



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 17 September 2015

Session 4

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 17 September 2015

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

## General Question Time

### Capital Projects (Central Scotland)

**1. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what the impact is of European Union rule changes on capital projects in Central Scotland. (S4O-04598)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** I advised Parliament last week that the Office for National Statistics is seeking opinion from Eurostat on some points of clarification relating to its July decision about the classification of the Aberdeen western peripheral route non-profit distribution project. That is likely to take some weeks.

In parallel, the Scottish Futures Trust has submitted proposals to the ONS in relation to the hub model, through which we are delivering a programme of schools and health projects. The ONS is likely to be in a position to respond by late October or November. As a result, I do not expect it to be possible for a number of hub projects in the current pipeline to reach financial close over the coming weeks.

The SFT will continue to engage closely with project partners to consider the implications for them. The Scottish Government will, of course, keep the position under close review.

**Mark Griffin:** The Scottish Government approved the merger of Abrohill high school and Cumbernauld high school, with the following condition on the local authority:

“To provide the Scottish Government and the Parent Councils of all the schools affected by this proposal, confirmation that funding has been secured for the new school along with a detailed timetable for development and construction of the new school.”

Given that part of the confirmed funding for the new Cumbernauld academy was provided by the Scottish Government, that it was a Government condition of the merger proceeding, and that the timetable is now in doubt due to issues with the Scottish Government funding share, does the cabinet secretary not feel that the Government has a moral obligation to provide conventional capital funding for this particular project?

**John Swinney:** Where I can agree with Mr Griffin is that I think that the utilisation of traditional

capital funding is a more straightforward route for the development of capital infrastructure. It is a much more reliable way to fund public expenditure, which is why I regret so much the fact that we have had such substantial reductions in our capital budget since the 2010 United Kingdom general election. We are, on average, operating with about £1 billion less traditional capital expenditure than we had historically.

To mitigate the effect of that, we have moved to the NPD and hub models. What we are encountering are the very issues that Mr Griffin fairly raises in his question about the advice on the European system of accounts rules. The Government is working its way through those rules and we are working as diligently as we can with the Scottish Futures Trust to resolve those issues. However, they are complex matters that have now been referred by the ONS to Eurostat. I can assure Parliament that I will maintain a very open dialogue with Parliament and with stakeholders about how we resolve these issues.

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** The cabinet secretary has just referred to the AWPR. Does the delay in revising the contract have any impact at all on the start date for any of the sections of work on the AWPR?

**John Swinney:** None whatsoever.

### Barrhead High School (Construction Contracts)

**2. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reported uncertainty caused by the transition to the European system of accounts 2010, whether it will instruct that work should start immediately on the construction of the new Barrhead high school, with the Scottish Government bearing any risk and additional contracts, and with contracts amended as necessary. (S4O-04599)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** As I advised Parliament last week and again in my response today to Mark Griffin, I do not expect it to be possible for a number of hub projects in the current pipeline, including Barrhead high school, to reach financial close over the coming weeks, while necessary engagement with the Office for National Statistics continues. The Scottish Futures Trust will engage closely with all affected project partners over the coming weeks.

**Hugh Henry:** The pupils, teachers and parents of Barrhead high school are having to cope with a building that is, frankly, not fit for purpose. That is impacting on the future of those young people. Although I understand the dilemma that the cabinet secretary has and the difficulties caused

by that decision, there is an old phrase, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Will the cabinet secretary show some will and say that the Scottish Government would underwrite any additional costs that will come as a result of that decision and instruct the SFT that it should engage in getting that work started immediately?

**John Swinney:** I assure Mr Henry that there is no absence of will on the part of the Government to undertake new school developments, given that more than 500 schools have been either refurbished or rebuilt during our term in office. The will is there to take projects forward, but I have to live within the resources that are available to the Scottish Government. If I had lived within only the capital allocations that were available to us, a whole range of projects in Scotland would not have taken their course, because we would not have used the NPD model, which has helped to boost construction activity in Scotland—so much so that there has been a 21 per cent increase in such activity. That is a fantastic contribution to our economic growth.

I assure Mr Henry that resolving the issue is at the top of my list of priorities. A huge amount of effort is being made to try to resolve it as quickly as we possibly can. I will advise Parliament of the progress that we make in that respect.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary previously told Parliament that eight projects were delayed as a result of ESA10. That list did not include Barrhead high school, Our Lady and St Patrick’s high school in my constituency or Cumbernauld high school, about which we have just heard, yet they are all clearly caught up in the delay. On the basis of the open dialogue that the cabinet secretary just promised, will he publish the full list of projects that are affected, given that he believes that the delay will last until October or even November?

**John Swinney:** I have already given comprehensive information to Parliament in the answers that I gave last week. I have also promised Parliament that I will make a full statement once I have more of the information to hand to give Parliament more clarity about the steps that we could take. The provision of that clarity is not all in my hands, but is largely in the hands of the Office for National Statistics and Eurostat.

I reaffirm what I said to Parliament last week: I will come to Parliament and fully update members on the progress of the projects that are affected once we have a clearer sense of the way in which the issue will be resolved.

## Maternity Services (NHS Fife)

**3. Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with NHS Fife regarding maternity services. (S4O-04600)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** Ministers and Government officials regularly meet representatives of NHS Fife to discuss matters of importance to local people, including maternity services.

**Cara Hilton:** The baby boom in Dunfermline has clearly caught national health service planners by surprise. At a recent NHS Fife board meeting, Scott McLean, director of acute services, warned:

“This has added significant pressure to maternity services and there is a risk that the safety and effectiveness of the service could be compromised if these pressures are not addressed.”

Despite that real risk, NHS Fife has said that it will not review maternity services in Dunfermline until a national review has been completed.

Given that we are talking about the safety of mums and babies potentially being compromised unless action is taken swiftly, will the cabinet secretary support my call for an urgent root-and-branch review of NHS Fife maternity services, to ensure that they meet the needs of the people of Dunfermline and west Fife?

**Shona Robison:** I assure the people of Fife that NHS Fife maternity services are safe for them to use. As Cara Hilton rightly said, NHS Fife has discussed the matter and is looking to refresh the strategy around maternity services, taking into account the increase in the Fife birth rate—to which Cara Hilton referred—as well as the outcome of the review of maternity and neonatal services in Scotland that is currently taking place. It will also consider the views of local service users prior to taking any further action. In the meantime, NHS Fife is getting on with engaging with the local community on plans to augment antenatal and postnatal services on the Queen Margaret hospital site.

I will make sure that NHS Fife continues to look at how it develops its maternity services, but it is right and proper that it also considers the recommendations that are made from the national review of maternity and neonatal services that is currently taking place.

## Child Poverty

**4. Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when the ministerial advisory group on child poverty last met and what matters were discussed. (S4O-04601)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** The ministerial advisory group on child poverty met with officials on Tuesday of this week and discussed a number of issues related to child poverty in Scotland, including the on-going fairer Scotland conversation, and a draft annual report on child poverty, which will be published later this year. The advisory group also held constructive discussions about the future approach to tackling child poverty in Scotland.

**Clare Adamson:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that the United Kingdom Government has abolished child poverty targets and plans to redefine the remit of the social mobility and child poverty commission. Does he agree that those are retrograde steps that are designed to mask the fact that the UK Government will push even more children and families into poverty as a result of its austerity-driven policies, such as cutting tax credits and the employment and support allowance and imposing the benefit cap and the benefit freeze?

**Alex Neil:** As members will be aware, the Scottish Government does not support the changes that are currently being proposed to child poverty legislation under the UK Government's Welfare Reform and Work Bill. Last week, I wrote to Iain Duncan Smith to request that he amend the bill to repeal all parts of the Child Poverty Act 2010 that impose any duty on the Scottish ministers, including the duty to appoint a commissioner to the new social mobility commission.

Scotland already has in place an innovative measurement framework that was developed in collaboration with the advisory group and set out in "Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland—Our Approach 2014-2017". That addresses the wide range of drivers of poverty, as well as the impacts that poverty has on the lives of children and their families. We will continue to report against that framework, but we will work with stakeholders to build on and improve it.

The advisory group's advice and input on Tuesday was a welcome start to those discussions, and that will continue to be important as we develop a Scottish approach to tackling child poverty.

### **Emergency Life Support Training (Schools)**

**5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to promote emergency life support training in schools. (S4O-04602)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** As part of the implementation of the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest strategy, the Government is working with

stakeholder organisations to develop ideas and initiatives to increase cardiopulmonary resuscitation—CPR—training. I am pleased that the British Heart Foundation has committed to working with all secondary schools in Scotland by 2020 so that they are equipped to teach CPR and public access defibrillator awareness.

**Rhoda Grant:** It is important that, as well as learning CPR, young people know where to locate an automated external defibrillator. Many communities in Scotland have fundraised to purchase AEDs. What is the Scottish Government doing to identify the locations of all AEDs and ensure that they are all maintained? Given young people's use of modern technology, will the Scottish Government work with Crowdsav, which has an app that people can download to their mobile phone that will lead them to the nearest AED?

**Shona Robison:** I will certainly look into Rhoda Grant's suggestion. The Minister for Public Health, Maureen Watt, is taking forward work on the location issue, because it is important to know where the kit is. It is also important that those who are nearest to those locations and who want to be trained are trained and that the kit is kept in good order. I am happy to keep Rhoda Grant informed on that and to give her a bit more detail. I will ask Maureen Watt to do that and to write to her with an update.

I pay tribute to the communities that have fundraised. That fundraising is an important addition to the life-saving services that we have. Communities have gone out of their way to add to the number of defibrillators that are publicly available, and I pay tribute to their actions.

### **Scottish Business Development Bank**

**6. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made with the Scottish business development bank. (S4O-04603)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** Good progress is being made on the establishment of a business development bank. We will set out the options for how it will operate and a timetable for its establishment by the end of this year.

As part of the preparations for establishing the bank, the programme for government contained a series of new announcements on continuing support for small and medium-sized enterprises, which includes launching a new £40 million SME holding fund this autumn to provide investment to SMEs; expanding the provision of specialist financial readiness advice for SMEs; and working with our enterprise agency and local authority

partners to simplify how SMEs access finance, advice and support.

**Gavin Brown:** The bank was first announced by the Government well over two years ago, so the cabinet secretary has an interesting definition of good progress. Will the bank be open for business before the dissolution of Parliament?

**John Swinney:** That will depend on the announcements that the Government makes towards the end of this year. We will set out all the detail at that stage.

I thought that this might have been an opportunity for Mr Brown to welcome the launch of the £40 million SME holding fund, which will give SMEs practical assistance. That is part of the preparations for the delivery of the Scottish business development bank.

#### **Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (Public Transport)**

**7. Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what the recommended routes are for people travelling on public transport from East Renfrewshire to the Queen Elizabeth university hospital and how long, on average, it is anticipated that these routes should take. (S4O-04604)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** Traveline Scotland provides tailored journey planning for anyone who is travelling to the Queen Elizabeth university hospital. Traveline information takes account of the individual's departure point and the time of day when they wish to travel. The information that is provided to travellers includes available alternatives, along with an estimate of how long any journey will take. In addition, Strathclyde partnership for transport and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have a great deal of information on their respective websites on how to get to the new hospital.

**Jackson Carlaw:** There has been a breakthrough of sorts: parts of Eastwood, where I live, have finally appeared in the umpteenth version of the transport access plan, if only in a series of disembodied boxes in the nether regions of the map. Does the minister appreciate that the primary concern of many about the consolidated Glasgow hospital campus related to access to its location and that many in East Renfrewshire—despite all the years of talking about an integrated transport pathway—feel utterly overlooked? What more can he insist be done to offer practical access for patients and visitors alike?

**Derek Mackay:** Mr Carlaw will be aware that there is a range of options and routes. It is right to say that there is no direct route but, with some bus changes and other interchanges, it is possible to

get to the hospital in times that range—I acknowledge that this is the case—from 40 minutes to over an hour. As I described, there is a personalised service to support individual passengers, in addition to the patient transport service and a range of information to support people to make the right public transport connections.

#### **General Practitioners**

**8. James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to address the reported shortage in the number of GPs. (S4O-04605)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** Under this Government, the number of general practitioners who are employed in Scotland has risen by 7 per cent to nearly 5,000—the highest figure ever on record. We have increased investment in primary medical services by more than £88.7 million, and there are more GPs per head of population in Scotland than in England.

However, I recognise that demand is increasing, which is why I have recently announced that over the next three years an additional £50 million will be invested to address immediate workload and recruitment issues. That work will include putting in place long-term, sustainable change in primary care.

**James Kelly:** I hope that the cabinet secretary is aware of some of the pressures that GPs are working under. Last week, one GP in Rutherglen told me that local GPs were under so much pressure that his colleagues were ruling out working in the out-of-hours service. With local GPs working under so much pressure and strain, particularly in Rutherglen, Cambuslang and Blantyre, what practical measures is the Government taking to support them?

**Shona Robison:** As I said in my initial answer, the practical measure that we are taking is an investment of £50 million over the next three years. That will do a number of things to address immediate workload and recruitment issues. Specifically, the fund will increase the number of medical students who choose to train as GPs and give encouragement to those who want to work in deprived areas. In addition, we will continue the enhanced returners programme to support GPs who wish to return to the profession, and we will develop a programme for local GP leadership and networking. I assure James Kelly that we are taking all the action that we can to address the issues that he highlighted.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** The cabinet secretary mentioned medical students who train in Scotland. Is she aware that 30 per cent of



those students leave Scotland once they have finished their professional training? Will she consider a requirement that they should stay in Scotland once that training has concluded?

**Shona Robison:** Yes—we are looking at all those matters.

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Before we move to First Minister's questions, I am sure that members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery His Excellency Mr Patrick Engelberg, the ambassador of Luxembourg to the United Kingdom. [*Applause.*]

## First Minister's Question Time

11:59

### Engagements

**1. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02947)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Engagements to take forward the Government's ambitious programme for Scotland.

**Kezia Dugdale:** Earlier this month, one of Scotland's most successful businessmen looked the First Minister in the eye and told her to put the referendum behind her. Today, Sir Tom Hunter has repeated his message to Nicola Sturgeon. He said:

"it's time to move on, move forward and use the powers we have."

Does the First Minister think that Sir Tom Hunter is wrong?

**The First Minister:** I agree whole-heartedly with Sir Tom Hunter that we should use whatever powers we have in this Parliament at any time to full effect, and this Government will always do that. That was evident from the programme for government that I outlined two weeks ago. It is not inconsistent with also arguing for enhanced powers for this Parliament where we think that that is in the best interests of the Scottish people.

Let me give two examples from this very week where the argument for transferring powers from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament is overwhelming. The first is the Tory attack on trade union rights. It would be better for employment law to rest with this Parliament. The second is the Tory assault on the incomes of working people. It would be better for decisions on social security to be taken in this Parliament.

Maybe if Labour and their friends in the Conservatives had managed to persuade more than just 9 per cent of the Scottish population that their vow on more powers had been delivered, we would not be seeing support for independence increasing in the polls. There have been 24 polls in the past 12 months and every single one of them has shown support for independence higher than it was a year ago tomorrow. Maybe Kezia Dugdale would be better advised to ask herself why that is the case.

**Kezia Dugdale:** The First Minister says that she is determined to use the full powers of this Parliament. Most people in Scotland are waiting for her to start using any of those powers. The reality is—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Order.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I do not expect the First Minister to change her principles, but I do expect her to change her priorities.

Tomorrow marks one year since the referendum. I know that, this week, the First Minister has talked about the material changes and the triggers that would be required for another referendum. She wants the Scottish National Party to get a second chance to ask that referendum question. Today, the question that I want to ask is about those kids who do not even get a first chance under her Government.

We know that kids from poorer backgrounds start primary school with language skills a whole year behind their better-off classmates. After eight years of this SNP Government, more than 6,000 children in Scotland today leave primary school unable to read properly. Can the First Minister tell us how many more kids we have to see without the basic skills they need before that triggers radical action?

**The First Minister:** When it comes to the judgment on the performance of this Government, I am quite happy to rely on the judgment of the Scottish people. I remind Kezia Dugdale that poll after poll after poll right now puts support for this Government in the low 50s and support for her party in the low 20s. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** I think that that says it all.

In terms of raising standards of literacy and numeracy in our education system, I could not have been clearer about the priority that I and this Government attach to that. That is why we have launched the read, write, count campaign and established the £100 million attainment fund, which is already channelling extra resources to more than 300 primary schools in the most deprived parts of the country.

When it comes to education, to health and to justice and getting crime levels down to a 41-year low, I will leave Labour to—to coin a phrase from Kezia Dugdale—carp from the sidelines. I will get on with delivering the action that the people of Scotland need and deserve.

**Kezia Dugdale:** The First Minister mentions the polls. Let us talk about them. She might be popular in them, but her record on education is not. Just one person in three in Scotland thinks that her record on education is up to scratch. If she is proud of that, that is great, but she should not expect any congratulations from me. She can turn and her back benchers will clap her, but just one person in three thinks that she has a good record when it comes to education.

Here is the thing. This is the First Minister who promised us not so long ago that the referendum was a once-in-a-generation event. She now has a shopping list of material changes that she thinks will justify another referendum. Instead of using the full force of government to make a difference to the lives of young Scots, the SNP wants us to go through the same arguments all over again.

Someone in Scotland today is twice as likely to get an A in their highers if they go to private school than if they go to a state school. A young person from a rich background is twice as likely to go on to higher education as someone from a poor background. The First Minister has had eight years, so when will she deliver a material change in the number of poorer children who are going to higher education?

**The First Minister:** Kezia Dugdale clearly could not decide whether she wanted to ask about education or independence. Maybe she should have followed the example of her new leader and asked the audience what she should ask about.

I will take Kezia Dugdale's points in turn. She mentioned opinion polls. She will be familiar with the recent Ipsos MORI opinion poll that showed that, whether it is on health, education or justice, support for the policies of this Government is streets ahead of support for the policies of the Labour Party. I have answered the question on improving standards of literacy and numeracy—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** The Labour Party clearly does not want to hear about the action that we are taking to drive up standards in education.

More young people from our most deprived communities are going to university, but the amount is not high enough, which is why one of the first things that I did as First Minister was establish the widening access commission. We will get the interim report from that commission in the autumn, and we will start to deliver on its recommendations.

The division between the Government and the Opposition parties is this: they carp from the sidelines, they moan and they groan; this Government gets on with delivering for the people of this country.

**Kezia Dugdale:** That answer sounded like it had been emailed in by Alex from Strichen. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Let us hear Ms Dugdale.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I agree with the First Minister that Scotland has some of the most talented and ambitious young people in the world but, after

eight years of an SNP Government, the odds remain stacked against thousands of children in Scotland. What will it take for her Government to close the gap between the richest and the rest in our schools? What will it take for Nicola Sturgeon to wake up to the fact that thousands of children in Scotland leave school unable to read properly? What will it take for the Scottish Government to put the arguments of the past aside and focus on the future of our young people? People in Scotland deserve to know. When will the First Minister stop campaigning for another referendum and start governing for a better Scotland?

**The First Minister:** After eight years of this Government, we have record numbers of higher and advanced higher passes. After eight years of this Government, we have record school leaver destinations. After eight years of this Government, the percentage of young people from our most deprived areas who are going to university is improving, but we are determined to do even better. I am proud of the record of this Government and will be proud to stand on it, but I am ambitious for this country and I will always seek to do the best for it.

If Kezia Dugdale does not raise her own performance, she will soon be going the same way as Jim from Eastwood.

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** To carry on a theme, Dave from Chipping Norton wants me to ask the First Minister when she will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-02946)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I always knew that Ruth Davidson took all her orders from Dave from Chipping Norton. Anyway, no plans in the near future to meet Dave.

**Ruth Davidson:** The First Minister and I disagree fundamentally about the renewal of our nuclear deterrent on the Clyde. Although I may disagree with it, I respect her position. In recent days, however, her predecessor has raised the ridiculous prospect that Trident renewal could be a trigger for a second referendum on independence, despite the fact that last year a decisive majority voted to remain in the United Kingdom, with Trident on the Clyde as part of that, and despite polls in recent days showing that most Scots favour the retention of our nuclear deterrent.

We know that the First Minister will not give us any clarity on what her triggers for a future referendum are, but can she at least rule out that absurd proposal?

**The First Minister:** As I have already said, I will set out our position on a second referendum in our manifesto. I will consider the circumstances in which it might be appropriate to propose another

referendum. However, I cannot understand why anybody would have any problem whatsoever with having the issue driven by democracy. If there is no evidence that people who voted—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** We are starting to see the problem that the Opposition parties have here.

If there is no evidence that people have changed their minds, of course it would not be right to have another referendum, but if there is evidence that people are changing their minds, or if there is a significant change in circumstances, it would be wrong for any one party or any one politician to rule out a referendum indefinitely.

The real question that Ruth Davidson should be addressing—a bit like Kezia Dugdale should be addressing it—is why, in every single one of the 24 polls that have been conducted in the past 12 months, support for independence is higher than it was on referendum day. We are starting to see quite clearly that the desperation of the better together parties to have a referendum ruled out indefinitely is not because they respect democracy but because, on this issue, they increasingly fear democracy.

**Ruth Davidson:** I am not sure that that takes us any further forward at all. Before the referendum, the First Minister was able to say—she promised the people of Scotland this—that the referendum was going to be a once-in-a-generation event. Yet just this week, we are told that the triggers for a second referendum could be a defence policy that she does not like, an economic plan that she is opposed to, a devolution settlement that she disagrees with, or even a new leader of the Labour Party, which she does not think can win. In short, the trigger for another referendum seems to be any day of the week that has a y at the end of it. Is the truth not that the First Minister is just scratching around, trying to find any imaginable excuse to get the referendum rematch that the Scottish National Party so desperately wants?

**The First Minister:** I am not prepared to take any lectures from a party that has broken its vow to deliver extensive new powers for this Parliament. People should not just take—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** People should not just take my word for it. Only 9 per cent of people in this country think that the vow has been fully delivered. Even Gordon Brown, the great architect of the vow, thinks that it has not been delivered by the Tory Government. Maybe that is one of the reasons why support for independence is rising.

The contradiction is this. If the Tories, Labour and the Liberals really believed in their heart of

hearts that the people of Scotland were totally against independence, they would be crying out for another referendum. People know that the reason why those parties want us to save them from rising support for independence is that they fear the verdict of the Scottish people. I will put my faith in the judgment of the Scottish people. It is about time the other parties started doing that as well.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** Does the First Minister appreciate the anger of people in my constituency about the obscene pay-outs to senior management at the former Coatbridge College? The Auditor General for Scotland told the Public Audit Committee that that failure of governance was

“among the most serious that I have seen during my time as Auditor General.”—[*Official Report, Public Audit Committee*, 9 September 2015; c 11.]

What can the First Minister do about the situation? How can her Government ensure that it cannot happen again?

**The First Minister:** I am appalled at the way in which the college made decisions involving hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money. Those events took place before the colleges were reclassified by the Office for National Statistics and stronger national controls came into effect. Nonetheless, at the time Coatbridge College was required to comply with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council’s guidance and did not do so.

The rules have changed. Since April last year, colleges must seek prior approval from the SFC for severance and settlement arrangements. There are also now enhanced ministerial powers to intervene in such circumstances.

I know that the Public Audit Committee wants to explore the issue further. The convener is prepared to exercise powers under the Scotland Act 1998 to compel any reluctant witnesses to cooperate, which I think is entirely appropriate. As a Government, we will also consider whether more can be done in the future to avoid such situations happening again.

### Fracking and Unconventional Gas Extraction

**3. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister whether the timetable for the conclusion of the evidence-gathering process and public consultation regarding the moratorium on fracking and unconventional gas extraction will be published before the October recess. (S4F-02949)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Ministers have already held meetings with representatives of environmental non-governmental organisations, community groups,

industry bodies and local government. Those meetings have helped us to prepare for the research and public consultation processes. As a result, we have a robust and thorough research process planned and have agreed to have a wide-ranging and participative consultation process. I confirm that the full timetable and the research process are being finalised and will be published before the October recess.

**Sarah Boyack:** Everybody wants to know how long the Scottish National Party’s moratorium will last. Fracking has been on the Parliament’s agenda since 2011. Do the public not deserve certainty? Do they not have a right to know exactly what the Scottish Government’s view is? Will the First Minister’s Government come to a decision on fracking before next year’s elections so that local communities have the opportunity to influence the decision? Will she sign up to Scottish Labour’s triple lock, properly assessing health, environmental and climate risks, learning from experience in the rest of the United Kingdom, and, crucially, signing up to community votes on proposals?

**The First Minister:** As I said, the full timetable for the process will be published before the October recess, and the Parliament will be able to scrutinise it at that time.

On the question that Sarah Boyack started off by asking me, the moratorium will last for as long as it takes for the Government to have all the information—health information, environmental information and information from the public consultation—to allow us to take a decision. We are determined to lead a precautionary, careful, cautious and evidence-based approach to the matter. That is what the people of Scotland want, and it is what the Government will continue to do.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I am looking at a list of parliamentary questions on the topic from Green members and others across the political spectrum. I am sure that the First Minister does not want me to read them all out, as there are more than a dozen of them. A few have been given holding answers or similar, but most have remained unanswered for six or seven months. Do the Parliament and, indeed, the public not deserve clarity on the question, particularly as we enter the run-up to the election next year? Do the public not have a right to know what the SNP intends to do—whether it is yes or no—about the issue?

**The First Minister:** I thought that Patrick Harvie would have welcomed the clarity of a moratorium. There will be no fracking in Scotland until the Government and the Parliament are in receipt of all the relevant and necessary information to take an evidence-based decision. That is an entirely appropriate way to proceed on the matter. I do not know whether he agrees with his predecessor as

co-convener of the Greens, Robin Harper, who says that there are some circumstances in which fracking should go ahead. We are not prepared to say that at this stage because we need to have all the information on which to make an evidence-based judgment.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The Scottish Government's own expert scientific panel on unconventional gas extraction reported in July last year and stated its view that fracking could be conducted safely in Scotland if properly regulated. We know that the Scottish Government ignores scientific advice on genetically modified crops and that the position of the chief scientific adviser has been vacant since last year, but is it not time that the First Minister started listening to our scientists on fracking?

**The First Minister:** I know that Murdo Fraser is gung-ho when it comes to fracking but, in a sense, he helps to illustrate the reason for the sensible approach that the Government is taking. I have just had a question from somebody who wants me to rule it out straight away and now I have a question from Murdo Fraser, who wants me to rule it in straight away. Neither approach would be justified, because we do not yet have the environmental, health and public consultation information on which to base a reasonable, precautionary, sensible judgment.

We will continue to take the sensible way forward on the matter. We will reach a view, and the Parliament will have full input into that, when we have the evidence on which to base it.

### Trade Union Bill

**4. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's position is on the United Kingdom Government's Trade Union Bill and its potential impact on employment in Scotland. (S4F-02955)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Government strongly opposes the Trade Union Bill. It is a draconian piece of legislation and will undermine good industrial relations. It will also make it more difficult for employees to have their voices heard. The measures proposed are an ideologically driven attack on the rights of workers. We see no justification for such an excessive erosion of the rights of trade unions to fairly and reasonably represent their members.

The bill has the potential to destabilise the progressive approach that we are taking in Scotland. We have written to the United Kingdom Government to highlight our opposition to the bill, and we will do everything in our power to minimise any impact that it might have when it has been passed.

**Christina McKelvie:** I welcome the First Minister's commitment to fight all the way on the bill. Will the Scottish Government seek an exemption for the Scottish public sector in relation to the UK Government's plans to end the current arrangements for check-off and facility time?

**The First Minister:** Yes, we will. While the bill is progressing through the House of Commons we will take every opportunity to oppose it, at every stage, but we will also explicitly seek exemptions on the arrangements for check-off and facility time. Indeed, the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training will raise the matter at the meeting that she has coming up with the UK skills minister. We will continue to do everything that we can to oppose the plans in the strongest possible way.

I make one final point. I want to be in a position in this Parliament of being able to do more on these vital issues than just opposing Tory proposals. I would like us in this Parliament to be in a position of having control over trade union and employment legislation, so that we could take a completely different approach. I hope that one of the first actions of the new Labour leader will be to reverse Labour's opposition to the devolution of legislation over employment and trade union rights.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Labour councils, led by Glasgow City Council, West Lothian Council, Falkirk Council and Fife Council, will not co-operate with check-off and facility time provisions if the Trade Union Bill passes. Will the First Minister give a cast-iron commitment that her Government will do exactly the same?

**The First Minister:** I answered a question on that at a public meeting in Coatbridge the other night. There will be no co-operation from this Government in imposing draconian trade union legislation—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** Let us get real here. If we cannot stop a Tory Government passing this legislation, the real answer is to get the powers out of the hands of the Tories and into the hands of this Government.

I will happily agree with Neil Findlay on this issue; I just wish that he would agree with me that it would be far better to decide these things in this Parliament.

### Scottish Fiscal Commission

**5. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister when the Scottish Government will bring forward revised proposals for greater independence of the Scottish Fiscal Commission following the recent consultation. (S4F-02948)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** As I confirmed in the programme for government, the Scottish Government will bring forward a Scottish Fiscal Commission bill in the current parliamentary year. The Government recognises that it is critical to the effectiveness and credibility of the Scottish Fiscal Commission that it is both structurally and operationally independent of Government and that it is seen to be so. We will ensure that the bill that is introduced in the Parliament includes robust measures to protect the commission's independence.

**Jackie Baillie:** The First Minister will be aware, of course, that major new financial powers are coming to this Parliament, so it is increasingly important that there is independent and transparent scrutiny of the nation's finances. All respondents to the Government's consultation on its proposed Fiscal Commission raised concerns about the lack of independence, pointing out that we cannot have a commission that both advises and scrutinises Government.

Will the First Minister put party interests to one side and take action over something over which she has power? Will she adopt the high standards that the International Monetary Fund set out, to guarantee the independence of the Scottish Fiscal Commission?

**The First Minister:** The very highest standards will be guaranteed in the bill. The Fiscal Commission will be structurally, operationally and visibly independent of Government, and that is what people have a right to expect.

The responsibility for preparing the tax forecasts that underpin our budget decisions rightly rests with ministers, because we are accountable to this Parliament. The detailed account of the forecasting approach that we take will be published, the Fiscal Commission's independent evaluation of that report will be published, and any changes that the Government makes in response to the Fiscal Commission's evaluation will also be published, for total and complete transparency.

Jackie Baillie and other members should remember that the Fiscal Commission has the right—right now, and it will continue to have it when it is on a statutory footing—to disagree with the Government's forecasts. Indeed, in the draft budget process for this year, the Fiscal Commission said that the forecasts on non-domestic rates revenue were "optimistic" and the Deputy First Minister revised those forecasts down as a result.

The Fiscal Commission will be demonstrably independent, and I hope that every member of the Parliament will welcome that.

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** After taking much evidence, the entire Finance Committee

concluded that the Scottish Fiscal Commission should carry out its own forecasts. What is the First Minister's personal view on that issue?

**The First Minister:** If Gavin Brown had listened to my previous answer, he would have heard me talk not only about the importance of responsibility for forecasting resting with ministers, who are accountable to Parliament, but about the transparency of the process around that.

The bill will be introduced and Parliament will have the full opportunity to scrutinise it—it will go through the normal committee process. As with any bill, members will be able to lodge amendments at committee stage 2 and in the plenary session of the Parliament at stage 3. I am confident that the bill that will emerge will put the Fiscal Commission on a statutory footing, secure its operational and structural independence, and make it clear for all to see that the commission is independent of Government.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** Will the First Minister ensure that the commission has a full and uninhibited role in assessing the fiscal framework if and when that is put in place?

**The First Minister:** The Fiscal Commission will have an independent role in scrutinising and evaluating the approach that the Scottish Government takes to forecasting and the financial matters that fall within its remit. We seek—I hope that we will have the support of Tavish Scott and every other member for this—to ensure that the fiscal framework that accompanies the Scotland Bill is fair to this Parliament. Anything less than that would be unacceptable.

#### United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015

**6. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what involvement the Scottish Government will have in the UN sustainable development summit 2015. (S4F-02957)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Unfortunately, the Scottish Government will have no direct involvement in the UN summit on 25 to 27 September, at which the sustainable development goals will be formally agreed. The Scottish Government's request to travel to the UN with the United Kingdom delegation was declined by the Secretary of State for International Development.

**Rob Gibson:** I thank the First Minister for that dismal answer—[*Laughter.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Let us hear Mr Gibson.

**Rob Gibson:** —from the point of view of Scotland. The ban, which has been ordered by

Westminster, will prevent the Scottish Government from exercising our duty to pursue the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is incorporated in the Scotland Act 1998, and it bars our ministers from taking part in the New York agenda concerning such topics as inequalities, land reform and climate change. It is, therefore, bad for Scotland, and our basic and urgent needs cannot be met in those international talks with our input.

**The First Minister:** The UK Government's refusal to allow Scottish ministers to participate in the summit is disappointing not only for the Government but for people across Scotland who attach great significance to the matters that will be under discussion. Bobby Anderson, the chair of the Scottish Malawi Foundation, has described the decision as

"politically-driven and small-minded".

Not attending the summit inhibits our ability not only to share Scotland's experience on those matters but to learn from other international practice and experience, and it deprives the UK Government of our support on and contribution to the matters that will be discussed. I am disappointed about the decision, which does not augur well for such decisions in the future. Nevertheless, I assure the chamber that the decision will in no way diminish this Government's commitment to take forward the new sustainable development goals.

## National Cycle Network

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-13831, in the name of Jim Eadie, on the 20th anniversary of the national cycle network. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I ask guests who are leaving the gallery to do so quietly, please.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament joins Sustrans Scotland in celebrating the National Cycle Network in Scotland as it turns 20 years old in 2015; understands that the network runs for over 2,500 miles across Scotland, including through the Edinburgh Southern constituency, providing important community links that encourage everyday journeys to be made more sustainably; acknowledges that, in 2014, the network hosted over 120 million trips on foot or by bike; considers that the network is a huge asset for Scotland, with the health benefits of network journeys and the economic value of leisure and tourism cycling valued at hundreds of millions of pounds, and believes that as the network continues to grow in the years ahead so too will the benefits.

12:31

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** I am delighted to lead this debate to celebrate and pay tribute to the national cycle network in Scotland on its 20th anniversary. I thank members from across the chamber who signed the motion that is in my name. I also warmly welcome constituents who have joined us in the gallery.

The network has grown to become a magnificent asset. It covers 2,500 miles across Scotland, connects communities and makes it easier for people to choose healthier and cleaner journeys every day. The network now comes within 500m of over 40 per cent of Scotland's population and it is estimated that 120 million trips were made on it last year alone. That brings benefits to the health and wellbeing of the people who make those journeys, as well as to our environment and our wider economy. It shows that there is a clear demand for safe and attractive walking and cycling routes across the country.

The national cycle network was created in 1995 after Sustrans received a grant from the newly launched national lottery. I am grateful to Dave du Feu of cycling organisation Spokes for bringing it to my attention that the network's history stretches further back. I hope that he will not mind my saying that his commitment to cycling stretches as far back as 1983, when Spokes successfully persuaded the then Scottish Office and Lothian Regional Council to commission John Grimshaw, the founder of Sustrans, to prepare reports on the potential of disused railways, as well as other opportunities, to create coherent cycle route networks. That year also saw the opening of the

first cycle route across the Meadows in Edinburgh, which finally enabled people to cycle towards the city centre without using major roads.

Two years later, the Grimshaw Scotland report was published. It formed the original concept and inspiration for the national cycle network in Scotland. I will conclude my history lesson by mentioning that Spokes's leaflet 26 from autumn 1985 described that as

"the best news for many years for cyclists in Lothian and many parts of Scotland."

The report also helped to inspire the development of the fantastic north Edinburgh network, which provides completely traffic-free cycling from Roseburn in the west to Leith in the east.

As co-conveners of the Scottish Parliament's cross-party group on cycling, Alison Johnstone, Claudia Beamish and I have had the privilege to work with all the relevant organisations in moving cycling up the political agenda. I also acknowledge the contributions that Sarah Boyack and John Lamont have made to taking forward that work.

The cycling action plan for Scotland has the key aspiration of getting 10 per cent of all journeys in Scotland to be taken by bike by 2020. Although that is ambitious, it is encouraging that Cycling Scotland's 2015 annual monitoring report shows a 32 per cent increase in cycling levels since 2003.

Edinburgh and Inverness are leading the way, with around one in 10 journeys to work being taken by bike. However, there can be no doubt that significant further progress will have to be made if the aspiration is to become a reality.

With that in mind, cycling organisations are gearing up for the 2016 Scottish parliamentary elections. Earlier this year, I hosted a reception in Parliament to launch "Scotland on the move: The actions needed to get more people walking and cycling". A number of calls to action are supported by the active travel community, which includes the Scottish cycling charity Cycling Scotland, Living Streets, the Paths for All Partnership, Ramblers Scotland, Sustrans and Transform Scotland. All those organisations agree on the need for guaranteed funding, investment in infrastructure and a variety of measures to make our roads safer for people to travel on by foot and by bike.

Although the network has received the support of successive Scottish Governments, local authorities and other partners, sustained investment in active travel is vital to ensure that the momentum behind the demand for walking and cycling continues. Investing in cycling brings a variety of economic, health and environmental benefits. Sustrans, using the World Health Organization's health economic assessment tool, has estimated that £321 million was saved in 2014

alone thanks to the health benefits of walking and cycling. Furthermore, the financial benefit of cycling tourism has been estimated at £230 million by Transform Scotland and Sustrans. As for the environment, tens of thousands of tonnes of carbon are potentially being saved as a result of the network. The potential CO<sub>2</sub> savings from journeys increased from over 64,000 tonnes in 2013 to over 75,000 tonnes in 2014.

To deliver the best infrastructure for cycling, the single most important factor is long-term commitment from the Scottish Government and local authorities. In that regard, I welcome the Scottish Government's infrastructure investment plan, which reinforces the long-term commitment to support active travel.

In July, my colleagues Alison Johnstone and Claudia Beamish met the Minister for Transport and Islands to request Scottish Government support for the creation of a competitive award for local authorities for an on-road segregated cycle lane project. Such an award, which would in effect become an award for exemplar projects, would encourage local authorities to build on the existing cycling network with on-road segregated cycle lanes, such as those found throughout the Netherlands and in Copenhagen. That would be a major incentive in helping to change travel culture and behaviour in our cities, and it could lead to residents calling for local authorities to take more action to create safe cycling networks in our urban areas.

It is important that we have good transport links to the network, particularly given the growth in cycle tourism in recent years. I was therefore delighted that, earlier this month, the ScotRail alliance announced that cycling access is being reinstated at Edinburgh Waverley station. This month, a new cycle lane and associated infrastructure will be located on the north ramp, including gated barriers at the foot of the ramp, road markings and new signage. I appeal to the ScotRail alliance to work with organisations such as Spokes and Sustrans in the design of the plans to ensure that cyclists' needs are listened to and acted on.

Although the national cycle network offers cyclists a traffic-free environment for travel, cyclists still need to share the roads with motor vehicles. If we are to get more people cycling, we need to make our roads safer, less congested and healthier for the next generation. As I have said previously in the chamber, many people want to cycle but feel that the roads are not yet safe enough. The safer we make our roads, the more people will get out of their cars and on to their bikes.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government is taking action to encourage a cultural change on



road safety. However, I highlight Cycle Law Scotland's road share campaign for presumed liability. I recognise that we do not yet have a consensus in support of that in the chamber or in wider society, although I and other members of the cross-party group support it. However, we need to recognise that, in European nations that operate presumed liability, there is a strong correlation between that approach, higher levels of active travel and safer road use. We can all agree that further steps are necessary to build a culture of mutual respect on our roads.

Cycling Scotland's work to increase practical cycle awareness for drivers of large vehicles through expanding its training sessions for lorry and bus drivers should be welcomed, and it is great that a pilot scheme is being rolled out in Edinburgh to give such drivers the opportunity to experience the issues that cyclists face on the road.

Looking to the future generation, I believe that every child in Scotland should have the opportunity to learn to ride a bike safely and confidently on our roads.

The national cycle network illustrates clearly that supporting walking and cycling is one of the best investments that any Government can make, as it delivers massive benefits for the nation's health, the environment and the economy. I am sure that members across the chamber will agree with me that we all have a big part to play in supporting the network, and I look forward to working alongside colleagues and cycling groups to ensure that its benefits continue to be delivered now and well into the future.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As this is a popular debate, I would be grateful if members kept to four-minute speeches, please.

12:40

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank my colleague and co-convenor of the cross-party group on cycling, Jim Eadie, for his motion to celebrate the national cycle network. I am pleased to continue to work with him and Alison Johnstone on our quest for more active travel and more positive outcomes for people across Scotland. I am also pleased to have been in contact with the minister on a number of issues.

The NCN, which is 20 years old this year, has brought significant value to the Scottish economy, our health and our environment. I take the opportunity to congratulate Sustrans Scotland, the communities across Scotland, the local authorities and the other bodies that have contributed to this far-reaching success.

As Jim Eadie highlighted, Sustrans estimates that the health benefits of walking and cycling on the network were worth £321 million last year. It is important to reinforce that point because, at a time when our national health service is under such strain, it is vital that we have preventative spending on health and that different departments break down the barriers between them and do not work in silos, to ensure that such issues are addressed before people become obese, have heart issues and so on.

The 3 per cent increase in everyday trips on the network for commuting, shopping and the school run shows that people will adapt to a more sustainable lifestyle if they have the ability to do so. In my region, South Lanarkshire Council has made considerable improvements to cycling provision through its local transport strategy, which runs to 2023. In rural areas, where people often depend on cars, extensions to the NCN can make a considerable impact. We should remember that not everyone in rural areas has access to, can afford, or chooses to have a car. In 2014, journeys on the network potentially saved 75,760 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

This work will make everyday cycling and walking a safer and much more attractive option. It would be fantastic if more children could cycle or walk to school; in fact, the recently completed route through the centre of Lesmahagow village in my region has made that wish a reality, and I commend South Lanarkshire Council for its dedicated work on increasing safety and creating cycle-parking facilities and better cycle lanes on busier roads.

The magnificence of Scotland's geography means that the NCN does not cater only for purposeful journeys. With the ever-growing network and developments in mobile technology, cycling holidays and day trips can be planned with certainty and become an option for less experienced cyclists and walkers.

The opportunity for tourism in the sector must be harnessed and, with the tour of Britain having sped past the Parliament last week, I will highlight a number of cycling events. Last year, the tour of the Borders in my region brought an estimated £500,000 to the Scottish Borders. To generate the same kind of strong economic benefit across Scotland, we must ensure that funding is balanced so that it supports smaller events, too.

The opening of the Borders railway presents a fantastic opportunity for tourism, and we should seize the chance to integrate the rail line with the cycle network wherever possible. It is excellent that a number of stations on the line are well connected with the network, but the fact that the train to Tweedbank might not have enough spaces for bicycles is a real issue. I raised the matter with

the previous transport minister, Keith Brown, nearly two years ago; I still think that it needs to be addressed, and I wonder whether the current minister will have another look at it.

Limited designated space on public transport can affect the planning of cycle trips, if people are not confident that they will be able to get on. It is especially limiting if people have to book in advance and cannot be spontaneous.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I must ask you to hurry along.

**Claudia Beamish:** Twenty years on, the national cycle network provides access to parts of Scotland that otherwise would not often be visited. Its growth must be supported to continue the invaluable benefits and to aid active travel more broadly. I congratulate everyone in Scotland who has worked hard on the issue.

12:45

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I join other members in thanking Jim Eadie for bringing the debate to Parliament. I say to members that I mean no disrespect, but I will have to leave the chamber as soon as I have made my speech, because I am hosting an event this lunch time for youth volunteers from my constituency. Some of those young people have done their volunteering by cycling to do old folks' messages for them. I am glad that I can contribute.

I want to talk especially about the two routes of the national cycle network that go through my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden. Route 754 goes along the Forth and Clyde canal from Bowling to Edinburgh and takes in Westerton, Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch and Twechar. I often say that the canal is a thread that runs through my constituency, but the cycle network that runs alongside it could also be described in the same way.

It is important that we remember that, as both the previous speakers mentioned, although the cycle network is good for cycling, it also allows us to get out on our feet and do some walking, which is good for our health. The two parts of the national cycle network that go through my constituency are well walked by me and my dog, Rhona the Dalmatian.

The other route that goes through my constituency is route 755, which goes from Drymen to Glenboig. Part of that uses the old Strathkelvin railway, which goes through Lennoxton and Milton of Campsie. One of the great things about the national cycle network, as demonstrated by the Strathkelvin railway path, is how it joins to other networks. The long-distance John Muir way, which was opened in 2004, uses

part of the Strathkelvin railway path, so people can now go from Helensburgh, on one coast, all the way through to Dunbar, on the other.

The Strathkelvin railway path is also used by the Thomas Muir heritage trail, which is fairly local to my area. If I may take the time for an advertisement, this year is the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Muir, the father of Scottish democracy. On 23 September, I will hold a reception to mark that in the garden lobby of the Parliament and, on 3 October, there will be a march and rally outside Parliament.

In the few minutes that are left to me, I will pick up on the comments that Jim Eadie and Claudia Beamish made about the increase in cycling levels that has taken place, with 10 per cent of commutes now being done by bike in some areas, because of the advantage of having the national cycle network. I am sure that I have brought this example to Parliament's attention before, but I will not miss this opportunity. In Bishopbriggs, through the work of ED's Cycle Co-op, 20 per cent of our primary school children now cycle to school. Look what we can do when we have impetus and can use part of the cycle network, and think what we could do in the future.

I will leave one thought with the minister and check the *Official Report* later for his response. To increase the level further from 20 per cent, it has been suggested that Bishopbriggs could be designated a 20mph area. That is about making the area safe—obviously safe—for cyclists and walkers. However, through working with ED's Cycle Co-op, I understand that the regulations for designating 20mph areas can be complicated to implement.

I thank Jim Eadie again for bringing the subject to Parliament and for allowing me to highlight some of the beautiful areas in my constituency.

12:49

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I thank Jim Eadie for giving us the opportunity to debate this subject, and I thank Jim and my other co-convenor of the cross-party group on cycling, Claudia Beamish, for the efforts that they have made so far in getting this important issue the attention that it deserves.

I, too, congratulate all those who have been involved in the improvement and extension of our national cycle network: the Sustrans volunteers, those who are connected with other organisations and the local authorities. Their work really is making a difference.

I have seen improvements in Edinburgh and across my constituency, but there are still many opportunities that we can and should harness.

Every time we dig up a road, we should see whether we can make an improvement for people who walk and people who cycle. Let us have a rolling programme targeted at dangerous or just plain annoying junctions, where walking and cycling are not prioritised.

Off-road and separated cycle lanes are vital to help people to feel and be safe. Let us look at a specific example here in Edinburgh. The first phase of the investment in the link between Edinburgh's Meadows and the Innocent path cycleway is under way and is already making a difference. It is incredible to think that the national cycle network 1 used to involve cycling along a little narrow corridor, full of wheelie bins and bin bags, with railings where it would be necessary to dismount. That has been transformed by investment. A cyclist can now stay on their bike and get safely across the road. That started in March and it is not finished, but I have no doubt that it will encourage people to cycle and to feel that their children are safe doing so, too. I look forward to the work on the western side of the Meadows, which unfortunately will not begin until next year.

Many members campaigned about the utterly ridiculous situation whereby cyclists were banned from entering Waverley station. I am pleased to note that that is on track to being changed. However, we need cultural change so that we do not have to campaign against such wrong-headed thinking and decisions. The situation has been a frustrating waste of time. We want to connect up different types of transport and use our energy more positively.

Leith Walk improvements are in the pipeline, too, although they have been a long time coming for residents who live and commute there.

Identifying gaps and necessary improvements in our cycleways and walkways is best done by people who use the routes. Walking and cycling investment is exactly the sort of investment that should be decided by participatory budgeting. What would happen if we handed over the whole walking and cycling budget to a participatory budgeting exercise? I think that we would start to see exactly the sorts of improvements that people want in their neighbourhoods.

We should be ambitious. Scotland's network is more than 4,000km long. Denmark's population is similar in size to Scotland's, but its network is more than 11,000km long and it covers a land area that is half that of Scotland's. There will be differences between the networks, but I make the point that we should keep our heads up when planning our cycling infrastructure.

The national planning framework 3 includes the national cycling and walking network as a

nationally significant development, which is a really positive move. It is the first time that the NPF has recognised distributed developments—ones that happen in lots of different places across the country as opposed to those that just involve a big piece of kit in one place. Such network developments benefit people across the country and should be considered nationally important. The central Scotland green network, the national digital fibre network and the electricity transmission network are other examples.

Although it is great that the walking and cycling network is in the NPF as policy, it is vital that walking and cycling improvements are pushed forward with funding attached. The Government makes clear funding commitments to roads for cars and lorries, so it should make a clear funding commitment for walkers and cyclists, too.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Draw to a close, please.

**Alison Johnstone:** I will finish now. Will the minister confirm that a commitment to walking and cycling will play a much more significant part in the new infrastructure investment plan?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr McGrigor, I note that you have withdrawn your request to speak. Will you confirm that you no longer wish to speak?

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I did not press my button.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Actually, you did, but we will carry on. I call John Lamont.

12:54

**John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I congratulate Jim Eadie on securing the debate and on his very good opening speech.

As we have heard, the national cycle network is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The network was founded in 1995, with a view to providing a national network of safe, attractive and high-quality cycle routes. Today, the NCN covers 14,000 miles of connected cycle paths and roads, of which 2,500 miles are here in Scotland, and 40 per cent of the Scottish population lives within half a mile of the network.

It is extremely important for Scotland and the health of our nation that the national cycle network promotes cycling and makes it more accessible. It is estimated that 2,500 deaths in Scotland every year can be attributed to low levels of activity. By providing safe spaces to get around by bike, the national cycle network encourages people to take an active journey to work or school.

Travelling by bike or on foot not only improves the health of those who do so but helps the health of the economy. People who travel on foot or by bike spend almost a third more in local shops than those who travel by car. When congestion in towns and cities is reduced, destinations can become more attractive to visitors and inward investments. The promotion of active travel in the workplace can also help to create a healthier and therefore more productive workforce.

As part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of the network, Britain's favourite long-distance route and its favourite route of less than 30 miles were selected from a list of nominations. The Edinburgh to Newcastle route, which passes through Cockburnspath and Eyemouth in my constituency, was nominated for the long-distance category. Despite none of the Scottish entries winning, those routes show how fortunate we are here and what brilliant opportunities there are for cycling on paths in some of the most stunning scenery in all of Britain. As a keen cyclist, I know how much more enjoyable and accessible routes are if they are properly signposted. That goes for off-road cycle routes, too.

In 2014, the national cycle network hosted more than 120 million trips on foot or by bike, of which thousands of trips were taken throughout the Scottish Borders. As well as having numerous cycle routes as part of the network, the Borders has been host to some exciting cycling events. The Tesco Bank tour of the Borders took place in August, and stages 3 and 4 of the Aviva tour of Britain travelled through the Borders last week. The tour of Britain covered many miles in the Borders—it arrived at Newcastleton and finished stage 3 at Floors castle in Kelso. Stage 4 passed through Berwickshire, having travelled through some of the most beautiful scenery in Scotland. Those two major events contributed to the local economy; indeed, Transform Scotland estimated that cycle tourism in Scotland is worth up to £239 million a year.

Despite the existence of the national cycle network, many people feel unsafe on the roads. Research carried out by Sustrans found that 56 per cent of people felt that cycling on roads in built-up areas was not safe and fewer than 20 per cent regularly did it. Some people have complained that, in places, the national cycle network is poorly signposted and not fit for purpose. Some parts have narrow lanes and poor surfaces. The network, local authorities and the Scottish Government should look at that.

Although 234 miles of traffic-free and on-road national cycle network routes were built or upgraded between December 2013 and December 2014, continued improvement of the national cycle network is needed to ensure that all

cycle routes are suitable and safe for cyclists. Hopefully, the national cycle network will continue to grow and improve, thereby giving us in Scotland safer and increased enjoyment from cycling. I hope that this Parliament continues to promote cycling throughout Scotland.

12:58

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Jim Eadie on securing the debate. It is wonderful to celebrate 20 years of our national cycle network; making possible 120 million journeys on foot or by bike is an incredible achievement.

As other members have mentioned, our national cycle routes are an economic asset to the country, not only for the tourists who come to use them but for the rest of us, for days out and short trips. It is crucial that we acknowledge that massive tourism benefit, and it is good that the statistics that we have received from Sustrans and Transform Scotland are now on the record.

I highlight the health benefits of cycling and walking. Further, there is a big social justice benefit to be gained from promoting walking and cycling. They are the most affordable forms of transport. Our ambition in Scotland should be to ensure that everybody has access to high-quality routes close to their homes and that they can easily access the longer-distances routes on our national network. The access issue is a key point. Within communities, we need the incremental change that Alison Johnstone talked about, with better, safer routes for walking and cycling. Claudia Beamish highlighted the issue of the rural connections. If we look at the map of Scotland, we can see that we have had a progressive increase in dedicated and more continuous routes and better signposting, and that is a key thing to celebrate in relation to the national network.

I want to pick up on Jim Eadie's point about getting the design right. The national network is fantastic, but we need to get all the connecting points right, too. I agree with Jim Eadie's points about Waverley station. It is important that people who use routes inform their design and the access to Waverley station is a classic example of that.

I also want to mention in passing the need to ensure that we cater for both walkers and cyclists. Some of the design that we are seeing on our roads and pavements is less than optimal. There are issues and challenges in urban areas of my constituency, where there are new designations for both walkers and cyclists. We need to ensure that both walkers and cyclists have enough space. It is wrong to take space from pedestrians and give it to cyclists when the pavement is very narrow. As several members have mentioned, we

need to ensure that we continue to increase the level of investment in walking and cycling. In particular, that means investing in dedicated, segregated routes. We also need better on-road routes for cyclists, which picks up the point that John Lamont made about safer access for all, which is crucial.

Briefly, on signage, many people are not aware of our cycle network and the national infrastructure that has been put in place. Journey planning is crucial. We need a more integrated approach to ensure that public transport—buses or trains—enables people to access the national cycle network. For walkers, buses are an easy option, whereas for cyclists we now have more local bike hire options, which feeds into the economic benefit of cycling. However, more can be done. I welcome Abellio's new plans for the integration of cycling with the train network.

It is the 20th anniversary of the national cycle network, so let us use that as a big promotional opportunity. From my experience of taking trips to North Berwick, Stirling, Falkirk and Fife, I know that the national cycle network provides a liberating experience because it is a high-quality experience. We need to have that across the whole country.

I am very much looking forward to the new Borders railway network. I know that there are capacity issues, as Claudia Beamish mentioned, and those need to be addressed. From talking to Spokes members in Edinburgh, I know that many of them have a huge ambition to get down to the Borders; many of them are going to cycle all the way back up, while some of the less fit members will be getting the train down, cycling around the Borders, then catching the train back up. We should enable that sort of access for everyone. It is an environmental justice issue and a social justice issue. The network offers a massive health and economic benefit to the country.

Let us look forward to the next 20 years and hope that there will be equal celebration in 20 years' time, because we will have so many more routes by then.

13:02

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** I congratulate Jim Eadie on securing the debate and Sustrans on all its great work as we celebrate 20 years of the national cycle network.

As several speakers have reminded us, the network is for walking as well as cycling. Sustrans tells us that, out of 121 million trips a year, about 58 million are on foot. As many speakers have said, that is hugely beneficial for our health in the first instance. It strikes me that many of the public

health community are now saying, "If you're going to do one thing for your health, more than anything else it should be more physical activity."

The climate change objectives have been highlighted and Sustrans's figures on CO<sub>2</sub> reductions as a result of the network have also been highlighted. There is reduced congestion, and the network creates more people-friendly cities in many cases and has many economic benefits. Therefore, as it contributes to a number of key outcomes in the national planning policy framework, I hope that the Government will continue to fund the network and—I hope—increase the funding.

As Jim Eadie pointed out, there are roughly 2,500 miles of the national cycle network in Scotland and many of those routes are on old local railway lines, canal footpaths and forest trails. Jim Eadie highlighted the great north Edinburgh network, a large part of which is in my constituency. I have been pleased to use that network extensively recently, particularly when cycling with my young grandchildren. One of the benefits of the network is that young children can be encouraged to cycle on it at an age when they cannot yet cycle on the roads. I am pleased to say that my five-year-old grandson, who has just started school, goes along the north Edinburgh network to school every day, either walking or on his bicycle.

There is an issue to do with etiquette on the network. It sometimes worries me that, with walkers and cyclists together, some cyclists are perhaps not quite as considerate as they should be when they pass groups of pedestrians, particularly when young children are involved. There is an issue there.

However, the network is clearly an incredibly positive development. I am most aware of that in cities, because there are major concerns about people cycling in such congested cities as Edinburgh. Given that, it is to the great credit of Edinburgh that one in 10 journeys to work there are already made by bike. I hope that that number will improve with the completion of the cycling developments on Leith Walk, for example. They have been delayed, but I am sure that they will mean a great improvement when they are completed.

As part of the 2015 20th anniversary celebrations, there was a national cycle network week at the end of June. A lot of community events were connected with that week. I think that Sustrans has highlighted that, as well. I note that its website offers inspiration for walking and cycling, and people can research on it cycle routes according to their interests and abilities. They can research routes for families, art trails, routes for nature lovers, urban adventures and challenge

routes for those who want to push themselves physically while making the most of stunning scenery. That reminds us of all the social advantages of the cycling network as well as the health and climate change advantages and, of course, the economic advantages, which I referred to at the beginning of my speech. A Transform Scotland report estimated that mountain biking and leisure cycle tourism combined contribute between £236 million and £358 million per year to the Scottish economy, with a cumulative gross value added of £129 million.

The arguments in favour of cycling, walking and the network are therefore overwhelming. I urge the Scottish Government to look to support active travel and the further development of the network in order to further those many positive policy objectives.

13:07

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** I, too, congratulate Jim Eadie on securing this debate to celebrate the national cycle network's 20th anniversary.

The debate has been quite a consensual one about active travel generally and a celebration of walking and cycling. However, I do not want to miss out runners, who are the other category of people who also use the national cycle network. I am not the only person with an interest in running. Some people—John Lamont, for example—manage to run more than I do, although last night after the event at Our Dynamic Earth celebrating the 20th anniversary of the national cycle network, I was caught running by the chairman and chief executive of Sustrans. That is evidence of the fact that living an active lifestyle is important.

On the growth of the route, I think that we all welcome the network's 2,500 miles, the extensions to it and—Alison Johnstone referred to this—its protection and promotion in the national planning framework and Scottish planning policy, which I was able to do as the appropriate minister to safeguard many routes. We have an aspiration to join the dots and make the connections, rather than come to a sudden halt at a difficult point.

I challenge all members to ensure that they, too, challenge local authorities, given that many of the interventions are local. Later this year, I will convene a summit with local authorities and other stakeholders, such as health boards, to calibrate all our policy interventions and funding decisions so that they support active travel and active lifestyles.

**Sarah Boyack:** I very much welcome that initiative by the minister. The point about getting good-quality infrastructure across the country is absolutely crucial. In particular, we must ensure

that local authorities have the knowledge, and testing that with people who will use those routes will be crucial.

**Derek Mackay:** I appreciate that point. In convening the summit, I want to impress on local authorities their responsibilities and the interventions that the Government can make. For example, on the perception that 20mph zones are too difficult to do, I commend the City of Edinburgh Council for its work in taking the issue forward. I have republished guidance to try to make things easier—I am sure that Fiona McLeod will appreciate that answer on the guidance when she checks the *Official Report*.

Apparently 120 million trips are taken every year on the national cycling network. That seems a phenomenally high figure, but the staff and volunteers at Sustrans and elsewhere who have made such a difference to the network are to be commended for it.

In January I led my first ministerial debate on active travel. I want to do the same again next year so that we can have a full debate on policy and funding for active travel. I made a commitment to build on the record high spend on active travel in the previous financial year and to exceed that amount in the current financial year—I want to put that on record.

I also want to put on record my agreement in principle to cross-party work on a further exemplar project, as described by Jim Eadie. I have explained the circumstances that could allow that to happen, but I confirm to Parliament that I entirely support the development of an exemplar project. The Leith Walk project is a good example of how we can achieve critical mass through making connections where people actually want to go.

For the reasons that we have all given relating to healthier and greener lifestyles, we need infrastructure and we need behaviour change. There is an issue with behaviour change and a need for a cultural shift on road safety. I am not convinced by the concept of presumed liability, but I am absolutely convinced that there is an issue with regard to how we share the carriageway and footway infrastructure in our country. We have much more to do on behaviour change.

With regard to infrastructure, funding from local government and our own funding interventions will have to be sustained to allow extensions and improvements to take place and the right connections to be made. One of the few remaining ring-fenced funds from the Scottish Government to local authorities is the safer streets fund, but there is a range of funding opportunities to support local and national extension of the infrastructure, and I want to promote many of those opportunities

through the summit and as part of our on-going work.

I think that we all enjoyed the event at Our Dynamic Earth last night, at which we celebrated with volunteers the 20th anniversary of the national cycle network. I look forward to the completion of the further extension of route 78, which is an emerging route that will go through the Highlands and the Great Glen.

I have put cycling on the agenda in all policy areas. I think that members will welcome the fact that, only a few weeks ago, I met ministerial colleagues, including the environment and health ministers, and their teams to discuss the alignment of their policies to support the active travel agenda. That policy positioning is taking place at the very top of the Scottish Government.

Practical interventions are being made to change the way in which we conduct our business. Many members have welcomed Abellio ScotRail's new approach to cycling. It is unlocking potential in existing stations, promoting bike hire schemes and looking at capacity to get the balance right. That work includes the Borders railway and other areas, with improvements such as refurbished and new stock. I am looking forward to those new trains.

We are also embedding the town centre first principle to show how accessible transport and active travel can work together to support all communities, and town centres in particular.

All of that is a celebration of active travel, but there is much more to do. I welcome the cross-party confidence in, celebration of and support for the national cycle network, which has transformed formerly unused routes, railway tracks and paths into something far more positive and vibrant. In celebrating that positivity, we can, I hope, get even more people walking, running and cycling, and enjoying healthier lifestyles, our environment and our beautiful country.

13:13

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Business Motion

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is consideration of business motion S4M-14261, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for the stage 3 consideration of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, during stage 3 of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill, debate on amendments shall, subject to Rule 9.8.4A, be brought to a conclusion no later than 30 minutes after the stage begins (excluding any periods when other business is under consideration or when a meeting of the Parliament is suspended or otherwise not in progress).—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Point of Order

14:31

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Motion S4M-14272, in the name of Fergus Ewing, asks Parliament to welcome a specific point in the updated “2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland”, namely that it

“records a significant increase in the generation of electricity from renewable sources”.

The nature of the debate was agreed by Parliament last Wednesday and the parliamentary clerks asked for indications of debate speakers last Thursday. The minister lodged the motion on Tuesday, and it referred to that specific point in the report. However, the Scottish Government did not make the report public until this morning. Although it was circulated to members last night, that happened only at 10 to 6, well after the deadline for lodging amendments. At the very least, that shows a lack of courtesy to members by the minister, which is regrettable but also somewhat surprising, not least given the broad welcome that the report has received.

Presiding Officer, in order to allow business in the Parliament to take place in a courteous manner, will you ask the Scottish Government to make sure that, in future, it gets organised and publishes any document that it is going to quote selected parts of in a motion in time, so that amendments can be lodged?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Fergus Ewing wants to respond to the point of order.

**The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** To respond to that point, I accept that I would have preferred the document to be published earlier. As soon as it was brought to my attention that it had not been published, steps were taken to rectify that. As Mr McArthur said, the document was communicated to all members of the Scottish Parliament last night, but that was later than it should have been, for which I apologise.

I hope, however, that the information that is contained in the document is relatively straightforward and familiar territory for all the members who are involved in the debate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As I have to rule on that matter, I point out that, as Mr McArthur will know, that was not a point of order and timing is a matter for the Government. However, I welcome the minister’s apology on this occasion and I hope that the same thing will not happen again. Many thanks, minister.

## Renewable Energy

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-14272, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the future of renewables in Scotland’s energy policy. Minister, you have 10 minutes or thereby.

14:33

**The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** Earlier this week, I set out the Scottish Government’s views on what is needed to sustain the oil and gas sector. That sector’s continued health is important in its own terms and particularly as we transition to a low-carbon economy. We have already achieved much as part of that transition. Today, I wish to update members on our success in delivering a marked increase in renewable electricity generation, as described in the updated “2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland”. Provisional figures show that we generated a record 49.8 per cent of Scotland’s gross electricity consumption in 2014 from renewables, so we are well on course to meet our interim target of 50 per cent by 2015.

We are committed to increasing community and locally owned generation towards a target of 500MW by 2020. I have heard just this morning that we have now passed our target, with nearly 12,000 individual installations across Scotland; 61MW of generation is wholly owned by community groups, and there are now 45 examples of shared ownership, nearly quadrupling last year’s figure of 12.

Given our continuing support for the work that is being done on carbon capture and storage, it is extremely exciting that the world’s first full-scale gas carbon capture and storage project is moving closer to being built in Peterhead. We are also supporting Summit Power’s Caledonia clean energy project, with the Scottish Government providing £2.5 million to support the development of the CCS clean energy project at Grangemouth.

We continue to champion wave and tidal energy technologies through the creation of Wave Energy Scotland and our investment in MeyGen, which is the world’s largest planned tidal stream energy project. The onshore construction phase of the Pentland Firth tidal project is well under way, and I was delighted to hear this week that the project owner, Atlantis Resources, is relocating its corporate head office from Singapore to Edinburgh.

We are also making progress in other areas. We have achieved an 11.8 per cent reduction in energy demand against a 2005 to 2007 baseline; in other words, we have almost achieved our 12



per cent target figure well in advance of the target date of 2020.

Moreover, through the publication of our heat policy statement in June, we have set a clear framework to support the delivery of low-carbon affordable heat and to focus and drive the pace of change. The statement also sets out a framework for investment in a low-carbon heat sector.

We have supplemented our support with the establishment of the £76 million low-carbon infrastructure transition programme, which is a Scotland-wide cross-sector project development unit to support the development and acceleration of low-carbon infrastructure projects over the next three years. Under that programme, I launched the geothermal challenge fund earlier this year, and today I am pleased to announce that we are turning our attention to accelerating large-scale water-source heat pump projects to support low-carbon district heating schemes in Scotland. We are making £375,000 available to help with the development of business proposals, and a further £2 million will be available to support a commercially viable demonstrator project.

However, despite our success, we now face significant challenges. First, security of electricity supply is now under threat across the United Kingdom. Across Great Britain, spare capacity in the system could be as low as 1.2 per cent this winter.

Secondly, UK charges are preventing the creation of new thermal plants in Scotland, which is what we called for in 2013. In Scotland, Scottish Power has confirmed not only that Longannet will close on 31 March 2016 as a result of discriminatory transmission charges but that it will

“not be progressing with the development of a CCGT plant at Cockenzie (due to the same economic conditions affecting all thermal plant in Scotland).”

Thirdly, the UK Government has carried out what can only be described as an assault on renewables, which includes the early closure of the renewables obligation for onshore wind and solar photovoltaic projects, the review of the feed-in tariff scheme, the proposed removal of FIT accreditation and, bizarrely, the removal from renewables of exemption from the climate change levy. Such moves have caused widespread uncertainty and concern. Indeed, a report by the chartered accountants Ernst & Young that was published earlier this week shows that investment in onshore wind energy is already being hit. Chartered accountants are not necessarily known for their use of extravagant or colourful language, but EY has said that the UK Government has sentenced the renewables industry to

“death by a thousand cuts.”

Fourthly, we wait to see whether the United Kingdom Government and the Prime Minister will honour their promise to connect the northern isles and the Western Isles to the UK grid or whether those islands will remain separated therefrom.

Those decisions cut to the heart of a major Scottish interest and yet were made without meaningful consultation, despite the recommendation of the Smith commission on just that subject. That raises questions about the extent to which Scottish energy issues are, and will ever be, given appropriate consideration by the UK Government.

Without the appropriate recognition of our role in setting the policy framework, Scotland risks missing the opportunity to cement the growth of our renewable electricity industry, with significant supply chain benefits, while decarbonising our energy supply.

Our ambitions, which are set out in the electricity generation policy statement, to largely decarbonise the electricity grid by 2030, to greatly enhance community renewables and to have a balanced generation mix are unchanged. However, within this context of future UK policy uncertainty and a lack of clarity on whether it will serve Scotland's interest, I inform members today of my intention to begin a process to ensure that we have the best suite of policies to address the future challenges of delivering affordable, secure, low-carbon energy supplies—not just electricity but heat, given that heat is by far the largest source of our energy demand in Scotland, at over 50 per cent.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** The Labour Party can clearly make common cause with the Scottish Government on the UK Government's decision to close the renewables obligation certificate scheme a year earlier than planned. Although we wish to press the UK Government to rethink its position or at least to negotiate the transition period, will the minister consider using the Scottish Government's power to extend the ROCs over the transition period? Until the ROC scheme is closed—in other words, for the next year—the Scottish Government has the power to issue its own renewables obligation certificates, paid for not by the UK consumer but by Scotland. Has the Government considered using its power to do just that?

**Fergus Ewing:** As Ken Macintosh acknowledges, we have pressed the UK Government hard on this matter. We know that the UK Government has a mandate, based on its manifesto, to bring about a situation in which there are no new subsidies. However, I would argue that the decision that was taken to curtail an existing subsidy scheme does not accord with the wording

of that manifesto, because it concerns not a new provision but the curtailment of an existing one.

Secondly I have pressed that matter not only by writing letters; I also met Amber Rudd in the summer to press our concerns. That had no impact whatsoever on the UK Government.

In response to Ken Macintosh's specific question, I say that we do not have the budget that would enable us to pay for reserved matters that are the responsibility of the UK Government.

Our overall vision will be to reduce overall energy demand in the system in the first place, by focusing on heat-demand reduction, further addressing household fuel poverty and helping to reduce costs to improve the competitiveness of our businesses and energy-intensive industries and the efficiency of the public sector. We need more local heat generation and supply. We need more energy storage at transmission, distribution and household levels.

We have many of the building blocks in place. In June, the Scottish ministers designated energy efficiency as a national infrastructure priority. I will say more about that when I sum up the debate, as I have run out of time to deliver the next part of my speech because I took an intervention.

In all our work, we will draw on advice from experts across the sector, including members of the Scottish energy advisory board, for the purposes that I set out clearly earlier. That will underpin our work over the coming months towards an overarching energy strategy for Scotland, setting out what we can do to optimise the benefits of Scotland's significant energy resources and expertise through to 2030.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes that the updated *2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland*, published by the Scottish Government, records a significant increase in the generation of electricity from renewable sources; considers that UK Government policy prevents Scotland from achieving its full renewable and low-carbon energy potential, and is damaging to investor confidence, employment, energy security, consumers' energy bills and emission reduction; recognises that the further powers in the Scotland Bill cannot deliver Scotland's energy ambitions, and agrees that the UK Government must engage with Scotland and the other devolved administrations on energy policy.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thanks for cutting your speech short, minister. I regret that we are extremely tight for time today.

14:44

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Predictably, we have been asked to welcome the Scottish National Party's new strategy, which we had not seen. Charmingly, Fergus Ewing said that it probably

was not that important that we had not seen the strategy before today's debate and implied that it was not that radical.

The Parliament can agree on a lot regarding renewables. I am proud that I set the first target, which was seen then as bold and brave. It was not what the officials thought that we would just achieve anyway. There is a danger that targets will be targets just to do what we were going to do anyway. We need more stretching targets now. When the Parliament was set up, the power of setting stretching targets, together with political leadership, work with business and the higher education sector on innovation and design, and a degree of consensus across the chamber—although not among all members all the time—let Scotland do something different. There was much to be proud of, and that has continued over the Parliament's first 16 years.

We are appalled at how the UK Government is scuppering developments and projects into which companies have put tens upon tens of millions of pounds in good faith. That is unacceptable. It is all right for the UK Government and the Scottish Government to disagree now and again—that is the nature of government—but it is unacceptable to put at risk such developments when we need long-term certainty on investment in renewables and infrastructure. On that issue we are as one with the SNP Government.

The Ernst & Young report that Fergus Ewing quoted is a massive blow to investor confidence and will have an immediate impact on jobs and the supply chain. The figures that Scottish Renewables has given us today highlight the fact that 1.25 million homes could have been served by renewables and there could have been £3 billion of investment—and then there is the community impact. The figures highlight a hugely retrograde step.

I highlight the threat from the feed-in tariff scheme review, which could have a massive impact on community projects. Such projects have always been slower to get going and many are only now coming into their own. I hope that the minister will look at whether tying in energy storage and heat batteries might make it possible for some projects to go ahead—particularly those that involve solar PV on domestic and commercial rooftops.

We must think creatively about how we will move forward in the long run. We have uncertainty on the contract for difference—currently there is no commitment beyond March 2016. That is a critical issue for banks and big investors. We need high-level—and public—engagement with the UK Government and UK ministers.

Although Governments across the UK might have differences in tone, emphasis, style and substance, we have a UK energy market with UK consumers. Those differences must be respected. The precipitate withdrawal of support for the feed-in tariff and ROCs is unacceptable, and UK ministers must exercise political humility and a bit of leadership with other Administrations across the country. That withdrawal of support is bad for jobs and investment, and it is appalling that it comes in advance of the climate talks that we will have in December.

Our amendment focuses on the need for a long-term strategy, stable finances and a better planning regime. Around the globe, countries are looking at low-carbon economies and preparing for the transition that we need to cleaner energy and industry. We must be part of that, and not behind it.

When I prepared my amendment, I thought about whether I should put something that would be acceptable to the minister. However, I wanted to go further than he would go and further than his officials would advise him to go, because we need to be more ambitious. What is happening at the UK level makes me even more convinced of that.

I ask the minister to look properly at the points that Ken Macintosh made. In 2005 we supplemented the marine ROC. A higher level of support is needed. It is a UK issue, but I ask the minister to look at all options. He should think about how the money that is there needs to be spent in the next year to 18 months, given the loss of investment and jobs.

Our amendment highlights other work that is needed, including much better integration of renewables and the energy efficiency strategy in both domestic and non-domestic sectors. We need to give energy efficiency political priority, particularly in the business sector. There are massive savings to be made. When I met companies last night, I was struck by how all the big opportunities in which they are investing are not in Scotland. We need to fix that.

We need to look at domestic fuel. No matter how many times ministers reannounce the budget, we will not meet our target next year for the abolition of fuel poverty. We need a more radical approach. We need more to be done on community and co-operative schemes, which means a more joined-up approach with our local authorities. The staffing and expertise impact on local authorities as a result of the underfunded council tax freeze means that local authorities are understandably cautious. South of the border, local authorities are doing much more radical and practical stuff now.

We need political leadership and determination. The minister will have our support for that, but he also needs to raise his game, particularly on the local targets, which are nowhere near radical enough to drive the change that we need now. That is difficult and we will need to work together on that.

I am incredibly disappointed with the Conservative amendment, which could have been more constructive and could have acknowledged the impact that the UK Government's changes will have on Scottish industry.

One simple thing that the Scottish Government could do is accelerate consideration of the permitted development rights issue. I have called for that for a decade. It is great that we will get air-source heat pumps. What about non-domestic solar power, too? We have to raise our game, and everybody needs to be part of that process.

I move amendment S4M-14272.3, to leave out from "considers" to end and insert:

"notes the growth in onshore wind energy in Scotland, which has been enabled due to investment by consumers across the UK; calls for a UK energy summit with the UK and devolved administrations to deliver urgent and constructive dialogue to secure the progress of projects under the Renewables Obligation; considers that the Scottish Government should also use the powers that it retains under the Renewables Obligation; believes that there is much more that should be done by the Scottish Government to integrate its renewables and energy efficiency strategies to tackle fuel poverty, create jobs and reduce emissions and to include the promotion of marine renewables, community, cooperative and householder renewables and community heat and transport networks; considers that a new, more stretching target should be set for community renewables delivered through stronger planning policy support, for example on permitted development rights, and calls on the UK Government to reconsider its current proposals on Feed-in Tariff and support for small-scale and community renewables in light of the benefits that have been demonstrated in terms of energy supply, job creation and emission reductions across Scotland from community-led projects."

14:51

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

The Scottish Conservatives have always believed that renewable energy has a part to play as a component in Scotland's energy mix. We do not share the single-minded focus of some other parties on onshore wind as a technology, but we want a balanced portfolio of renewable energy to make a contribution. There are a great many success stories in Scotland that we can all celebrate, whether they are in hydro, wind, biomass, air-source and ground-source heat pumps, solar, wave or tidal.

We know, and we have heard again today, that the Scottish Government is critical of the UK Government's plans to cut subsidies for wind

power. I remind members that those plans were signalled well in advance of the general election. It was back in April 2014 that the then Minister of State for Energy, Michael Fallon, made it crystal clear that any wind projects that did not have planning consent and grid connection by the date of the general election would not be eligible for subsidies thereafter. He was simply reiterating what had been stated previously. All that the Conservative Party has done is hold true to its manifesto commitments and keep its promises.

Why have we taken that approach? It is simply because the costs have been spiralling too high.

**Sarah Boyack:** Will the member give way?

**Murdo Fraser:** No—I need to make progress.

The respected Scottish economist Tony Mackay, who is a specialist in energy, has calculated that wind farm subsidies in Scotland were between 2.5 and 3 times what was required for wind farms to be built. He puts his best estimate at 2.8 times. In his words, that means that developers have been making “super-normal” profits from those projects, all at the expense of the electricity bill payer.

**Fergus Ewing:** Does Mr Fraser not realise that it is perverse that the UK decided, with the objective of reducing costs, not to reduce the cost of the most expensive form of renewables but to reduce the cost of the most efficient and least expensive, as it is £80 per megawatt hour for onshore wind as opposed to in excess of £110 per megawatt hour for offshore wind? Does he at least acknowledge that there is irrationality in his argument?

**Murdo Fraser:** The minister represents the Highlands. I would have thought that he would be concerned about fuel poverty. According to Tony Mackay—who I think lives in the minister’s constituency—electricity bill payers are paying 2.8 times more than they should for onshore wind. I would have thought that the minister would welcome a reduction in the subsidy that his constituents pay for that technology.

We need to remember that, if we add together all the projects already constructed, all those under construction and all those that have planning consent, we will have exceeded our target of having 100 per cent of our electricity needs from renewable energy by 2020. We cannot go on pouring public subsidy into one technology when our targets are already being met.

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

**Murdo Fraser:** No—I need to make some progress. I have only five minutes.

The UK Government’s proposals have had a warm welcome from communities across Scotland and from conservation groups such as the John Muir Trust. Tony Mackay commented:

“The UK Government’s proposed changes may not be ideal but at least they are a sensible way forward. They will not result in a reduction in wind energy capacity in Scotland but may slow down future growth. Hopefully they will result in lower electricity prices for consumers in Scotland”.

We have heard an awful lot of doom and gloom about what the subsidy changes will mean for the renewable energy sector. Fortunately, not everyone who is involved takes such a pessimistic view. Brian Galloway, who is the energy policy director at Scottish Power, wrote in July:

“My view is that once the dust settles we will come to understand that onshore wind still has a vital role to play. ... I remain optimistic on the prospects for Scotland’s onshore wind industry.”

In August, the Canadian company Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners said that it plans to build wind farms that will generate up to 200MW in Scotland before the end of the decade. The company’s president commented that such a project

“really can stand on its own two feet without the need for significant subsidies”.

We see a similar picture in relation to solar power.

Back in 2011, when there were previous subsidy changes, SNP members predicted the industry’s demise. Mike MacKenzie MSP said of the changes:

“This could have a devastating impact for households and businesses and housing associations across Scotland.”

Of course, it had nothing of the sort. The solar PV industry went from strength to strength.

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry, but the member is in the final minute of his speech.

**Murdo Fraser:** The president of the British Photovoltaic Association, Greg Barker, has called on the sector to avoid the hysteria and self-damaging doom-mongering that we saw in 2011. He added:

“Around the world, the solar industry is already operating without subsidy and there are still further opportunities to create additional value and extract further efficiency savings in the UK sector ... It is time to muster up an optimistic ‘can do’ ethic and talk up the huge success and enormous potential of UK solar, not plead for years more subsidy.”

Pleading for more subsidy is what the minister is doing this very afternoon.

Renewable energy still has a bright future, despite all the doom-mongering that we have

heard from members of other parties today. The UK Government is taking the right decisions to protect consumers and should be commended for doing so.

I move amendment S4M-14272.1, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“recognises the need for a balanced energy policy for Scotland in which renewable energy is a component; understands that, with projects constructed, under construction or with consent, the Scottish Government’s target of generating an equivalent of 100% of Scotland’s electricity demand from renewable sources will be met by 2020; welcomes steps by the UK Government to relieve pressure on consumer bills by reducing subsidies to mature technologies such as onshore wind power, and believes that renewable energy in all its forms will continue to have a healthy future across the UK.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. I am sorry but we are very tight for time, so please can members keep their speeches to four minutes.

14:56

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** In the limited time that I have, I want to focus on the all-too-real impact that UK Government actions are having in Scotland on our efforts as a nation to green our energy generation, on some of our communities and on an agricultural sector that is seeking to diversify. I will offer a few examples by way of illustration.

Fifteen kilometres off the coast of my constituency is the planned location for the Inch Cape wind farm, which has the potential to power up to half a million homes. However, it was unsuccessful in its bid for a contracts for difference earlier this year. The developers will try again in the next round, but of course there is absolutely no guarantee of success at the second time of asking. These are unsettling times, which are made even more unsettling by the fact that Inch Cape, along with three other proposed offshore developments—including Alpha and Bravo Seagreen, which are planned for a little further off the Angus coast—await the outcome of an RSPB Scotland-instigated judicial review, which is expected within the next couple of weeks.

We cannot blame Westminster for the actions of the RSPB, but we can blame the UK Government for its approach to offshore wind, and to solar and onshore wind, for that matter. It seems that eye-watering subsidies for Hinkley Point—with all the concerns over whether or when it might begin generating—are fine and it seems that pushing fracking is fine. However, supporting renewables in all their guises and in any meaningful way is, at very best, on the wane—so much for Mr Cameron’s pledge that he would lead the greenest Government ever.

It is not just in an up-front way that Westminster is undermining our drive to become a renewables powerhouse. A farmer on the coastal strip of my constituency has spent in excess of £60,000 thus far to secure conditional planning permission for a single 800kW wind turbine. The consent is conditional on Ministry of Defence radar interference mitigation measures, a solution for which was accepted by Defence Estates back in 2013. The farmer has secured a grid connection at a cost of a further £120,000, on which he must pay a £10,000 deposit by 9 October. However, despite the fact that RAF Leuchars is now closed as an air base, the MOD is now demanding that further radar mitigation field work be carried out at a cost of £1.2 million—the cost to be shared amongst a group of farmers, another three of whom I understand to be constituents of mine. The total number of turbines involved in Angus runs into double figures.

The farmer who came to me has been told that his phase 1 share of what is termed the “continuing development” of the measures—there would be three phases all told—would be £12,000, which must be paid now if his turbine is to be retained within the project. He would face a similar charge at phase 2. No estimate for a figure at the final phase is available and nor is there a timescale for when deployment of the system could be anticipated.

Proposals by the Department of Energy and Climate Change to reduce tariffs drastically for that scale of turbine next January and the decision to remove the ability to tie into current rates by pre-registering a project mean that the proposal, unless it is commissioned within 12 months—which is not possible—is no longer viable. The farmer has been advised that, rather than commit another £22,000 to the project just to keep it alive, he should quit now and write off the money that he has spent thus far.

Many others—individuals and groups—face similar choices now. While on Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee business earlier this week, I heard of a community turbine proposal in the Callander area that is supported by a £145,000 community renewables Scotland grant. It aimed to provide an income stream for a variety of local projects over the next 20 years, but is now at significant risk because of the changes to the feed-in tariff regime.

As those examples demonstrate, there are painful economic consequences for individuals and communities of the UK Government’s retreat from supporting renewable generation. The environmental consequences will be even more serious. In advance of Paris, the UK Government needs to rethink its approach.

15:00

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** As colleagues will know, I am always delighted to have an opportunity to debate the issue of renewable energy and ways in which we can harness the enormous potential in Scotland, given our world lead in natural resources, research capability and skills base.

As the update report that was published today makes clear, we are seeing good progress, albeit we could and should be doing more and better in a number of areas, as Sarah Boyack indicated.

I agreed with pretty much everything that the minister said in his speech, but I was a bit disappointed by some of the wording in the motion. Arguing that Scotland's energy ambitions cannot be delivered is a counsel of despair, and that is untrue. Sarah Boyack's amendment makes that and other highly relevant points very well. The minister has an excellent track record in trying to build consensus and on focusing on areas of agreement. I wish that he would continue to do that and avoid lapsing into finding excuses to rerun the referendum, rewrite the Smith commission report or, indeed, reignite political differences that the sector is desperate for us to avoid.

That said, I welcome the confirmation of the significant increase in the generation of electricity from renewable resources. That is encouraging with regard to our interim target and laying the foundation for reaching the 100 per cent target in due course. The Scottish Liberal Democrats strongly support that, having been responsible in the previous Executive for setting some of the early stage targets on the journey towards decarbonising our energy system. As I said earlier, the political continuity and consensus that we have seen are important. They have helped to remove some of the political risk for the sector.

There were differences under the previous UK coalition Government—Sarah Boyack alluded to some of those differences—but I know that Fergus Ewing enjoyed a good working relationship with successive Lib Dem energy secretaries, particularly my good friend and the strongest possible advocate of the renewables sector, Ed Davey. Sadly, since the election in May, we have seen a different approach. Like the minister, I am dismayed by what seems to be a cavalier attitude that has been adopted by the current Conservative Government. Its plans to close the renewables obligation were signposted, as Murdo Fraser indicated, but the decision to accelerate those plans by a year was irresponsible and in bad faith.

**Murdo Fraser:** Will the member give way?

**Liam McArthur:** I am afraid that I do not really have time to do so.

That has not only undermined a great many projects, including around £100 million-worth of community projects; along with the other measures that the minister referred to, it has knocked confidence in the wider renewables sector beyond the onshore wind sector. Even the Tories may come to regret that.

To look at the overall picture, obviously I have a specific interest in marine renewables, on which Orkney has led the way. Things have not been easy since the previous 2020 update. The challenges that the wave sector in particular faces are significant, although I still firmly believe that it and tidal energy have a key role to play in our renewables future.

As well as the technical challenges, the greatest risk is posed by the continued lack of grid infrastructure. I know that that is not an easy nut to crack. If that were the case, it would have been sorted already. However, without a clear and urgent timetable for delivering that key strategic asset, the threat to the development of renewables in the islands that I represent should not be underestimated. That is not just a concern for Orkney, with the potential loss of jobs and wealth creation; it matters for Scotland and the UK, which will struggle to meet their renewables and climate change targets without Orkney playing its full part.

As I said in Tuesday's debate, innovative solutions are being identified to better use the resources that we have available. The surf 'n' turf project is looking at how hydrogen can be used to run our ferries. Installed renewables can and should be used to heat and power the replacement Balfour hospital in Kirkwall, and there are opportunities to use renewables and special tariffs to deliver affordable warmth and help, with energy efficiency measures, to reduce the scandalous levels of fuel poverty that blight my constituency and many like it.

The minister can count on my support in helping to deliver those changes and other changes that demonstrate what our renewables future should be about.

15:05

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** In the lead-up to the Paris summit, climate justice in Scotland is vitally important as an example of inclusive action on the global stage, and communities and workers must be at the heart of a just transition. As I have said in recent speeches, it is essential for the Scottish Government to have a strategy to develop transferable skills for the future in response to the challenges that are being faced by the oil industry in the North Sea.

In the lead-up to the summit and beyond, we must ensure that rural Scotland is not left behind

in a just transition to a low-carbon economy. We must support our communities, thereby signalling that rural communities around the globe must not be marginalised. There are some fine examples of transition at community level. Some of those have been supported by the Scottish Government's climate challenge fund—for example, the Lanark Community Development Trust and Peebles CAN.

In travelling around my region, I have seen cause for optimism. I have spotted the van of a company called Eco Edge, tucked in a driveway in a small village. The company installs biomass boilers. I have witnessed the installation of a wood-pellet boiler by a resident in the village of Douglas. However, how many residents in isolated rural areas and in off-grid dwellings can afford to do that? In some parts of South Scotland, people cannot even find a plumber, let alone someone to fit a biomass boiler, air-source heat pump or solar panels.

What is the Scottish Government doing to support the start-up of small rural businesses so that they can take up the opportunities that are offered by the transition? What is being done to support transferable skills for small rural businesses, and how are those opportunities being promoted? Can the minister reassure us today that the rural fuel poverty task force will offer truly inclusive solutions? What is the timescale for its recommendations?

We must lend support abroad through the climate justice fund—for example, to women in Malawi and Bangladesh. We must also look at the position of women in Scotland and the contribution that they are making to renewable energy action. There is a significant opportunity to stabilise the gender imbalance in the energy sector. Without the barrier of entrenched inequality in a long-standing industry, women are making a valuable contribution to ensuring that our emerging renewables industry is globally competitive.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government is ensuring that policy development is adapted to helping women to reach their full potential, given that progress has increased by 28 per cent. Continued research and monitoring is key to ensuring fair funding and skills development opportunities, particularly for women in rural areas.

In the lead-up to the summit, we must be able to show clearly that renewable energy must be connected and combined with energy efficiency for success to be achieved. Some councils have been brave despite the challenges that my colleague Sarah Boyack highlighted. That includes my council area of South Lanarkshire. The council has, through its investment programme in its housing stock, moved on to improving energy efficiency in the properties that it owns.

In Clydesdale, the council has started a programme of works for rural off-grid areas such as Douglas and Forth, where it is replacing old heating systems with air-source heat pumps. In addition, the council has, using Government funding, been putting external cladding on to older wooden houses in places such as Lanark and Carstairs on a universal basis so that the cladding can act as insulation where there is no cavity wall.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member must draw to a close, please.

**Claudia Beamish:** If we can lead by example, by being inclusive in our actions to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency in Scotland, we can truly be an inspiration to the rest of the world in the lead-up to the Paris summit.

15:09

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Ever since Margaret Thatcher began the privatisation of our energy system in the early 1980s, UK Government energy policy has been progressively failing. Back then, we had a robust system with inbuilt resilience and spare capacity. The term “fuel poverty” had not yet been coined. Now, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets has warned repeatedly about the lights going out. Spare capacity is down to 2 per cent and National Grid is buying in spare capacity generation at absurdly high prices. When energy is in short supply, the price goes up. It is as simple as that.

The UK Government's energy plan is to build more interconnectors to Europe. It is hoping to buy in energy from elsewhere, but at who knows what price? The other part of the plan is to spend £35 billion on the new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point, with—I hope that Mr Fraser is listening carefully—a subsidy of more than twice the wholesale price of energy for 35 years. A further £10 billion is to be spent on necessary infrastructure. Huge amounts of money have been delivered straight into the hands of Chinese investors and a French state-owned company that is already asking for more.

No EPR reactor has yet been successfully built. The Finnish and French EPRs will cost at least twice as much as they were supposed to, and the two Finnish EPR reactors are already five years behind schedule. Who knows what the decommissioning costs will be? Sellafield's are approaching £70 billion and the job is by no means finished.

The UK Government plans to buy in energy from anywhere it can except, it seems, Scotland's renewable energy, yet we were told during the referendum campaign that, if we voted yes, the broad shoulders of the UK Government would not support Scotland's renewable energy sector. The trust of many people in Scotland is now severely

strained because the UK Government—Mr Fraser's Government—is in the process of rapidly withdrawing support from our renewables sector.

This is by no means just about onshore wind. Wave energy companies such as Seatricity have relocated from Orkney to Cornwall because they lacked a grid connection. I am sure that Mr McArthur would be pleased to confirm that. The European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, which was 10 years ahead of the rest of the world in wave and tidal research, recently made 25 per cent of its workforce redundant, and the green deal is being withdrawn because it is not fit for purpose—although I have said that from the start—with its unworkable golden rule.

However, it is not just about what is being done. It is also about how it is being done. Subsidies are being withdrawn with undue haste and investor confidence is severely shaken. Trust is easily lost but difficult to win back. In the investors' world, that means very much higher returns on investments that are perceived as risky not because of the technical challenges, but because of an inconsistent and incoherent energy policy on the part of the UK Government.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must draw to a close, please.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Jobs are being lost, investment is being lost and climate change targets are being threatened. It is time for this Parliament and the Scottish Government to have full powers over energy so that we can reverse the UK Government's misguided decisions. Otherwise, we all face a future of energy prices that are much, much higher than they need to be.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Patrick Harvie to speak, after which we will move to the closing speeches.

15:13

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am grateful for the two minutes that you have given me. I apologise for my oversight in not submitting in advance a request to speak in the debate.

It is not every day that I find myself coming to the chamber and being on the same side of a debate as Fergus Ewing. What a rare pleasure. I am sure that there will be many other opportunities for us to disagree on fossil fuel policy and aviation taxes, but on this occasion we have some common ground. I imagine that my reaction was much the same as his when we heard Murdo Fraser tell us that we should be talking up renewables at the same time as his party colleagues are pulling the rug from under the industry. That is a completely untenable position.

Let us make no mistake—that is what the UK Government's recent decisions have been about. A slew of them came out at the beginning of our summer recess, which left us without the opportunity even to challenge the issues on the record at the beginning of the summer, whether in relation to the subsidies for solar and wind power, which we have heard about this afternoon, or the policies on reducing our demand, which is the other part of the sustainable energy future that we need.

In the that is time available to me, I want to make a case for just one additional policy change from the Scottish Government. It should be commended for having reached, or almost reached, ahead of time the target for community and locally owned renewables. However, community and locally owned renewables are not the same thing, although they are both good. A small business or a farmer investing in some renewables and community ownership are both good, but the challenges that face those two different forms of renewables ownership are different. I make the case for the Scottish Government to accept that the target has been reached and to set two more stretching targets—one for community ownership, including local authorities, and another for local private ownership.

15:15

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** This has been an interesting but, I suspect, predictable debate. We have heard from the minister something that we have become used to in recent weeks. Once again, he has wheeled out the begging-bowl mentality and complained that the United Kingdom Government has, by the withdrawal of subsidy, somehow undermined what he claims repeatedly to be a highly efficient form of energy production, and that that has been done without any warning. As my colleague pointed out earlier in the debate, Michael Fallon, the then energy minister, made it clear as long ago as April 2014 that the Government intended to withdraw the subsidies for onshore wind.

**Patrick Harvie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alex Johnstone:** No, thank you.

None of Michael Fallon's political opponents expected him to be the energy minister after the general election. That surprise has cut many members involved in today's debate to the quick.

**Sarah Boyack:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Johnstone:** No, thank you.

The truth is that Scotland has a huge number of wind turbines and that such a high-cost form of



energy has resulted in energy prices across Scotland being pushed up. At a time when we should have sought ways of increasing diversity in the energy market, we have chosen an expensive option and we have, in many respects, pushed fuel poverty upwards.

I say that onshore wind is an expensive option. Occasionally, we hear the minister—and even at times the First Minister—telling us that onshore wind is one of the cheapest and most efficient ways of generating electricity. Why, then, do we have to subsidise it? We must remember that it is important to target resources at new and diverse ways of encouraging additional environment-based renewable energy sources. Therefore, we have to ensure that the most efficient sources are paying their way and are not in receipt of subsidy payments that should be going to other sectors.

The Scottish Government has become obsessed with onshore wind. It has interfered in the planning process to ensure that many onshore wind turbines have been built in areas where local authorities sought to prevent that. Planning has become a lottery because of that interference. Over large areas of Scotland, people are genuinely upset by the way in which that process has been conducted.

I took the opportunity to go to the top of the Garvock hill near Laurencekirk last weekend and was able to count more than 100 industrial-scale wind turbines from a single standing point. That is an indication of what the Government has done to Scotland, and it must be held to account for it.

We have huge opportunities for a diverse and well-developed energy policy in Scotland. We have huge opportunities to bring in additional resource from offshore wind, solar photovoltaics, wave and tidal power. If those opportunities are to be taken, we must not make the mistake of pursuing a single method of power production to the exclusion of all others.

That single act by the UK Government, which was predicted and flagged up more than a year in advance, was a courageous move to ensure movement in the energy market, particularly with the support for offshore wind. I support the amendment in the name of my colleague, Murdo Fraser.

15:20

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** There is, of course, broad agreement in theory on the objectives of energy policy: ensuring security of supply, producing affordable energy and tackling climate change. Today, we have heard about some very different approaches to how all those things can be done at the same time and about the priorities that we should set.

Onshore wind is today's headline issue. Successive Scottish Governments have followed the lead given by Sarah Boyack as Minister for Transport and the Environment in the first session of Parliament in setting ever more demanding targets for renewable energy. By their investments, the private sector, the industry and communities have helped those targets to be met.

The British Labour Government of 1997 to 2010 played an important role, creating a single Great Britain energy market that covers Scotland, England and Wales, and devolving the system of renewable obligation certificates to provide public support to private developers. Together, single-market renewable obligation certificates and ambitious Scottish targets have stimulated a dynamic and successful wind energy sector that was so successful that the need for public subsidy was coming to an end. The industry was clearly gearing up to move to the next phase of its development over the next couple of years. What a pity that the Conservative Government lacked the wisdom and judgment to allow that maturing to take its course, instead choosing to rip up the subsidy regime and deny support to some very good projects that were not quite ready to go. An extra 12 months of support could have made all the difference.

The details of how the subsidy schemes will come to an end are still up for discussion. The Scottish Government can, and I think should, play a strong role in negotiating with the Department of Energy and Climate Change on cut-off dates and grace periods to determine which projects in the pipeline will or will not qualify for a subsidy. That is clearly of great urgency and importance to project developers large and small, as the minister indicated when he referred to the EY report. We have been asking for clarity on the matter for some time, and I hope that he will make clear what he expects to be able to achieve with the powers and influence that he has.

As Ken Macintosh pointed out, the Scottish Government has powers to address the issue not through additional public expenditure, as the minister's response to Mr Macintosh implied, but by directing existing renewable obligation certificates to sustaining good projects that are currently at risk. We simply ask the Scottish Government to reconsider that.

Good projects have also been put at risk in the deployment of solar power, which, if anything, is closer than onshore wind to reaching the stage of profitability without subsidies.

It is frankly bizarre that a party in government at Westminster that would claim to be a friend of business and of farmers should sabotage investment plans and block the roll-out of small-scale wind and solar projects in the Scottish

countryside because it could not find a smarter way to shift the energy balance in the direction that it wants. It is not too late to do something about that, as we have heard this afternoon.

**Mike MacKenzie:** I think we are all in agreement that subsidies should gradually be rolled back as technologies come to maturity. We are in disagreement with the Tories on the speed at which those subsidies are being withdrawn.

How does the member justify the huge subsidies that the nuclear industry is receiving? If it is not a mature technology by now, when will it ever be?

**Lewis Macdonald:** Is it not a pity that Mr MacKenzie does not take the hint about building consensus and agreement across parties that oppose the actions that are being taken by the Tory Government at Westminster? I am afraid that, with his approach, we may have to work harder to achieve that consensus. At least I would look to David Cameron to agree to his ministers sitting down with the devolved Administrations throughout Britain to find ways to restore investor confidence and enable small-scale developments to go ahead.

During the summer I visited the first community-owned wind turbine in mainland Scotland—it is near Udny in Aberdeenshire. I also saw the benefits of solar roof panels at the National Trust for Scotland's Pitmedden garden. It is difficult to see the basis for anyone wanting to stymie such projects, and I hope that ways can be found to make more of them happen.

The Scottish Government can act now in one area where it has power to do so by promoting the deployment of solar panels on government buildings and public sector housing across Scotland. Some councils, such as Aberdeen City Council, have already done that very effectively, and it would be a pity if Scotland's devolved Government continued to lag behind.

Aberdeen is also best in class, not just in Scotland but across the UK, for combined heat and power. Over the past three years, there have been major extensions to the CHP networks that were put in place in social housing and public buildings in the city over the previous decade. That is a model for district heating that the Scottish Government should support, especially where it is possible to use renewable sources. I was pleased to hear about some small but welcome steps from the minister.

The Aberdeen CHP example also points to a wider challenge: how to reduce carbon emissions without adding to consumer costs. The installation of CHP in tower blocks in Aberdeen has led to reductions of 45 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions and consumer bills. That is exactly the

kind of community-based development that we should support and the Scottish Government should lead.

There are also opportunities to respond to the pressures in the oil and gas industry, which could share its offshore fabrication skills.

Above all, we require an imaginative response—an inclusive response from all who share the objective of developing our renewables sector. I hope that we are able to build that across most of the chamber.

15:25

**Fergus Ewing:** I have enjoyed moments of this debate. I will try to respond to some of the specific points that were put, although that I fear it will not be possible to respond to them all.

I agreed with a great deal of what Sarah Boyack said. To respond to her point about doing more on local energy systems, we are already encouraging such systems. We are encouraging a mix of technologies in relation to storage, which she specifically mentioned, in the ground-breaking community and renewable energy scheme—CARES—local energy challenge fund demonstrator projects, which are being funded this year through a £20 million fund. Each is a ground-breaking, innovative project, and some fall into the categories that Ms Boyack would support.

Sarah Boyack also mentioned permitted development rights. We already have permitted development rights for some air-source heat pumps, but she mentioned extending them to solar power. As I might have said already, if she wishes to write to me on that matter, I will give it serious consideration. We come at these issues from the same direction, and it behoves us to work together where there is common ground. I pledge that we will certainly do that.

**Sarah Boyack** rose—

**Fergus Ewing:** I am really sorry, but I would like to try and cover as many points from the debate as I can before I make some final comments.

Patrick Harvie was kind enough to acknowledge the achievement today of the community energy target. We are proud that we in Scotland have achieved the target of 500MW of community schemes, which appeared ambitious when we set it. I acknowledge that much work was done with the support of colleagues in the Labour Party, the Liberal party and the Green Party. To respond to his specific request, now that we have achieved that target, it is sensible that we establish what it is appropriate to achieve in the future. We have high ambitions, as does he, so we will give careful consideration to the matters that he raised.

I acknowledge Mr McArthur's long-standing commitment to renewables. I agreed with a great deal of what he said, although it was a little bit ironic that he berated me for making critical remarks about the UK Government, which he said later in his speech was acting in a "cavalier" fashion. I will not be churlish, so I will not say any more about the matter than that.

Suffice it to say—this is the most important point—that we try to develop as much common ground as possible in Scotland on energy. The challenge that we face is that the Scottish consensus on energy policy does not appear to match the London agenda. That is the predicament that we face. I will set out components of that Scottish consensus.

First, we need much more emphasis on energy efficiency and demand reduction. Of course that applies to our estate too, so we have announced our intention to do much more in public buildings.

Secondly, we need many more energy storage solutions at transmission and household level. For example, the SSE Coire Glas scheme that I consented and the Cruachan scheme would offer tremendous additional pump storage capacity. However, National Grid does not appear to recognise the benefits of pump storage.

I invited National Grid to look at the issue at an industry leadership group meeting that I co-chaired. If we are increasingly looking towards a low-carbon electricity generation system, with forms of energy that are intermittent, including hydro and wind—although they are a very good fit—storage solutions are necessary to provide the equivalent back-up and baseload to what we have had in the past.

I have always argued, although frequently Mr Fraser does not seem to recognise this in his speeches, that we need a variety of sources of electricity generation. Indeed, I have previously quoted Winston Churchill, who said that when it comes to the problem of electricity generation for a country, the solution is "variety and variety alone."

**Murdo Fraser** *rose*—

**Fergus Ewing:** I see that the mention of Winston Churchill has roused Mr Fraser.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am always grateful to the minister for mentioning Winston Churchill—and for giving way.

The minister will be aware from the discussions that we had yesterday evening that the output from wind power across the whole country yesterday was precisely zero, and that that is not unusual. Wind power will work as a large component in energy with storage back-up, but what is the minister's estimate of the combined

cost of wind power plus storage, relative to other technologies?

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr Fraser is right to say that wind energy is intermittent. He proves my point, in that that is precisely why we need more storage solutions. As to the cost, I can tell him this: the cost of providing sufficient storage will be far less than the enormous cost of the Hinkley Point nuclear power station, which Mr MacKenzie mentioned. The cost of Hinkley Point is not just eye-watering but almost unimaginable: it is £45 billion—45 thousand million pounds. It is the granddaddy of them all. It dwarfs the total aggregate subsidy for renewable energy.

Peter Atherton, of Liberum Capital, said that the cost of the nuclear energy that might some day be generated at Hinkley Point—the current estimate for that is the mid-2020s—will be

"£5 million per MW of capacity".

He pointed out that the comparable cost per megawatt of combined cycle gas turbine generation is £755,000. In other words, nuclear is seven times more expensive than gas, yet Mr Fraser is arguing that we would be saving money. It is almost unbelievable.

I got sidetracked there by Mr Fraser's intervention. I emphasise that we need more hydro. We need more solar, as Sarah Boyack and Lewis Macdonald rightly argued. We need more district heating schemes—we have developed 33 projects with £7 million thus far, but we need to do far more in that regard. We need to devote more attention to developing our heat resources in Scotland—not enough attention has been devoted to that. We need offshore wind. There are around 22 offshore wind schemes south of the border but there is not one here yet. It is time to even up the balance. We need more floating offshore wind, and I hope that the Statoil project will be delivered soon.

We also need a solution to the tremendous problems that have been generated by the Conservatives' decision—which was not in the Conservative manifesto, despite what Mr Fraser said—to curtail, without notice, the renewables obligation certificate system. That has undermined investment and led Ernst and Young to criticise the Tory Government in language that is far more colourful than anything that I could manage.

## British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

15:33

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is stage 3 proceedings on the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill. In dealing with the amendments, members should have the bill as amended at stage 2, SP bill 55A, as revised; the marshalled list, SP bill 55A-ML, as revised; and the groupings, SP bill 55A-G, as revised.

The division bell will sound and proceedings will be suspended for five minutes for the first division of the afternoon. The period of voting for the first division will be 30 seconds. Thereafter, I will allow a voting period of one minute for the first division after a debate. Members who wish to speak in the debate on any group of amendments should press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible after I call the group.

I ask members to note that we have interpreters in the chamber this afternoon. Therefore it would be helpful if speeches were delivered more slowly than usual.

I ask members to refer to the marshalled list of amendments.

### **Section 1—Functions of the Scottish Ministers in relation to British Sign Language**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 1 is on the status of British Sign Language. Amendment 7, in the name of Mark Griffin, is the only amendment in the group.

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Amendment 7 is a small but significant amendment that removes the word “sign” from the bill. Although British Sign Language is a sign language, it is a language in its own right, and the amendment will give additional resonance and emphasis to that fact. Throughout the bill’s progress, one of the clearest arguments that were put forward by witnesses in favour of the bill has been that BSL should be recognised as a language. This amendment will help to achieve that goal, making it clear to non-BSL users that BSL is a language and not simply a form of communication for a particular group.

I move amendment 7.

**The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan):** The Scottish Government likewise regards British Sign Language as a language. We confirmed that in a formal statement of recognition in 2011. In referring to British Sign Language simply as a

language, rather than—as in the bill as originally drafted—as a sign language, the amendment is consistent with our support for BSL. Therefore, the Scottish Government is happy to support the amendment.

*Amendment 7 agreed to.*

### **Section 5—Progress reports**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 2 is on BSL translation of progress reports. Amendment 1, in the name of the minister, is grouped with amendments 2 and 3.

**Dr Allan:** At stage 2, Mr Griffin lodged a series of amendments requiring that both the BSL national plan and listed authority BSL plans be translated into BSL. The Scottish Government fully supported those amendments at the time. Amendment 1 requires the Scottish ministers to translate the national progress reports into BSL. That means that the national progress reports, which will be published every six years, will be accessible to BSL users, who will naturally take a great interest in what progress is being made by national, regional and local public bodies.

Amendments 2 and 3 are minor technical amendments that are necessary as a consequence of amendment 1.

I move amendment 1.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I welcome the amendments, which honour a commitment that the minister gave to the Education and Culture Committee at stage 2. We had largely addressed the anomaly through Mark Griffin’s stage 2 amendments, and I welcome the further commitment that the minister has been able to give.

**Mark Griffin:** I welcome amendment 1, which requires the Scottish Government to make progress reports available in BSL in the same way as national plans and listed authority plans will be made available in BSL as a result of the stage 2 amendments that the minister mentioned. I also support amendments 2 and 3 which, as the minister says, are of a minor nature.

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

### **Section 5A—Forms of British Sign Language**

*Amendments 2 and 3 moved—[Dr Alasdair Allan]—and agreed to.*

### **Section 8—Listed authorities**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 3 is minor and technical amendments. Amendment 4, in the name of the minister, is grouped with amendments 5 and 6.

**Dr Allan:** I confirm that these are very minor, tidying amendments that are a result of the scale of amendments that were passed by the committee at stage 2. Amendment 4 inserts into section 8 some words that are necessary to make the provision read properly. Amendments 5 and 6 bring the long title into line with what the bill provides for following amendments at stage 2 by referring to plans.

I move amendment 4.

**Mark Griffin:** I note these minor amendments, which are of a tidying-up nature and ensure consistency in references throughout the bill following stage 2 amendments. I am happy to support the amendments.

*Amendment 4 agreed to.*

### Long Title

*Amendments 5 and 6 moved—[Dr Alasdair Allan]—and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That ends consideration of amendments.

## British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill

### The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-14111, in the name of Mark Griffin, on the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill. I call Mark Griffin to speak to and move the motion. You have 10 minutes, Mr Griffin.

15:42

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It is with great pleasure that I open today's debate. The bill was introduced to Parliament on 29 October 2014 and concluded stage 1 with a parliamentary debate on 5 May 2015. The Education and Culture Committee considered the bill at stage 2 on 2 June and today the Parliament debates whether to pass it. I very much hope that members will come together in welcoming this legislation and supporting it at decision time.

Before I discuss the main amendments to the bill that were agreed to at stage 2, I would like to put on the record my thanks to a number of people who have helped shape and develop the bill. In particular, I thank the Education and Culture Committee for its considered scrutiny of the bill and for its continued engagement with members of the deaf community by giving them the means to participate in the bill process. The committee's processes, which enabled as many people as possible to participate, are an exemplar for the Parliament.

My thanks also go to members of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee for their continued scrutiny of the subordinate legislation powers and to the people who have worked so hard to support me and the bill prior to its introduction and through its parliamentary stages.

I also express my gratitude for the positive and constructive way in which the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, Dr Allan, and his officials approached the bill.

I also thank you, Presiding Officer, and your office for the support of the staff in the non-Government bills unit, who have done a lot of the heavy lifting to develop the bill and its accompanying documents. They have been a tremendous support. Although you are impartial today, I thank you, personally, and the other Presiding Officers for the support that you have given in terms of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body translating a large volume of documents into BSL videos. Without that support, it just would not have been possible to make the bill process as inclusive as it rightly was.

Finally, I thank members of the cross-party group on deafness, many of whom are in the chamber today. The bill marks almost a decade of their hard work. The process is a fantastic advert for the openness and accessibility of our Parliament. What has happened is a fantastic example of members of a minority group in our society coming together, forming a cross-party group, setting out their priorities and lobbying members to the point that we have a bill in front of us. That is a result of their dedication, so it is only right and proper that we show our appreciation and thank them. *[Applause.]*

A number of changes have been made to the bill since I stood in the chamber to talk about it at stage 1. The changes are the result of a lot of joint working with the Scottish Government and valuable contributions from stakeholders such as Deafblind Scotland. However, one thing that has not changed is the aim of the bill. As I explained at stage 1, British Sign Language is the first language—and only language—of many deaf people in Scotland. BSL is a visual-gestural language that uses space and movement; the hands, face and head are used to communicate. It has a different grammatical structure from English. Across Scotland, BSL is the indigenous manual language, in the same way that English is the indigenous spoken language.

Deaf people who use BSL are part of a recognised cultural and linguistic minority but, unlike people who speak other minority languages, many deaf sign language users cannot learn to speak English, as they cannot hear the language. The aim of my bill is to encourage the use of BSL in Scottish public life and to raise awareness of the language among the hearing population. I am confident that it is in good shape to achieve those aims.

During the stage 1 process, the Education and Culture Committee heard evidence from witnesses who gave examples of how a lack of BSL awareness and skills among members of the hearing population affected their everyday lives. I will tell members about another case that was included in an annual report of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. A woman who communicates through BSL was admitted to hospital for surgery. During her 12-day stay there, although hospital staff tried to communicate with her, they did not provide a BSL interpreter. That was despite the woman repeatedly pointing to a poster for interpreter services and twice handing staff a BSL interpreter's card. It was clear from the hospital records that she felt isolated because of the lack of communication. That is just one example that the ombudsman has published.

Statistics provided by the Scottish Council on Deafness show that 77 per cent of BSL users who

have visited hospital could not easily communicate with national health service staff. I hope that, in passing the bill, we will address that sense of abandonment, whether in healthcare situations or in the education system.

I turn to some of the key changes that have been made since the beginning of stage 2. The first has been on the scope of the national plan for Scotland. The amendments that have been made in that area, which were lodged by the minister, reduced the total number of plans by bringing a number of public bodies within the scope of the national plan. That gives greater clarity about the purpose of the national plan and will reduce the administrative burden on the public sector. At the same time, a number of bodies were added to the schedule, which means that the Scottish Government will be able to take a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to BSL at the national level.

The amendments that have been made on planning and reporting create a fixed cycle for the production of plans and progress reports. When I first considered the timing of plans, my intention was that national plans should be linked to each cycle of the Parliament, so that every Government would produce its own plan and review progress on it. However, I accepted the minister's argument that a fixed-term cycle is more predictable and simpler and that a parliamentary cycle could be unhelpful for local authorities, which operate on a different cycle.

The bill that I instructed also referred to performance reviews that would highlight good and poor practice and would name and shame authorities that were falling short, but I was persuaded that the minister's approach of replacing that with a progress report, which would identify progress with authority plans through a self-assessment process involving feedback from BSL users, made sense.

I also thank Dennis Robertson for his continued keen interest in the bill. He and I lodged a number of amendments to guarantee the inclusion of people who are deafblind in the bill's implementation. First of all, a new section of the bill now means that, in the main, any references to BSL are to both the visual and tactile forms of the language. When we originally drafted the bill, we took the view that the term BSL already covered all forms of BSL, but I was happy to amend the bill to deliver that clarity.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** I want to put on record my thanks to Mr Griffin and Mr Robertson for their efforts in making those changes, which will benefit the deafblind community. Having spoken to some of my constituents who are deafblind, I think that the changes will be immensely advantageous to them.

**Mark Griffin:** I thank Mr Stewart for those kind words. It shows just how mobilised, ambitious and enthusiastic the deaf and deafblind community is about the bill that most MSPs received communications on the amendment in question, and it was great that we were able to do something and ensure that tactile forms of BSL are included in the bill.

Changes were also made on the issue of ministerial responsibility. The original bill included a section that required the Scottish Government to identify a specific minister to take on responsibility for implementing the legislation, but I am happy to recognise that the Government operates on the basis of collective responsibility and that Dr Allan will be identified as the lead minister and point of contact for anyone who wishes to engage with BSL.

The stage 2 process, along with today's final amendments, means that the bill is in good shape to start delivering real and tangible change for BSL users in Scotland. I am delighted to move,

That the Parliament agrees that the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:52

**The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan):** To the many people in the gallery, I want to say—in BSL—thank you and welcome to the Scottish Parliament. I had the privilege of meeting a few of our deaf and deafblind visitors just before the debate. I know that many of them have been campaigning for a BSL bill for many years, and I recognise that this is a significant day for that community.

I congratulate Mark Griffin on proposing the bill, and I thank him for working closely with the Scottish Government over the past few months so that we could improve its provisions together. The bill has enjoyed cross-party support throughout its parliamentary progress; indeed, all the stage 2 amendments were supported by Mr Griffin as well as all members of the Education and Culture Committee.

As Mr Griffin said, the bill aims to promote the use and understanding of BSL across the Scottish public sector, and its clear intention is to improve, over time, our understanding of and response to the needs of our deaf and deafblind citizens, who use BSL as a first language, as has been mentioned. However, the bill is more than that. Too often, we talk about BSL users only as recipients of our public services. I pay tribute to the resilience and creativity of the deaf community in Scotland and suggest that all of us in Scotland will benefit from their contribution to our country and our economy.

The bill requires Scottish ministers to publish a BSL national plan within two years of the act receiving royal assent. Listed authorities, including local authorities and regional national health service boards, will have to publish their own BSL plans a year later. We will be required to publish a national progress report that will highlight progress, best practice and areas for improvement across the public sector, which subsequent BSL plans will need to address. BSL plans and reports will be published every six years, which will mean that we can see progress over time.

As a result of our amendments, the BSL national plan will cover all public bodies with a national remit that are directly accountable to Scottish ministers. That will enable a more co-ordinated and strategic approach at a national level. It will also significantly reduce the number of plans that are produced, which will reduce the administrative burden and cost on the Scottish public sector.

I am determined to ensure that the bill, if passed, will help us to take the practical steps that will make a tangible difference to the day-to-day lives of our citizens who use BSL and to their families and communities. It is therefore crucial that national and local BSL plans properly reflect their priorities. That is why we intend to establish a BSL national advisory group, which will advise Scottish ministers on the content of the national plan. A significant proportion of the group will be deaf BSL users. The BSL national advisory group will draw on the views of the wider deaf and deafblind community and will develop a set of priorities that are to be included in the national plan.

We want to share expertise and resources to help public bodies to improve their understanding of and response to the deaf communities that they serve. This year, we have provided funding of £415,000 to five deaf organisations to help make that happen. Working with the British Deaf Association, the Scottish Council on Deafness, Deaf Action, Deaf Connections and Deafblind Scotland, we have created the deaf sector partnership.

The partnership's most important function will be to support proper engagement between public bodies and the BSL communities that they serve. It is that engagement that will help to ensure that plans focus on the right things and, in doing so, make a practical difference to people's lives. I look forward to sharing more detail on the programme of work in due course.

I make it clear that the Scottish Government recognises deafness as a culture and British Sign Language as a language. We formalised that in a statement of recognition in 2011, which said:

“The Scottish Government recognises the importance of British Sign Language to the Deaf community in Scotland, and the contribution which this vibrant language makes to the rich and varied use of language in Scotland today. BSL is a vital means of communication for Deaf people, as well as part of their linguistic and cultural identity.”

My view is that, if we promote, protect, support and value British Sign Language and deaf culture, we will all benefit from the greater contribution that our deaf and deafblind citizens can and want to make to our communities, our country and our economy. From that there will be a contribution to our wider efforts to create a fairer Scotland. I commend the bill to Parliament.

15:58

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I congratulate Mark Griffin on bringing the bill to Parliament. Taking a bill through Parliament requires hard work and determination, which he has just shown. I hope that the whole Parliament will support the bill and pass it into legislation tonight. That will send a strong message to people in the deaf and deafblind community that we value them and their language.

BSL is the main language that is used by people who are born deaf or deafblind, and it can also be used by people who have become deaf later in life. The bill highlights that BSL is a language in its own right. Like any language, it is used to pass down culture and history through the generations. The rich and famous have their history and culture written down in history books for them, while the masses depend on their stories being handed down through generations.

Language is hugely important in that process, which is why we value the languages that all our communities use. We must take steps to preserve and promote them, along with the culture and history of our people.

The bill will create a focus on BSL. The requirement for plans will make public bodies and the Government give regard to promoting and protecting the language in their policies.

The bill will help to address a number of issues. Making BSL more accessible will impact on school attainment. We have heard that deaf children have lower attainment than hearing children. We must tackle that built-in inequality to ensure that all young people reach their full potential. As people progress through school, language becomes more technical, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, where we need to encourage young people to participate. To increase attainment we must ensure that BSL is available to young people in school and that signers have adequate knowledge of the subject, so that they can translate it to pupils in a way that

allows them to achieve the same level of attainment as hearing pupils.

It would be useful if, like other languages, BSL was available as part of the school curriculum. Young people who do not require BSL to communicate should be able to learn it, which would enable them to communicate with deaf and deafblind people. Such learning would enrich those young people's lives.

We need to look at rolling out more BSL training. I pay tribute to Scottish union learning, which has done a huge amount of work on that. I undertook a BSL short course through Scottish union learning. Sadly, I have not been using what I learned, so the knowledge that I gained has become pretty sketchy. It is important that we continue to learn, but we also need the opportunity to use skills that are gained through language courses. Scottish union learning was keen for people in the public sector and the service industry to have BSL skills, to enable them to communicate better with their clients.

In Scotland, 90 per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents, which indicates a need for BSL for families and adult learners. If parents are to communicate effectively with their children, they need to learn the language before their children do, to help their children to develop skills. Therefore, learning needs to take place as soon as deafness is identified in a child.

Promotion of BSL will ensure that more professionals learn to use the language. One of the big issues for BSL users is access to services. At times, difficulties with that can be an inconvenience, and at other times, they are detrimental, such as when trying to access healthcare—Mark Griffin told some awful stories about that. We are all nervous about going to hospital. How much more so would we be if we were so isolated?

Use of BSL can interfere with confidentiality, which can be compromised when using a translator. That can be especially difficult for people with mental health issues, who need to be able to explain their thoughts and feelings to medical professionals. The use of an interpreter can be a barrier to that. It is vital that interpreters understand the issues that are involved and can put them across to health professionals.

The bill highlights BSL as a language in its own right. It is a language with which to pass on history and culture, communicate and build relationships, and have fun.

Isolation can be devastating. If BSL were more widely used and understood, that would tackle isolation. It would also give hearing people access to another language, with its rich culture and heritage.



I congratulate Mark Griffin again on introducing the bill. The Parliament has passed many pieces of legislation that make us all proud. The bill is another great example of that and I hope that we will all support it at decision time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Many thanks. I call Murdo Fraser. [*Interruption.*] I am sorry; I seem to have the wrong script. I call Mary Scanlon.

16:04

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I have never been taken for Murdo Fraser before, but there is a first time for everything.

I, too, thank Mark Griffin for successfully steering the bill to its final stages. I commend his commitment, which I understand is based on family experiences. At this final stage, it is also worth commending former Labour MSP Cathie Craigie and, more recently, Jenny Marra MSP, for their excellent work on behalf of deaf people.

The Scottish Conservatives fully support the measures in the bill and we will be voting 100 per cent for it at decision time. We support any measures to assist deaf people and their families to communicate effectively. The bill will make a difference by promoting and raising awareness of BSL as well as keeping the issue on the political agenda. It is undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

The words “postcode provision” are often used in relation to BSL. I fully agree with Inclusion Scotland when it asks for

“an honest appraisal of where the gaps in provision exist and how these will be addressed during the period of the plan.”

Accurate baseline data is essential for the bill to achieve the success that we all hope it will achieve.

The fact that Inclusion Scotland states that there are 30 qualified BSL interpreters in Scotland, while the National Deaf Children’s Society says that there are 80, shows that two organisations that are well versed in the issue disagree about the number of interpreters. Unless accurate figures are assured from the start, any progress measurements will be meaningless.

On the subject of postcode lotteries, one place that qualifies as a centre of excellence is Dingwall academy in the Highlands. I am pleased to welcome to the gallery Margaret Kinsman and pupils, along with many other people in Scotland who have joined us to see the passage of the bill. I met teaching staff at Dingwall academy earlier this year and was inspired by their enthusiasm and commitment to extending BSL to pupils. I make no apology for describing what the school wants to be

done after today. Every pupil in first year at Dingwall academy gets 16 hours of BSL training. I am not sure whether Dingwall is the only secondary school in Scotland to offer BSL to all S1 pupils. If any MSP can give a local example to match or do better than Dingwall, I would be pleased to hear about it.

We fully support and welcome the progress that the bill represents, but there is still more to do. It is disappointing that there is no formal qualification to national 4 or 5 level. The Scottish Government always likes comparisons with England. In England, a GCSE in BSL has been developed and is being piloted in five schools and one college from this month. Given the equivalence between GCSEs and the national exams, I hope that the Scottish Government will work with English authorities with a view to bringing BSL into parity with qualifications for other languages. Dingwall academy has told me that it would quite like to be one of the first schools to be used for any pilot. I do not mind waiting until the minister sums up for him to give that guarantee.

A reason that is often given for the lack of BSL teaching and support is a lack of teachers. The Scottish Government could look at how to incentivise teachers to take up training and qualifications. I did not realise that a teaching qualification is needed, followed by three years of teaching experience, then another two years of distance learning through Moray House in Edinburgh. I understand that most local authorities will fund around 85 per cent of fees and allow time off. However, it is still a huge commitment for any individual to do that course of training, given that, at the end of study, there is no pay enhancement for BSL teaching.

My five minutes are up. Given that I am summing up, I will finish my points later.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have a little bit of time in hand as we move to the open debate, so I can allow members five minutes for speeches.

16:10

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** I welcome all our guests to our gallery this afternoon. I also welcome those who are in the overspill room. I am not sure when we last had to use the overspill room for a debate in the Parliament.

It gives me great pleasure to thank Mark Griffin for introducing the bill. Rhoda Grant described this as a proud moment, and I sincerely hope that Mr Griffin will have that sense of pride come 5 o’clock, when his bill is passed.

I also thank Mark Griffin, and my friend and colleague Kevin Stewart, for acknowledging the

very small part that I played at stage 2 of the bill—it was small but very important. It is important to the deafblind community, which wants to have the same equality as everyone else. To have tactile BSL recognised in the bill is a journey that the community has been on for so long.

I offer my sincere thanks to Drena O'Malley—having worked with Drena O'Malley for the last 30 years or so in different sensory services, I can assure you that it is not often that I would say that. *[Laughter.]* Drena O'Malley's hard work, determination, enthusiasm and energy have helped in steering the issue and securing this acknowledgement of tactile BSL. I thank her and everyone else in Deafblind Scotland.

I want to look at the awareness-raising aspect and what that means. Prior to being elected, I had the great privilege to be the service manager for North East Sensory Services, which, among other things, provided services for people who are blind and those who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. When we were awarded the contract to provide services for those who are deaf and deafblind, the majority of our staff group—apart from those who had been transferred under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations from a different organisation—had no awareness of BSL. When we asked staff to come forward to learn BSL, we were astounded: every single member of staff came forward. Everyone wanted to embrace that level 1 awareness of BSL, so that any person who required BSL and who came into the services, whether it was in Aberdeen or Moray, would at least face someone on the front line who could acknowledge their language, wants, needs and requirements.

That is all that people ask for; people in the deaf community just want to be the same as everyone else—they want to be able to communicate and to be understood.

The Scottish Government has not just sat back and done nothing over the years. Indeed, in some respects much work has gone on in the cross-party group. I thank Mark Griffin for his kind comments on the cross-party group, of which Jenny Marra is the convener and I am one of the co-deputy conveners. The cross-party group on deafness is under a great deal of—I was going to say pressure, but that is not right. There is a great deal of understanding in taking forward the needs and the wants of the people who know that they have a different need, but one that needs to be recognised.

The point that I want to make is that we have moved forward and embraced technology. I know that my time is running out, but I will give one example of the technology. The video relay system was initially with NHS 24, but it has now

been rolled out to all public services with additional funding from the Government. It enables people who use BSL to be able to communicate the same as anyone else. If they are going to make an appointment with their general practitioner or are going to any other public service, they have an app on their phone and smart technology. Those things are available. When that system was rolled out, the chief officer at the Scottish Council on Deafness said that it was "terrific". She said that it gives people who use BSL the confidence and the confidentiality to speak and be heard the same as everyone else.

When I considered the national advisory group, I saw three initials: NAG. I sincerely hope that the advisory group continues to nag the Government.

16:16

**Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** I pay tribute to my colleague Mark Griffin for his tireless work in promoting the bill and progressing the welfare, culture and values of the deaf community right across Scotland, and I welcome all the guests to the gallery.

The bill presents us with an opportunity to drive an important culture change in society's attitude to BSL. I have followed it with interest from its early stages, and I noted comments from stakeholders that it was unnecessary.

**Dennis Robertson:** The member will acknowledge that we have signers in the gallery. One aspect of being able to sign to ensure that all the words are passed over to those in the gallery, and those who are watching on video, is perhaps the speed of presentation.

**Cara Hilton:** I apologise. I speak very fast. I think that it is a Grangemouth thing.

As we are all too aware, there has been very limited progress in securing equal rights, which is why we are debating the bill. Its importance is that it does not treat British Sign Language as an aid for those perceived as being disabled; it gives BSL its correct status as a fully independent and indigenous language of Scotland with its own culture, grammar and history. At the bill's heart is the aspiration to drive real change for deaf children, their families and all BSL users in Scotland.

I turn to the bill's provisions. I hope that the requirement for both the Scottish Government and public bodies to draft British Sign Language action plans will ensure increased support for deaf people, particularly young people and children who are still in the education system. That is important, as the National Deaf Children's Society has estimated that there are as many as 3,850 deaf children in Scotland and every year 120

children are born with severe or profound hearing loss.

Figures show a very worrying attainment gap between deaf children and their peers. Scottish Government figures reveal that only just over a third of deaf pupils attain highers or advanced highers, compared with 60 per cent of hearing pupils. In 2012, almost 10 per cent of deaf school leavers left with no qualifications at Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 2 or above compared with just 2 per cent of all pupils. That discrepancy is unacceptable and leaves many deaf young people struggling to find a decent college or university place or to access job opportunities.

It is not just about qualifications. In its evidence to the Education and Culture Committee, the British Deaf Association highlighted how reliance on interpreters in the classroom means that deaf children are often unable to be fully engaged with classroom activities, including the natural jokes and banter in the classroom environment. That leaves many feeling bored and socially isolated at school, and that will obviously have a lasting effect on children's mental health.

As Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Tam Baillie, pointed out in his briefing for the debate, the failure of our education system to fully meet the needs of children who use BSL as their main language is not only a lost opportunity for those children; it is a denial of their basic human rights. The provision of national and local BSL action plans provides an opportunity for us to set goals and priorities to deal with those issues, address the attainment gap, and prevent deaf children from being left behind by our education system.

The BDA also highlighted in its submission to the Education and Culture Committee the poor level of knowledge among some teachers and interpreters using BSL in schools. Many of those professionals hold BSL qualifications at only higher level. I therefore welcome the opportunity that the bill offers to set more rigorous targets for the training and monitoring of BSL use by teachers and school interpreters. I hope too that BSL will become part of the school curriculum.

As Rhoda Grant has highlighted, 90 per cent of deaf children have hearing parents. Many of those parents report difficulties in adjusting to their child's diagnosis and struggle to find the resources to help their children to communicate. Again, I welcome the steps that some local authorities are taking to provide home visits from BSL interpreters. The interpreters work with parents to encourage the child's linguistic development, starting when the child is very young rather than waiting until they start school.

Yet again, however, such support can be patchy. A recent survey of parents throughout Scotland found that a worrying 35 per cent had received no information about using BSL with their child before they started school. More must be done to ensure that local authorities share best practice as they develop their local action plans. I hope that there will be more investment from the Scottish Government to address the current gaps in delivery and to deliver real change. That will be especially important in closing the attainment gap.

Today is an historic moment for the deaf community in Scotland. The bill sends out a very important message to those who use British Sign Language that their language and culture are valued and that their rights are recognised. It will help to raise and increase awareness of BSL across the hearing population, and transform the lives of every British Sign Language user in Scotland. I thank Mark Griffin once more for his tremendous work in bringing the bill through Parliament. I hope and trust that it will have unanimous support from members today.

16:21

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I start, as I did in the stage 1 debate, by thanking all those who helped the Education and Culture Committee in our scrutiny of the bill, particularly the BSL users and the people from the deaf community who took the time to give evidence. I also thank those who helped us to break all previous attendance records at the committee. Many of them are in the gallery this afternoon, including representatives from Dingwall academy. I wish Mary Scanlon well in what is presumably a campaign to become rector of Dingwall academy once she retires from this place.

I offer sincere congratulations to Mark Griffin on his work, alongside that of the minister, in delivering for the BSL community. Although the bill will not in itself deliver early improvements in access to services, better educational outcomes or the removal of barriers to employment, it holds out the possibility of accelerating a cultural and attitudinal change that will make those changes more likely—and quicker—in future. By increasing recognition of BSL as an indigenous language that has its own culture and identity—as the minister remarked—we can pave the way to ensuring that deaf people are able to access information and services in their first language.

Despite the overwhelming support for Mark Griffin's bill, some concerns were raised with us. They related in part to the potential risk of expectations being raised unfairly, and the committee had some sympathy with that view. To a large extent members of the BSL community showed themselves to be well aware of what the

bill would and would not achieve, but there is the potential for misunderstanding. Another argument was that the bill's aims are already covered elsewhere, notably by equality legislation. I think that we were right to reject that assertion as it fundamentally misses the point that equality legislation will do nothing to promote BSL as a stand-alone language.

That said, I think that we succeeded in making a number of important improvements to the bill, reflecting some genuine concerns and sensible suggestions that were put forward by those from whom we took evidence. The way in which national and local authority plans will be developed is, I believe, more pragmatic and meaningful as a result of changes that have been made to the bill as it was introduced.

There was always a balance to strike between ensuring transparency and accountability on the one hand while on the other hand not drowning councils, public bodies and others in costly reporting requirements that would do little for the BSL community. Again, I think that the bill now better reflects that proper balance.

The content of the plans will be developed over time, but we know from the evidence that we received that they will need to prioritise the promotion of BSL in education settings, including early years support, as well as opening up access to healthcare and employment opportunities.

It is right that ministers will be required to keep the Parliament updated on progress, not as a means of naming and shaming but to ensure that the bill is doing what we intend and, along with the work of the advisory group, identifying potential areas where changes and improvements might need to be made. As I said at stage 1, the advisory group should be drawn in the main from the BSL community.

Two other changes that I would like briefly to highlight fall into the category of the painfully obvious, yet for various reasons they were not originally explicit in the bill. The first relates to the need for specific recognition of the distinct needs of the deafblind community. I know that Mark Griffin was keen to see that, but the need for it also came through strongly during our evidence sessions and the Law Society drew attention to it. I am delighted that that initial weakness in the bill has now been addressed thanks to the efforts of Mark Griffin and, indeed, Dennis Robertson.

The other area concerns the availability of the plans in BSL. Frankly, it was utterly inconceivable that the plans would not be available in BSL, but nevertheless, again, the bill needed to be strengthened at stage 2, and I welcome the further improvements that were made earlier this afternoon at stage 3.

My final comment is about the impact that the bill has had on the Parliament. I mentioned earlier the committee meetings where we struggled to accommodate all those who wished to attend, which is not a challenge that we are forced to confront regularly. That reflects the inclusive way in which we have gone about engaging with those who are most directly affected by the legislation. That is how it should be, even if it is not always that way. I therefore pay tribute to the committee clerks and other parliamentary staff for the creativity and dedication to the task that they have shown. They can rightly be proud of what they have achieved during the bill's passage, and I hope that it will influence the manner in which we operate in future, which will, I hope, be more accessible.

As I said at stage 1, the bill can and will help to raise the profile of BSL as a distinct language and, over time, increase its use in the delivery of services. For that, committee colleagues and the minister, but most of all Mark Griffin, deserve great credit.

16:27

**Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** Like many others, I begin by offering Mark Griffin my sincerest congratulations. Those of us who have experience of trying to take a bill through the Parliament understand how difficult it is and we sympathise with any member who does that. To have not only got a bill part of the way through the process and got it supported by the Government but got it all the way through to stage 3 is a tremendous achievement, and Mark Griffin should be proud of what he has done.

I thank all those who gave evidence to the Education and Culture Committee. They really helped the committee in its examination of the bill. I also thank my fellow committee members. One of the problems with speaking after them—members such as Mary Scanlon and Liam McArthur—is that they covered the detail of the bill and many of the things that I wanted to say. I genuinely appreciate their work and their efforts throughout the process, and I echo what they said in their comments about the bill.

I hope that the actions that the committee and indeed the Parliament took to ensure that as many people as possible from both the deaf and the deafblind communities could fully engage with the committee and the Parliament have made a genuine difference. Like others, I am sure, I was lobbied by deaf and deafblind constituents. Not only was that a tremendously important part of the process of helping my understanding of the need for and importance of the bill, but it made clear to me in a stark way the difficulties that individual

members of the deaf and deafblind communities face daily.

I will give an example. A deaf constituent approached me and attempted to make an appointment to come and see me to talk about both the bill and issues that he wanted to talk about personally. I could have seen him quickly—that week, in fact; the problem was getting a BSL interpreter who was available on the day when he and I were available.

Instead of being able to meet that constituent within a few days or a week, it took many weeks to arrange an appointment for three people to sit down together, so that my constituent and I could speak to and understand each other and could make sure that he got his points across and that his view was recognised in the work that I was doing in Parliament.

**Dennis Robertson:** Does the member feel that the new video relay system that has been rolled out to more public services could avoid appointments with constituents being delayed?

**Stewart Maxwell:** Dennis Robertson makes an important point. The committee has been talking about the use of technology and how technology will be important in ensuring that deaf and deafblind community members and constituents can get in touch with their MSPs and MPs quickly and get their voices heard. I would be interested to hear some details about the roll-out of that programme.

I am going to do something now that does not often get done in this Parliament; I am going to blow our own trumpet. I am sure that what the Education and Culture Committee did was not perfect by any means, but it was a substantial step forward in the way in which the Parliament operates. We created a BSL Facebook group and invited the BSL community to join it and share their views on the bill by posting BSL video clips. The group was well received, attracting around 2,400 members who posted hundreds of BSL videos and comments relating to the bill. That was a tremendous step forward.

We also translated key documents into BSL, including our call for views and guidance on how we handle submissions, summaries of the evidence that the committee received and our stage 1 report. We adopted a bilingual approach to the committee's public meetings: we invited witnesses to give evidence in BSL and provided English-BSL interpretation for the public gallery and via Parliament TV. To accompany the launch of our stage 1 report, we filmed a question-and-answer session involving some BSL users who had given evidence to the committee. The video, which was posted on our website and on various social media, offered deaf people an alternative

means of finding out what the committee had included in its report. That was a tremendous step forward. I echo Liam McArthur's comments and thank those in the Parliament who did all the hard work in making sure that we could achieve all that.

A number of benefits came from that work. The committee initiatives, particularly the Facebook group, were widely held up as good examples of how public bodies could be inclusive, and the feedback that we got from those in the BSL community who engaged with the process was very good.

Many people have high expectations of what the bill can deliver. We all hope that they will be met and that much can be achieved through the recognition and long-overdue promotion of BSL.

I quote from the bill's long title:

"An Act of the Scottish Parliament to promote the use of British Sign Language including by making provision for the preparation and publication"

of a national plan for British Sign Language. Many people have waited a long time to see those words in an act of the Scottish Parliament. Scotland has many languages and many cultures and I am delighted that we are taking this vital step today and putting BSL on an equal footing with the other languages of Scotland.

16:33

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Stewart Maxwell mentioned expectations, and that is what the bill is all about: the expectations of deaf children and adults.

The Education and Culture Committee also has expectations around the work that we are doing on attainment. That takes me to Dingwall. Dingwall academy is rightly proud of its recent pupils and I saw no limits to their expectations. One profoundly deaf pupil became a maths teacher, another became an audiologist, two are now at university, a third graduated with first-class honours last year, and various other ex-pupils are at college in the Highlands. That is what the bill is all about: putting deaf children on an equal footing with all other children and giving them the same opportunities, including career opportunities. A hearing pupil who studied BSL and deaf studies at Dingwall has gone on to become an interpreter, graduating with first-class honours. I see no limits if deaf children are given the proper support when they need it.

The focus on progress reports against a published performance plan is commendable. I hope that those who make progress from a very low base will realise just how much progress is still required. I also hope that, where provision of BSL is good, improvements and progress will continue to be made.

Conservatives welcome the setting up of a national advisory board to support the bill's implementation. I hope that the board will adhere to the principles and hopes that are contained in the bill.

I raise an issue that I have raised at every opportunity since the introduction of the bill and which Dingwall academy raised again today: the proposal to improve the availability of family sign language in order to enhance the ability of hearing parents to communicate with their deaf children and to promote the children's development. Helping the child and helping families must be such a positive way forward, given that 90 per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents. I did not know that, prior to considering the bill.

Postcode provision certainly applies to family sign language. I understand that there is an early years project by the National Deaf Children's Society, but there is still much that the Scottish Government could do to ensure that all families are given the support that they need just to communicate with their own children. That is not much to ask for and, as Rhoda Grant pointed out, it should be done at the point of diagnosis, not when the children start school or go to secondary school.

According to the NDCS:

"There is currently no nationally funded provision for these parents to access appropriate training or classes in order to communicate with their child through sign language."

That suggests that:

"family provision needs to include signs and phrases to facilitate play and child-centred activities."

That is the appropriate support for families, particularly from birth to pre-school.

Family sign language improves deaf children's vocabulary and contributes so positively to family relationships. As a parent, I cannot imagine what it would be like not to be able to communicate with my child. We should all think about that.

I would like family sign language to be included in the progress reports and performance reviews, and I ask the minister whether that is a consideration that he will take on board for the future.

I very much welcome the bill. The Scottish Conservatives support every word in the bill, but we are also looking for more. Once again, I commend Mark Griffin and I give the bill my party's full support.

16:39

**Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It gives me great pleasure to close the debate for

Scottish Labour. I start by congratulating my colleague Mark Griffin on bringing the bill to the chamber and on giving the deaf community a voice in Parliament. I know that the bill means a lot to him, as is evident from the effort that he has given it throughout its entire process. I also pay tribute to Cathie Craigie for her work in this area.

Mark and I share a regional office, and I know the hard work that he and his staff, Cathie and—in particular—Frank, have dedicated to the bill. I am pleased that that will be recognised at 5 pm tonight, when the Parliament, I hope, unites to pass this historic bill.

It is a great privilege for me to take part in the debate. As a member of the Education and Culture Committee when it scrutinised the bill, I heard first-hand evidence as to why we require it and what impact it is likely to have on people's lives if it fulfils its potential. As Heather Gray, director of the National Deaf Children's Society, said:

"The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill marks a historic moment for the deaf community in Scotland, many of whom have British Sign Language as their first or preferred language. The National Deaf Children's Society strongly believes that, if implemented, this landmark legislation will become a key driver in Scotland towards more effective service provision, better opportunities, and improved life chances for deaf children and young people."

However, we must not rest on our laurels. When I spoke in the stage 1 debate, I highlighted a number of issues facing deaf people in Scotland. I will not go through each of them again, but it is important to draw the chamber's attention to the attainment gap that deaf learners currently face, which is extremely concerning.

Scottish Government figures for 2011-12 show that 36.4 per cent of deaf school leavers attained highers or advanced highers, compared to 60.2 per cent of hearing pupils. Scottish Government data also shows that, at only 26 per cent, deaf school leavers are less likely to go on to higher education than hearing school leavers, at 39 per cent. We also know from the Grimes report that only 8 per cent of teachers of the deaf can sign. We must address that. I hope that the Scottish Government closely considers the forthcoming report from the Education and Culture Committee on the attainment gap for people with a sensory impairment and that all issues highlighted in it will be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Statistics from the Scottish Council on Deafness show that up to 70 per cent of deaf people believe that they have failed to get a job because of their deafness. That is a sobering statistic but one that has become all too familiar.

In June this year, I had the honour of sponsoring the Action on Hearing Loss reception, which a vast number of MSPs attended. The reception was

held to highlight deaf awareness week and the importance of everyone receiving deaf awareness training and learning about the communication needs of the 850,000 people in Scotland who are deaf or have hearing loss. At that event, we heard from Abigail Matheson about her experience of trying to gain employment. She said that employers' lack of understanding of communication support, poor deaf awareness and lack of knowledge about the access to work scheme create barriers that prevent deaf people from having the chance to get into their preferred careers. She also raised the problems that deaf people often face at Jobcentre Plus, where staff will not always book British Sign Language interpreters or use the correct terminology when talking about deaf people and their individual communication needs.

We must do more to help people such as Abigail get the support that they require to enter the workplace. The bill will address some of the problems that she outlined, but it will not address them all. Mark Griffin and the organisations that support the bill have made it clear that the bill is the first step on the journey to improving the lives of deaf people in Scotland. It will not solve all the problems that deaf people face, but it is an important first step that the Parliament must take today. As we heard in evidence, the bill will give deaf people the opportunity to access life through their own language. There can be no stronger point to end on.

I look forward to supporting the bill at decision time.

16:43

**Dr Allan:** I thank my fellow members for their contributions to this very productive and—in the view of many people in the public gallery, I think—historic debate.

As I said in my opening speech, the bill has enjoyed strong cross-party support from the start. It is clear that there is a great deal of interest from across the chamber in British Sign Language and the experience of deaf BSL users in our communities.

I add my congratulations and thanks to the committee convener, Stewart Maxwell, the former deputy convener, Siobhan McMahon, and all the members of the Education and Culture Committee for their detailed and careful consideration of the bill, which allowed it to be improved and strengthened.

The Scottish Parliament has been applauded for the approach that it has taken to ensure that its work on the BSL bill is accessible to deaf BSL users. Thanks are due partly to the committee and to the Parliament itself but, more generally, I hope

that as a society we have a new understanding of the importance of being inclusive in that way.

**Dennis Robertson:** Will Dr Allan also thank the parliamentary staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure that all the deaf and deafblind people in the gallery and the overspill area have been adequately looked after, with their requirements accommodated?

**Dr Allan:** I happily echo those remarks. As I said, it is not often—other than at First Minister's question time, when an organised fight is put on every week—that we see the gallery as full as it is today. That tells its own, important story about the subject at hand.

Mr Griffin talked about a lack of interpretation in hospital, and I know about the incident that he mentioned. The Scottish Government is addressing the issue with the support of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I do not for a moment claim that the existence of the bill will transform the situation overnight, but I very much believe that the bill will strengthen the hand of everyone who campaigns to put such matters right.

Mary Scanlon generously said that she would wait until I stood up to speak before expecting me to answer her question—I feel slightly as if I have been intervened on while silent. However, she made an important and pertinent point when she asked about, among other things, the role that schools can play in providing BSL more generally, beyond the deaf community. BSL can be offered as part of the one-plus-two programme, and Scotland's national centre for languages can advise schools about how BSL can fit into their language learning plans alongside other languages.

I recognise that there is work to be done to ensure that BSL learners can progress in their language learning in the same way as learners of spoken languages do. I am happy to explore the issue and to keep in touch with Mary Scanlon about the issues that she was right to raise.

Dennis Robertson pointed to the great willingness to learn BSL that exists beyond the deaf community. I hope that we can all work together to try to meet demand.

Liam McArthur and other members pointed to the importance of deaf people being able to access services in their own language. The contactScotland-BSL service enables deaf BSL users to contact public services by phone, but I recognise that that does not obviate the need for face-to-face interpretation.

I will do my best to ensure that the levels of participation during the bill's passage through the Parliament are sustained during implementation, if

the bill is passed in a few minutes' time. I thank the deaf and deafblind community, and the many organisations that work with it, for their contribution to the bill. As I said, many members of the community are here in the gallery, and I know that there are many more people watching the debate online. By sharing their experiences and insights with us, they helped us to gain a better understanding of the needs of BSL users, including what BSL users need from us.

People's experiences around the country are not all the same, of course. In that context, I particularly mention the needs of deaf people in remote and rural areas. I represent 13 islands and I know BSL users who find it difficult to access a conversation, let alone services, in their own language within a radius of many miles.

I particularly want to put on record my thanks to the five organisations that make up the deaf sector partnership, all of which are represented in the public gallery today. They are the British Deaf Association, the Scottish Council on Deafness, Deaf Action, Deaf Connections and Deafblind Scotland. I am grateful for their work with us over the past few months, which has helped us to prepare for implementation of the bill. I look forward to continuing to work with them, over the coming months, as we establish the BSL national advisory group and start to work on the BSL national plan.

Again, I thank Mark Griffin for proposing the bill in the first place. He has made a significant contribution to improving the lives of deaf and deafblind BSL users in Scotland, and he should feel proud of that.

We have made a good start, but it is clear that much more can be done across Scotland to remove the barriers that, in many cases, still prevent deaf and deafblind BSL users from maximising their potential and making their fullest contribution to daily and public life in Scotland. The bill sets us firmly on the right path to address that. I therefore urge my fellow members from across all political parties to vote in favour of the bill.

16:50

**Mark Griffin:** I thank the minister and members for their valuable contributions to the debate, and I thank those organisations from outside the chamber that have provided fantastic supporting briefings. I also thank the interpreters who have been in the galleries, interpreting everything that has been going on—particularly the hands-on tactile BSL interpreters who have been providing one-to-one interpretation for any deafblind members of the public. They will be very tired by this point.

I will briefly remind members of some key facts about BSL in Scotland. According to the latest census figures, there are approximately 12,000 BSL users in Scotland, although there is thought to be a great deal of underreporting because some BSL users have issues using census forms that are in written English. It is also estimated that 120 children a year are born with a hearing loss, the majority of whom are born to hearing parents. As members can imagine, a child being born with a hearing loss can have a huge impact on parents, guardians, brothers, sisters and other family members, as Mary Scanlon pointed out. I therefore support her call for BSL lessons for family members of children who are born deaf to be provided at a very early stage in the children's development.

Scotland has a serious shortage of BSL-trained teachers, which has an obvious effect on the number of deaf children who are able to access education. The matter was raised repeatedly by Rhoda Grant, Cara Hilton and Siobhan McMahon. Siobhan McMahon quoted Scottish Government figures showing that only 36.4 per cent of deaf pupils attain highers or advanced highers, compared with 60.2 per cent of hearing pupils, and that only 26 per cent of deaf school leavers go on to higher education, compared with 39 per cent of hearing school leavers. That comes down to the language skills of the teachers. It is not difficult to see why there is an attainment gap when a BSL user can be taught complex subjects such as maths, physics or chemistry by a teacher whose language skills are lower than those of the learner. We will need to look at that in the future in order to reduce the attainment gap.

That skills gap can lead to a higher rate of unemployment among young deaf people. Data from a deaf achievement Scotland project shows that the rate of unemployment among young deaf people aged 16 to 24 is 49 per cent, compared with a rate of 19 per cent for all young people. As I said at stage 1, one of the reasons why we need this legislation is to encourage education providers to think about how deaf children can be educated in the language and culture in which they belong, rather than forcing their own methods of education on those children. I hope that my bill can go some way towards that.

Dr Allan said in his opening speech—and I fully agree with him—that we are missing out on what deaf and deafblind people have to offer society and the world of work and we can no longer afford to do so.

One of my reasons for attempting to introduce a British Sign Language bill was personal—Mary Scanlon referred to that earlier. Two of my great-grandparents were deafblind. I never met them, because they died before I was born, but I was



brought up with stories from my mum and her mum about how they raised their children, the difficulties that they faced, how they interacted with their children and grandchildren and how they attempted to access services and carry out everyday activities that we take for granted with a dual sensory impairment.

When I became an MSP, I joined the cross-party group on deafness, where I heard some of the experiences of the people in that group. I was sad to learn that, almost three generations after my great-grandparents, people are still experiencing the same difficulties in accessing services, including medical and police services, and in educational attainment. It struck me that the language is still marginalised and misunderstood.

I am under no illusion that the bill is anything other than a starting point. It is the starting point for a continuous cycle of improvement in access to services for BSL users. It aims to raise awareness of the language, highlight gaps in provision and identify and enable the sharing of good practice.

The Education and Culture Committee heard evidence from witnesses who gave examples of how a lack of awareness of BSL affected their everyday lives. One witness told the committee about going into hospital and having to wait hours, days, weeks and months after appointments without knowing what was going on, without being able to communicate what their symptoms were and without being able to get information about their medication and how to take it, because no BSL interpreter was available to help. I hope that the video relay service is available for every member of the BSL community who accesses any medical services.

Mary Scanlon spoke about the number of BSL interpreters that we have, and the debate about that number. The number that I have is that we have 80 registered BSL interpreters in Scotland, whereas Finland—a country with a similar population to Scotland—has 750 sign language interpreters. I hope that, if the bill is passed, the promotion of BSL in public life will lead to a resurgence of the language and an interest among all people in learning it, which will, I hope, lead in turn to an increase in the number of interpreters who come into the system.

Many organisations have already made great progress. I do not think that anyone would deny that, given the example of what the NHS has done with video relay services to consider the needs of BSL users. It is time that that experience was shared across the public sector so that others can start to catch up. I recognise that it is not possible to wave a magic wand and instantly enable BSL users to use the language every time they engage with the health service, education establishments and others. I wish that I could do that, but I believe

that the bill is an important first step in putting BSL on a firmer footing and that it will make a positive difference to the lives of BSL users.

As the bill has gone through Parliament, it has often been said that the Equality Act 2010 is in place and that that should be enough to cover the needs of BSL users. It is important to state, as others have done, that deaf BSL users do not define themselves as disabled; they are intellectually and physically as capable as any member in here and they resent the fact that they have to define themselves as disabled to access services that we take for granted. We do not go to a foreign country and define ourselves as disabled.

The issue is about people communicating in their own language. We have to recognise that there is a minority in Scotland who use a different language and who have no opportunity to learn the indigenous spoken language. It is up to us to address that and adapt our services accordingly. I hope that the bill will be passed and will achieve that aim. I commend the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill to Parliament. [*Applause.*]

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-14291, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Provisions No. 2) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

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

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Because this is a very important day, we have a very important person with us, Shaurna Dickson, who is going to sign decision time for us.

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-14272.3, in the name of Sarah Boyack, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14272, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the future of renewables in Scotland's energy policy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)

Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 33, Against 72, Abstentions 4.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-14272.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14272, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the future of renewables in Scotland's energy policy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 13, Against 96, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-14272, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the future of renewables in Scotland's energy policy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**Against**

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

#### Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 63, Against 13, Abstentions 33.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament welcomes that the updated 2020 *Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland*, published by the Scottish Government, records a significant increase in the generation of electricity from renewable sources; considers that UK Government policy prevents Scotland from achieving its full renewable and low-carbon energy potential, and is damaging to investor confidence, employment, energy security, consumers' energy bills and emission reduction; recognises that the further powers in the Scotland Bill cannot deliver Scotland's energy ambitions, and agrees that the UK Government must engage with Scotland and the other devolved administrations on energy policy.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-14291, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Provisions No. 2) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S4M-14111, in the name of Mark Griffin, on the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill be passed.

**The Presiding Officer:** The motion is agreed to and the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill is passed. [*Applause.*]

I take this opportunity to thank Mark Griffin, the Government and the Education and Culture Committee for all their work in bringing the bill to this stage. I also thank our parliamentary staff, who have excelled themselves.

I also take this opportunity to thank all our signers today. You have done a fantastic job, and the whole Parliament thanks you for it. [*Applause.*]

Members can see for themselves the reaction of the deaf and deafblind community and how much this bill means to them—and I say to members, thank you.

That ends decision time, and I conclude today's business.

*Meeting closed at 17:07.*



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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