the debate on world menopause day in the House of Commons last October.

The menopause can affect adult women of almost all ages, although 51 is the average age that women in the UK reach it. I thank other MSPs who have listed the many symptoms already.

My first experience of the menopause was from seeing my mum’s experience. I think that she really had it quite tough, and I know that it went on for years. She was renowned for having a fan in every handbag. Now, here I am having reached that age and I must confess that, I, too, carry a fan in every handbag for those moments. I am quite happy to lend them out, should anyone need one. At night, I feel like I am constantly doing the hokey cokey in bed: my legs are in, out, in, out—all night. I try to deal with those things with a bit of humour, because I find that that approach helps me.

I do not know whether other members have ever seen “Menopause the Musical”. I have, and it was very funny, but not because the menopause is a joke—it is not. I was laughing more in empathy than anything else. I recognised myself on that stage.

The show did a good job of normalising a taboo subject. When I say that it is taboo, I mean in public or work places. It is easier to speak to my girlfriends about it, because it is what we are all experiencing. However, it is quite a different story in a business meeting or on a train or a bus during rush hour. When a woman suddenly feels one of those moments coming on, it can make them feel quite anxious and fill them with dread.

I know that it is not just me who feels that way. In 2016, an ITV “Tonight” survey found that a quarter of women had considered leaving their jobs because of the effects of the menopause. Fortunately, I have come to terms with dealing with it in a work environment. I now just come out and openly say, “I’m having a hot flush.” However, I know that not every woman feels that they work in a place where they can say that. A survey for BBC Radio 4’s “Women’s Hour” last January

revealed that 70 per cent of respondents did not tell their bosses that they were experiencing the symptoms. That is a huge number of women.

We need to make workplaces more understanding of the menopause, because it really is just a fact of life. It is part of being a woman, the same as when a young woman hits puberty and their periods begin. I am a firm believer that those facts of life should not get in the way of someone's life or career. We have to think about what we can do to help women navigate through those stages of life in the easiest possible way, from developing workplace measures that reduce the anxiety around talking about the menopause, to educating children and young people so that the topic becomes normalised in the future.

Raising awareness is one of the best ways to do that, and I join others in thanking Rachel Weiss for her work in establishing menopause cafes throughout the UK, as they have allowed women to speak with others who are going through the same experience.

There is more that we can do to reduce the stigma around the menopause. I know that, because fantastic strides have been made in the past decade towards reducing other stigmas. For example, mental health has gone from being something that we did not talk about to an issue on which there is a national focus. Tackling stigmas head on and normalising them is a proven way of making things better. On the menopause, perhaps we can begin to set those wheels in motion today.

16:32

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I pay tribute to the minister for bringing this important issue for debate. It is fair to say that we can be proud that we are debating the issue for the first time in the chamber. I certainly agree with the motion that, for too long, the menopause has been a subject that has been treated as a joke and as something that is a bit taboo.

I was a bit worried about speaking in the debate, not because I do not think that we should talk about the subject, but because I wondered what I, as a man, knew about it. However, the conversations that I have had over the past day or so have revealed to me that I am probably exactly the person who should be standing here talking about it to my male colleagues, because I have learned a lot about how important it is that we normalise the subject of menopause.

We have made strides with regard to mental health, and I think that we are getting to a point at which people are more able to speak about it in the workplace and other places. We should be

moving along a similar road in relation to the menopause. Every woman should have access to the information, education, advice and emotional support that she needs to empower her to take control of her health and wellbeing during that normal phase of life. Too many women are told that menopause is a natural phase of life that they just have to get on with. We have heard members speak powerfully about that today.

However, as we have also heard, menopause symptoms vary widely and, in many cases, little advice or support is given. There is still much fear and confusion about hormone replacement therapy among doctors and women. For example, as we have heard, 67 per cent of women who were recently surveyed said that there is a general lack of support or advice for women who are going through the menopause. Who would not be worried about hormone replacement therapy and its possible consequences? The words themselves can cause dread.

As Rona Mackay asked, what hormone replacement therapy is commonplace for men? A minority of men need androgen replacement therapy, but it is needed on nowhere near the same scale. If it was commonplace for men, we would be talking about the subject very freely and there would be support in place: it would be a different subject altogether.

We know that work presents yet another challenge. In a health survey that was published in October 2014, 70 per cent of female workers said that they felt unsupported, one in five felt that her symptoms were affecting her work, and one in 10 had considered quitting. Nine out of 10 women said that they felt unable to talk to a manager or colleague, 18 per cent said that they had needed to take time off, and one in 50 was on long-term sick leave. However, few disclosed the real reason for their absence. I find those statistics shocking.

Gillian Martin and the minister mentioned the good progress that is being made in my neighbouring council area, South Lanarkshire. I am pleased that two of our SNP councillors in North Lanarkshire, Councillors Anderson and Fotheringham, lodged a motion that was passed in October 2019, to ensure that North Lanarkshire Council is committed to ensuring that a policy be introduced to impact positively on the female workforce, with the council providing appropriate support to women who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause. However, since the motion was passed, there has been no progress on the creation of a policy by North Lanarkshire Council officials. Councillor Carragher spoke to the council, which confirmed that no work had been done on developing a policy. She said:

"I was told it was felt doing so would complicate matters as the Council already has mechanisms in place to better

assist but it was accepted that better knowledge of these mechanisms was required.”

What makes that worse is that 79 per cent of North Lanarkshire Council’s workforce is female. It is simply unacceptable that the council has not even bothered to work on a policy that will affect more than three quarters of its workforce at some point. I understand that there are policies in place on a short-term basis, such as special leave and flexible working hours, but it is disconcerting and bad practice for North Lanarkshire not to take action on a policy as South Lanarkshire has done.

Elaine Smith: Will the member take an intervention?

Fulton MacGregor: Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No.

Fulton MacGregor: I apologise to Elaine Smith.

I can see that I am well over time. When I first decided to speak in the debate, I did not think that I would be in that position, but the debate has been very much a learning curve for me. Every woman and man deserves to understand the menopause. Too many individuals and relationships suffer because of a lack of understanding of that phase of life.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move to closing speeches, I ask myself, “Wherefore art thou, Mr Corry?” No doubt he will give the Presiding Officer a little note. Mr Bowman, you will make sure that that happens.

16:37

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): It is time to end the stigma of the menopause, and I believe that we are helping to do that by debating it today. I thank Christina McKelvie for bringing the first-ever debate on the menopause to the Scottish Parliament: 20 years ago, it would have been inconceivable that people would have been prepared to take part in such a debate—never mind that a Government minister would introduce it. It shows how far we have come that we are prepared to talk publicly about such an intimate health and welfare issue. I hope that the debate will encourage women who see or read it to talk about it themselves.

I think that it was Alison Johnstone who said that it is liberating that we can talk about menopause and not “the change”. We heard from Elaine Smith and Alison Harris: perhaps we should have some Scottish Parliament fans—they would certainly be well used.

When Kirsty Wark spoke out about breaking the silence on the menopause, she talked about her experience, which had been brought on by a

hysterectomy. Women having a hysterectomy early in life brings on the menopause, because the woman is no longer producing oestrogen, which has obvious consequences for health.

Sharon Edwards from the Scottish Trades Union Congress women’s committee has been mentioned many times. It is worth repeating that, as she has said, for far too long the menopause has been an issue that has been shrouded in secrecy, and confined to whispered conversations between women and many jokes about hot flushes.

Annie Wells talked about women who no longer felt that they were good company. That is a sad reflection on the situation. As Monica Lennon said, there are up to 34 symptoms of the menopause.

It struck me that if a woman does not know what she is about to face, how does she know what she needs from her partner? Work needs to be done on that. If they know what the battle ahead is, most women will be able to take it on. Services need to be based on that principle. Maurice Corry effectively summarised the pain of womanhood, which covers puberty, periods, childbirth, smear tests, mammograms, premenopause and the menopause. We should shape our services accordingly.

The menopause is meant to be a natural process, but there is a hell of a lot of pain attached to it. Despite that, we know that women come through it and remain resilient and hard working. Liam McArthur rightly described the situation as “a health inequality” that we have to put right. As others have said, that means that changes in the workforce are necessary, because demographics have changed and there are more older women in the workforce.

Many women are, naturally, reluctant to share their experience of their symptoms with their employers, GPs, friends or family because of a lack of understanding in society. It is clear that that must change.

Of the 3,500 women who responded to last year’s STUC women’s committee’s survey, 63 per cent said that the menopause had been treated as a joke at work. The largest increase in employment rates during the past 30 years has been among women aged 55 to 59—the rate having increased by about 20 per cent.

The symptoms of the menopause can have negative impacts on women’s economic participation. The workplace environment can significantly affect a woman’s ability to manage her symptoms at work; inadequate ventilation has been mentioned. Other issues that should be at the top of employers’ agendas—and trade unions’ agendas, when they are negotiating better policies in the workplace—are lack of appropriate toilet

facilities, crowded work spaces and inflexible working arrangements.

Doctors, too, need better support. Nearly two thirds of GPs in the UK do not feel confident about treating the menopause. That must change, because if GPs do not feel confident, how can the women feel confident? The fact that only half of doctors have received training in managing the menopause is particularly concerning.

Almost two thirds of the women who responded to the Scottish Women's Convention survey felt that there was not enough information available to them to help them to identify that their symptoms related to the menopause, and to support them in how to manage it. Of the 3,500 women who responded to the STUC women's committee's survey, more than half were already going through the menopause.

I hope that the subject of the debate is one to which we will return. It is the job of politicians in Parliament to work together not only to remove the stigma and the taboo of talking about the menopause, but to shape the kind of services that women need. We must talk to the people who need to change their attitude, primarily in the context of the workplace. If we do that, the world will be in a better place.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I call Rachael Hamilton.

16:43

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): You have missed a great debate, Presiding Officer.

In closing for the Scottish Conservatives, I thank everyone who has taken part in the debate and the minister for bringing it to the chamber.

We are starting to see society move in the right direction when it comes to the menopause, but there is still a long way to go. As many members have pointed out, the menopause is completely normal—it is as normal as pregnancy or periods. However, my mother and my grandmother never talked about their experience of the menopause, with the result that I believed that it was quite normal to walk around wearing a cotton sundress in the winter.

It is an unavoidable fact that most women go through the menopause. As we have heard, it affects women in many different ways. Despite that, there remains a stubborn stigma surrounding it. Maurice Corry highlighted that the first step towards destigmatising the menopause is to talk about it in a way that normalises it and that the sharing of experiences is important in that regard. Given that the menopause is completely normal, it should not be a taboo subject.

I thank my Conservative colleagues Annie Wells and Alison Harris for speaking about their experiences. I also thank Rachel Maclean MP, who led a menopause awareness campaign. She believes that too many women do not get the treatment that they deserve. During a speech in the House of Commons on world menopause day 2018, she highlighted the need for better education. She said that the menopause

“needs to come into the school curriculum and to be part of what schools are talking about. Let us look at how we can do that, because surely it is not that hard.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 18 October 2018; Vol 647, c 851.]

I could not agree more with that statement, because it is extremely important that we teach not only young women and girls about it but young men and boys. It was refreshing to hear four men speaking in the debate.

By receiving factual education about the symptoms, whether it is from the NHS or through schools, women can prepare for what is to come and what to expect and, in turn, increase the awareness of their families, friends and work colleagues of what is happening. Certainly, I would ask the Scottish Government to provide that factual education, particularly when it comes to young people's personal and social education lessons.

What about the workplace? Many members have talked about that today. Employers have an important role to play and should be encouraged to introduce support policies in the workplace—Alison Johnstone spoke about a workplace menopause policy. Maurice Corry also talked about the women's business council, which has developed a toolkit for employers that enables them to make adaptations, create the right workplace environment, support flexible working hours and raise awareness of the menopause.

Alison Johnstone reminded us that half the workforce is female. Gillian Martin said that the menopause is not a reason not to employ older women; that was also highlighted by Joan McAlpine, who spoke about the benefit of older women in society, including in the workplace. Stewart Stevenson spoke about that, too.

It is really worrying that one in four women over 50 considers cutting their hours due to menopausal symptoms. It is not just something that we should load on to employers; we should do as Liam McArthur suggested and deal with the health inequalities. It is important that menopausal symptoms are correctly identified and managed by GPs—Elaine Smith is a fantastic advocate for that, as she talks about the symptoms of the menopause and their similarities with the symptoms of an underactive thyroid. It is also important that we use research for the

advancement of treatment; identifying the symptoms correctly and then working alongside employers may bring the menopause to the fore, destigmatise it and allow women to stay in the workplace for longer.

Unusually, the BBC has received compliments today. Lots of members have talked about the welcome launch by “BBC Breakfast” of its wake up to the menopause campaign. It ran a week of menopause clips, looking at everything from the symptoms to workplace issues, educating the public on how women may feel and what help people can offer. That followed on from “The Menopause and Me”, a documentary by Kirsty Wark.

Kirsty Wark has been absolutely fantastic in breaking down the stigma and the documentary goes some way towards tackling the negative perceptions that women face because of menopausal effects. Her involvement in the programme came about because of her own sudden and unexpected experience. She had a medical menopause at the age of 47, after a hysterectomy and after coming off hormone replacement therapy because of fears over its link to breast cancer. Because the menopause was never spoken about, she felt isolated and unable to talk about her experiences. Perhaps this debate will allow other women to feel more comfortable in speaking about their own experiences to other women and indeed to men, to their children and to those in their workplace.

The isolation aspect of the menopause was highlighted recently by a British Menopause Society survey, which found that 23 per cent of women feel isolated as a result of menopausal effects. We need to see greater societal change in order to help women feel comfortable about speaking more openly about their experiences, and for others not to be critical, judgmental or prejudiced against women who are experiencing the menopause.

It has been encouraging to hear contributions from across the chamber. I am really scared about going through the whole thing myself after listening to everybody’s experiences but I do not think that I have ever spoken about it in public so it is amazing to hear about. I am glad that there is a strong recognition from all parties that we must do more to tackle the stigma.

I commend the British Menopause Society for its work and the support that its volunteers offer right across the country, including the cafes that we have heard about. It is such people who make a real difference to women’s experiences.

I hope that, going forward from this debate, the Scottish Government will set out its next steps in supporting Scottish women.

16:49

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I thank all the members who have contributed to the debate. It is important that the Parliament has come together to send an unambiguous message that we support and value women at all stages of our lives. Before I go further, I congratulate the Parliament, which will shortly launch its policy on periods and the menopause.

Like Alison Harris and others, my first experience of the menopause was my mum. What I remember was irritability, tiredness and tearfulness, but it was never explained and it was never spoken of. I remember as a young girl being very anxious that something was wrong with my mum and, being an imaginative young girl, I had her dead and buried a couple of times. It was never spoken of.

In passing, before I turn to what members have said, I give my personal thanks to Pauline McNeill for recognising that women who have come through it are brilliant and hard working.

Annie Wells talked about the menopause as a natural part of ageing, and it is. The problem is that the experience of women, in the workplace and elsewhere, is that somehow what is happening is not natural. Somehow, it is our fault. We are being difficult and we are being troublesome. For us as women, it can also be a hard thing to face up to, because what it signals, whether we recognise it or not, is the end of our capacity to conceive naturally. Whether we rail against it or not, we have absorbed the notion that conception and the bearing of children are essential parts of our femininity. It is also a signal that our life and our lifespan are finite. Those things are hard to face up to. Yes, it is important to recognise physical symptoms and the postmenopausal impact on our physical health, but it is also important to recognise the psychological effect on our mental health of not just the symptoms, but what it sometimes feels to us that the menopause means.

Monica Lennon: We will all have read the helpful briefing from Engender. I had not been aware of it, but Engender points out that the mental health strategy makes no reference to the menopause and has only four references to women, two of which are in relation to perinatal mental health. Could that be looked at for the next update to the strategy?

Jeane Freeman: I will come to that point in a minute. I am not sure that the mental health strategy should mention the menopause, but the delivery of our work on mental health and our work in primary care should recognise the potential impact of the menopause on women’s mental

health. I am happy to take on the spirit of the intervention, if not exactly what is being asked for.

On health more widely, there is a real need for wider education. Alison Harris touched on that, and it occurred to me strongly through the debate. That is particularly so in primary care, where some of the issues that Elaine Smith raised about assumptions that are made about women, misdiagnosis, and failure to recognise the interrelationship between other conditions, the menopause and medication can be found. For the majority of women experiencing menopause symptoms, appropriate management, advice and treatment should be available through primary care services. Where there are more complex issues, for example with other medical conditions, a medication referral is made to secondary care.

People have touched on what the health service does in terms of the menopause. There are specific menopause clinics in NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian, Lothian and Tayside. In health boards, specialist gynaecology services are also available for women. In addition, there are a number of clinics that are recognised by the British Menopause Society in Glasgow, Clyde, Highland, South Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Arran, and elsewhere.

We recognise that, especially in primary care, there is a need for significant additional training so that the workforce's understanding of the issue can be increased. I am happy to commit to looking again at our work in that area.

However, education must go further than the primary care setting or our medical workforce. Realistic medicine, which our chief medical officer and her team advocate so well, centres on meaningful conversations taking place between people and healthcare professionals. In order to have those, the individual on the other side of the desk—whether they be a GP, an advanced nurse practitioner or another professional—needs to be both more confident and more knowledgeable.

Although I want to avoid overmedicalising what is a natural part of women's lives, I agree with the approach that Alison Harris mentioned, which is to start working much earlier with young women and girls. They need to know that menstruation is normal, but be ready to recognise the symptoms of conditions such as endometriosis, which we have mentioned in other debates, so that they do not confuse them with, for example, heavy periods. Women need to understand what is happening in their bodies, be confident in their knowledge, and be prepared to argue their cases and present their needs in primary care settings and elsewhere. Knowledge is powerful. Normalising our knowledge of natural bodily functions and changes to our bodies is critical in that regard. As Liam McArthur said, ending

inequality at every level starts by talking openly and listening well.

I am very happy to commit to working across government, with colleagues in education and elsewhere, to increase the provision of information. That process must start where it needs to happen—in schools—but should extend through our health service to improve information, increase what is available, improve understanding and support women in the health-related issues that they face. There is more for us to do. I will continue the discussions that have begun with the chief medical officer and others about how much more we can do to raise awareness and strengthen menopause services in Scotland.

Much of the debate has, rightly, focused on the workplace. NHS Scotland is the largest employer in our country. Many of the issues that have been raised and discussed today and that have been faced by women in other workplaces will be faced by those in the health and social care sector. It is the case that NHS Scotland does not have a standardised policy on the menopause, but I hope that members will accept my assurance that it will have one very soon.

Elaine Smith: We have discussed the fact that many councils do not have workplace policies either. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, rather than simply criticising them for that, we should take a cross-party approach to encouraging them to put such policies in place?

Jeane Freeman: I absolutely agree with that. I would be poorly placed to criticise another organisation for not having a workplace policy on the issue when, right at this minute, our health service does not have one. I will take Ms Smith's point on board. It is right that we should collectively encourage all employers—whether they are in the private or public sectors—to take the issue seriously and to develop such policies, and that we should offer them support where it would be helpful to them for us to do so. We should encourage the normalising of what is part and parcel of women's lives. Women must talk about the menopause and ask for the support that they need—whether it be from the health service, more widely from their employers or society, or, more intimately, from their partners.

Mandy Rhodes described today's women as "generation M". I do not want future generations to have that label; I want women of this generation to be the ones who normalise the transition, end the stigma, and work with men and others across our country so that the young women who will go through the transition in future will not have to face the issues that today's women face.

Business Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-17368, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a change to tomorrow's business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 22 May 2019—
after

1.30 pm Economy, Energy and Fair Work
 Committee Debate: Business Support
 Inquiry

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Mental Health -
 Quality and Safety of Services—
 [Graeme Dey]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There is one question to be put. The question is, that motion S5M-17347, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on ending the stigma of the menopause, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges that the menopause has for too long been a taboo subject; agrees that there can often be little understanding of the symptoms of the menopause in wider society; congratulates the STUC Women's Committee on its 2018 report, *Menopause and the Workplace*; commends the awareness raising work of Rachel Weiss, who established the Menopause Cafes and annual Menopause Festival, and the Scottish Women's Convention, which is gathering the experiences of women across Scotland who are saying in their own words that this should no longer be viewed by society as "a women's issue" and that there is a need to end the stigma of the menopause, and agrees that raising awareness of the menopause will help its impact be better understood and addressed.

International Museum Day 2019

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16134, in the name of Colin Beattie, on international museum day 2019. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that International Museum Day will be marked on 18 May 2019 with the theme, Museums as Cultural Hubs: The future of tradition; understands that the objective of this day is to raise awareness of museums as important means of cultural exchange, enriching cultures and developing mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among people; recognises that the awareness day was first celebrated in 1977 and that, in 2018, more than 40,000 museums across 158 countries participated; considers that museums are trusted spaces, rooted in their communities in which visitors can come together to co-create, share, interact and celebrate the cultural diversity, history and shared places, and thanks all who work in the more than 400 museums in Scotland and the other museums worldwide on their continued efforts to conserve, communicate, research and exhibit people's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

17:01

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): International museum day has been an important date in our calendar since its inception, in 1977. It presents us with an opportunity to consider the extraordinary privilege that we have in Scotland to be able to enjoy such a vast wealth of museums and a vast breadth of galleries of all kinds across our mainland and our islands.

I know that the Presiding Officer would have wished to take part in the debate. She would, no doubt, have mentioned, in particular, the national mining museum of Scotland at Newtongrange, in her constituency. However, she is otherwise employed.

I have always been passionate about museums and galleries, and not just those in Scotland. As for too many people of my generation, the opportunities for a career without leaving my home country were very limited, so I began what became a global journey, living for many years in many different countries with vastly different cultures. During that time, I quickly learned that one of the best ways for me to rapidly get to know a country was to visit the museums and galleries that laid out the ideas of the people of my new host nation and its history, as well as its amazing arts and crafts.

Each time I returned to Scotland on home leave, I would spend much of my time in museums and galleries in Edinburgh and Dundee. I did not pause

then to consider how much education and understanding was being offered to me in those visits; they were just enormously enjoyable sources of knowledge of heritage and past relationships with other nations. However, it was impossible to ignore the splendour of our collections compared with those of so many other countries that had suffered losses through war and extreme weather, not to mention poverty.

Since those days, I have continued to seek out opportunities to visit our museums and galleries, like so many of those of us who are fortunate enough to live in Scotland, as well as the ever-increasing numbers of tourists from elsewhere.

I was recently struck with the realisation that, although our museums tell us about our past, the buildings that house them are sometimes very much of our present and our future. In June 2011, the truly extraordinary Riverside museum of Glasgow was completed, and it currently houses Glasgow's museum of transport. This museum of all kinds of transport was designed by the world-acclaimed architect Zaha Hadid, and this is what she had to say about its remarkable contribution to our heritage and to our city of Glasgow:

"Through architecture, we can investigate future possibilities yet also explore the cultural foundations that have defined the city. The Riverside Museum is a fantastic and truly unique project where the exhibits and building come together at this prominent and historic location on the Clyde to enthuse and inspire all visitors. The design, combining geometric complexity with structural ingenuity and material authenticity, continues Glasgow's rich engineering traditions and will be a part of the city's future as a centre of innovation."

The museum is home to 3,000 objects and has attracted 1.5 million visitors, which is hardly surprising.

However, it is not only in our growing cities that we find some of our most splendid and fascinating museums. Highland Council hosts the Highland folk museum in Newtonmore, which has come a long way since the early years, when it was recognised as Britain's first mainland open-air museum when it opened in Kingussie, in 1944. It is a living history museum where Scottish Highland ancestors' way of life can be experienced—we can see how they lived and built their homes, how they dressed and even how they grew their food. It is now set in an 80-acre site, with restored buildings and actors who help visitors to travel in time.

It is to Dr Isabel Frances Grant that we owe a debt of gratitude for the beginnings of that exciting museum. In 1930, she organised and curated the Highland exhibition in Inverness, with 2,100 artefacts. By 1935, she had founded the Highland folk museum on the island of Iona, and 800 visitors were recorded in the first year of opening, with more the following year.

There is much to say about that remarkable museum, but there are others that I would like to comment on and time is limited. However, it would be remiss of me not to make reference to the thoughtful outreach work that takes place at the Highland folk museum. Using the shinty collection and many photographs, stories and songs, the enthusiastic team at the museum meets sufferers of dementia and sheds light on dimming memories of when shinty was a regular part of life in the Highlands. Through the story telling and informal gathering, the social outreach programme has made a substantial contribution to the wellbeing of many local residents who are affected by that debilitating condition.

Other museums have similar programmes—the National Library of Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and other organisations offer sessions for those who suffer from dementia. Tea and cake, along with a range of activities that have been inspired by the collections, help those visitors to have some fun and social activity while being stimulated by the experience.

Social programmes are only one of the additional benefits that our nation's museums and galleries contribute. I previously alluded to the inspiring architectural contribution of the design of the Riverside museum in Glasgow by Zaha Hadid. However, I am sure that members are all well aware of our recent splendid addition in Dundee. The V&A has received well-deserved international acclaim, having attracted architects from around the world to compete for the opportunity to design it. It has just been shortlisted as one of the five finalists for the Art Fund's museum of the year 2019 prize.

In my constituency of Midlothian North and Musselburgh, we are proud to have two museums that serve our local communities. One is in the historic county town of Dalkeith and the other is in the honest town of Musselburgh. Both museums are staffed exclusively by volunteers who are passionate about their communities and the extraordinary part that they have played in history. If members have not yet had the pleasure of visiting Musselburgh, I will not spoil the fun by saying too much. The dedicated museum volunteers have presented the local residents with themed exhibitions in the historic town hall, in addition to hosting permanent exhibits for young and older visitors alike that illustrate the colourful history and culture of the fishing community. The role of women as the fishwives of Musselburgh is well recorded, and the photographs of a lifestyle that is now long gone are vividly presented to generations of young people who are now the community members of Musselburgh, as well as to visitors who come from Australia, Canada and the United States of America to discover their heritage.

Hosted by a local housing association, Dalkeith museum is located in the magnificently restored corn exchange. Dalkeith railway station, like so many stations in Scotland, closed long ago, but, thanks to a remarkable piece of good luck, the 19th century bronze station bell that once sounded the departure of trains has been restored and is currently on display at Dalkeith museum, after being lost from Midlothian for more than 50 years. It sits amid many artefacts that reflect and inform the local community. Visits from school groups and local residents, as well as from tourists, are recorded.

All of that is a testament to the dedicated commitment of the many curators and conservation professionals who care for the heritage and ensure that the buildings that are home to the collections are bright, comfortable and well-maintained spaces. The thoughtful and creative display of the images and artefacts changes our perception of ourselves and expands our knowledge and understanding of our nation's heritage, its historical importance and our relationship with the rest of the world. It means more than looking at museums and galleries; it informs our future, and we thank those who make it possible for their remarkable enterprise and diligence.

I know that international museum day will be celebrated for many years to come, and I hope that my motion and members' business debate will be the beginning of a tradition in the Parliament of recognising this special day.

17:09

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Colin Beattie on securing today's debate and giving us the opportunity to mark international museum day, which took place on Saturday 18 May.

Before museums, renaissance Europe had their ancestors—cabinets of curiosity. These cabinets, filled with the rare, eclectic and esoteric, were the preserve of wealthy European aristocrats and were usually housed in private palace rooms. As early as 1587, an advisor to Christian I of Saxony set out a wish list of sculptures, paintings,

“curious items from home or abroad”

and

“antlers, horns, claws, feathers and other things belonging to strange and curious animals”.

The cabinets not only served as a collection reflecting the interests and explorations of their curators; they were also largely social devices that established a person's rank in society. Most people would have little opportunity to view those wonders or, indeed, participate in their curation.

Now, museums have become spaces that invite everyone to engage with the past and the objects or ideas that diverse communities throughout the history of humanity have held dear. As Colin Beattie's motion reminds us, museums have developed into vital cultural hubs that can foster peace and understanding.

Scotland's museum collections are immensely diverse, and the full extent of museum activities across the country is not yet known, which makes it difficult to put a financial value on the impact of Scotland's museums on tourism and the cultural economy. However, a report by the Moffat centre for travel and tourism business development at Glasgow Caledonian University found that 52 per cent of museum visitors are local, making museums a vital local cultural facility that draws in tourists and enriches local life.

One such museum in my constituency is West Kilbride museum, which invites residents and visitors alike to explore life in the parish during the past 400 years. Since its inception, in 1988, a dedicated team of local volunteers has sustained an enviable collection of relics from all sections of the town and its surrounding area, and their hard work does not end there. As Scotland's craft town, West Kilbride is home to a wonderful array of local artists working across varied mediums, and their works are frequently on display in West Kilbride museum, tying in four centuries of history with the modern world. Its exhibits embody the town's colourful story and mark local events such as the centenary year of West Kilbride Boys Brigade, which is currently being celebrated with an exhibition of memorabilia. Discovering the history, traditions and development of West Kilbride surely increases people's pride in their community and inspires them to shape its story going forward.

Today, in North Ayrshire, we are lucky enough to enjoy a variety of museums, from the traditional exhibition to the immersive experience. At Skelmorlie Secret Bunker, visitors get a chilling insight into the reality of the cold war. This monitoring post, 15 feet underground, was designed to detect a nuclear attack. My constituent Frank Alexander took over the lease of the building in 2004 when it was just a shell, and, with dedication and determination, he has kitted it out with authentic equipment to recreate the mood of an era when the nuclear threat was at its greatest. Climbing deep into the earth, visitors are overwhelmed by a real sense of taking a step into the past and a future that, thankfully, was never realised.

That is what the best museums do—they make us feel something. Whether they help us feel proud of where we have come from, inspire us, challenge us or stimulate us, museums of all sizes can have an enormous impact on our wellbeing.

That is especially true today, when more and more museums are developing their role as socially purposeful organisations that deliver positive social impact. Gone are the days when museums were quiet, cold and foreboding places. They are now more welcoming and accessible, and they serve as hosts for an incredible variety of cultural and social events. Today, there is an increased sense that museums belong to the people who visit them.

Scottish writer Andrew O'Hagan put that feeling into words when he spoke about his connection with Kelvingrove art gallery and museum, in Glasgow, which I was very familiar with as a child. On his first step through the museum's doors, he was struck by a thought:

"this was ours, all ours, the paintings, the light, the stonework. It belonged to the people of Glasgow, and to me."

Everyone in Scotland is able to feel that level of connection to a museum or gallery, whether it is somewhere local or somewhere that simply captures their imagination. I thank Colin Beattie once again for facilitating the opportunity to reflect on international museum day 2019 and on the unique value of each and every one of Scotland's museums.

17:13

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): As the shadow culture and tourism spokesperson for the Scottish Conservatives, I am delighted to speak in Colin Beattie's debate on international museum day.

Museums are an integral part of showing off the very best of Scotland, whether it is our rich history, varied geography or diverse culture. We have a plethora of fantastic museums right on our doorsteps, which offer a wonderful window into our colourful past.

Recently, I was honoured to visit the new Moat Brae in Dumfries. It was a sneak peek because I was at a function there—it is not yet open, but it opens in June. It is the childhood home of J M Barrie, whose book "Peter Pan" most people in the chamber will have read. I thoroughly recommend a visit if you are ever down in the area of Joan McAlpine, Oliver Mundell and Finlay Carson.

In my constituency of Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, we have the wonderful Jim Clark museum in Duns, which is near completion. As you may be aware, Jim Clark was an exceptional formula 1 driver, becoming world champion in 1963 and 1965 and achieving 72 grand prix starts, 25 wins and 33 pole positions during his career. He was a true inspiration to a generation of motorsport fans and is remembered very fondly in the Scottish borders.

It is fitting that this year will see the opening of the new Jim Clark museum and the return of the famous rally to the country roads of Berwickshire. Building work got under way last year and the opening of the new museum will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the original memorial room being opened by Jim Clark's parents. The aim of the new museum is to inspire the next generation, and generations to come, with a modern and vibrant celebration of Jim Clark's incredible career and the impact that he had on motorsport around the world, with trophies, pictures, film footage and some of the cars in which he raced.

Exhibiting the cars in which Jim Clark raced will be the highlight of the new museum, which will have the existing trophy collection at its heart. I take this opportunity to thank the hard work of the many volunteers, Scottish Borders Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the people who have given so generously and been instrumental in bringing the project to fruition. I cannot wait for it to open. I encourage everyone to not only visit the new Moat Brae, but to take a trip to the Borders to enjoy that excellent museum when it opens.

Museums have amazing power not only to display great historical artefacts, paintings and objects but to be inspirational, informative, enlightening and educational. They draw in tourists from everywhere, and Scotland has its fair share of fascinating museums. Last year, we were pleased to see that the national museum of Scotland drew in more than two million visitors—a first for any Scottish attraction.

Museums do a wonderful job of accommodating tourists from across the world, with multilingual audio headsets and tours. I ask the Scottish Government to think of the importance of the smaller museums in exhibiting local culture and history. The Jim Clark museum is one small example of that and it has taken an awful lot of work to get to this point. It is important that we do not forget about the smaller museums, which need support, and invest in that provision.

In the short time that I have, I also ask the cabinet secretary and Scottish Government to consider supporting more public museums and galleries to establish themselves as dementia friendly, as Colin Beattie mentioned. There is no definition of it, but it is not just about putting up a sticker to say that somewhere is dementia friendly. It is about making all sorts of easy changes to simple things to make the experience much easier for a carer and the person experiencing the dementia condition.

I encourage everyone, of all ages, to visit a museum on or around international museum day. Every day is a school day and you never know what you might learn next.

17:18

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am delighted and proud to speak in this debate and I thank Colin Beattie for bringing it to the chamber. I am proud because it was in 2001 that a Labour Government, four years into office, made entry to all museums in the United Kingdom free. Some were free already and others were still charging, but with Gordon Brown's VAT arrangements we managed to make entry and accessibility to every museum across the country completely free. That underpinned our commitment to public accessibility of artwork and our history. It is an achievement that we can all agree was very worth while and we can all be very proud of it.

For me, museums offer celebrations of life and commemorations of and historical lessons about humanity's catastrophes. They serve such important purposes for both.

As I prepared for today's debate, I reflected on the impact of museums on my life. One of my earliest recollections of being in a museum is of the Barrack Street museum in Dundee, which is now used as a storage facility for our other museums in the city. The great skeletal carcass of the Tay whale that was removed from the longest river in Scotland would hang above me, and I used to be in permanent fear that it would fall on to my head. I remember visiting it very regularly as a child. It now hangs in the refurbished McManus gallery in Dundee, which the city council restored beautifully a few years ago and which has become a real hub in the city.

Another early memory was of queuing in Market Street, just down the road from here in the Parliament, to see Tutankhamun's mask in the 1980s—I cannot put an exact year on it, but it may have been 1985; perhaps the cabinet secretary will remember. I remember the huge buzz in my primary school and in the community about a worldwide historical artefact coming to Scotland and Scottish schoolchildren being able to see it.

From huge events like that, which had a real national significance, to the smaller, more intimate museums that colleagues have spoken about, such as the Lewis Grassie Gibbon exhibition up in the Mearns, which is beautifully accessible to everyone who has read the book and is visiting the stunning landscape of that part of the north-east, museums are an integral and important cultural and emotional part of our lives.

I remember the whole world of the London museums and exhibitions opening up to me as a student. We went to London most summers; I visited the Imperial war museum and the British Museum's stunningly beautiful reading room, where I took great delight in sitting in Karl Marx's

regular seat. I was lucky enough to visit museums like the Metropolitan museum in New York while on a scholarship to the US. The learning experience that we can have in those places goes on for days, months and years.

I was struck a few weeks ago by the video that was released on social media of all living UK Prime Ministers announcing the new Holocaust memorial and museum that are to be in London. The development is very fitting and perhaps long overdue, and it was good that all living Prime Ministers took the time to lend their support to that important initiative. Visitors to Berlin have seen the powerful way in which Germany has created its national memorials, exhibitions and museums about the horrific events that happened in the 1930s and 1940s, with the lessons that humanity must never repeat those tragedies.

On a recent visit to Srebrenica and Sarajevo with Remembering Srebrenica Scotland, the museums at Potočari commemorating that terrible genocide were plain to see. There is another visit there taking place at the moment.

Presiding Officer, I have gone slightly over my time, but I hope that you will allow me to speak a little bit about the V&A museum in Dundee, because, for our community, it has been such a significant addition to the cultural life of our city. I pay tribute to the Scottish Government and to Fiona Hyslop for her role in that museum. It has exceeded expectations with regard to visitor numbers, the impact on tourism in Dundee—new figures were released yesterday—and the confidence of our city. I hope that in years to come, our new museum will have some of the impact of the museums in Scotland and across the UK that I have described.

17:23

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I echo Jenny Marra's comments about the V&A, which I have still to visit—it is very much at the top of the list. I also thank Colin Beattie for allowing the debate on an issue that is clearly a passion of his.

I thank him, too, for last week's highly successful reception in Parliament. I was delighted that Stromness museum was in attendance and that its stand was extremely busy through the evening, as were all the others. The museum was showcasing its innovative work with the University of Dundee on three-dimensional modelling of the wrecks at Scapa Flow, to bring them to a wider audience than has previously been possible.

Museums and galleries help to make Orkney the community that it is. In a sense, Orkney is a microcosm of what Colin Beattie described in relation to Scotland as a whole. We are blessed with a vibrant cultural scene that stems from the

value that we attach to heritage. As well as the Stromness museum, we have the Orkney museum, the museum at Lyness, the Corrigan Farm museum, the Orkney Fossil and Heritage Centre, the Orkney wireless museum and the Longhope lifeboat museum. The fact that a community of 21,000 has those and other museums and galleries demonstrates the extent to which Orkney is punching above its weight and attaching value to its heritage. I pay tribute to the staff and volunteers, as well as the people who support the museums in Orkney Islands Council and elsewhere, for the work that they do.

I was intrigued by a recent survey by the International Council of Museums, which asked about what museums are. It was the subject of lively debate. The respondents to the survey came up with many weird, wonderful and—in some cases—imaginative responses. One respondent from Greece suggested that museums are the “factory of our dreams.” Someone from Germany suggested that

“The museum is a walk-in library of our collective memory.”

Another said that a museum is a place that

“attempts to elaborate human dignity and life quality through appreciation of love, peace, equality and nature”.

Perhaps surprisingly, that came from a respondent from Iran. Rather more prosaically, somebody from Slovakia suggested that a

“Museum is no longer just a place of collecting ‘old stuffs’.”

A wide variety of views were expressed in the survey, which encapsulates the fact that museums and galleries mean very different things to different people.

A more interesting question might have been to ask what museums and galleries can be. There is digital engagement across the board, as is reflected in Stromness museum's innovation in relation to the wrecks of Scapa Flow. We are also seeing work on co-curation and de-colonisation.

In order for museums to remain relevant, they need to continue to focus on the issues that affect people's lives. Therefore, more museums are describing issues relating to poverty, racism, climate change and a multitude of other issues. That is absolutely right and proper. A Spanish respondent to ICOM's survey made the point that a museum is

“reborn as many times as it takes.”

All good museums strive to do that.

In order for museums to be able to do that, funding is key. That is the case not just for exhibitions and outreach but—as one constituent said to me—for the “under the bonnet stuff”, including the cataloguing that is critical to the work of museums. Although we should push museums

to look at new models of funding—whether through donors, sponsorship or the merchandising in which many museums engage—it has been said rather powerfully that such models can be sustainable only with strong Government backing in the form of public policies and a clear commitment to fund the daily operations of museums.

I hope that the debate will reinforce the point that the value that we attach to museums needs to be underscored by the funding that allows museums and galleries to do their work. The cabinet secretary is a strong supporter of the sector, and I very much hope that the Scottish Government will continue in that vein. I again thank Colin Beattie for securing the debate, and I look forward to the cabinet secretary's closing remarks.

17:28

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am very pleased to take part in this evening's debate, and I commend Colin Beattie on securing it.

As we have heard, international museum day is a global celebration that takes place on or around 18 May, and is co-ordinated by the International Council of Museums. The event highlights a different theme every year. International museum day provides the opportunity for museum professionals to meet people and to inform them of the varied challenges that modern museums face in today's society.

The definition of a museum is that it is a permanent institution that ensures that society is informed, as well as having its own individual development. A participating museum communicates, researches, conserves and acquires, and it holds exhibitions of humanity's tangible and intangible heritage. A museum should also provide the environment for enjoyment, studying, processing and educating.

All those services are platforms for raising public awareness. It is important that museums have the ability to organise and be part of our society on an international level.

This year's theme is "Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition", and highlights the changing role of museums in society over the years. As we have heard, museums are there to be relevant in their area, to give advice, to become more audience focused, and to show flexibility and adaptability to ensure that they can be relevant in today's society. With the increase in popularity of computer-generated virtual worlds and places, it is now more important than ever that museums can become cultural hubs and can function as

platforms that contribute to creating knowledge in our society.

We need places where visitors are able to create, share and interact in order to get a real flavour of what is happening in the world, and to gain a view of history and historic achievements that have taken place, which will help to increase knowledge, awareness and tolerance of others around the world.

Although their primary mission is to ensure that there is communication, collecting, collaboration, research and exhibitions, museums have transformed their practices in order to remain very much part of their communities today. They are involved and have the capacity to ensure that they remain involved.

We have heard today about different types of museum—tartan, toy and transport museums—and the hundreds of museums across Scotland that are visited every day. I will pay tribute to one or two around the country. The Scottish submarine centre in Helensburgh was recently awarded a runner-up award in a national campaign. My home town of Perth has many world-renowned traditional museums and art galleries, and our old city hall is about to become a £20 million vibrant new museum. It received funding from the Tay cities deal. We look forward to seeing it develop.

In my region of Mid Scotland and Fife, there is Stirling castle and its living museums; the fantastic Carnegie library and gallery in Dunfermline, which recently won awards again.

Also—as we have heard from a number of members—there is the impressive V&A, which is based in Dundee. It has revolutionised the sector and continues to shine a light on where we are.

By acting locally, museums can advocate individually against global problems that challenge our societies. As institutions that are at the heart of society, museums have real power to establish dialogue between cultures and to build bridges, break down barriers and define a sustainable future. I commend and congratulate all who are involved.

17:33

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak on this afternoon's motion on international museum day 2019. First, I thank Colin Beattie for lodging the motion and for his excellent speech and—indeed—commitment to the museum sector. I also thank colleagues who spoke in the debate for their interesting contributions, and I thank others who supported the motion, too. It is clear from the signatories to the motion and the contributions to

the debate that there is cross-party support for the sector.

Last week's international museum day event in the Scottish Parliament was hosted by Museums Galleries Scotland and kindly sponsored, again, by Colin Beattie. The event saw representatives from more than 50 museums come together to celebrate the museums sector's hard work in keeping our heritage alive.

I was pleased to see at the event further examples of the innovation that is taking place in Scotland's museum sector. Liam McArthur referred to Stromness museum's "Living Wrecks: The Marine Life of Scapa Flow" exhibition, which was a highlight. It was an interactive exhibition that utilised 3D imagery, dive video footage and virtual reality to help visitors to explore the maritime heritage of Scapa Flow, with added sea turtles, great white sharks and blue whales. The museum's partners have created 3D scans of museum artefacts, vastly increasing the accessibility of Scapa Flow's heritage. They are also securely recorded, which means that future generations will be able to see exactly what we do now.

In my speech at the Museums Galleries Scotland event last week, I noted that museums allow us to communicate across time and cultures. To further ensure sustainability, museums have by necessity become local cultural hubs, which has inspired new ways for them to present their collections and engage with their communities and visitors.

Museums have always held a place in our hearts; they present us with seemingly endless objects and stories to light up our imaginations. I can only imagine the excitement of the children who saw the towering form of Dippy the Diplodocus during his recent visit to Kelvingrove museum—his first trip outside London since 1905. Dippy's visit was intended to inspire learning, but numerous events were organised to expand his role beyond being a larger-than-life copy of dinosaur bones. The event to draw Dippy like Leonardo, which linked Dippy's stay to the temporary Leonardo da Vinci exhibition that was held at the Kelvingrove at the same time, explored natural history through art. That is an example of how museums are changing how they engage with their visitors and how they present the stories of the history that is in their care.

Museums are on the lookout for ways to tackle contemporary issues, as will be seen in the national museum of Scotland exhibition entitled "Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk". The exhibition will explain how the fashion industry is challenging modern perceptions of beauty and encouraging diversity, and it will include examples

from designers such as Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier.

Scotland's national museums play a vital role in portraying the larger picture of Scotland's historical, scientific and cultural histories, and they do a fantastic job. They also host international exhibitions. I smiled at Jenny Marra's reference to seeing the mask of Tutankhamun. I think that I saw it in about 1970, at the British museum, when I was a tiny child. I had to queue for five hours to see it, but it left a lasting impression on me. Jenny Marra also gave her personal reflections and referred to the McManus gallery and museum, which is an outstanding refurbished exhibition space.

My constituency has museums that are changing. The new Linlithgow museum, with its three new galleries and a bespoke community space, aims to bring Linlithgow's history to the fore in a fresh interpretation of the royal burgh's history. It is the result of Linlithgow Heritage Trust's project to create a new museum for royal Linlithgow. The trust successfully applied to the national lottery heritage fund for a grant of £240,000 to enable community involvement in the project's development and delivery, and in interpretation of the burgh's heritage.

Of the various exhibition highlights, I draw members' attention to the adopt an object scheme, which invites patrons to sponsor an object for a year. That creates a steady income stream that can be used for improvements to the building, the conservation of exhibition items and publicity. I understand that there are also plans to host art workshops and a community archaeology dig, which will increase connectivity with the community.

I am excited about what is happening in my area, and members spoke about museums and galleries in their areas. Kenny Gibson talked about the contribution of West Kilbride, which is in his constituency. I visited the gallery there earlier this year and purchased an artwork from the fantastic exhibition that I saw. Rachael Hamilton referred to the new Jim Clark museum, which reflects the point that new things are happening in the museum sector—we are not talking just about existing museums. We have heard about the V&A, too. There is something to be said about the vibrancy, ambition and dynamism of museums in local places, which can also take on a national role, as the V&A has.

It is impossible to understand the role of museums without taking into account the connections that they make. They are an inherent part of our communities and they act as a platform for placing local history in a global context. Museums Galleries Scotland administers the museums recognition scheme, which celebrates,

promotes and invests in nationally significant collections beyond our national museums and galleries. Scotland has 49 such collections—many of which are in small rural museums—that are immensely varied but equally as important in the array of objects that they contain, which reflect centuries of effort. As with the accredited museums, those collections allow Scotland to be part of a global exchange of history, ideas and learning.

Alexander Stewart talked about the role of museums in society. One of the groups most positively affected by the growth of museums is the older generation. Rachael Hamilton mentioned dementia. Many older citizens who are suffering from dementia, who live in poverty or who are socially isolated benefit from the idea of museums as cultural hubs.

Last week, I was fortunate to hear about some of the great work that is being done in Glasgow and Edinburgh with older people. Diana Morton, who is an outreach manager for the City of Edinburgh Council, noted some of the fantastic work that council museums are doing. That includes the contact the elderly scheme, in which socially isolated older people are picked up by drivers and brought to a museum once a month on a Sunday for an activity and a cup of tea.

I offer special mention to Stobhill hospital in Springburn. In the secure units of the Isla and Jura adult mental health and dementia wards, objects from Glasgow museums have been placed into display cases on the walls to encourage conversation between the staff, residents and visitors. The objects, which range from model ships to sewing machines, were all selected by hospital staff. The walls stimulate memory, make the environment a much nicer place and have been very well received by those who they aim to help. That is an example of the wellbeing that museums can provide us all with, whatever our age.

We heard from Liam McArthur about museums being defined as the “factories of our dreams” or as

“a walk-in library of our collective memory.”

I always remember a wee boy telling me, when I asked him why he thought that museums were important, that museums

“keep the memories of our people”.

Yes, museums are places, but they are imbued with the spirit and the stories of people, and with that sense of where we have been and where we are going. I am happy to have taken part in the debate, and I commend Colin Beattie for bringing it to Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:41.

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

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